



Yemen

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	20,000–23,000
Percentage of total population	0.1%
Start of current displacement situation	2004
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	130,000 (2008)
New displacement in 2008	70,000 to 110,000
Returns in 2008	55,000 to 90,000
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	138

Clashes between government forces and Shi'ite followers of the late Sheikh Badr Eddin al-Houth led to displacement in north Yemen at regular intervals from 2004 with a peak in 2008. Fighting flared up in November 2005 following the breakdown of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's amnesty towards members of al-Houth's militia, and in February 2006 several thousand people were displaced in armed clashes and air raids. An escalation in the fighting in 2007 led to further displacement in the northern governorate of Saada, until the July 2008 declaration of a ceasefire. However insecurity has since continued, with clashes reported, restrictions in access remaining, and unexploded ordnance and landmines still present.

In October 2008 severe flooding in eastern Yemen also displaced 10,000 people, and the government declared Hadramout and Al-Mahara governorates disaster areas and accommodated affected people in schools and public buildings.

OCHA estimated that 130,000 people were displaced or affected by the conflict in July 2008. The government reported in September that up to 90,000 had returned since the end of the conflict, but these return figures have not been verified and some reports suggest many people have returned to situations of displacement due to the high level of damage to their home areas.

According to the OCHA report, 60,000 people had found refuge in Saada town by July, of whom 15,000 to 20,000 were receiving limited assistance from national and international aid agencies in seven camps, and around 40,000 were sheltering with hosts. As many as 70,000 were also believed to be displaced in remote rural areas, where limits in access enforced by the government were preventing the delivery of assistance. The government progressively allowed aid agencies into some towns, though this access was still insufficient to reach many people affected.

There was great concern not only for IDPs but also for people forced to remain in the areas of hostilities. Civilians were prevented by both government and opposition checkpoints from travelling to Saada town to seek food and medical assistance. There is little information on particularly vulnerable displaced groups such as women, children or elderly people, but reports have noted a prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment of children into tribal and Houthi forces.

Many people were still displaced at the end of the year. Though almost 8,000 families were said to have returned to their places of origin or resettled elsewhere in Saada by November 2008, over 3,000 families were recorded as displaced in areas accessible to UN and humanitarian agencies. Areas of Saada remained inaccessible due to insecurity or movement restrictions imposed by all parties to the conflict.

IDPs assessed in camps in Saada and elsewhere were enduring dire conditions and were particularly in need of food, medication, access to education, non-food items, improvements in access to water, sanitation and shelter. Many were unable to return to their homes due to fear of insecurity and reprisals, destruction of their homes, and lack of livelihoods and basic services there.

The government and NGOs have undertaken assessment missions to determine the damage to property and infrastructure in order to begin the process of reconstruction. In August, the Ministry of Local Administration reported that 6,000 houses had been damaged in Saada, as well as a large number of farms, schools, health facilities and mosques. The government has since established the Saada Compensation Committee for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation to help IDPs return and rebuild their lives.

The Yemeni Red Crescent Society and several other local and international organisations, including WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, Islamic Relief, and MSF, have provided assistance to displaced and non-displaced people affected by the conflict. While assistance and protection will continue to be inadequate until the access to affected civilians is better, the international community has a substantial role to play in funding and delivering humanitarian and development assistance to help the Saada region overcome the extensive devastation of the conflict.