

Nearly 2,500 houses damaged by fighting in the first half of 2020

During the first half of 2020, 2,490 houses were damaged by fighting in 547 separate incidents, according to the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP), only 2 per cent fewer than in the previous 6 months, when 2,530 houses were damaged. The average number of houses damaged each month is down by 13 per cent from 106 per month in 2019 to 92 per month in 2020, though since November 2019, the number of incidents reported each month had been gradually increasing.

Eighty-six per cent of houses affected in the first half of 2020 were concentrated in three governorates, all with active frontlines in the north of Yemen: Al Hudaydah, Sada and Marib – 1,341 in Hudaydah Governorate alone. In Sada, which borders Saudi Arabia, 563 houses were hit, and there was almost daily shelling on the western borders and increasing reports of air strikes across the governorate. Another 237 houses were damaged in Marib, where hostilities have escalated this year with ground fighting and air strikes.

One in every four civilian casualties across Yemen occurred in homes in the first six months of 2020 in contrast with one in every three in 2018 and 2019. However, in some areas the proportion was far higher, half of the 47 civilian casualties reported in Marib in 2020, where shifting frontlines in the governorate have left civilians with little opportunity to flee, were in the home, and houses in Marib City have come under missile fire. In Al Hudaydah, where fighting persists in some densely populated urban areas, a third of 76 civilian casualties occurred in the home. Women and children have been most affected by such attacks – of 2,847 civilians harmed between 1 January 2018 and 30 June 2020, 1,540 (54 per cent) were women and children, and the proportion has been steadily rising. Attacks on homes are also a cause of displacement and can have serious psychosocial effects across different generations.

Shelling and air strikes caused 96 per cent of all attacks on houses since the start of 2018. While twice as many incidents were caused by shelling, air strikes caused 25 per cent more fatalities than shelling – 635 civilians have been killed by air attacks on civilian houses compared with 507 civilians killed by shelling on homes since the start of 2018.

More multiple civilian casualty incidents reported in August and at least one attack on a health facility

In what appears to be the third air strike in less than a month to cause multiple civilian casualties in the north of Yemen, on 7 August partners reported that nine children were killed and another seven children injured, along with two women and a man, in a strike in the Haraad area in Kabb wa ash Shaf District in Al Jawf Governorate. In a statement condemning the attack, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Ms. Lise Grande, stated “We have to be absolutely clear about this. The primary responsibility of a party to the conflict is to do everything possible to protect civilians and ensure they have the assistance they need to survive”. Just three days later, on 10 August, protection partners reported that a civilian was killed and another 11 were injured, including 6 children, when artillery shells hit Al Jah Al Ala in Bayt Al Faqih in Al Hudaydah. Health partners confirmed 11 casualties were received at Bayt Al Faqih Hospital and that one was referred to Bajil Hospital and two others to Sana’a for treatment.

On 17 August, attacks were reported on the Ministry of Public Health and Population in Taizz. In the first attack, soldiers looted an ambulance and medicines in the Al Hasab area of Al Mudhaffar District after assaulting the driver. On the same day, soldiers forced their way into the Public Health and Population Office on Al Thawra Street in Al Qahtira District, assaulting and expelling its employees, forcing the office to close. Medical facilities and transport are protected under international humanitarian law and should not be attacked.

Towards the end of August, there were reports of an upsurge in terrorist activity in Al Bayda Governorate leading to multiple civilian deaths and included another attack on a health centre.

