

Thematic Report: The Impact of Armed Violence on Civilian Dwellings in Yemen

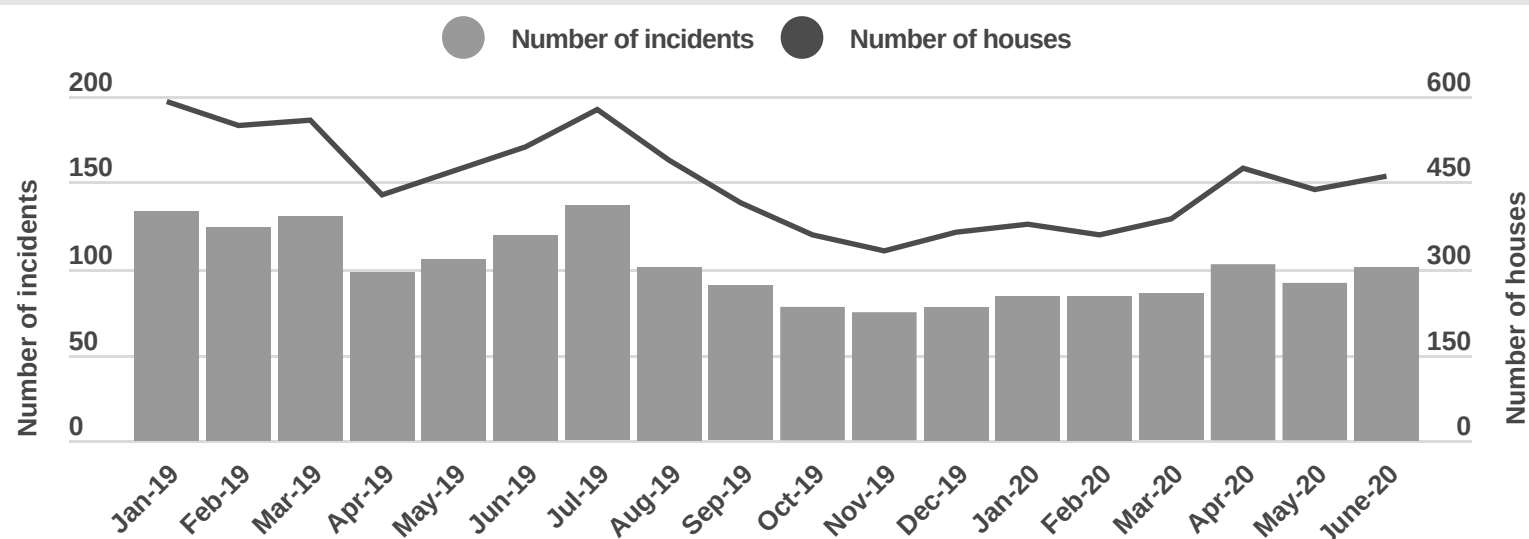
July 2020

As hostilities persist across Yemen, the civilian population continues to be impacted by armed violence. This report presents and analyses trends regarding the impact on civilians when armed violence impacts their houses, as civilian residential areas continue to come under fire across the country, particularly from airstrikes and shelling. The report also explores the specific vulnerabilities of women, children and IDP sites, covering trends and case studies from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2020.

The continued impact of armed violence on civilian houses in Yemen

During the first half of 2020, 547 incidents of armed violence directly impacted a cumulative total of 2,490 civilian houses. Despite the ongoing ceasefire in Hudaydah, efforts to sustain partial ceasefires in both the north and south of the country, and the UN Secretary General's appeal for a country-wide ceasefire in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is just 2% fewer than during the previous six months: from July to December 2019, 2,530 civilian houses were impacted by armed violence in Yemen. An average of 92 incidents have impacted directly on civilian houses on a monthly basis in 2020, down 13% from 106 in 2019. However, since November 2019, the number of incidents of armed violence impacting on civilian houses has been gradually increasing.

Incidents of armed violence impacting on civilian houses and number of houses impacted

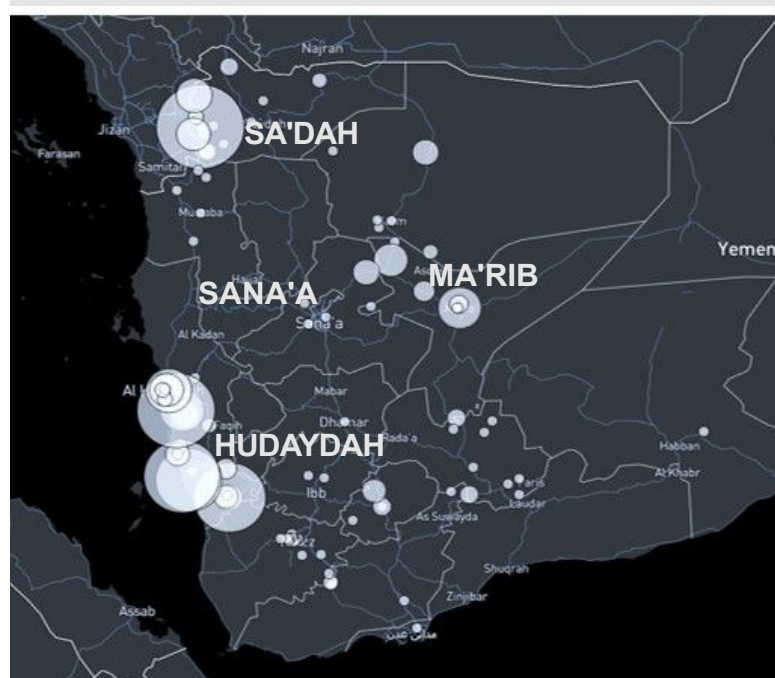


Civilian houses have predominantly been impacted on frontlines in the north

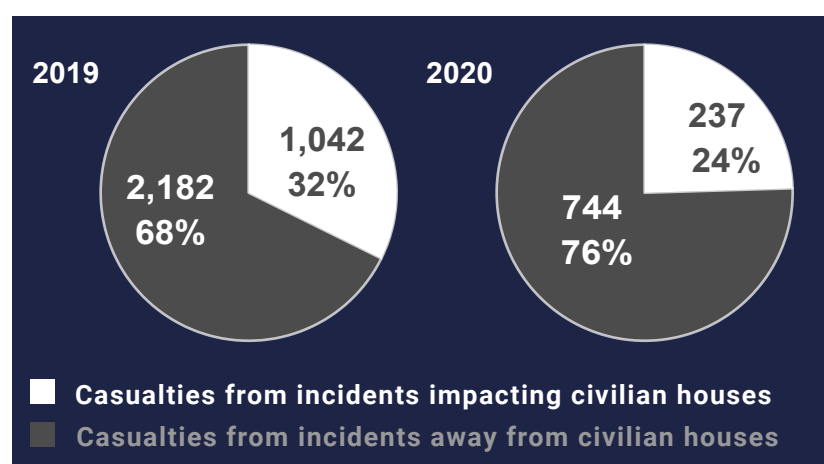
86% of civilian houses directly impacted by armed violence during the first half of 2020 have been concentrated in three governorates hosting active frontlines in the north of the country: Hudaydah, Sa'dah and Ma'rib.

In Hudaydah, although the ceasefire has largely fixed the frontlines in place, daily hostilities continue, including in urbanised areas, heightening the risk of residential areas being impacted; indeed, 1,341 houses have been directly impacted by hostilities in the governorate so far this year. Meanwhile, on the border with Saudi Arabia, 563 houses have been impacted in Sa'dah, where the western border districts witness almost daily shellfire, accompanied by increasing reports of airstrikes across the governorate. Another 237 houses have been impacted in Ma'rib, where hostilities on frontlines in the north, west and south of the governorate have escalated this year, seeing ground hostilities and airstrikes. There have also been repeat instances of residential areas in Ma'rib city coming under missile fire.

Heatmap showing distribution of civilian houses impacted by armed violence in 2020



A quarter of civilian casualties as a result of armed violence occur at home



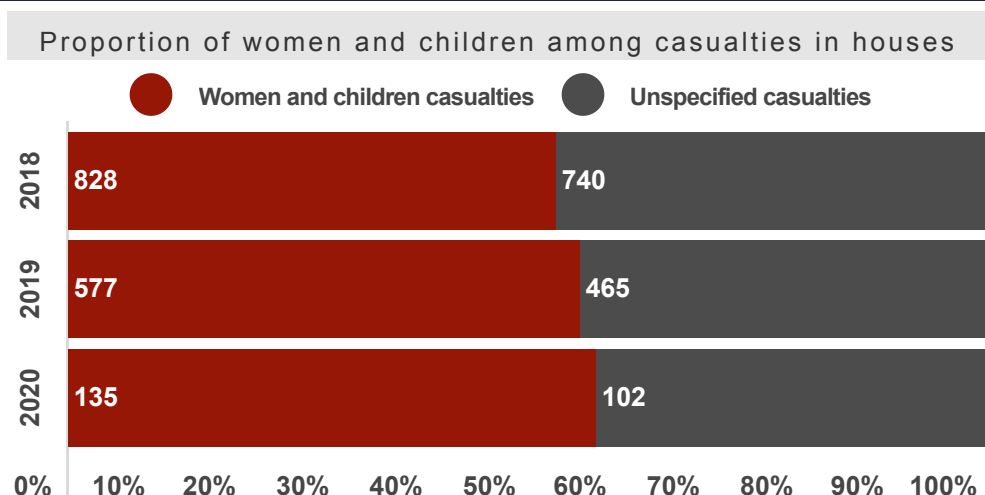
1 in 4 civilian casualties occurred at home during the first six months of 2020. Throughout 2018 and 2019, 1 in 3 civilian casualties occurred at home. However, this proportion is not uniform across Yemen. In Ma'rib, half of the 47 civilian casualties reported so far in 2020 have occurred at home, as dynamic and swiftly shifting frontlines have left civilians with little opportunity to flee in advance of escalations of armed violence. In Hudaydah, a third of civilian casualties have occurred at home this year, as fighting persists, including in densely populated urban areas. To date, Hudaydah has seen the most (76) civilian casualties as a result of incidents impacting civilian houses this year.

Protection Implications

Incidents impacting on the home bear a host of implications for civilians. First and foremost, death and serious injury to civilians is a major risk. Moreover, as houses sustain damages, civilians may be forced to flee, sacrificing property, assets, stability, community and livelihood in exchange for safety and shelter, while also putting additional strain on the resources of IDP hosting sites. Furthermore, the involuntary exposure of civilians to armed violence in domestic spaces is likely to result in acute and lasting cross-generational psychosocial trauma, especially among children.

The proportion of women and children among casualties in houses is increasing

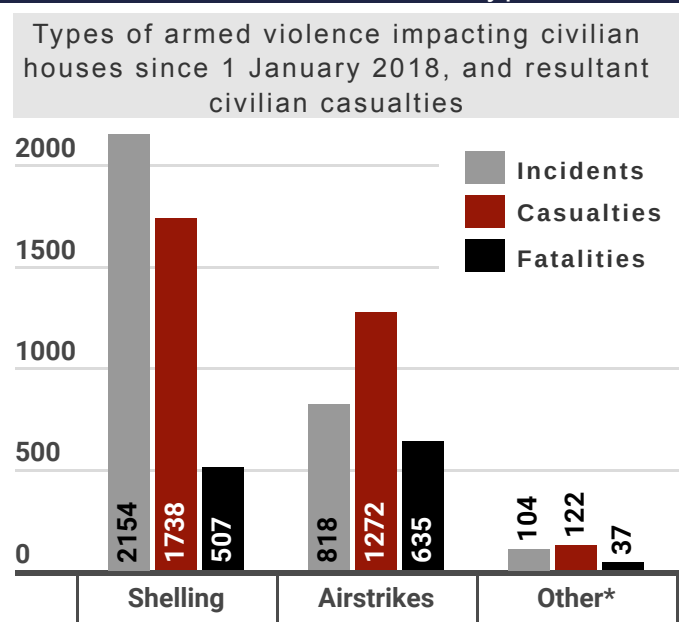
Since 2018, more than half of the civilian casualties due to armed violence impacting civilian homes have been women and children. Of a total of 2,847 civilians to have been harmed by armed violence in domestic spaces from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2020, 1,540 (54%) were women and children. This proportion is steadily increasing. In 2018, 53% of casualties at home were women and children. In 2019, this increased to 55%, and during the first half of 2020, rose again to 57%.



Protection Implications

When compared to unspecified casualties, women and children are proportionately more vulnerable when armed violence impacts the home. Culturally, women and children in Yemen spend more time in domestic spaces than men, and the imbalance is exacerbated as the conflict is resulting in higher numbers of women and child-headed households.

Airstrikes are the deadliest type of armed violence to impact civilian homes



* Includes SA/LW, landmines, IEDs and UXO incidents

Shelling and airstrikes have had a particularly heavy impact, causing 96% of all incidents impacting on civilian houses since the start of 2018. Although more than twice as many incidents were attributed to shelling, airstrikes have had a deadlier impact, resulting in 25% more fatalities than shellfire. Since the start of 2018, 635 civilians have been killed by airstrikes hitting civilian houses. By comparison, 507 civilians have been killed by shellfire hitting homes.

Women and children in the home are particularly vulnerable to airstrikes. Since the start of 2018, 59% of civilian casualties caused by airstrikes hitting civilian homes have been women and children. By comparison, away from the home, women and children have comprised a quarter (25%) of the civilian casualties caused by airstrikes. Of six incidents to have resulted in mass (>15) casualties among women and children at home, all were caused by airstrikes.

Risk factors contributing to vulnerability of IDP sites to armed violence

The number of incidents of armed violence reported to have impacted IDP sites doubled from four in 2018 to eight in 2019. The number of civilian casualties also doubled, from 41 to 85. This trend is continuing in 2020; during the first six months of the year, two incidents of armed violence have already directly impacted IDP sites; although no casualties have yet been reported, these incidents result in significant displacement (see below).

Of the 14 incidents of armed violence impacting IDP sites from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2020, 10 were caused by shelling, cumulatively resulting in 68 civilian casualties, of whom 11 were killed. However, despite accounting for just two of the incidents, airstrikes have had a deadlier impact, causing 23 civilian fatalities on the sites they struck, more than double the fatalities from shelling. The two incidents in total caused 53 civilian casualties, almost as many as from the 10 shelling incidents.

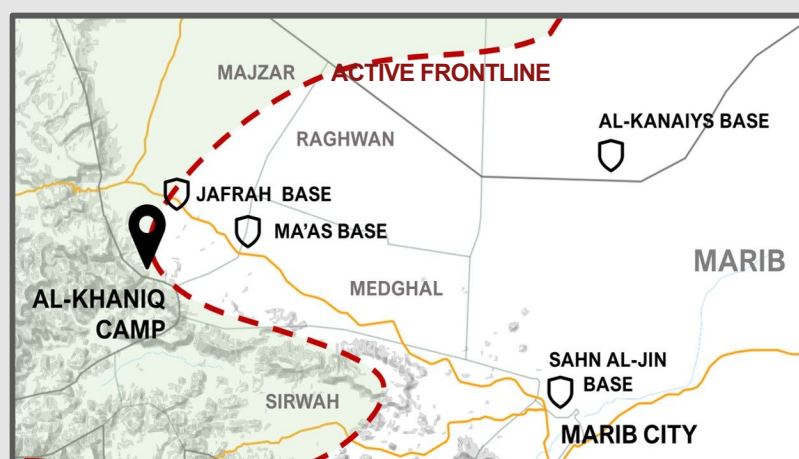
A number of risk factors are likely to heighten the risk of exposure of IDP sites to armed violence, including proximity to active frontlines and sites of strategic or symbolic significance, such as:

- Military sites and security infrastructure
- Contested routes and junction points
- Main supply routes
- Critical economic or cultural infrastructure
- Natural or human-made territorial demarcations

Due to the dynamic nature of the conflict, escalations can be swift and unpredictable, and any such areas may witness direct or remote targeting, or may become subsumed by hostilities on the ground.

Case Study: Al-Khaniq Camp

Al-Khaniq camp in Marib is a key example of the risk posed by proximity to active and dynamic frontlines. The site has been impacted by armed violence twice since the start of 2018. As hostilities escalated and the frontlines shifted earlier this year, artillery shelling hit the site on 26 January. Although no casualties were reported, around 1,550 families were forced to relocate to Medghal district or Marib city.

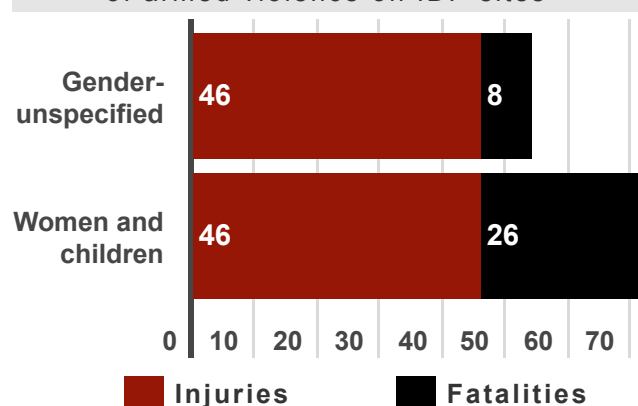


Protection Implications

Incidents of armed violence impacting IDP sites present a serious risk of death and injury to inhabitants. Furthermore, they likely compound civilians' experiences of psychosocial trauma, due to the repeated exposure to conflict and subsequent destabilisation. Such incidents may also result in premature returns, or secondary, or even tertiary, displacement, which in turn places additional strain on recipient sites. When one site is impacted, other sites in the vicinity may see sudden influxes, placing pressure on resources that are already likely stretched. Having already faced severe disruption to their lives and livelihoods, any additional displacement further undermines IDPs' resilience and exposes them to further protection risks.

Civilian casualties and the vulnerability of women and children on IDP sites

Civilian casualties resulting from incidents of armed violence on IDP sites



Since the start of 2018, incidents of armed violence impacting IDP sites have resulted in 126 civilian casualties, of whom over a quarter (27%) were fatalities. Women and children comprised more than half of the total civilian casualty toll on IDP sites (72 persons, 57%).

Women and children on IDP sites have also suffered a comparatively higher mortality rate: since the start of 2018, over three quarters of the 34 civilian fatalities caused by incidents impacting IDP sites have been women and children. 1 in 3 (14 of 44) child casualties caused by incidents of armed violence on IDP sites were fatalities, and a 43% (12 of 28) mortality rate was seen for women. By comparison, just 8 (15%) of the 54 gender-unspecified casualties were fatalities.



Protection Cluster Yemen

The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project is a service under the Protection Cluster for the collection, analysis and dissemination of open source data on the civilian impact from armed violence in Yemen, to inform and complement protection programming.

For more information, please visit www.civilianimpactmonitoring.org.



CIVILIAN IMPACT MONITORING PROJECT
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