

WHO Cancels Shipment of 500,000 Cholera Vaccines to Yemen

With at least 320,000 cases of cholera in the country, the outbreak is caused by widespread damage to infrastructure during the Saudi-led war, U.N. officials said.

By [Telesur](#)

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While the latest figures confirmed over 320,000 cases of cholera in Yemen, the World Health Organization announced that it would be canceling the planned shipment of nearly one million cholera vaccines to the country torn apart by a Saudi Arabia-led bombing campaign, citing security and logistical concerns in the decision to cancel the shipment.

An initial shipment of 500,000 doses are currently in Djibouti, ready to be shipped, however WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told reporters that the doses might be rerouted to several countries in Africa instead.

WHO's latest figures indicate that there have been around 320,000 cases of cholera, a disease that causes uncontrollable diarrhea and severe dehydration that can be deadly without treatment. The conditions in Yemen in the midst of a Saudi-led, U.S.-sponsored war have led to a spread of the disease on an epidemic scale. Lack of access to clean water, famine, and destruction of health-infrastructure resulting from the war have been the primary drivers of the outbreak.

United Nations officials placed blame for the crisis squarely on those parties involved in perpetuating the conflict.

"This cholera scandal is entirely man-made by the conflicting parties and those beyond Yemen's borders who are leading, supplying, fighting and perpetuating the fear and the fighting," U.N. aid chief Stephen O'Brien told the U.N. Security Council Wednesday.

He called for greater international pressure to end the conflict.

"Yemen is facing critical stoppages of hospitals and a lack of doctors and nurses. The health system has essentially collapsed, with an estimated 55 percent of facilities closed due to damage, destruction or lack of funds. Some 30,000 health care workers have not been paid in nearly a year and no funding has been provided to keep basic infrastructure such as hospitals, water pumping and sanitation stations operating," O'Brien continued.

A Saudi Arabia-led coalition began a bombing and blockading campaign against Yemen in 2015 in an effort to back the government ousted by Houthi rebels. In addition to targeting civilian buildings, such as hospitals, the Saudi coalition has also nearly entirely closed off Yemen's air and seaports.

The Saudi-led coalition is heavily backed by material and financial support from the United States and the United Kingdom.

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