

MONTHLY BRIEFING

FOREIGN STUDIES UNIT

September / 2026

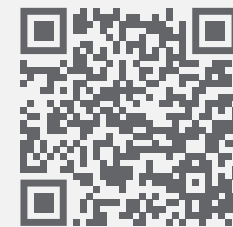
ISSUE: 61



Monthly Briefing

The Monthly Briefing is a bulletin that monitors and documents the most prominent current events in Yemen, on the political, military, economic, security and humanitarian levels. It is published monthly and translated into several languages

THE PREVIOUS
ISSUE





Overview

During September, Yemen saw a serious shift on the ground as Houthi forces advanced along the western coast and seized Mokha, Perim Island and Bab al-Mandab. Fighting also spread to the western and southwestern highlands of Taiz and to Lahj. These developments coincided with missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia and a wave of international diplomacy, while displacement grew and essential services were disrupted. The two sides' accounts of territorial control and casualties continued to diverge.



✓ Political Scene

During September, security at Bab al-Mandab became increasingly internationalized as Houthi attacks reached Saudi territory and energy corridors. The UN Security Council held two emergency sessions and issued a press statement endorsed unanimously by its members. The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt and Pakistan, together with the G7, called for an end to the escalation, and the four-country statement affirmed Saudi Arabia's right to defend itself. Washington, for its part, kept a channel open to the Houthis through Muscat and called off airstrikes it had prepared. The Yemeni government's request for U.S. military support did not produce a public commitment, while the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) called for general mobilization.

U.S. officials met Houthi representatives at the U.S. Embassy in Muscat under Omani mediation. The Houthi delegation included spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam, who is under U.S. sanctions. The meeting took place days after the group seized Mokha and the western coast. The Houthis pledged not to target U.S. vessels, to uphold the 2025 ceasefire understanding with Washington, and not to target Israeli vessels or commercial vessels other than Saudi ones.

13 September

Speaking after talks in Cairo, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman stressed the importance of securing navigation in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. El-Sisi declared Egypt's full support for the measures Saudi Arabia is taking to protect its national security and sovereignty, and for efforts toward a comprehensive and sustainable political settlement in Yemen.

15 September



The UN Security Council held an emergency session on Yemen at the request of the United Kingdom, the Council's penholder on Yemen, and Bahrain, after Houthi missile and drone attacks on southern Saudi Arabia on 8 September injured 73 people. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg briefed the Council, warning that the war was entering a new and more dangerous phase, in the country's broadest escalation since the 2022 UN-brokered truce.

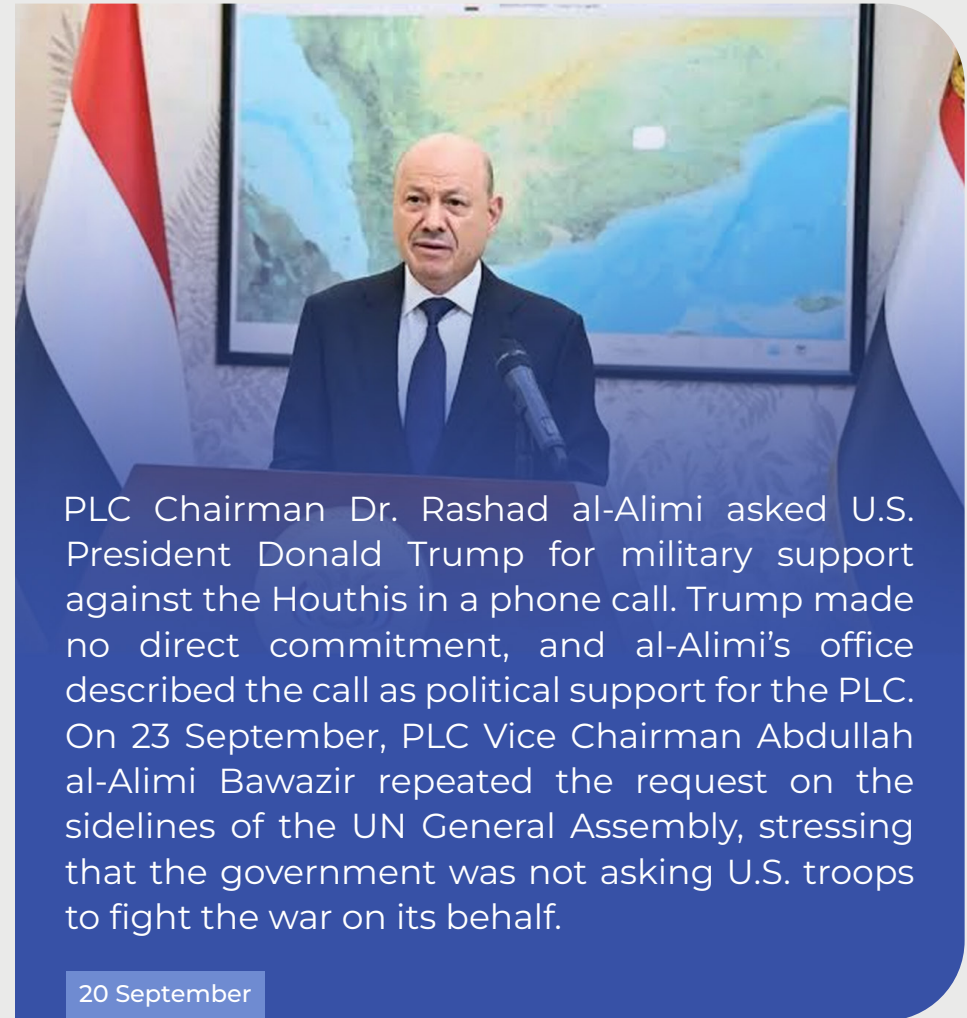
10 September

According to U.S. sources, President Trump called off planned airstrikes on the Houthis at the last moment, after directing the Department of Defense to prepare them following a Saudi request. Target lists had been approved and aircraft were being readied for takeoff when the cancellation order came. Houthi Political Bureau member Mohammed al-Bukhaiti said the group was not targeting any vessels in the strait other than Saudi ships.

20 September

G7 foreign ministers and the EU High Representative called on the Houthis to halt their attacks in Yemen and on Saudi Arabia and to return to the political process in good faith. They backed the UN Special Envoy's mediation and called on Iran to stop arming and supporting the group, in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2140 ,1747 and 2216. In a separate statement issued in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the foreign ministers of Türkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan affirmed Saudi Arabia's inherent right to self-defense under international law and the UN Charter.

22 September



PLC Chairman Dr. Rashad al-Alimi asked U.S. President Donald Trump for military support against the Houthis in a phone call. Trump made no direct commitment, and al-Alimi's office described the call as political support for the PLC. On 23 September, PLC Vice Chairman Abdullah al-Alimi Bawazir repeated the request on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, stressing that the government was not asking U.S. troops to fight the war on its behalf.

20 September

The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye (Faisal bin Farhan, Ishaq Dar and Hakan Fidan) held talks in New York on arrangements for an urgent meeting of the three countries' chiefs of staff in Riyadh under the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement signed on 7 August 2026, which treats an attack on any signatory as an attack on all. Turkish Chief of General Staff General Selçuk Bayraktaroğlu confirmed that he would attend the Riyadh meeting.

24 September

In a press statement issued by all 15 of its members, the UN Security Council condemned the Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia in the strongest terms, demanded an immediate end to the group's military escalation, and urged full implementation of Resolution 2216, including measures to prevent weapons from reaching the Houthis. The Council also expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia, which welcomed the statement the following day.

25 September



At a Cabinet meeting, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz called the targeting of Mecca a "heinous crime" and described the Houthis as a "terrorist militia," a notable direct statement from the King since the escalation began. It followed the coalition's announcement on 16 September that it had intercepted a drone near Mecca.

22 September

In an address on the eve of the 64th anniversary of the 26 September Revolution, PLC Chairman Rashad al-Alimi called on Yemenis to join a general mobilization and rally behind the armed forces and security services, with the aim of restoring state authority across the country, including Sana'a. He urged those wishing to join to use official channels. He also announced a "safe return" for those who leave Houthi ranks or end their fighting or cooperation with the group, effective from the eve of 26 September, and said military and security personnel would retain their legally acquired employment rights.

25 September



Residents of many Houthi-controlled areas of Ibb Governorate marked the anniversary of the 26 September Revolution by lighting torches and setting off fireworks in the highlands, despite tightened security and campaigns of raids and abductions, according to Asharq Al-Awsat. That the anniversary was marked despite these restrictions suggests that republican symbolism remains present in public life, reflecting a political divide over the identity of the state.

25 September

✓ **Military Scene**

The military escalation in September centered on the rapid advance of Houthi forces from the western coast toward positions overlooking Bab al-Mandab. A ground offensive launched in early September led to the capture of Mokha, Dhubab, Mayyun Island and the Hanish archipelago, followed by pressure toward the Kahbub highlands, Al-Wazi'iyah and the supply lines linking Taiz, Lahj and Aden. Government forces responded with counterattacks and airstrikes.

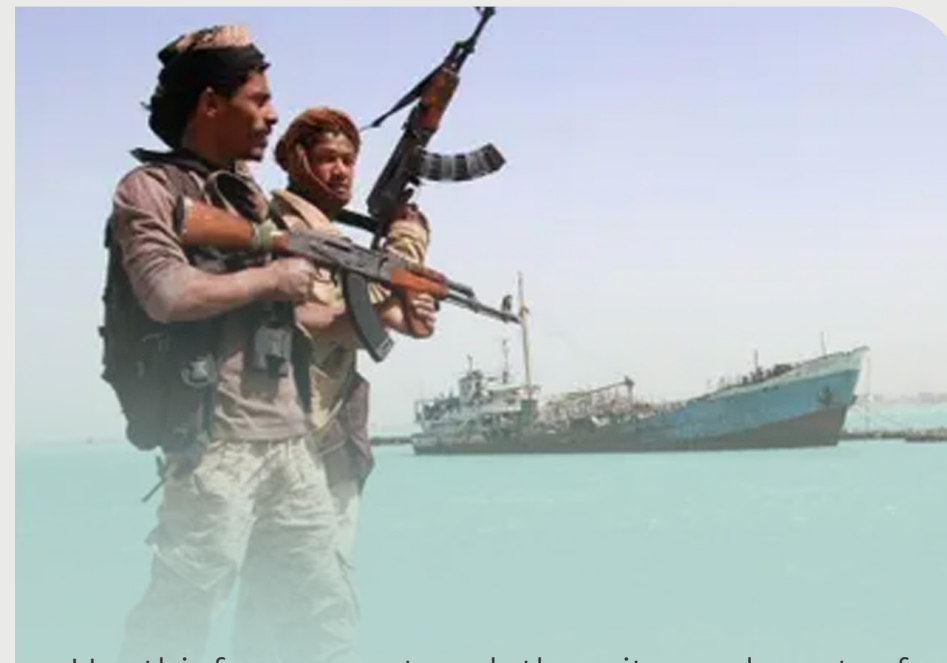


Houthi forces launched a ground offensive against government positions on the western coast, after nearly a month of intermittent attacks on Mokha and its port that began in early August. Fighting spread along the coastal districts as far as Hays in southern Hodeidah, which government forces announced they had recaptured on 6 September. On 7 September, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg described the offensive as deeply concerning.

3 September

Houthi forces continued their advance toward the Bab al-Mandab Strait, taking Dhubab district and reaching Perim Island at the strait's entrance after government forces withdrew. By 13 September, Houthi forces had deployed on Greater and Lesser Hanish after pro-government forces pulled out.

11 September



Houthi forces captured the city and port of Mokha on the Red Sea, after advancing about 115 kilometers in two days through the Hays and Al-Khawkhah districts. PLC Vice Chairman Tareq Saleh described the withdrawal of government forces as “tactical.”

10 September

Government forces repelled a Houthi infiltration attempt in Wadi Al-Maqatirah in Hayfan district, south of Taiz, near the Hayjat Al-Abd road, a route linking Taiz with Lahj and Aden, according to an announcement the following day. The government said army units, the Giants Brigades and Popular Resistance forces took part, inflicting heavy losses on the attackers, and that the Houthis had shifted to infiltration operations.

23 September

The Yemeni military said its aircraft struck Houthi positions and reinforcements on the Taiz fronts, including the Mawiyah and Al-Dhikrah junctions east of the city, a reinforcement convoy on 60th Street to the north, and the Al-Suwayda area in Hayfan district to the south. It said the strikes killed and wounded Houthi fighters, including field commanders, but gave no figures.

11 September

The Yemeni government accused Iran of having advisers from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Lebanese Hezbollah on the ground, helping to direct the Houthi offensive at various levels, including tactical planning, frontline coordination, and communications and satellite-intelligence support. Iranian sources had reported on 10 September that IRGC commanders had been sent to Yemen.

23 September

Yemeni, Iranian and regional sources told Reuters that IRGC commanders had directed the Houthi campaign on the western coast. Colonel Majed al-Nuzaili, spokesperson for the armed forces, announced that four Iranian experts specializing in drone and missile operations had been killed in Taiz, which he described as confirmation of Iranian support.

11 September

✓ Security Scene

Security risks widened to include cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities and facilities, civilian casualties from interception debris, and attacks on displacement sites inside Yemen. Repeated Saudi alerts pointed to attacks reaching deeper into the Kingdom and toward areas of religious and economic importance, including Riyadh, Mecca and the energy facilities at Yanbu.



Saudi-led coalition spokesperson Major General Turki al-Maliki said 73 civilians were injured in missile and drone attacks attributed to the Houthis on Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran. Saudi authorities also reported fires at energy facilities and the suspension of some operations. It was the broadest wave of attacks since the Houthis resumed attacks on Saudi Arabia in July.

8 September

The Saudi-led coalition intercepted and destroyed a drone south of Mecca before it entered restricted airspace; the interception was announced the following day. Coalition spokesperson Turki al-Maliki said the security of the Two Holy Mosques and their visitors was a “red line.” Alerts were issued to residents of Mecca, Taif and Jeddah.

15 September

Saudi Civil Defense said debris from an intercepted drone fell in Taif Governorate, killing a Yemeni resident and injuring a Saudi woman and a Pakistani resident, the latter seriously. Buildings and vehicles were also damaged. It was the first reported death inside the Kingdom since Houthi attacks resumed in July, amid a wave of attacks on cities in southern and western Saudi Arabia.

17 September



Security risks widened to include cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities and facilities, civilian casualties from interception debris, and attacks on displacement sites inside Yemen. Repeated Saudi alerts pointed to attacks reaching deeper into the Kingdom and toward areas of religious and economic importance, including Riyadh, Mecca and the energy facilities at Yanbu.

7 September

The Saudi-led coalition announced that it had intercepted a ballistic missile launched toward Riyadh at dawn and foiled other attacks targeting Bisha, Taif, the Farasan Islands and Yanbu. It was the first alert in the Saudi capital since the escalation began in July. Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said the group had targeted sensitive sites in Riyadh and Aramco facilities in Yanbu.

19 September

The Saudi-led coalition announced the interception of six ballistic missiles that it said were launched toward Taif and Yanbu. A Greek air-defense unit shot down a missile and a drone near Yanbu, and Saudi Civil Defense issued alerts in Mecca, Tabuk, Jeddah and Yanbu. The Houthis said they had targeted a sensitive site in Riyadh and Aramco facilities in Yanbu. No casualties were reported. Yanbu is the main Red Sea export terminal for the East–West Pipeline.

24 September

Coalition spokesperson Turki al-Maliki announced the interception of two ballistic missiles launched toward Khamis Mushait and two drones launched toward Riyadh. Overnight alerts were issued to civilians in Khamis Mushait and Abha, and no casualties or damage were reported. The attack was part of the continuing Houthi escalation against southern Saudi cities and Riyadh since early September, and came two days after a similar attack on Taif and Yanbu

26 September

✓ **Economic Scene**

The economic picture shifted from the local impact of the escalation on ports and roads to pressure on Saudi energy routes, shipping costs and insurance. There is no evidence that navigation through Bab al-Mandab has stopped: vessel-tracking data showed a sharp drop in transits on the day Mokha fell, followed by continued traffic at below-normal levels. Risks rose further after the Saudi East–West Pipeline was disrupted by an attack launched from Iraq and export facilities came under attack. Saudi Arabia also provided new support to the Central Bank of Yemen in Aden, while exchange rates stayed relatively stable in Aden and Sana’a despite the continuing monetary divide.

Saudi Arabia suspended oil pumping through the East-West Pipeline as a precaution after drones struck pumping stations on the line in the Riyadh and Medina regions on the night of 10 September. The Iraqi government said the drones were launched from Iraq's Maysan Governorate. No group claimed responsibility. The pipeline is the main route for Saudi oil exports through Yanbu on the Red Sea. Brent crude rose above \$100 per barrel on 10 September for the first time since July.

11 September

Kpler vessel-tracking data showed that shipping through Bab al-Mandab continued, with 51 vessels transiting the strait over the weekend of 20-19 September, compared with 57 the previous weekend, after a sharp decline on 10 September, the day Mokha fell. The figures do not indicate a closure of the strait but reflect the effect of heightened war risk and rising insurance costs on shipping.

21 September



The Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen announced new support for the Central Bank of Yemen in Aden to strengthen economic, financial and monetary stability, without disclosing the amount. Reports put the first tranche at around \$250 million. The support follows two earlier Saudi disbursements this year: SAR 1.3 billion in February and a second tranche in June.

3 September

War-risk insurance premiums for Saudi-linked tankers bound for Yanbu rose to around 3 percent of vessel value, from less than 1 percent in July, and to as much as 7 percent for voyages to Jazan and southern ports. Premiums for non-Saudi-linked voyages in the Red Sea stayed between 0.2 and 0.3 percent, according to insurance market data. The increase came a day after Brent crude rose above \$108 per barrel in trading, following a Houthi announcement that it had targeted Aramco facilities in Yanbu.

25 September

ACAPS recorded the U.S. dollar trading at around YER 1,575 in Aden and YER 533 in Sana'a, based on rates for newer banknotes in Aden and older banknotes in Sana'a. Rates remained relatively stable in both markets throughout September despite the military escalation. The gap reflects the continuing monetary divide and differences in liquidity between the two markets; it is not a single exchange rate that can be compared directly.

26 September

✓ Violations

Human rights concerns grew as fighting spread into populated areas and displacement sites and civilian casualties rose, while field restrictions and political divisions made some incidents harder to verify. Data from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) offer only a limited UN framework, not a comprehensive casualty count. The arbitrary detention of UN staff and human rights defenders by Houthi authorities continued to show how restrictions hamper civil and humanitarian work, while documentation, evidence preservation and access to victims remain limited in conflict areas.



UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Shabia Mantoo reiterated that the detention of 73 UN staff by Houthi authorities was arbitrary, noting that some had been held since 2021. She said five former UN employees and dozens of staff from NGOs, civil society organizations and diplomatic missions also remained in detention. The UN linked the raids on its premises and the seizure of its assets to its inability to deliver assistance in Houthi-controlled areas.

18 September

OHCHR documented at least 32 civilian deaths, including 15 children and three women, among 125 civilian casualties (killed or injured) since the start of August, and said the actual toll was likely higher. It recorded three Houthi attacks on displacement sites in Marib Governorate, on 7 August and on 7 and 9 September. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called for the release of UN staff detained by the Houthis.

24 September

Amnesty International called on the Houthi authorities to release lawyer and human rights defender Abdulmajid Sabra on the first anniversary of his arrest at his office in Sana'a on 25 September 2025. The organization said he was being held without formal charge at an intelligence and security facility in the Shamlan area, and linked his detention and interrogation to his posts about commemorating the 26 September Revolution and to his human rights work.

25 September

✓ Humanitarian Scene

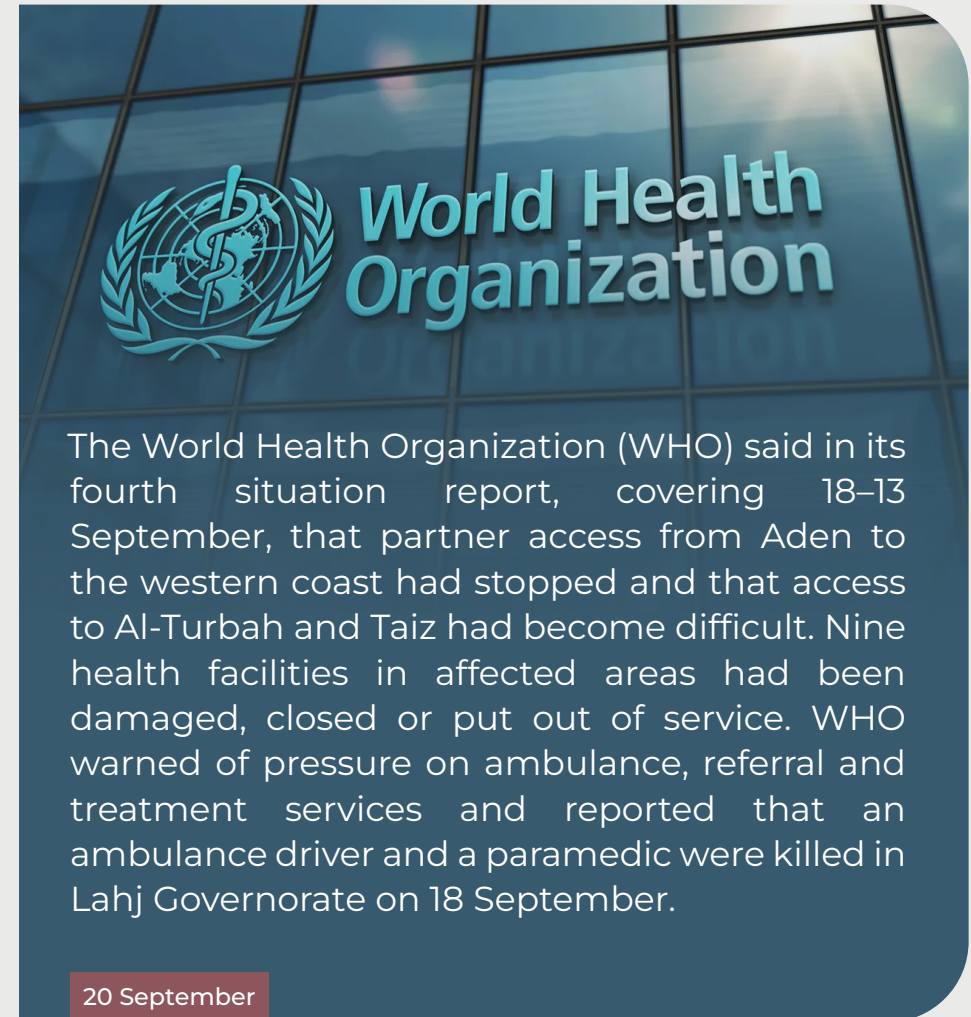
The fighting caused rapid displacement inside Yemen and across the sea to Djibouti, putting further pressure on host governorates, shelter systems and health services. Figures vary by reporting period and methodology: cumulative displacement, daily flows and projections are not directly comparable or additive. Humanitarian organizations also warned of disruption to medical referrals, education and nutrition services amid funding shortages and access constraints, particularly in Houthi-controlled areas, where UN agencies have been unable to operate.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said fighting had displaced more than 112,000 people inside Yemen since the escalation began on 10 August, most of them in the previous two weeks, with Taiz and Lahj the worst-affected governorates. At a UN briefing in Geneva, IOM Yemen Chief of Mission Abdusattor Esoev said the organization's stocks were close to running out. IOM Djibouti Chief of Mission Alexandre Cuasac said around 3,000 people had arrived in Djibouti by sea in less than a week, most of them in Obock.

18 September

The World Food Programme (WFP) announced an expansion of its response in Yemen after providing hot meals and food assistance to around 60,000 people. Acting Executive Director Carl Skau said WFP was increasing supplies to reach hundreds of thousands of people but could not operate in Houthi-controlled areas because its offices had been occupied and UN assets seized. On 17 September, WFP said it needed \$274 million through 2027 and that fighting in Mokha had cut access to 49 distribution points and damaged its facilities.

21 September



The World Health Organization (WHO) said in its fourth situation report, covering 18–13 September, that partner access from Aden to the western coast had stopped and that access to Al-Turbah and Taiz had become difficult. Nine health facilities in affected areas had been damaged, closed or put out of service. WHO warned of pressure on ambulance, referral and treatment services and reported that an ambulance driver and a paramedic were killed in Lahj Governorate on 18 September.

20 September

UNICEF warned that nearly one in four of around 2,900 children screened by mobile nutrition teams was suffering from acute malnutrition, including more than 200 severe cases. UNICEF Representative in Yemen Akhil Iyer said around 71,000 children had been displaced within three weeks, and that the closure or suspension of classes in 243 schools had disrupted education for more than 137,000 students. He added that at least 15 children had been killed and 14 injured since 3 September.

22 September

The Yemeni government's Executive Unit for IDP Camp Management recorded more than 158,000 displaced people, or around 23,550 families, across eight governorates since the latest escalation began. This is higher than UN agency estimates, which use different monitoring methodologies and reporting periods.

22 September

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) warned that fighting had displaced more than 130,000 people since the start of September, over 60 percent of them in Taiz Governorate, and that humanitarian planning projected up to 100,000 more could be displaced over the next three months. Spokesperson Babar Baloch said more than 3,000 people had crossed the sea to Djibouti and hundreds to Somaliland and Puntland, with around 10,000 arrivals expected by mid-October. UNHCR's Yemen response plan was less than 20 percent funded, with \$34 million received out of \$194 million required.

25 September



✓ Statistics

The military escalation unfolded against continued economic and institutional fragility. At the same time, the month saw efforts to reorganize the financial sector, modernize payment systems, and tighten oversight of exchange companies. Damage to Mokha Port and the continued shutdown of Aden Refinery, however, underscored the lasting impact of war and resource shortages on critical economic assets.

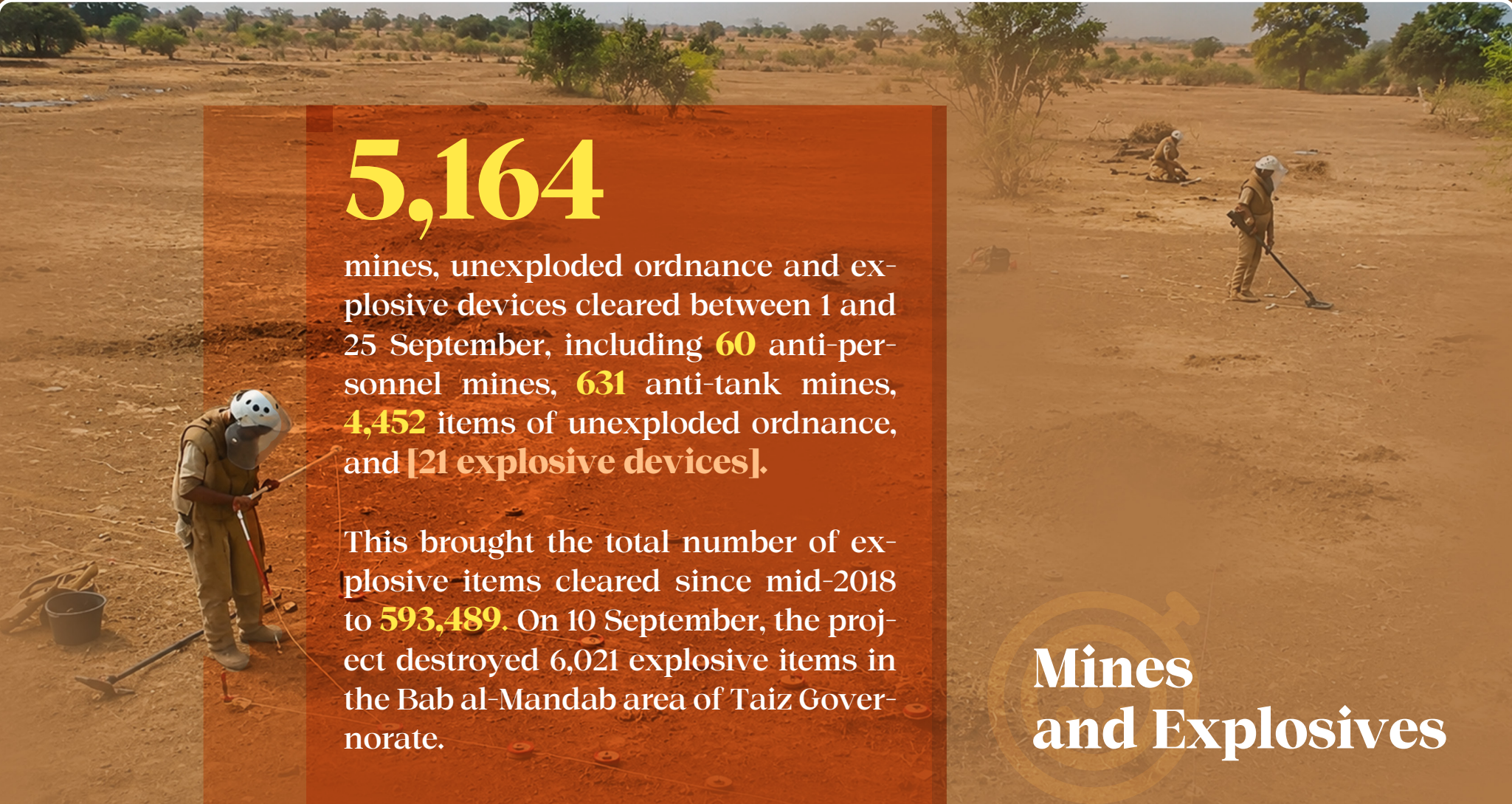
134,550
displaced people

Recorded between June and 22 September following the escalation along Yemen's western coast.

Governorates Receiving the Largest Numbers of Displaced People

Taiz	Lahj	Aden
75,180	34,446	10,920

Source: IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix



5,164

mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive devices cleared between 1 and 25 September, including **60** anti-personnel mines, **631** anti-tank mines, **4,452** items of unexploded ordnance, and **[21 explosive devices]**.

This brought the total number of explosive items cleared since mid-2018 to **593,489**. On 10 September, the project destroyed 6,021 explosive items in the Bab al-Mandab area of Taiz Governorate.

Mines and Explosives

2 Million

children under the age of five
projected to suffer from acute
malnutrition in 2026

18 Million

people in Yemen
projected to face acute
food insecurity

Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



3,672

Deaths and Injuries

between 6 August and 18 September

674
deaths

2,998
injuries

WHO's fourth situation report recorded 680 new casualties between 13 and 18 September.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

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