

Red Cross staffers evacuated from Yemen due to insecurity



Geneva, June 8 (RHC)-- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has evacuated some 71 members of its team in Yemen amid rising insecurity in the war-torn country. The ICRC said Thursday that the staffers had been moved out of Yemen to Djibouti because of security incidents and threats.

ICRC spokeswoman Marie-Claire Feghali said some 450 employees, including dozens of expatriate staff, remained in Yemen. Feghali said the partial evacuations had affected many of ICRC's aid programs, including surgical, water and food assistance missions. She called on all warring sides in Yemen's conflict to provide security guarantees so the agency can keep running its aid delivery and other programs.

"Our current activities have been blocked, threatened and directly targeted in recent weeks, and we see a vigorous attempt to instrumentalize our organization as a pawn in the conflict," the ICRC said in a statement.

The evacuation comes after unknown gunmen shot dead an ICRC employee on April 21. The employee, a Lebanese national, was killed while traveling in his car to visit a prison in the southwestern Yemeni city of Ta'izz.

The ICRC statement said rising security threats to its personnel had made it effectively impossible to

continue some missions. “While the Yemen delegation has received numerous threats in the past, we cannot now accept additional risk less than two months after a gunman killed a staff member,” said the statement, adding, “The security of our staff, who are being intimidated by parties to the conflict, is a non-negotiable prerequisite for our presence and work in Yemen and an absolute priority.”

According to figures released by the Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights, more than 600,000 people have been killed or injured since 2015 in the Saudi war on Yemen, an already impoverished nation which now faces a dire humanitarian situation.

Saudi attacks have also targeted humanitarian staffers from the United Nations and other organizations, prompting those agencies to reconsider their presence in Yemen. Authorities at the Red Sea port of Hudaydah said over the weekend that a UN aid vessel had been targeted just as it delivered a cargo and was preparing to discharge. The port, which is under a heavy Saudi blockade, is Yemen’s sole access point to food and aid.

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