

# *Nearly 26,000 Yemenis flee, UN pleads for safe aid passage*

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Sanaa, June 20 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee Yemen amid fierce fighting along the country's western coast, a United Nations official said Monday. Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for the UN secretary-general, said about 5,200 families or about 26,000 people have left the region to seek safety adding that "the number is expected to increase as hostilities continue."

The continuous fighting in Hodeida has also disrupted humanitarian efforts, as the regional port is the country's main point-of-entry for aid. The action has prompted the UN Security Council to plead for the rebel-held ports of Hodeida and Salif to be kept open and operating safely.

About 70 percent of Yemen's food and most of the humanitarian aid and fuel supplies enter through the port. Around two-thirds of the country's population of 27 million relies on aid. "The situation is very disturbing," Russia's deputy UN ambassador, Dmitry Polyansky, said. "We all hope that nothing terrible will happen further in Hodeida. That is our shared analysis of the situation."

"The political moves that are being proposed are being supported by us ... but the situation is now very volatile," the Russian envoy said. "We hope that he will succeed. ... but let's wait some time and see what will come of it."

Some 10,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict. The United Nations has said at

least 8.4 million are currently facing the danger of starvation.

The United Arab Emirates will reportedly make available eight ships, seven aircraft and another 100 local Yemeni trucks, according to the Straits Times, to issue 380,000 baskets of food comprising wheat, rice and flour.

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