

Yemeni Women's Human Security amid Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb:

Humanitarian, Social, Economic and Security Implications

Prepared by: **Ahlam Al Moflhi** - Director of Women, Peace and Security Studies Programme

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Analytical Study

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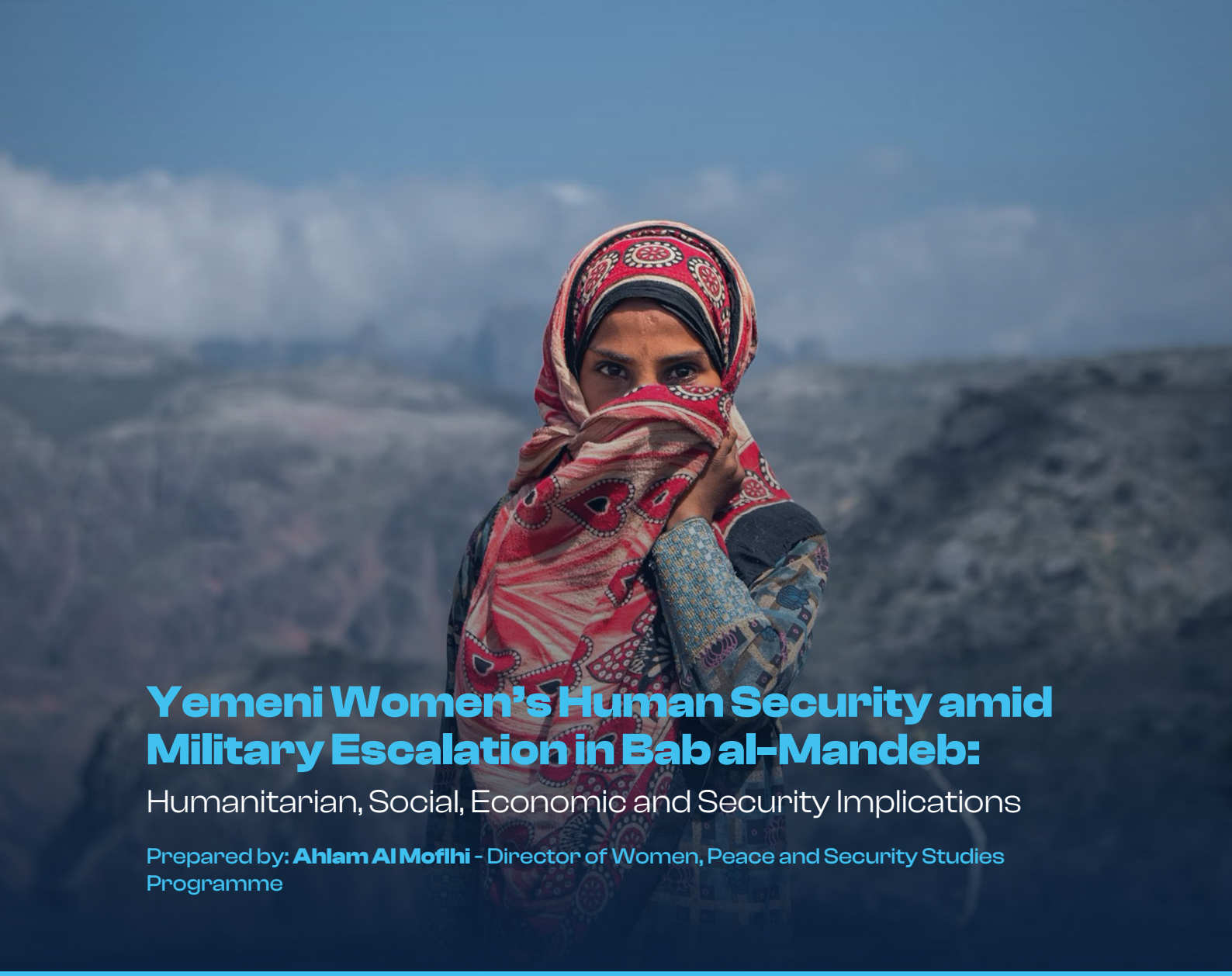
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Theoretical and Methodological Framework	5
First: Maritime Security as a Means of Strengthening Human Security	9
Second: The Interrelationship between Navigation Security and Yemeni Women's Human Security	15
Third: Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb and Its Humanitarian Implications	16
Fourth: Yemeni Women and the Implications of Military Escalation for the Pillars of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda	19
Fifth: Humanitarian, Social, Economic and Security Implications of Military Escalation for Yemeni Women	21
Sixth: Findings and Recommendations	25
Conclusion	29



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Executive Summary

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait is one of the world's most strategically important maritime passages. It connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean and plays a vital role in trade and humanitarian supply delivery. On 10 September 2026, military escalation saw the Houthis take control of Mokha and Mayyun (Perim) Island, followed by the strait itself, raising concerns over the safety of navigation and the stability of trade and supply flows. By 22 September 2026, the escalation had displaced approximately 130,000 people, left 3,672 dead or injured and damaged seven health and service facilities.

This study moves beyond the traditional maritime security focus on protecting navigation and trade to examine its implications for Yemeni women's human security. It explores the economic, food, health, and personal security dimensions, linking them to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The findings show that military escalation has caused a deterioration in women's circumstances across several interrelated dimensions. Disruptions to markets and supply chains have raised prices, reduced employment opportunities, and deepened food insecurity. Damage to health facilities and service interruptions have increased health risks, particularly for pregnant and

breastfeeding women. Displacement and expanding military operations have also heightened protection needs and risks of gender-based violence, while reducing the capacity of women and women's organisations to participate in response efforts and peacebuilding.

The study concludes that stability in Bab al-Mandeb is directly linked to women's human security, as disruptions to navigation and port operations affect access to food, medicine, fuel and aid. It recommends strengthening gender-responsive humanitarian action, supporting displaced women and women who provide for their households, and expanding protection services, reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support. It also calls for ensuring women's participation in crisis management and peacebuilding and integrating a gender perspective into maritime security policies and the management of ports and maritime corridors.

Keywords: Yemeni women, human security, Bab al-Mandeb, displacement, Women, Peace and Security, gender, armed conflict, Yemen.

Introduction

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait is one of the world's most strategically important maritime passages, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean and serving as a vital artery for international trade. On 10 September 2026, the seizure of the strategic city of Mokha and nearby Mayyun (Perim) Island marked a significant military development, raising regional and international concerns over the security of international navigation and the conflict's implications for regional stability⁽¹⁾.

While political and security debates often focus on the military and strategic di-

mensions of these developments, the humanitarian dimension is equally important, particularly for women, who bear compounded burdens during conflict, displacement and the collapse of public services. The literature on armed conflict indicates that women are disproportionately affected because of their social roles and limited access to economic and institutional protection.⁽²⁾

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The study addresses a central research question: how does military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb affect Yemeni women's human security across its economic, food, health, personal, community and political dimensions? It hypothesises that military escalation reduces women's human security more severely than that of other population groups, as the effects of conflict interact with existing gender-related vulnerabilities.

The study's significance lies in examining recent military developments in an area of international strategic importance from a women-centred perspective. Women are among those most affected by armed conflict and its humanitarian, social, economic and security consequences. By analysing the implications of military escalation for Yemeni women's human security, the study also seeks to enrich debates on the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Yemen.

Although international scholarship has long examined the relationship between women and maritime security, it remains relatively nascent compared with research on traditional security and land-based conflicts. Studies examining the effects of piracy, coastal conflicts and maritime migration on women in regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Medi-

terranean show that maritime insecurity often affects women disproportionately. These effects include declining livelihoods, worsening food insecurity and heavier social and family burdens in communities affected by conflict and maritime crime. Despite some advances in this field, research on the direct relationship between military developments in strategic maritime corridors and women's human security remains limited, particularly in the Yemeni context⁽³⁾.

The study therefore seeks to help address this research gap by examining how military developments in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait affect Yemeni women's humanitarian, economic, social and security conditions. It explores the links between maritime security, trade and humanitarian aid flows, and women's economic, health and social security. It also contributes to maritime security scholarship by shifting the level of analysis from the state and the security of international navigation to individual human security, particularly that of women in conflict settings. In doing so, it offers an analytical framework linking maritime security, human security and the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Yemeni context.

Existing research on Yemen has not directly and comprehensively examined how military and security developments in Bab al-Mandeb, and armed actors' control of ports and maritime corridors, affect Yemeni women's human security. Most available studies focus either on maritime security in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb or on women's circumstances within the broader Yemeni conflict, while connections between these two fields remain underexplored. This reveals a research gap: few studies examine how interactions between maritime security and military developments affect Yemeni women's human security. This study seeks to help address that gap.

Some recent studies have begun to highlight the importance of integrating a gender perspective into maritime security, recognising that stable maritime corridors do more than protect international trade: they also strengthen the human security of coastal communities and civilian populations⁽⁴⁾. These studies emphasise that maritime challenges affect women differently, including through disruptions to coastal livelihoods, declining economic opportunities and the effects of maritime migration and insecurity on local communities. This literature argues that navigation, ports and maritime trade are not gender-neutral issues, but directly affect women's economic, social and food security, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected communities⁽⁵⁾.

International scholarship has also examined the gender dimensions of maritime security, including the effects of maritime threats on coastal communities and women's role in strengthening local stability. These studies indicate that the effects of maritime threats extend beyond navigation and international trade to the economic, food and social security of coastal communities. Women are disproportionately affected by disruptions to livelihoods linked to fishing, trade and maritime services. As economic and security conditions deteriorate, they also face greater burdens in meeting daily needs and fulfilling family responsibilities.

Research on maritime migration and forced displacement has also shown that women and girls face particular challenges when travelling through maritime corridors, including limited protection, heightened risks of exploitation and violence, and difficulties accessing basic services. These challenges reflect the close interconnection between maritime security and human security. Yet research directly examining how military developments in strategic maritime corridors affect

women's human security remains limited, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, underscoring the need for further research in this field.

Charting a New Course: Women, Peace and Security, and the Maritime Domain is among the leading studies linking the Women, Peace and Security agenda with maritime security. It emphasises that maritime issues are not gender-neutral and that the stability of maritime corridors is directly linked to protecting the human security of coastal communities. *Maritime Security Strategies from a Gender Perspective* also shows that maritime security policies can affect women's opportunities for economic empowerment and community participation, and that integrating a gender perspective helps advance equality and sustainability in the sector.

Despite these advances, studies directly examining the relationship between military developments in strategic maritime corridors and women's human security remain limited, particularly in the Yemeni context. Most research has focused either on maritime security in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb or on women's circumstances within the broader Yemeni conflict, with limited attention to the links between the two fields.

This study seeks to fill that gap by analysing how military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb affects the economic, food, health, community and political dimensions of Yemeni women's human security, and by highlighting the relationship between maritime security and the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the context of the Yemeni conflict. It also contributes to maritime security scholarship by shifting the analysis from the state and international navigation to individual human security, specifically that of women in conflict settings.

The study adopts human security as its principal explanatory framework for understanding the implications of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb for Yemeni women's circumstances. The concept gained prominence with the publication of the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report, which shifted the focus of security from protecting states and borders to safeguarding individuals and their fundamental rights. From this perspective, security extends beyond the absence of military threats to encompass economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

This framework suits analysing the consequences of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb because it explains the conflict's indirect effects on civilian life, particularly for women facing growing barriers to basic services, employment opportunities, and social protection⁽⁶⁾. From this perspective, the effects of military escalation are measured not only by the scale of military gains or losses, but also by their implications for civilians' economic, food, health and personal security. Forced displacement, deteriorating basic services, rising poverty rates and increasing risks of violence are key indicators of declining human security for Yemeni women in the context of the conflict.

The study also draws on feminist theory in international relations as a complementary framework to explain how wars and armed conflicts disproportionately affect women⁽⁷⁾. This theory critiques traditional approaches to security for prioritising the state and military capabilities while overlooking the everyday experiences of the most vulnerable groups, particularly women. It argues that social and cultural structures rooted in gender inequality make women more susceptible to economic deprivation, violence and political

marginalisation during conflict, deepening their vulnerability and further limiting their capacity to cope with crises⁽⁸⁾.

In the Yemeni context, feminist theory helps explain the disproportionate effects of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb on women. These arise not only from direct exposure to violence and displacement, but also from accumulated forms of social and economic discrimination that restrict their access to resources, services and protection. This approach also helps explain the growing risks of gender-based violence and women's underrepresentation in decision-making, humanitarian response and peacebuilding⁽⁹⁾.

By combining human security with feminist theory, the study offers an analytical framework linking military developments in Bab al-Mandeb to the dimensions of Yemeni women's human security. It explains how maritime insecurity, disrupted supply

chains, displacement and deteriorating basic services deepen women's vulnerability and undermine their human security.

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical approach, reviewing academic literature on human security, feminist theory and maritime security, and analysing humanitarian reports issued by the United Nations and international organisations up to mid-September 2026. It also drew on available quantitative and qualitative data to understand the implications of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb for Yemeni women. The analysis also incorporates developments on the ground, as documented in news coverage and humanitarian reporting. However, restricted access to certain conflict-affected areas, together with the possibility of changes in displacement and casualty figures, may have affected the accuracy of some published estimates.

Figure (1)
Pathways Linking Military Escalation and Control of Bab al-Mandeb to Yemeni Women's Human Security



Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on the literature on human security and feminist theory.

I: Maritime Security as a Means of Strengthening Human Security

From a human security perspective, security extends beyond protecting borders and maritime corridors to safeguarding individuals and ensuring their access to food, healthcare, income and personal safety. Safe and stable navigation through Bab al-Mandeb is therefore one factor shaping the human security of Yemen's population, particularly women, given the country's heavy reliance on imports and humanitarian aid delivered through its seaports. Any threat to maritime security in the strait thus directly affects the population's living conditions and humanitarian circumstances.

Recent developments in Bab al-Mandeb show that maritime security and human security are not separate domains but interact directly. Stable maritime corridors are essential to the flow of food, fuel, medicines and humanitarian aid into Yemen, while deteriorating maritime security undermines the population's economic, food, health and personal security, particularly that of women. Bab al-Mandeb is therefore both a regional and international security concern and a human security issue that directly affects Yemeni women's lives and their access to the means of a dignified life, protection and safety. This raises a central question: how has control of Bab al-Mandeb affected the dimensions of women's human security?

1. Dimensions of Human Security

0.1. Economic Security

Beyond its strategic importance to international navigation, Bab al-Mandeb is a vital economic artery through which goods, fuel and humanitarian aid reach Yemen. Military escalation since 10 September 2026 has heightened concerns about maritime transport and supply chains,

affecting shipping costs and the availability of essential goods in local markets. Given Yemen's heavy reliance on imports to meet its needs for food, fuel and medicines, any disruption to port operations and maritime corridors directly affects the population's living conditions.

Women, particularly those who provide for their households, bear a disproportionate share of these economic consequences because they are directly responsible for meeting basic household needs and managing limited resources. Rising prices, dwindling income sources and expanding displacement deepen poverty and economic vulnerability among women, making access to food, basic services and healthcare more difficult. Disrupted maritime navigation and higher transport, insurance and shipping costs drive up the prices of essential goods and erode household purchasing power, further exacerbating poverty and economic vulnerability across the population.

This disproportionate burden also reflects women's responsibilities for managing household needs, providing food and caring for family members, particularly amid widening displacement, lost income and the absence of family members because of the conflict. These conditions have significantly increased the responsibilities of women who are their households' sole providers.

For women who provide for their households, securing food, shelter, healthcare and children's education presents overlapping challenges amid scarce employment opportunities and declining humanitarian aid, making them among the most vulnerable groups during military escalation. Reduced port activity and disruptions to trade, transport, and marine fishing also reduce employment and income opportunities across the coastal economy, adversely affecting women engaged

in fish marketing, seafood processing, and small-scale trade linked to ports and local markets.

United Nations reports confirm that deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions resulting from continued conflict and military escalation pose growing challenges for women and girls in Yemen, increasing the burden of meeting daily needs and constraining affected households' prospects for economic recovery⁽¹⁰⁾. Women who provide for their households face compounded challenges during the current escalation, as they must meet their families' basic needs amid rising prices, dwindling employment opportunities and reduced access to humanitarian aid. Displacement and the loss of income sources also increase households' reliance on negative coping mechanisms, deepening women's economic and social vulnerability and weakening their capacity to withstand recurrent crises.

These consequences are particularly evident in communities along Yemen's western coast, where many households rely on marine fishing, trade and port-related services as their main source of livelihood. Military escalation has disrupted these activities and reduced income sources, widening poverty and food insecurity and increasing women's vulnerability in these communities. Women also shoulder growing unpaid care burdens, including caring for children, the sick and older people, and securing water, food and other basic necessities. Particularly amid displacement and declining public services, these responsibilities limit their opportunities to participate in economic and community life and intensify the psychological and social pressures they face.

Military escalation has also disrupted fishing and port-related coastal trade, affecting women engaged in fish marketing, seafood processing and small-scale

businesses within the coastal economy. This has deprived coastal households of supplementary income that supports their economic resilience. Disrupted economic activity and reduced port traffic lead to higher prices, shortages of essential goods and fewer employment opportunities⁽¹¹⁾. The effects of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb thus extend beyond security and trade to directly affect Yemeni women's economic, social and food security, reflecting the close interconnection between maritime security and human security in contexts of conflict and persistent fragility.

Women are particularly affected by these conditions because of their low participation in the formal labour market and many Yemeni households' reliance on a limited range of economic activities. Those who provide for their households face greater difficulty meeting basic needs as living costs rise and humanitarian aid declines. United Nations reports indicate that deteriorating security and economic conditions create growing barriers to women's and girls' access to income sources and services⁽¹²⁾.

0.2. Food Security

Disruptions to maritime supply chains reduce food flows and raise prices, worsening food insecurity and malnutrition among women and children. Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb since 10 September 2026 has heightened concerns over the flow of commercial goods and humanitarian aid into Yemen, given the strait's strategic importance to regional and international trade. Any disruption to supply chains or maritime transport directly affects the prices of food, fuel and essential goods, increasing the burden of meeting daily needs for Yemeni households, particularly women responsible for managing those needs amid the continuing economic crisis. Restrictions on humanitarian access further increase the risk of food insecurity and

erode women's purchasing power in conflict-affected communities⁽¹³⁾.

Military developments have also affected local economic activities linked to ports, fishing, trade and services, sectors that provide a primary source of income for many households. Women working in small businesses, home-based activities and local markets have been directly affected, as displacement and lost income sources have increased reliance on humanitarian aid. Security restrictions and market disruptions have further reduced women's access to income and employment opportunities, deepening their economic vulnerability.

0.3. Health Security

Military escalation has made it harder for women to access basic health services, particularly reproductive healthcare and care for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Infrastructure damage and disruptions to medical supplies have compounded the health challenges facing women in conflict-affected areas. United Nations reports indicate that damage to health facilities and water networks has directly affected thousands of women and children.

Restrictions on the flow of imports and humanitarian aid also affect the availability of medicines, medical supplies and reproductive health services, threatening women's health security, particularly that of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Disruptions to port operations further impede humanitarian aid and medical supplies, reducing women's access to reproductive healthcare, care for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and essential medicines. These consequences are more acute in coastal areas and displacement sites that rely heavily on humanitarian aid and services provided by international organisations.

Military escalation has also damaged service infrastructure and obstructed access

to aid, including water and sanitation services. Women and girls bear the greatest burden of securing water for their households, particularly in displacement settings, increasing the physical and psychological pressures they face and affecting their human security and overall health.

The consequences of conflict also extend beyond material hardship to the mental health of women and girls. Repeated displacement, the loss of family members and persistent fear of violence heighten anxiety, stress and psychological trauma. Women who provide for their households face additional burdens in maintaining family cohesion and caring for children in settings that lack psychosocial support services, deepening their psychological vulnerability and impairing their capacity to cope with crises.

Beyond material hardship, conflict also takes a toll on the mental health of women and girls. Repeated displacement, the loss of family members and persistent fear of violence increase anxiety, stress and psychological trauma. Women who provide for their households face additional burdens in maintaining family cohesion and caring for children in settings that lack psychosocial support services. These burdens deepen their psychological vulnerability and impair their capacity to cope with crises.

At the social level, displacement and deteriorating economic conditions fuel early marriage, school dropout and domestic violence. UN Women reports confirm that protracted conflicts drive some households to adopt harmful coping strategies that directly affect girls and women⁽¹⁴⁾. Reports by the United Nations Population Fund also indicate heightened risks of gender-based violence among women and girls in conflict-affected and displacement setting⁽¹⁵⁾.

Repeated displacement and the fragmentation of local communities have also weakened the social support networks on

which women rely during crises, a process described as the erosion of women's social capital. These networks are foundational to community resilience in Yemen, providing households with psychological, economic, and caregiving support. As displacement has spread and families have become dispersed, these ties have eroded, deepening women's vulnerability and further limiting their capacity to withstand humanitarian and economic pressures.

0.4. Personal Security and the Militarisation of Coastal Communities: Implications for Women

Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb has intensified the militarisation of coastal communities, turning some areas into theatres of military operations and routes for displaced populations. This has restricted women's movement, reduced their access to markets and basic services, and increased the burden of family care in unstable settings. Security uncertainty has also limited their opportunities to participate in economic and community life, particularly near the front lines. Heightened risks of gender-based violence, exploitation and human trafficking have further undermined the personal security of women and girls.

Human rights research indicates that armed conflict often increases rates of gender-based violence, including harassment, exploitation and extortion. In the Yemeni context, restrictions imposed in some areas on women's movement and participation in community life create additional challenges, limiting their access to employment opportunities, aid and public services⁽¹⁶⁾.

Women's underrepresentation also means that their needs are inadequately integrated into humanitarian responses and policies for conflict management and peacebuilding. These risks intensify in ar-

reas of direct military confrontation, where declining legal oversight and weakened state institutions leave women and girls exposed to multiple threats to their personal, economic and social security⁽¹⁷⁾.

Recent humanitarian data indicate that women and children account for a high proportion of civilian casualties resulting from military escalation. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confirmed that they accounted for half of civilian deaths and more than half of civilian injuries recorded during the first half of September 2026. These figures reflect the erosion of Yemeni women's personal security in conflict areas and their growing exposure to direct and indirect threats associated with armed violence.

0.5. Community Security

Displacement caused by military escalation in coastal areas fragments social and family networks and weakens the traditional community protection mechanisms on which women rely during crises. Escalation has also affected education, with widespread displacement and school closures preventing thousands of children from continuing their studies. Recent data indicate that 243 schools have closed or suspended classes, affecting more than 137,000 pupils. Girls are among those most at risk of dropping out during conflict because of economic pressures, displacement and the increased likelihood of early marriage, jeopardising their educational futures and subsequent opportunities for economic and social empowerment⁽¹⁸⁾.

0.6. Political Security

Military escalation has diverted attention from women's participation in public affairs, as security, military and humanitarian priorities dominate policymakers' agendas. This has diminished women's opportunities to participate in local decision-making, humanitarian responses and peacebuilding initiatives, despite the growing need to involve them in crisis management and efforts to strengthen community stability.

2. Women's Digital and Information Security

Military escalation has increased reliance on digital communication to obtain humanitarian information and access basic services. Yet persistent gaps in Yemeni women's access to communication technologies and information limit their ability to benefit from aid programmes or obtain information about protection and humanitarian services during crises.

3. Security Restrictions on Women's Organisations

Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb since September 2026 has brought increasing security restrictions on the movement of humanitarian and civil society organisations, including women's organisations providing protection, psychosocial support and economic empowerment for women. These restrictions and worsening access to affected areas have reduced the capacity of local women's organisations and women-led civil society organisations to deliver protection and psychosocial sup-

port services to women and girls.

The restrictions have also hampered programmes for economic empowerment, peacebuilding and the protection of displaced women in conflict-affected communities. Insecurity, the closure of some roads, damaged infrastructure and difficulties accessing displacement sites and areas of fighting have constrained these organisations' ability to implement programmes and reach the women and girls most in need. Restrictions on movement and humanitarian access have also impeded monitoring and documentation, as well as protection and referral services for survivors of gender-based violence.

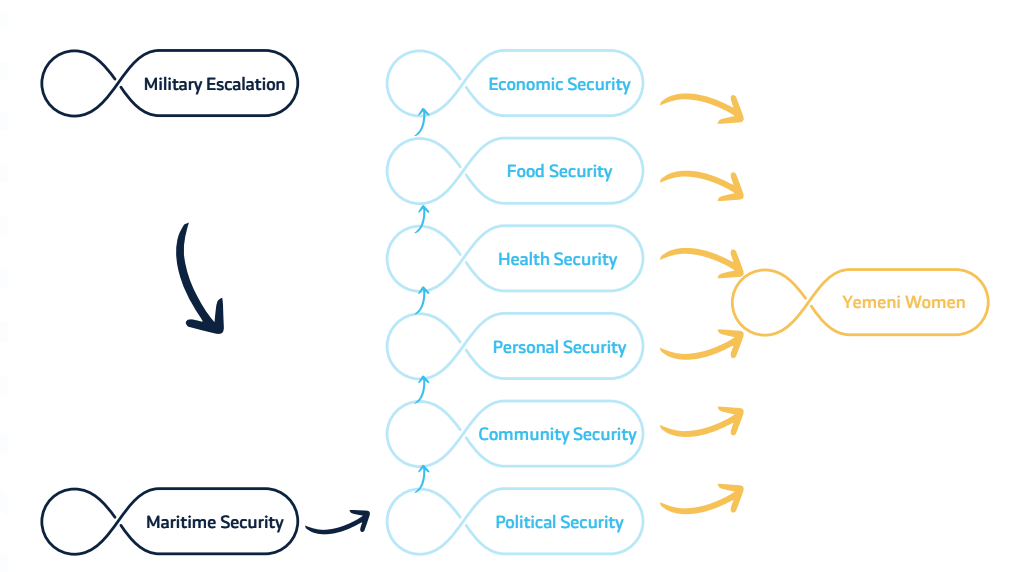
Security challenges have also disrupted a number of women-led peacebuilding and community mediation activities and reduced the availability of safe spaces for women and girls in some conflict-affected areas. As the numbers of displaced and affected people rise, women's organisations face additional pressure from growing humanitarian needs, limited resources and restricted access, reducing the effectiveness of gender-responsive humanitarian action.

These consequences directly affect women and girls by reducing their access to protection services, psychosocial support, economic empowerment programmes and information about humanitarian aid. This deepens their vulnerability and weakens women's capacity to cope with the effects of conflict and adapt to worsening crises.

Table 1. Implications of Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb for Yemeni Women's Human Security

Dimension of Human Security	Impact on Women
Economic Security	Loss of income, rising prices, fewer employment opportunities and increased burdens on women who provide for their households
Food Security	Worsening food insecurity and greater difficulty securing adequate food for households
Health Security	Disrupted health services and difficulties accessing healthcare and medicines
Personal Security	Heightened risks of gender-based violence and exploitation during displacement and crises
Community Security	Displacement, fragmented social networks and weakened community support mechanisms
Political Security	Underrepresentation and limited participation in decision-making and crisis response

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on UN Women (2025a, 2025b), UNHCR (2026), WHO (2026) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

Figure (2)
Dimensions of Human Security Affected by Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on UNDP (1994), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), UN Women (2025) and UNHCR (2026).

II: The Interrelationship between Navigation Security and Yemeni Women's Human Security

Recent developments in Bab al-Mandeb reveal a close relationship between maritime security and local populations' human security. As military tensions in the strait intensify, import costs rise, and humanitarian organisations' capacity to reach affected communities declines, directly affecting the food, health and economic security of women and children. Stability in Bab al-Mandeb is therefore both a regional and international security concern and an essential condition for strengthening human security in Yemen.

Stable maritime corridors do more than safeguard the free flow of international trade: they are essential to sustaining deliveries of food, fuel, medicines and humanitarian aid to Yemen. When military escalation disrupts that stability, its consequences extend beyond the security and military spheres into the humanitarian domain, directly affecting civilian livelihoods. Women face compounded burdens in caring for their families and securing basic necessities, particularly those already bearing additional pressures from the protracted conflict⁽¹⁹⁾.

Maritime insecurity manifests in rising living costs, reduced access to healthcare and heightened risks of displacement, poverty and food insecurity, placing Yemeni women among those most affected by security developments in Bab al-Mandeb. These developments also underscore the importance of integrating a gender perspective into approaches to maritime security. Protecting maritime corridors is more than a strategic or economic concern: it is also linked to safeguarding human security and the rights of the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls.

Recent developments along Yemen's western coast further demonstrate that disruptions to transport and supply flows directly affect households' food, health and economic security. Higher transport and shipping costs and disrupted supply chains raise the prices of essential goods and reduce access to services and humanitarian aid⁽²⁰⁾. Safeguarding maritime security in Bab al-Mandeb is therefore both a strategic and commercial concern and a fundamental requirement for strengthening Yemeni women's human security and limiting the deepening social and economic vulnerability associated with conflict. This is particularly important as displacement rises, basic services deteriorate, and humanitarian needs expand⁽²¹⁾.

Table 2. Pathways Linking Maritime Threats in Bab al-Mandeb to the Dimensions of Yemeni Women's Human Security

Maritime threat	Direct impact	Implications for Yemeni women
Control of Bab al-Mandeb and coastal areas	Disrupted navigation and transport	Higher food and fuel prices and greater burdens in meeting daily needs
Disruption to ports and logistics corridors	Reduced flows of goods and aid	Worsening food insecurity and difficulty accessing services
Expansion of coastal military operations	Mass displacement	Greater vulnerability among women and girls at displacement sites

Militarisation of coastal communities	Restricted movement and access to markets and services	Fewer employment opportunities and reduced access to healthcare
Disruption to services and infrastructure	Deteriorating health and education services	Heightened risks for pregnant women and girls
Limited humanitarian access	Limited protection and support services	Increased risks of gender-based violence
Disruption to maritime activities and the coastal economy	Loss of income sources linked to fishing and trade	Increased poverty among women and households supported by women

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on reports by UN Women, UNHCR and WHO, and the literature on maritime security and human security.

III: Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb and Its Humanitarian Implications

4. Key Indicators of Military Escalation

- Between 6 August and 18 September 2026, approximately 3,672 casualties were recorded: 674 people killed and 2,998 injured

- Between 13 and 18 September, 680 new casualties were recorded: 164 people killed and 516 injured, averaging approximately 113 casualties per day

- Deaths accounted for approximately 24% of casualties during 13–18 September, up from 17% in the preceding period. On 15 September, 35 people were killed and 43 injured.

- Lahj recorded 284 casualties between 13 and 18 September, the highest toll during this period, bringing its cumulative total to 433, nearly three times its previous toll of 149.

- Marib recorded 277 casualties over the same period and retained the highest cumulative toll, at 1,690 (46% of the total).

- The cumulative toll in Taiz and the western coast reached 1,349 casualties (37% of

the total), while Lahj recorded 433 (12%).

- Of the casualties recorded during the latest reporting period, 42% were in Lahj, 41% in Marib and 15% in Taiz.

- Since 6 August, the escalation has extended to 10 governorates, reflecting the widening geographical scope of military operations and clashes.

- During the latest reporting period, the operational centre of gravity shifted from parts of the western coast and Taiz towards Lahj, particularly Al-Mudarabah, Ras al-Arah and Kahbub, along the coastal road towards Aden.

- Al-Mudarabah and Ras al-Arah District recorded 284 casualties over six days: 226 people injured and 58 killed. On 16 September alone, it recorded 123 casualties, the highest daily toll across the governorates during the reporting period

- Military operations continued in Marib, particularly in Al-Jubah, Harib, Raghwan and Wadi Marib, alongside incidents in Al-Jawf, Shabwah and Al-Dhalea.

- In Taiz, the concentration of reported casualties shifted towards southern and central districts, including Al-Shamaya-tayn/Al-Turbah, Al-Ma'afir, Maqbanah, Sabr al-Mawadim and Al-Misrakh.

- Airstrikes continued along the western coast and in Taiz, alongside ground operations on several fronts.

- The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project recorded 53 civilian casualties in 45 incidents between 10 and 16 September: 14 people killed and 39 injured.

- Since the start of 2026, the project has documented approximately 1,256 civilian casualties.

- Incidents linked to the escalation damaged 65 homes, two bridges, two airports, one seaport, two water facilities and one school during the monitoring period.

- Ambulances were targeted on the Kahbub front on 18 September, killing two ambulance crew members.

- Nine health facilities or assets in Taiz, Lahj and Al-Hudaydah were damaged, put out of service, closed or directly targeted, demonstrating how the effects of military operations have extended to critical civilian infrastructure.

- Shelling of the Al-Hamah displacement site in Marib on 9 September killed three children and injured six people. An attack on Asdas Camp in Raghwan killed two children and injured eight children.

- Deterioration of several main roads, including the Hayjat al-Abd road between Taiz and Aden, further restricted movement and access, while the Port of Mokha sustained extensive damage and ceased operations.

- Shifting front lines and deteriorating supply routes have increased reliance on a limited number of movement corridors, heightening the risks of continued escalation and the spread of its geographical and humanitarian effects.

Source: world Health Organization (WHO), Yemen Conflict Escalation Situation Report No. 4, September 20, 2026. <https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/yemen/Yemen-Conflict-Escalation-Situation-Report-04.pdf>

stories/yemen/Yemen-Conflict-Escalation-Situation-Report-04.pdf

The capture of Mokha has brought significant changes to the military situation along Yemen's western coast, amid warnings from the United Nations and international organisations of a widening conflict and growing humanitarian risks. Armed clashes have triggered large-scale waves of displacement, forcing tens of thousands of civilians to flee within days. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than 46,000 people have been displaced by the latest military escalation⁽²²⁾.

Mass displacement typically places immense pressure on women, who shoulder responsibility for supporting their families and caring for children and older people in settings that lack basic services and economic security. Prolonged displacement also heightens their risk of exploitation, violence and deprivation of access to health-care and education⁽²³⁾.

Recent humanitarian reports indicate that military escalation has increased child casualties, a direct sign of the erosion of human security among Yemeni households, particularly women. Save the Children reported that at least 19 children had been killed and 49 injured during 40 days of escalating violence in Yemen. These losses have compounded effects on women responsible for the psychological and social care of children and other family members, while increasing psychological trauma and family instability in conflict-affected communities. These findings show that the effects of escalation extend beyond military losses to undermine the foundations of human security in Yemeni society⁽²⁴⁾.

OCHA reported that ongoing military operations have displaced at least 18,000 households, or about 125,000 people, since the beginning of September 2026. The United Nations also documented 40 civil-

ian casualties between 1 and 14 September, with women and children accounting for half of those killed and more than half of those injured. These figures reflect the conflict's disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and children.

Save the Children data also show that children accounted for more than one-fifth of civilian casualties during the latest wave of violence in Yemen. At least 19 children were killed and 49 injured between 1 August and 9 September 2026. In the week of 3–9 September alone, 43 children were killed or injured, the highest weekly child casualty toll in the preceding 12 months.

Together, these indicators reveal a rapid deterioration in civilian protection, directly affecting women, who bear primary responsibility for family care and children's psychosocial support in the Yemeni context. The consequences of children being killed or injured in conflict extend beyond the immediate human toll to increase the psychological, social and economic burdens on women, particularly mothers and those who provide for their households. These pressures further worsen Yemeni women's human security indicators.

5. Military Escalation and the Risks of Gender-Based Violence

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) indicates that 6.2 million women and girls in Yemen are at risk of gender-based violence, while more than 90% of rural areas lack prevention and response services. This leaves displaced women and households supported by women among the most vulnerable groups in the current crisis. Security restrictions accompanying military escalation have limited local women's organisations' capacity to meet the growing needs of women and girls, particularly for protection, psychosocial support and economic empowerment, just as displacement and deteriorating basic services are sharply increasing those needs.

These findings show that control of ports has implications beyond the military and economic spheres, directly affecting Yemeni women's human security through its effects on their food, health, economic and social security. Stable ports and maritime corridors are therefore essential to strengthening women's resilience amid conflict.

Table 3: Key Humanitarian Indicators Associated with Military Escalation as of 14 September 2026

Indicator	Number
Total displaced people	125,000
Displaced households	18,000
Total casualties (killed and injured)	2,883
Deaths	504
Injuries	2,379
Displaced women and girls of reproductive age	2,685
Registered pregnant women	240

Damaged health facilities	7
Damaged schools	243
Affected pupils	137,000

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on WHO, Yemen Conflict Escalation Situation Report No. 3, 13 September 2026, and data from OCHA, UNICEF and IOM as of 14 September 2026.

Table 4: Gender-Related Indicators Associated with Military Escalation as of 13 September 2026

Indicator	number
Displaced women and girls of reproductive age	2,685
Pregnant women	240
Women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen	9.6 million
Women and girls at risk of gender-based violence	6.2 million
Proportion of women and children among arrivals in Djibouti	Over 60%

Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on WHO data in Yemen Conflict Escalation Situation Report No. 3 (13 September 2026), and reports by UN Women (2025), UNFPA (2025) and UNHCR (2026).

IV. Yemeni Women and the Implications of Military Escalation for the Pillars of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Recent developments in Bab al-Mandeb underscore the importance of strengthening women's participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and humanitarian response. Despite advances under the Women, Peace and Security agenda since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, Yemeni women's participation in peace and security decision-making remains limited. This underrepresentation weakens the integration of women's needs into humanitarian responses and conflict-management and peacebuilding policies.

Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb directly affects all four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Under the

participation pillar, women's opportunities to take part in decision-making and crisis management diminish. Under protection, the risks of violence against women and girls increase. Under prevention, continued conflict undermines efforts to prevent violence and build community trust.

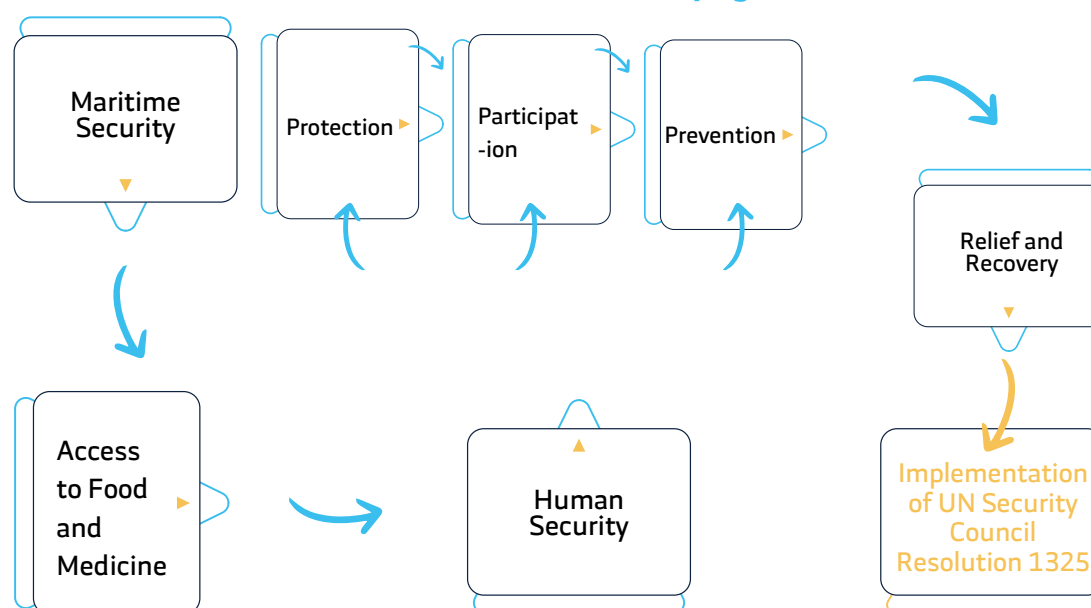
Under relief and recovery, women's growing needs for humanitarian services and economic support call for more gender-sensitive responses. Recent developments reveal that the central gap lies not only in women's deteriorating humanitarian circumstances but also in their continued underrepresentation in crisis response and decision-making mechanisms. This points to the persistence of the challenges that UN Security Council Resolution 1325 has sought to address since 2000, particularly regarding participation, protection, and relief and recovery.

Table 5: Implications of Military Escalation in Bab al-Mandeb for the Pillars of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (UN Security Council Resolution 1325)

Pillar	Scope under UN Security Council Resolution 1325	Implications of military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb
Participation	Promoting women's full and equal participation in decision-making and peace and security processes	Reduced opportunities for women to participate in crisis management and local decision-making as security and humanitarian priorities take precedence
Protection	Protecting women and girls from all forms of violence and violations during armed conflict	Heightened risks of gender-based violence and forced displacement, alongside limited access to protection and basic services
Prevention	Preventing conflict and violence and addressing the causes of insecurity and instability	Weakened peacebuilding and community cohesion efforts, alongside a decline in local conflict prevention initiatives
Relief and recovery	Integrating women's and girls' needs into relief, recovery and reconstruction programmes	Growing humanitarian, health, psychological and economic needs among women and girls, particularly in displacement settings

Source: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

Figure (3)
The Interrelationship between Maritime Security and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda



Source: Prepared by the author, drawing on the human security literature (UNDP, 1994), the Women, Peace and Security agenda (UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 2000), and the literature on maritime security from a gender perspective (Dharmapuri, Tansey and Van Buskirk, 2020; Burroughs et al., 2018).

1. Yemeni Women's Human Security amid Military Escalation

The evidence presented in this study shows that military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb has affected Yemeni women across the dimensions of human security. Economic security has deteriorated through lost income sources and rising prices, while damage to health facilities and barriers to reproductive healthcare have threatened health security. Personal security has declined as risks of gender-based violence and civilian casualties have increased. Widespread displacement has weakened community security by fragmenting family and community ties, while political security has remained limited by women's underrepresentation in decision-making on peace and security. Together, these findings indicate a comprehensive deterioration in Yemeni women's human security as a result of military escalation.

Despite the mounting humanitarian and economic challenges caused by military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb, Yemeni women have shown considerable adaptability and resilience by managing scarce resources and participating in community support networks and local initiatives, helping sustain social cohesion in affected communities. They have also played important roles in supporting displaced families, organising community crisis responses, and assisting the most vulnerable groups, underscoring the importance of strengthening their participation in recovery and peacebuilding. Even with limited resources, women have developed diverse coping strategies, including diversifying income sources, strengthening community solidarity networks and undertaking small-scale economic activities to mitigate the effects of displacement, poverty and food insecurity.

2. Legal Protection of Women During Armed Conflict

International humanitarian law affords women special protection during armed

conflict, including protection against violence and exploitation and guaranteed access to humanitarian assistance. The Geneva Conventions emphasise the need to protect civilians, prohibit attacks against them and ensure that humanitarian relief reaches those in need⁽²⁵⁾. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 also calls for stronger participation by women in peace and security processes, their protection during armed conflict and the integration of their needs into recovery and reconstruction efforts.

V. Humanitarian, Social, Economic and Security Implications of Military Escalation for Yemeni Women

Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb and along Yemen's western coast has consequences beyond immediate humanitarian harm, extending across interconnected social, economic, security and health dimensions that affect Yemeni women's human security in the short and long term. These consequences are intensified by the country's fragile humanitarian and economic conditions, protracted conflict, repeated waves of displacement and the limited capacity of institutions and basic services to respond to mounting pressures. Women experience the effects of escalation both directly and through multiple pathways: disruptions to navigation, ports and supply chains; interrupted humanitarian aid; lost income sources; displacement; and reduced access to healthcare, education and protection. These pathways leave women more exposed to accumulating humanitarian, social and economic risks.

1. Humanitarian Implications, Protection and Displacement

Displacement is one of the principal

pathways through which military escalation affects Yemeni women's human security. Expanding hostilities have forced growing numbers of families to leave their homes in search of safety, often without safe transport, adequately equipped reception sites or basic services. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the loss of income sources, reduced access to healthcare and education, and heightened risks of exploitation and gender-based violence. They also face additional burdens in managing household affairs and caring for children in settings that lack protection and basic services⁽²⁶⁾.

Humanitarian developments during September 2026 demonstrated the rapid expansion of displacement linked to the escalation. The IOM reported approximately 94,000 newly displaced people in Yemen since military operations intensified, while subsequent field estimates recorded around 77,789 displaced people, or 11,096 households, as of 11 September 2026⁽²⁷⁾. OCHA then reported that displacement since the beginning of the month had risen to at least 125,000 people, or approximately 18,000 households. Later UNHCR data put the number of newly displaced people since the September escalation at approximately 130,000⁽²⁸⁾. This rising sequence reflects the crisis's speed and widening scale and underscores the need for a humanitarian response that can expand rapidly to meet changing needs.

The consequences of displacement extend beyond the loss of shelter to the loss of income sources, social ties and regular access to education, healthcare and basic services. Women in displaced households shoulder much of the burden of care and managing limited resources, while households supported by women face additional challenges in accessing assistance, protection and livelihoods. Pregnant and breastfeeding women, children, people with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses

also require more specialised responses within displacement sites.

Displacement sites should therefore provide more than temporary accommodation for families: they should be safe and equipped with water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, shelter, healthcare and protection services. The response should also include gender-sensitive mechanisms, health and reproductive health services, psychosocial support, and safe, confidential channels for reporting violations and accessing assistance.

Meeting these needs depends on humanitarian actors' ability to reach affected populations. The United Nations has stressed that continued military operations and deteriorating security conditions can obstruct aid delivery to affected communities and limit organisations' capacity to provide basic services. This exacerbates food insecurity and deprivation of healthcare and clean water, undermining fundamental dimensions of human security on which women and children directly depend. Reduced aid access also compounds the vulnerability of households supported by women in conflict and displacement settings⁽²⁹⁾.

International reports confirm that Yemeni women and girls bear a disproportionate share of the humanitarian consequences of deteriorating security conditions and disruptions to maritime corridors and supply chains. UN Women indicates that approximately 9.6 million women and girls in Yemen need humanitarian assistance, and that attacks on critical infrastructure, ports and supply routes affect basic health and humanitarian services, increasing displacement, protection risks and gender-based violence. UNFPA also reports growing risks to women and girls from the protracted conflict and economic crisis. An estimated 6.2 million women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence, while a large pro-

portion of rural areas lack prevention and response services.

2. Economic and Social Implications and Livelihoods

Economic and social consequences constitute another principal pathway through which military and maritime escalation affects women's human security. Disruptions to navigation, port operations, and supply chains can reduce the availability of food, fuel, and medicines, and raise the prices of essential goods. They also affect coastal economic activities and income sources linked to trade, transport, fishing and services.

These pressures weigh particularly heavily on women, low-income households and households supported by women, as rising living costs and fewer employment opportunities reduce their capacity to meet basic needs. Displacement deprives many families of income sources and social support networks, while women assume additional responsibilities for providing for children and other family members and managing limited resources.

Continued escalation could also deepen the feminisation of poverty and widen gender-based economic disparities, particularly when income losses coincide with limited opportunities for employment, education and training. These consequences extend beyond monetary income to include a growing burden of unpaid work for women, especially household care and caring for children, the sick and older people.

The economic consequences also include the loss of property and documents during displacement. Losing identity documents or records related to property ownership, employment, and education can limit women's ability to access services, substantiate their rights, or restore income sources. Protecting documents and property, and providing accessible procedures

for obtaining replacement documents, should therefore form part of the humanitarian, social and economic response to the escalation.

Over the longer term, continued displacement, disrupted education and lost income sources could have stronger effects on women's human capital. Rising school dropout rates, reduced opportunities for education and training, and heightened risks of early marriage may constrain girls' economic and social empowerment and affect local communities' capacity to recover. The cumulative effects of poverty and psychological and social trauma may also carry over to future generations, limiting prospects for development, stability and peacebuilding.

3. Health, Psychological Wellbeing and Human Security

The health sector is among those under the greatest pressure from escalation and displacement. Growing numbers of displaced people, alongside injured and ill patients arriving from areas of fighting, place additional demands on hospitals and health-care facilities already operating within a Yemeni health system short of resources, staff and equipment.

For women and girls, disruptions to health services have particular consequences, especially for reproductive, maternal and child healthcare. Pregnant and breastfeeding women need continuous care that cannot readily be deferred. Difficulty reaching safe health facilities and interruptions to antenatal and postnatal care can increase health risks during displacement and military escalation.

Displacement and escalation also impose cumulative psychological and social pressures on women, from the loss of a sense of safety and stability to fears for family members, the loss of a home or income source, and separation from social

support networks. These circumstances may heighten anxiety, psychological distress and trauma, particularly when displacement is prolonged or repeatedly experienced.

From a human security perspective, mental health and psychosocial support must be integral to the response. This requires tiered support, ranging from community assistance and psychological first aid to specialised services and referrals for those needing advanced care, with priority given to children, women, people with disabilities and groups most at risk.

This approach is particularly important given the risks of gender-based violence. Displacement, lost income sources and weak protection may increase women's and girls' exposure to violence and exploitation. The response to escalation should therefore include clear measures to prevent violence and exploitation, safe and confidential reporting and referral channels, and guaranteed access to health, legal and psychological services for survivors.

4. Ports, Maritime Navigation and Cross-Border Displacement

Disruptions to navigation and port operations are a principal channel linking maritime security to human security. Yemen's ports are vital entry points for food, fuel, medicines, and essential goods, and they also support humanitarian aid flows and coastal economic activity. Disrupted port operations, restrictions on maritime movement, and heightened transport risks can therefore indirectly increase pressure on households, particularly low-income households.

The effects of escalation extend beyond Yemen's borders and may shape patterns of displacement and refugee movements by sea. UNHCR has warned that intensifying military operations in Yemen could trigger further internal displacement and ref-

ugee movements across the sea towards Djibouti. It reported that more than 2,400 people had crossed to Djibouti in just four days, with women, children and older people accounting for more than 60% of arrivals.

These movements reveal a regional dimension to the humanitarian crisis linked to Bab al-Mandeb. The strait serves not only as a corridor for international trade but also as a route for civilians fleeing danger in search of protection and safety. Such movements carry additional risks, including unsafe sea crossings, family separation, exploitation, lost income sources and limited access to protection and healthcare services in transit and reception areas.

Security in Bab al-Mandeb therefore cannot be considered separately from the security of coastal communities and conflict-affected populations. Stable navigation and port operations are linked to the availability of goods, services and employment opportunities, while disruptions can intensify humanitarian and economic pressures that particularly affect women and the most vulnerable groups. Maintaining the flow of aid and essential goods through ports is also important to protecting civilians' food and health security.

5. Long-Term Implications

The effects of military escalation extend beyond immediate humanitarian consequences to social, economic and psychological repercussions that may persist for years after hostilities end. Continued displacement, disrupted education and lost income sources are expected to deepen women's vulnerability and widen economic disparities between women and men. Higher rates of school dropout and early marriage may also erode women's human capital and reduce girls' opportunities for economic and social empowerment.

The repercussions for individuals and

households also affect local communities' capacity to recover. Prolonged displacement, lost livelihoods, and declining services can weaken social ties and increase dependence on aid, while limited opportunities for education and employment may make it harder to restore economic and social stability even after military operations subside.

Psychological and social harm caused by conflict and displacement may likewise persist after hostilities end, particularly where specialised psychosocial support and reintegration services are unavailable. This harm can accumulate over time, and some consequences may carry over to future generations, affecting opportunities for education and employment, family stability and community participation, and limiting communities' capacity to build peace and achieve sustainable recovery.

Addressing the consequences of military escalation for Yemeni women therefore requires moving beyond short-term humanitarian response towards a broader approach that combines protection, relief, early recovery, resilience-building, development and peacebuilding. Recovery policies should account for women's needs both as members of one of the groups most affected by conflict and as active participants in rebuilding families, communities and the local economy.

Taken together, these consequences reveal that the relationship between maritime security and human security is neither direct nor linear, but operates through interconnected channels encompassing navigation, ports, supply chains, prices, livelihoods, displacement, health and protection. Women bear a substantial share of these changes' effects because of their economic and social position, care responsibilities, and limited access to resources and protection mechanisms.

Safeguarding Yemeni women's human security amid escalation in Bab al-Mandeb

therefore requires policies that link stable navigation with civilian protection, continued access to food, medicines, and aid, protected livelihoods, guaranteed health and social services, safe routes for displacement and asylum, and women's inclusion in decision-making, response, and recovery. In this sense, maritime security forms part of the conditions necessary for human security, while human security is a central consideration in assessing the consequences of escalation and the policies adopted in response

VI. Findings and Recommendations

1. Key Findings

The study's key findings are as follows:

1. Military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb has revealed a simultaneous decline in Yemeni women's economic, health, personal, community and political security. This deterioration reflects the direct and indirect effects of escalation, including disrupted basic services, rising living costs, lost income sources, reduced access to protection and fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making.
2. The study identified a structural link between maritime security and Yemeni women's human security. Disruptions to navigation, ports, and supply chains affect civilians' daily lives, particularly their food, health, and economic and social security, underscoring the importance of integrating a gender perspective into maritime security policies.
3. The consequences of escalation have extended beyond military operations and sites into civilian life through displacement, disrupted services, rising prices, interrupted supply chains, reduced livelihood oppor-

tunities and increased risks of violence and exploitation. Its impact must therefore be measured through both direct losses and the extent to which women's ability to access food, healthcare, education, income and protection has declined.

4. Women and girls are among those most exposed to the consequences of displacement, including lost income sources, reduced access to healthcare and education, fragmented social protection networks and heightened risks of violence and exploitation. Displacement thus constitutes a central component of the humanitarian crisis, rather than merely a secondary consequence of conflict.

5. The crisis has taken on a serious and alarming regional dimension as displacement and refugee movements by sea towards neighbouring countries have increased. UNHCR and local authorities documented the arrival of more than 3,100 people from Yemen in Djibouti within days, amid intensifying hostilities and continuing waves of civilians fleeing across the dangerous waters of Bab al-Mandeb. Women, children and the most vulnerable groups continued to account for approximately 60% of arrivals, deepening the humanitarian and gender dimensions of maritime displacement and heightening the risks of potentially fatal sea crossings, family separation and weak protection networks.

6. Deteriorating security conditions and disruptions to port operations and maritime corridors have reduced the capacity to ensure regular access to aid and basic services, exacerbating food and health insecurity and increasing pressure on households, particularly those supported by women.

7. Displaced women and women who provide for their households face additional burdens in meeting basic needs, caring for children, older people and the sick, and managing limited resources, alongside

risks of losing income and protection. Their vulnerability is compounded by the loss of property and documents or interruptions to education and health services.

8. Disruptions to markets, ports and supply chains, alongside lost employment opportunities, have widened economic disparities between women and men. Lost income sources and growing unpaid care burdens have also limited women's economic participation and increased some households' dependence on aid.

9. Military escalation has shown that displacement, lost income, weak protection and reduced access to services can increase women's and girls' exposure to violence and exploitation. Preventing and responding to gender-based violence is therefore integral to safeguarding women's human security.

10. Local women's organisations play an important role in reaching women and girls, providing protection services and supporting community responses. Yet security restrictions linked to escalation and limited funding and resources constrain their ability to reach affected groups regularly, underscoring the need to strengthen their role as institutional partners in the response.

11. The study reveals a gap between the extent of the conflict's impact on women and their representation in decision-making on security, peace and crisis management, despite international emphasis on women's effective participation, particularly through the Women, Peace and Security agenda and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

12. The safety and continued operation of ports and maritime corridors for civilian and humanitarian purposes are directly linked to the population's food, health and economic security. Disruptions to navigation or port operations should therefore

also be assessed for their effects on access to food, medicines and aid, and on coastal communities' livelihoods.

13. The consequences of escalation persist beyond the end of military operations. Continued displacement, disrupted education, lost income sources and psychological and social pressures can deepen poverty, widen economic disparities, heighten the risks of school dropout and early marriage, and reduce opportunities for women's and girls' economic and social empowerment.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Recommendations for the Government and National and Local Authorities

- Establish and develop a national early warning and rapid response mechanism in coastal areas and areas at risk of displacement. Incorporate indicators specific to women's and girls' needs, including displacement risks, interruptions to health services, heightened risks of gender-based violence and disruptions to livelihoods.

- Ensure that national and local emergency and displacement management plans include specific measures for women and girls, covering safe shelter, water and sanitation, reproductive healthcare, protection services, psychosocial support and safe channels for reporting violations.

- Strengthen arrangements to maintain the flow of food, medicines, humanitarian aid and essential supplies through ports and maritime corridors. Avoid exposing facilities and corridors serving civilian and humanitarian purposes to risks that could disrupt basic services for the population.

- Ensure respect for international humanitarian law and protect civilians, humanitarian personnel, essential facilities and basic services. Work to remove unnecessary barriers to aid delivery in affected areas. International humanitarian law pro-

tections civilians and the most at-risk groups and regulates humanitarian relief and aid access for affected populations.

- Embed local women's organisations in humanitarian planning and response, recovery and peacebuilding through formal institutional arrangements, and provide a safe operating environment that enables them to reach women and girls in conflict-affected areas.

- Ensure women's effective representation on crisis management and humanitarian response committees and local bodies responsible for displacement, as well as in peace, recovery and reconstruction processes. Their participation should move beyond a limited advisory role to exert real influence over policies and decisions.

- Expand protection programmes addressing gender-based violence and provide psychosocial support, legal protection and health referral services for women, girls and children affected by conflict and displacement.

- Develop immediate and medium-term programmes to support women who provide for their households and women in coastal communities through vocational training, small grants and support for home-based and local enterprises. Link humanitarian assistance programmes to pathways for economic recovery.

- Establish a gender-sensitive national database to track displacement, gender-based violence, access to healthcare and education, lost livelihoods, and the needs of women and girls in coastal areas and displacement sites.

2.2 Recommendations for International and Humanitarian Organisations

- Increase funding for protection programmes and responses to gender-based

violence, prioritising areas directly affected by escalation and displacement.

- Ensure the continuity of sexual and reproductive health services, care for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and maternal and child healthcare in displacement sites and affected coastal areas.
- Provide tiered psychological and social support for women, children and affected families, and develop referral mechanisms for those requiring specialised interventions.
- Provide safe spaces for women and girls in displacement sites and link them to protection services and psychological, health and legal support.
- Direct a greater share of funding to local and women's organisations capable of reaching affected communities, while strengthening their institutional, administrative and security capacities.
- Coordinate with all parties to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches affected areas safely and regularly, and prevent security restrictions from becoming a persistent barrier to life-saving services.

2.3 Recommendations for Donors

- Move from short-term funding to multi-year financing for programmes supporting women's protection, economic recovery and resilience.
- Provide sustained funding for small and medium-sized enterprises and livelihood initiatives for women who provide for their households and women in coastal communities.
- Link humanitarian funding to early recovery programmes, enabling households to move gradually from dependence on aid towards restoring income sources and self-reliance.

- Allocate resources to collect data disaggregated by gender, age and location and conduct periodic studies on how maritime security and disruptions to ports and navigation affect women's human security.

2.4 Recommendations for the International Community and Peacebuilding Actors

- Ensure Yemeni women's effective participation in negotiations, mediation and decision-making on ceasefires, political settlements and peacebuilding.
- Ensure that security arrangements for Bab al-Mandeb and the Red Sea address civilian protection and the continued flow of food, medicines and aid alongside military considerations and the protection of navigation.
- Expand support for local women's initiatives in community mediation, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and local dispute resolution, particularly in coastal communities and displacement settings.
- Ensure that recovery and reconstruction plans account for the disproportionate effects of conflict on women and include clear objectives and indicators for their economic, social and political empowerment.

2.5 Recommendations on Maritime Security and Gender

- Integrate an assessment of how maritime threats and disruptions to navigation and port operations affect women and girls into maritime security strategies and policies for the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb.
- Develop institutional communication channels linking maritime security authorities, port authorities and humanitarian actors to ensure the exchange of information on risks and civilian needs.

- Ensure that women and women's organisations are represented on local and national committees responsible for crisis management and humanitarian response in coastal areas.
- Launch programmes targeting women working in fishing, trade, services and economic activities linked to ports and coastal areas to help mitigate the long-term economic effects of escalation.
- Integrate indicators specific to women and girls into early warning systems for maritime security and displacement, ensuring that warnings cover the humanitarian and social consequences of military and security risks as well as the risks themselves.
- Encourage research centres, universities and international organisations to conduct periodic studies on the relationship between navigation security, human security and gender in Yemen, and build a database to help policymakers design evidence-based responses.

Conclusion

This study shows that military escalation in Bab al-Mandeb has effects beyond conventional military and security concerns, directly affecting the dimensions of Yemeni women's human security. Humanitarian evidence indicates that control of strategic sites and maritime corridors, and the accompanying disruptions to navigation and supply chains, have intensified displacement, poverty, food insecurity, declining health services and risks of gender-based violence, worsening conditions for women and girls in conflict-affected areas. By 11 September 2026, the number of displaced people had reached 77,789, including 2,685 women and girls of reproductive age and 240 pregnant women. Damage to health and service facilities further underscores

the widening humanitarian consequences of military escalation.

The study also confirms the close interconnection between maritime security and human security. Stable ports and maritime corridors are essential both to protecting international trade and freedom of navigation and to sustaining the flow of food, medicines, fuel and humanitarian aid into Yemen. Any disruption to security in Bab al-Mandeb therefore directly affects Yemeni women's economic, food, health and social security, making maritime security a key determinant of human security in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The effects of military escalation are evident not only in the direct human toll but also in the deepening of existing vulnerabilities and gender inequalities.

The current crisis also directly affects the pillars of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, increasing protection needs, narrowing opportunities for participation in decision-making, weakening prevention and peacebuilding efforts, and expanding relief and recovery requirements. At the same time, Yemeni women have demonstrated considerable resilience and adaptability by supporting their families and contributing to community response networks. This underscores the importance of strengthening their role as active partners in humanitarian response and peacebuilding, rather than recognising them solely as people affected by the crisis.

The study concludes that Bab al-Mandeb has become more than a strategic maritime passage or a focal point of military and regional competition: it now directly influences Yemeni women's human security. Strengthening humanitarian protection for women and girls, maintaining the flow of aid and basic services, supporting women's participation in decision-making and crisis response, and integrating a gender perspective into maritime security policies

and the management of ports and maritime corridors are therefore essential to building community resilience and achieving more sustainable human security in Yemen. Further research is also needed to examine the relationship between maritime

security and human security from a gender perspective, particularly in contexts of protracted conflict, and thereby develop a more comprehensive understanding of the humanitarian dimensions of contemporary security and military developments.

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