

Thematic Report: Reviewing the shifting impact of armed violence on civilians in Yemen, two months into the 2022 UN-mediated truce

June 2022

On 2 April 2022, a two-month countrywide truce entered into force in Yemen. The following two months saw a complete cessation of airstrikes on Yemen, a significant reduction in hostilities across the country's main frontlines, and a notable reduction in reports of violence in the border areas between Sa'dah and Saudi Arabia. On 2 June, the truce was extended for another two months. This report provides an overview of how these changes shifted the threat profile for civilians in Yemen during the first two months of the truce, in terms of both civilian casualty numbers and impacted civilian infrastructure.

Please note, all information and numbers included in CIMP reporting are based on information publicly available in open sources, and have not been independently verified.

Overview

In the two months after the truce entered into force, 265 civilian casualties were reported in Yemen, marking a 41% decrease in casualty numbers compared to the two months prior*, when 456 civilian casualties were reported countrywide. Child casualties reduced by more than 50% in the same timeframe, from 64 in the two months prior, to 29 in the subsequent two months. 93 fatalities were among the casualties, marking a 25% drop from pre-truce numbers.

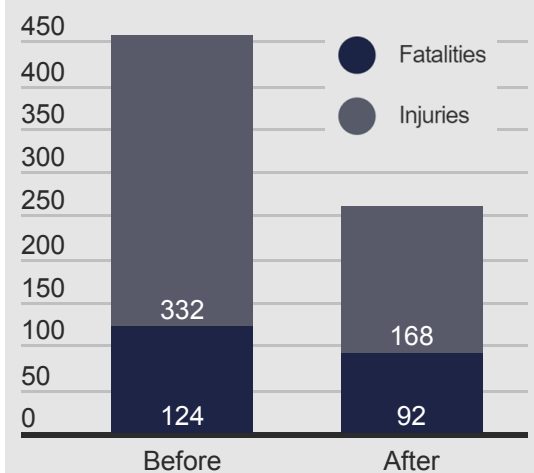
On a monthly basis, the first month of the truce saw the most significant drop in civilian casualties, although civilian casualties then increased during the second month, due in part to a mass casualty incident in Aden, discussed below. April 2022 saw the second lowest civilian casualty count on CIMP records since the project commenced at the start of 2018.

*As the truce entered into force at 7pm on 2 April, and the renewal was announced on 2 June, the time periods being used for the before and after calculations are as follows:

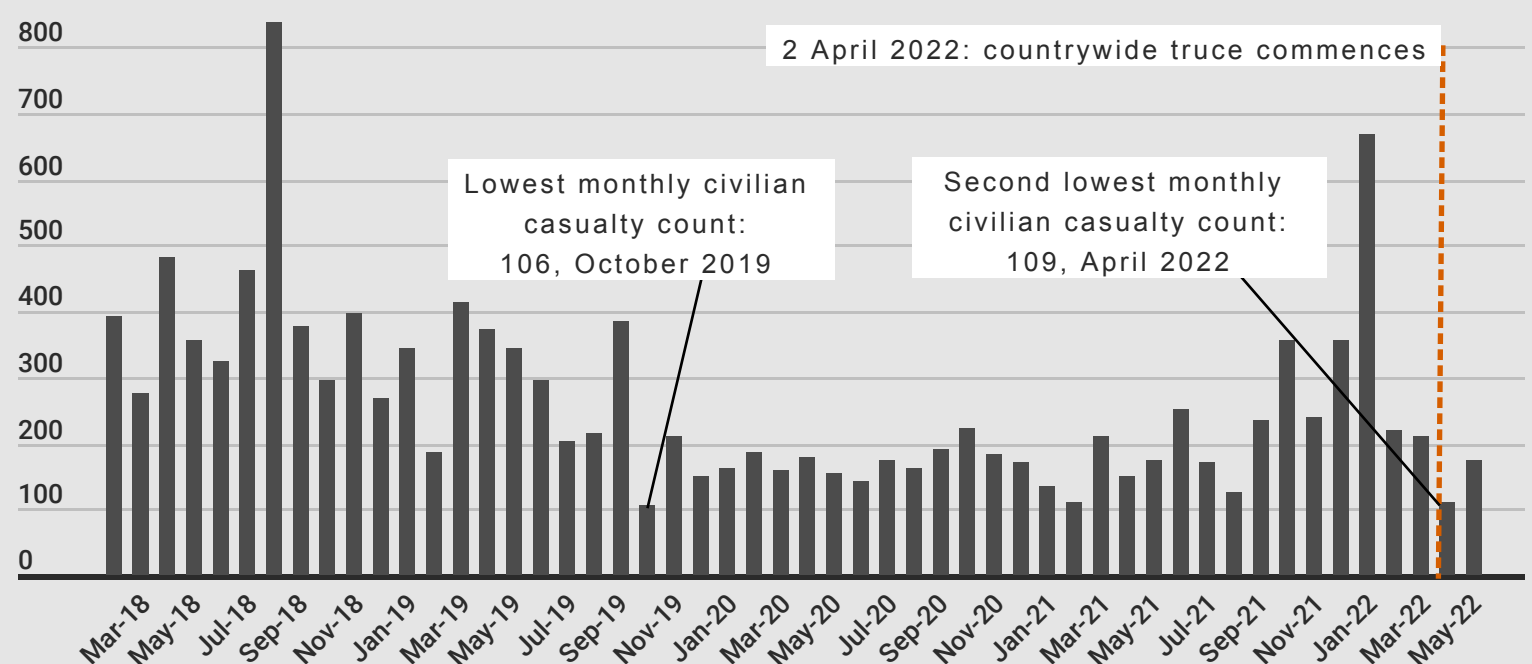
Before: 1 February 2022 to 2 April 2022, inclusive (61 days)

After: 3 April 2022 to 2 June 2022, inclusive (61 days)

Civilian fatalities and injuries in the two months before and after* the 2022 truce commenced



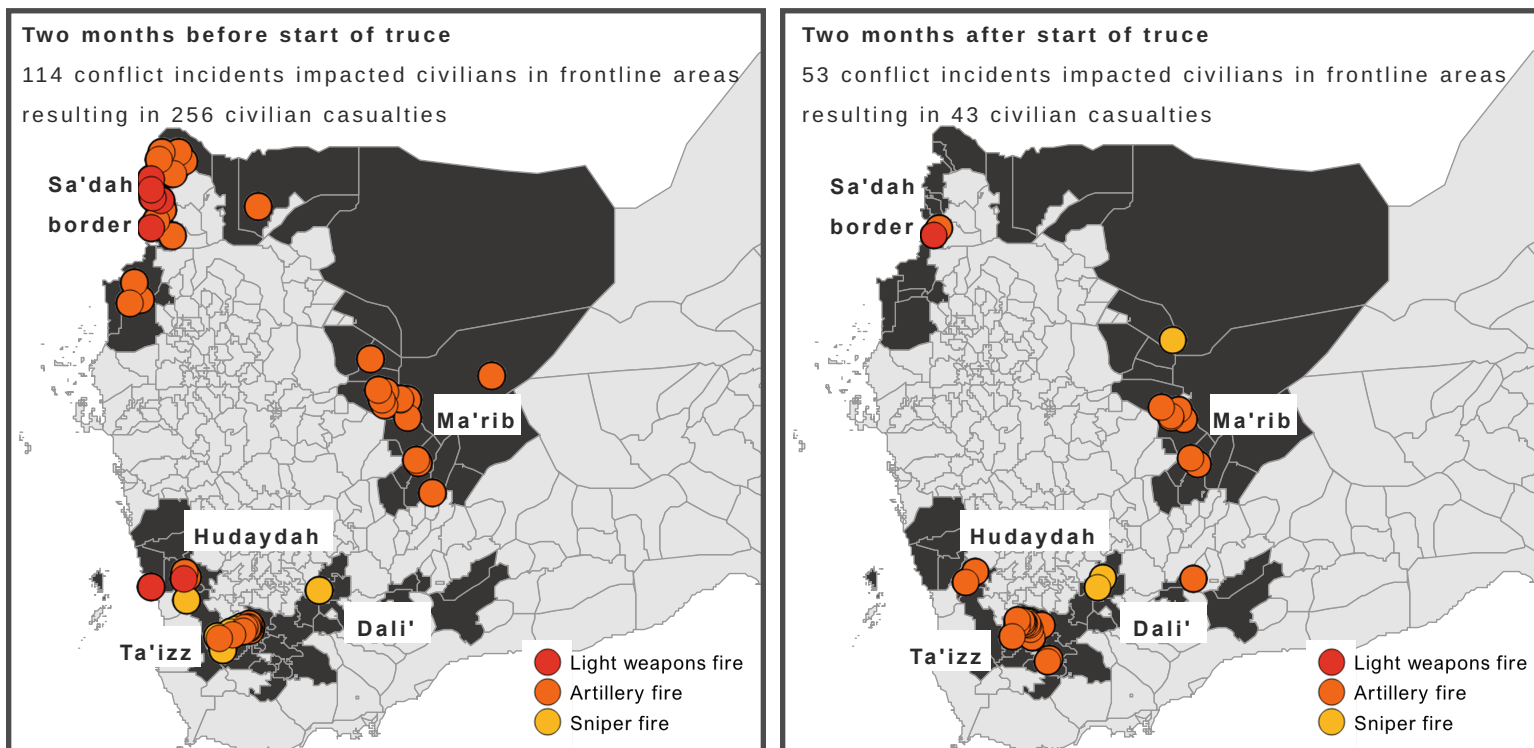
Civilian casualties as a result of armed violence reported on a monthly basis since January 2018



85% decrease in civilian casualties as a result of frontline violence since start of truce

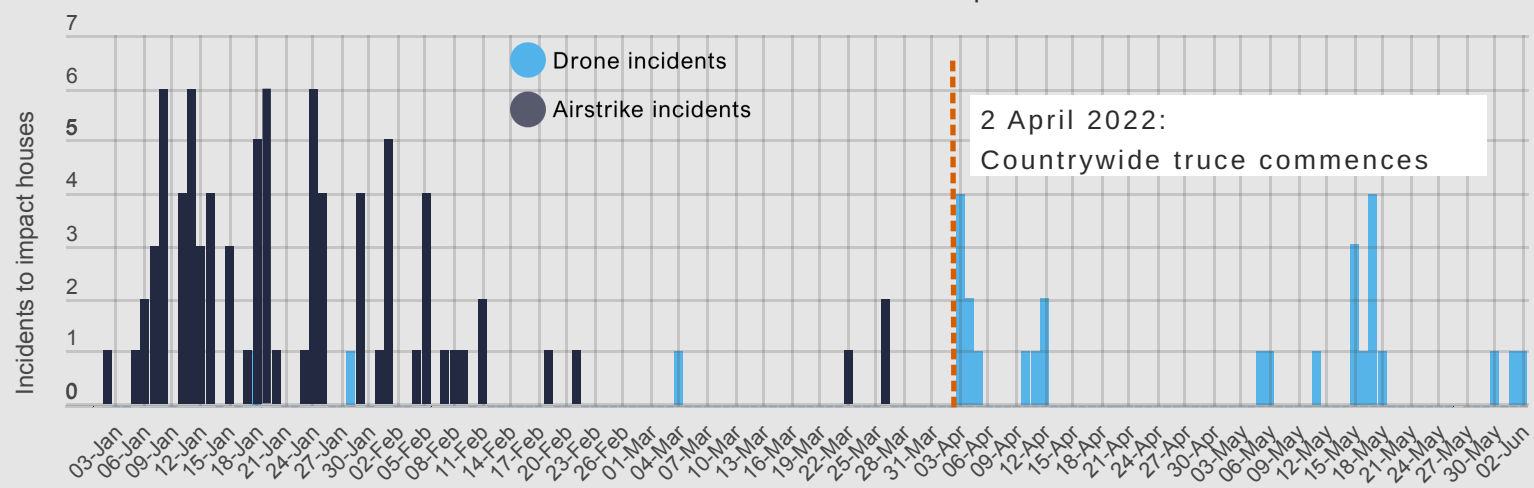
The reduction in civilian casualties is particularly notable when looking only at the impact of ground fighting in frontline areas, including light and heavy weapons fire, in the ten governorates* hosting active frontlines. Civilian casualties as a result of frontline violence, such as artillery fire, light weapons fire, including machine gun fire, and sniper fire, dropped from 256 in the two months leading up to the truce commencing, to 43 in the following two months; an 83% decrease. Of the 43 conflict-related civilian casualties in the two months after 2 April 2022, 27 were the result of shelling incidents in Hudaydah, Ta'izz, Sa'dah and Bayda, 14 on account of sniper fire in Dali', Jawf and Ta'izz, and two were hit by light weapons fire on the Sa'dah border. Sa'dah border violence was responsible for 199 civilian casualties in the two months prior to the truce, driven predominantly by machine gun fire and shelling in Monabbih (140) and Shada'a (46), which host a number of informal border crossings. These reports have dropped off significantly since 2 April, with six civilian casualties reported in Shada'a, and none in Monabbih.

Maps to show civilian impact incidents by type of armed violence in frontline areas during the two months before and after the truce commenced, excluding airstrikes and drone strikes



The number of civilian casualties as a result of airstrikes saw an absolute cease following the start of the truce, compared to 45 reported in the two months prior. By contrast, the number of civilian casualties reported as a result of drone incidents, including drone strikes and kamikaze-style bomb-laden drones, increased, from four in the two months prior to the truce commencing, to six in the latter two months. Although these figures are low compared to other types of armed violence, more notable was the increase in reports of civilian homes being impacted by drone incidents in the two months following the start of the truce. From 3 April to 2 June, 25 drone incidents were reported to have impacted civilian homes, displacing as many as 117 households, and putting women and children at particular risk due to the domestic nature of the spaces impacted. All incidents were reported in frontline areas, including seven reports of drones hitting civilian homes on the western frontlines in Ta'izz, and five in Ma'rib, to the west and south of Ma'rib city. The governorate to see the highest number of reports of drone incidents impacting homes, however, was Dali', where 12 such incidents were reported in Qa'atabah district.

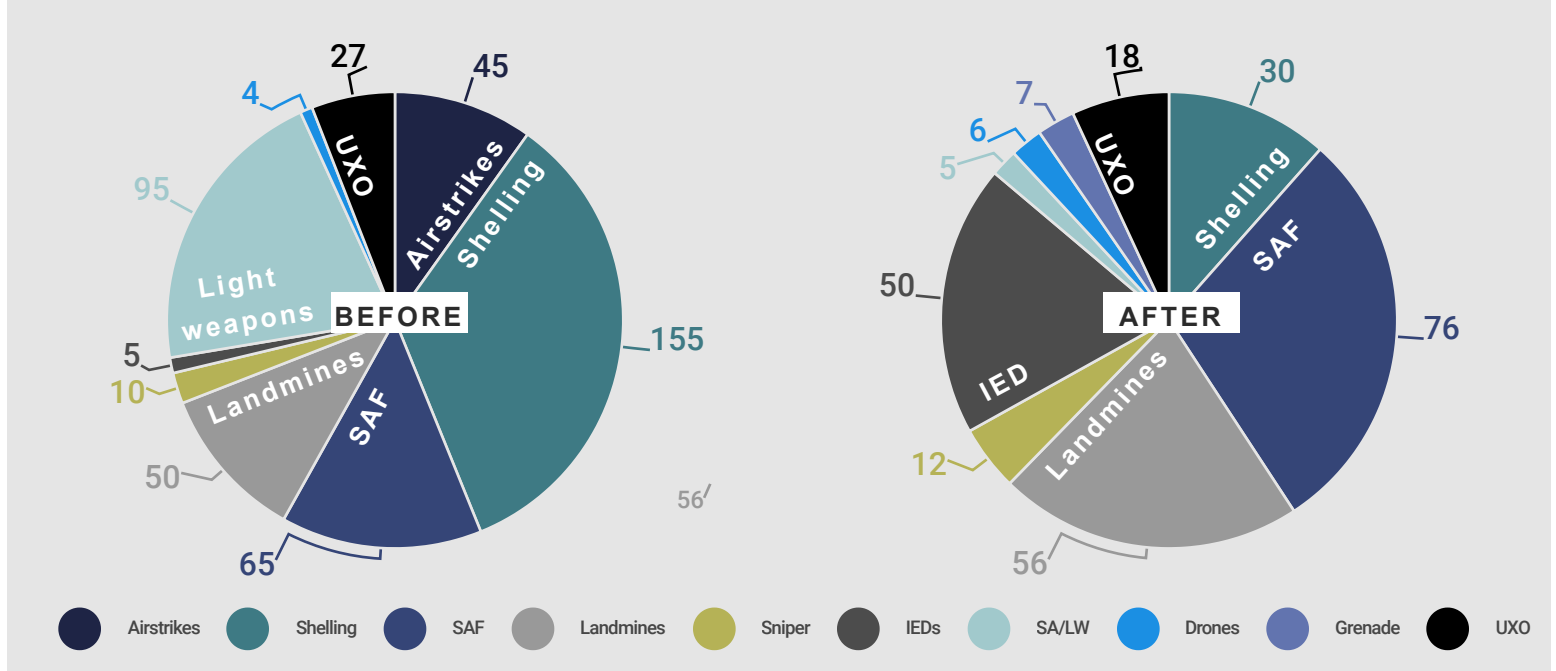
Chart to show number of airstrike and drone incidents to have impacted civilian houses in 2022



Localised tensions continue to drive civilian casualties away from frontline areas

Away from the frontlines, isolated incidents continue to result in civilian casualties, with the past two months seeing an increase in the number of civilian small arms fire (SAF) casualties. 65 SAF casualties were reported in the two months before the truce commenced, rising to 76 in the two months after, more than half of whom were the result of disputes escalating into violence. Against a backdrop of civil frustrations regarding commodity prices, late salary payments and failing public service provision, which have been compounded by persisting currency depreciation, marketplaces and checkpoints are particular flashpoints for shootings, frequently impacting civilian bystanders. Shootings have been reported across the country, but Ibb consistently witnesses heightened levels of insecurity, and saw more civilian SAF casualties than any other governorates in the two months after the ceasefire, at 16. This was followed by 11 in Amran, and eight in Abyan, including five as a result of a tribal dispute.

Civilian casualties by type of armed violence in the two months before and after the truce commenced

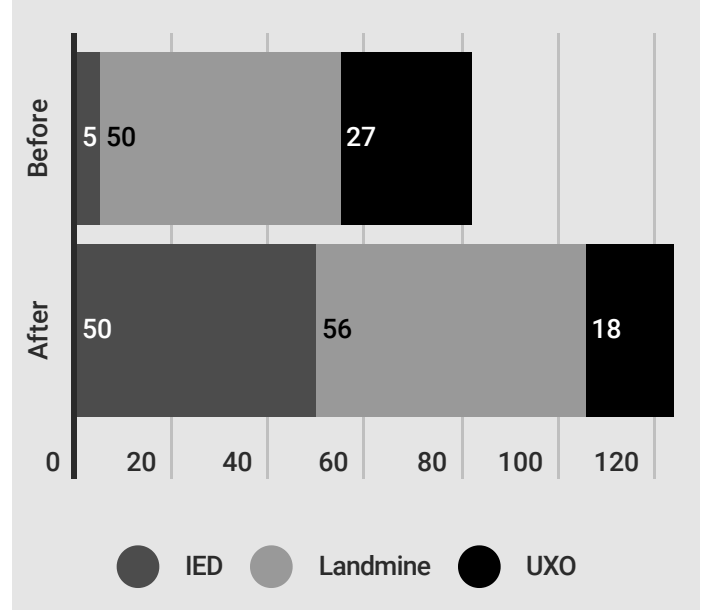


Remnant explosive ordnance remains a threat in both active and dormant frontline areas

124 civilian ERW casualties were reported in the two months after the truce started, compared to 82 in the two months prior. These numbers were partly driven by a mass casualty incident in Aden; on 26 May, five civilians were killed, and another 45 civilians were injured in an IED explosion at a busy market in Ash Sheikh Othman district in Aden. As a result of the incident, Ash Sheikh Othman saw the highest civilian casualty count of all districts in Yemen in the two months after the truce commenced. The south of Yemen continues to see simmering unrest, due in part to recent political shifts, with tensions brought around by increased factionalism compounded by longstanding frustrations over currency depreciation, rising commodity prices, and failures in basic services.

Despite the mass casualty incident in Aden, the governorate to see the highest civilian casualty numbers after the truce entered into force was Hudaydah, where 59 civilian casualties were reported from 3 April to 2 June, 43 of whom were on account of ERW. In the two months before the truce, 29 civilian ERW casualties were reported in Hudaydah. More than half (25) of the civilian ERW casualties reported in Hudaydah in the two months after the truce were in the eastern and southern outskirts of the city.

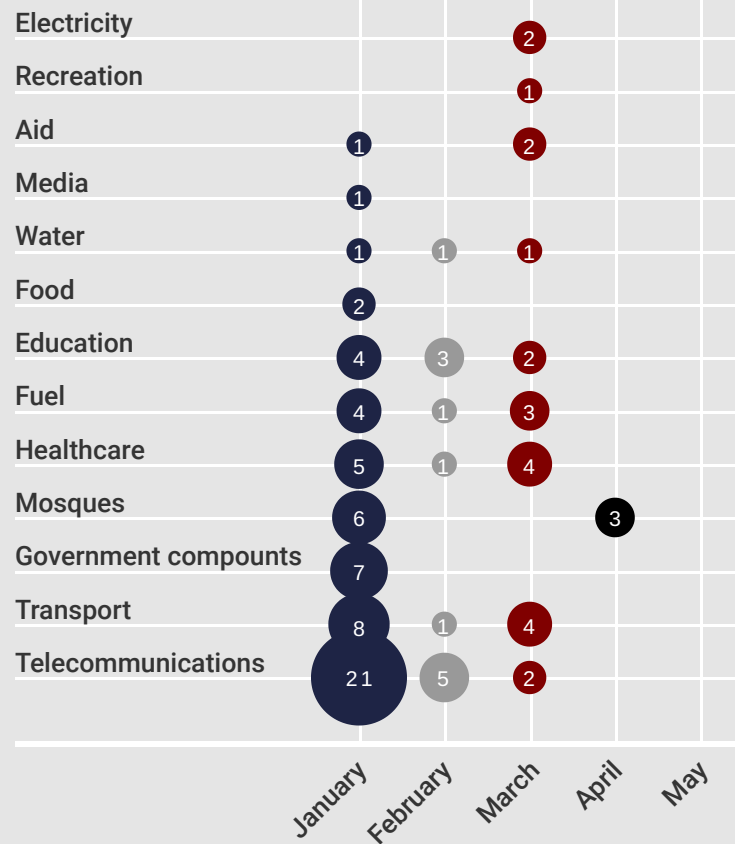
Civilian ERW casualties by type of explosive, two months before and after the truce commenced



The lack of impact of the truce on civilian ERW casualties is indicative of the legacy threat posed by remnant devices, even after hostilities cease. However, it is also possible that the threat may have increased in areas where the truce has facilitated heightened mobility among civilians, particularly former IDPs, who may now have greater confidence to return to areas where hostilities have de-escalated. This has been the case in Hudaydah since the frontlines shifted south in November 2021, and may now also be happening in other frontline areas in light of the truce. Moreover, the ERW threat may have been exacerbated by heavy rains, as devices can drift through saturated land or along waterways into areas previously considered to be safe. Flooding can also wash away warning markers that may be in place around high risk areas.

The cease in airstrikes has driven a significant decrease in the impact on civilian infrastructure

Number of incidents of armed violence to impact different infrastructural sites by month in 2022



Although civilian property, including homes and vehicles, continues to be impacted by armed violence, there has been a significant drop in reports of armed violence impacting civilian infrastructure, as per the categories shown in the chart to the left. For example, from 3 April to 2 June 2022, there were no reports of either health or education facilities being impacted. The first three months of the year saw ten instances of health facilities being impacted by armed violence, and another nine instances of education facilities being impacted, both predominantly as a result of airstrikes, which have seen a complete cessation since the truce entered into force.

The same is true for telecommunications infrastructure. Prior to 2 April, telecommunications sites including communications towers and network facilities were hit by airstrikes 28 times from January to March, predominantly across Sa'dah and Dhamar; more than any other infrastructural category. Since 3 April, no telecommunications sites have been impacted. Of 93 incidents of armed violence to impact civilian infrastructure in 2022, prior to the start of the truce, over two thirds (67) were the result of airstrikes, threatening civilian freedom of movement and access to critical infrastructure.

In the two months after the truce commenced, save for three instances of mosques being impacted by armed violence in April, no other infrastructural sites or services were impacted. Moreover, May 2022 was the first month since CIMP commenced reporting at the start of 2018 during which no incidents of armed violence were reported to directly impact civilian infrastructure in Yemen.

Forward Look

The first two months of the 2022 UN-mediated truce in Yemen resulted in a significant reduction in the impact of armed violence on civilians in the country, particularly as a result of the halt in airstrikes and the deescalation in ground fighting in frontline areas. On 2 June 2022, the truce was extended for a further two months, inviting the opportunity for further reductions in civilian casualties. However, the situation remains fragile, with negotiations ongoing on a number of different tracks. Unless progress is achieved on these tracks, the truce is at risk of destabilisation. Should the truce falter, hostilities risk returning to pre-truce levels in frontline areas, particularly if any sudden offensives are launched. A resumption in airstrikes and uptick in drone activity is also a possibility, reviving the risk of harm to civilians, while also threatening further disruption to civilian infrastructure, facilities and services, in both frontline and non-frontline areas.

Despite the drop in frontline activity, ERW remains a longstanding threat regardless of whether the truce sustains; a legacy of armed conflict. It is possible, even, that the truce has indirectly exacerbated the ERW risk, by bolstering confidence among IDPs to return to areas previously subsumed by fighting that may not necessarily be clear of ERW. Moreover, should negotiations succeed in re-opening roads to civilian access, particularly in Ta'izz, the ERW risk to civilians may be heightened if re-openings are not accompanied by thorough efforts to clear remnant ordnance. The ERW risk, including from landmines, UXO and IEDs, is likely to remain a critical threat in both active and dormant frontline areas in the coming months.

Away from the frontline areas, widespread tensions, particularly in relation to the economy, salary payments, commodity prices, fuel availability and public service provision, are likely to continue to drive unrest, from localised clashes as a result of disputes escalating, to protest-related violence, particularly in the south. Main roads, checkpoints and marketplaces, as well as areas around key military sites, all remain susceptible to violent escalations, presenting an ongoing threat to civilian passers by.



Protection Cluster Yemen

The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project is a service under the Protection Cluster for the collection, analysis and dissemination of open source data on the civilian impact from armed violence in Yemen, to inform and complement protection programming.

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