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Civilians in Yemen's Aden struggle to survive fighting, shortages: Red Cross

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Civilians struggling to survive street battles and Saudi-led air strikes in Yemen's southern port city of Aden are also facing shrinking supplies of food and fuel, a senior official from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said.

Hunger and disease are threatening the 1 million residents of Aden, now a war zone caught between local militiamen and Houthi fighters, Bertrand Lamon told Reuters in Geneva.

"The general level of food stocks in Aden has been dramatically reduced because of the lesser volume of imports by sea and difficulty to transport items by road from (the capital)Sanaa," the outgoing head of the ICRC's delegation in Aden said.

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"People have restricted mobility because of the conflict and the front lines, they have no car, no resources to travel. So it makes people more vulnerable and dependent on external aid," he added late on Wednesday.

Lamon, a Swiss national, worked in Aden from January 2014 and stayed months into the Houthi military push on the city that prompted an Arab military intervention on March 26.

A Saudi-led coalition of Gulf Arab countries has been bombing the Iran-allied Houthis for three months to try to restore Yemen's exiled government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

Saudi Arabia, determined to thwart any arms deliveries to the Houthis, has imposed a near total blockade on a country heavily reliant on imports.

Nationwide fuel shortages have spread disease and suffering in arid Yemen, where access to water usually depends on fuel -powered pumps and over 20 million people - 80 percent of the population - needs some form of aid, according to the United Nations.

The United Nations has quoted Aden health officials as saying that 8,000 people had contracted dengue fever in the city since the crisis began in March, including 590 who died from the disease.

The ICRC deploys 12 international staff and 50 Yemenis who cross front lines in Aden to retrieve dead bodies and deliver aid, including fuel to water pumping stations that supply half of the city's residents.

Aden's oil refinery was shelled twice by the Houthis in the past week, destroying two storage tanks and a pipeline connecting it to the oil port.

The damage, Lamon said, was "very partial," and the refinery continues to be tapped for local use and serves as a vital lifeline for residents, hospitals and aid groups.

As calls by the U.N. and aid groups for an immediate ceasefire have gone unheeded, the estimated number of 2,800 people killed nationwide in the fighting and air strikes looks set to rise.

An ICRC surgical hospital opened in the city's Al-Mansoura district last month, with about 50 beds.

"If the conflict gains in intensity we will definitely have a mass casualties scenario where health facilities will be overwhelmed," Lamon said.