

## How Are War-Torn Tents Haunting Yemenis in Marib?



“You have one month to vacate the apartment, or I will be forced to cut off the electricity and water.” The words Abdullah received at the door of his rented home in Al-Rawda neighborhood in Marib city were not just a passing threat, but a warning of yet another collapse in his long journey of displacement.

The man, who fled years ago from shelling in Sirwah district in search of safety, now finds himself threatened with eviction because he can no longer pay the rent. Speaking under the weight of anguish, he says: “We fled death to live in safety, and today we are being evicted because we cannot pay the rent.

Abdullah’s story is no longer an exception in Marib, the city that over the years of war has transformed from Yemen’s largest refuge for the displaced into a suffocating housing market that reproduces displacement within it. According to data from the Executive Unit for the Management of IDP Camps, around 286,000 displaced people face the risk of losing their homes due to accumulated rent arrears and inability to pay, an indication that the crisis has shifted from an urgent humanitarian dimension into a more complex economic and social crisis.

According to the annual report of the Executive Unit for 2025, more than 3.1 million people live in Marib, including displaced people, host communities, and migrants. The number of displaced people living outside camps stands at about 1,655,910, representing 226,587 families who mostly rely on rented housing, compared with 558,288 displaced people inside 210 camps.

These figures reflect not only the scale of displacement, but also the enormous pressure on the housing market and services in a governorate that also includes more than 542,000 members of the host community, 358,000 people displaced by economic deterioration, in addition to more than 41,000 migrants from the Horn of Africa.

In the past year alone, 2,693 new families were recorded as displaced, coinciding with a rise in secondary displacement within Marib after 9,440 families were forced to leave their rented homes and move to camps as a result of rising rents and living costs.

### A Wartime Market Without Controls

Over the years of war, Marib absorbed successive waves of displaced people, but this population expansion was not accompanied by parallel growth in infrastructure or organized housing policies, leading to the emergence of an unregulated real estate market governed by scarcity and rising demand.

Activist Afif Al-Abbab told Noon Post that housing disputes are steadily escalating as a result of population pressure and economic deterioration, noting that the relationship between landlords and the displaced began with a humanitarian and solidaristic character before gradually turning into one dominated by tension, as many landlords came to depend on rent as a primary source of income.

Dr. Ali Al-Tam, head of the Protection Organization for Civil Orientation (HOCO), describes the situation as a “time bomb,” warning that continued rent hikes and worsening living conditions could lead to a broad social explosion. He notes that rent for some houses reaches 3,000 Saudi riyals per month, while some apartments rent for around 1,500 riyals amounts beyond the means of most displaced families.

He adds in his interview with Noon Post that the use of foreign currency by some entities and organizations has indirectly contributed to higher prices and increased real estate speculation, alongside some landlords’ shift toward converting housing units into more profitable commercial uses.

### An Economy in Collapse and Families Being Worn Down

The rent crisis in Marib cannot be separated from the broader economic collapse in Yemen. Persistent inflation and the decline in the value of the local currency have eroded purchasing power, while incomes have remained almost frozen or stopped altogether.

Afif Al-Abbab says the collapse of the currency and rising prices have deepened disputes between landlords and tenants. Landlords believe rents no longer cover

living and maintenance costs, while tenants are unable to meet their obligations because of suspended salaries and weak job opportunities.

He confirms that the most affected groups include displaced families, the families of martyrs and the wounded, employees whose salaries have been cut off, and low-income earners.

For his part, Ali Al-Tam explains that the relationship between the two sides is now governed by a harsh equation: landlords seek to preserve the purchasing value of their income by raising rents or demanding foreign currency, while the displaced face shrinking aid and a lack of income sources, leading to a widening deficit gap, escalating daily disputes, and the loss of housing security, especially among the most vulnerable groups.

The most dangerous aspect of the crisis is not merely the inability to pay rent, but its direct consequences: thousands of families find themselves forced to leave their homes and move to informal camps lacking the most basic services, in a second wave of displacement within the same city.

Afif Al-Abbab confirms that cases of forced eviction have escalated recently, whether through direct threats or by raising rents and cutting basic services. Ali Al-Tam also points to the growth of this phenomenon as some landlords seek to re-rent properties at higher prices or in foreign currency.

Meanwhile, estimates by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warn that the loss of shelter is linked to heightened social risks, including child labor, early marriage, and domestic violence, making Marib's housing crisis a humanitarian protection crisis that goes beyond the boundaries of the real estate market.

By contrast, some property owners defend rent increases as a natural result of economic collapse and rising construction and maintenance costs. One landlord says: "We are also affected by the crisis, and if we do not raise the rent, we will not even be able to maintain the homes."

### Official Measures and Limited Solutions

Community mediation plays a role in containing some disputes through the intervention of sheikhs and neighborhood elders, but these remain temporary solutions that do not address the roots of the crisis, according to Al-Abbab and Al-Tam.

At the official level, Marib city district Director General and head of the local council, Mohammed bin Jalal, told Noon Post that the rent crisis began as a humanitarian issue linked to waves of displacement, but with the continuation of the war and the collapse of the currency, it has turned into an economic and

market crisis threatening social peace.

He confirmed that the local authority has begun implementing a series of measures to regulate the real estate market, including banning arbitrary evictions, prohibiting leasing in foreign currency, adopting unified contracts that preserve the rights of both landlord and tenant, in addition to regulating real estate brokerage offices and setting indicative rent prices.

Bin Jalal pointed out that field committees are working in coordination with the Executive Unit and neighborhood elders to monitor cases of threatened eviction and deal with them through police stations as violations of local authority decisions.

At the same time, however, he acknowledged that building sustainable housing projects exceeds the governorate's current capacities, given limited resources and their allocation to maintaining basic services, stressing that the local authority is betting on regulating the market and encouraging investment in residential complexes.

Despite these measures, activists believe the crisis requires stricter interventions, including setting a reasonable rent ceiling, preventing any eviction outside legal frameworks, and establishing a specialized body to address real estate disputes.