

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012



THE FORGOTTEN WAR IN YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA'S IMPUNITY

Yemenis are suffering under the Saudi-led and USA backed military coalition's blockade, where millions are food insecure and facing starvation, and indiscriminate air bombardment. Horrific human rights abuses, as well as war crimes, are being committed throughout the country by the Saudi-led and USA backed military coalition's, causing unbearable suffering for civilians.

Civilians are bearing the brunt of the war in Yemen. In addition to causing the deaths and injuries of thousands of civilians, the conflict has exacerbated an already severe humanitarian crisis. Since March 2015, the death toll from airstrikes and combat is estimated to reach 50,000 civilians, and more than 10,000 wounded. The coalition has conducted airstrikes that have indiscriminately killed and wounded thousands of civilians, and implemented a host of economic measures, such as periodic blockades and import restrictions that have caused severe food insecurity and disease. One example of such indiscriminate airstrikes is the coalition's airstrike last August that hit a school bus, killing 43 and wounding 63, most of whom were children.

This man-made war and crisis is deepening and exacerbating the humanitarian situation, and to add insult to injury the coalition continues to impede the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The war in Yemen has taken a devastating toll, particularly on the most vulnerable members of society: children.

- More than 22 million people – and nearly all children – are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance
- More than 6,500 children have been killed or injured in the violence since the conflict began
- The number of out-of-school children – already high before the conflict – has reached more than 2 million

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- The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) announced Approximately 84,701 children have died from severe acute malnutrition between April 2015 and October 2018 and malnutrition was taking a huge toll
- “Around 358,000 Yemeni children suffer from severe acute malnutrition,” UNICEF

The country’s infrastructure has been destroyed and its health services crippled. The Saudi-led war and blockade have pushed up the prices of basic goods and services.

According to the UN:

- 79% of the population is poor compared to 49% in 2017
- GDP per capita has declined 61% in the last three years
- An estimated 16 million people do not have access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.
- There have been 1,115,378 suspected cases of cholera between April 2017 and July 2018, with 10,000 new cases reported every week since June
- 60% of the population, 18 million people, are food insecure
- 8.4 million people do not know how they will obtain their next meal
- Less than 50% of health facilities are functioning
- Two million people are displaced, 76% are women and children
- Basic food prices have increased 98% and fuel 110% in the last three years

Despite several plea and warning from aid agencies that conditions in the impoverished country were deteriorating fast, the Saudi-led and USA backed military coalition has been launching several air strikes on Sanaa as the United Nations struggles to implement a peace deal reached last month. It is being reported that the Western-backed coalition had conducted 24 air strikes on Sanaa

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since January 19 evening, including four on the air base. In total with logistical support from the United States, the coalition has carried out more than 18,000 raids.

As per usual non-military targets such as a plastics factory were hit during this air raid. The coalition's disrespect of and non-cooperation with international laws and UN mechanisms has reached a new level of high. To illustrate. Among other things, there is a Video footage showing moment when the US-backed Saudi-led coalition militiamen targeted demining experts' team. The attack led to killing one of the team members in the presence of the UN monitors in the Kilo 13 area east part of Hodeidah city as seen on the video.

The ongoing massacre and despair of Yemeni people is accompanied by aloud silent diplomacy that is created and perpetrated by the whitewashing western media because of the multi-billion-dollar Saudi-led coalition war-for-profit. The four year war on Yemen have resulted in the worst humanitarian disaster of our time, a man-made catastrophe, fostered by deliberate ignorance and profiteering.

The United Arab Emirates, which is also a major player in the coalition, has also been arbitrarily detaining, disappearing and torturing people, even children, thought to be political opponents or security threats. Former detainees testified that they were beaten, forced into shipping containers covered in feces for weeks, sexually assaulted, and tied to a spit in which they were spun around in a circle.

Civilians and civilian facilities have been targeted, in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law for the past four years, however we have yet to see the Saudi-led coalition being held accountable for these violations.

One of the fundamental principles on which international law is founded is prohibition of the use of force.

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Article 2(4) of the Charter of the UN, “all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state”

According to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States adopted by the General Assembly on 24 October 1970 (resolution 2625 (XXV),

“A war of aggression constitutes a crime against the peace, for which there is responsibility under international law.”

The UN’s reaction to the war crimes of Saudi Arabia, USA, UK, France, and United Arab Emirates and other participating parties is expressed in soft condemnations and nothing else. Of note, during the four years of war on Yemen Saudi Arabia was elected to the UN women’s rights commission to advocate for women, and re-elected as a member of the human rights council.

The indifference of the world towards this man-made catastrophe has become the standard when it comes to the atrocities committed by imperial powers - USA, UK, and France - in the name of democracy in the Middle East. Silence is complicity in Yemen. It should not take four years of bloodshed to stand with the people of Yemen who are victims of an ongoing campaign of indiscriminate killing. Supplying weapons and technical and logistical support and allowing the Saudi-led coalition to continue killing civilians through indiscriminate air strikes and blockade is a horrific decision at the cost of innocent Yemenis’ lives! We should stand on the right side of history and end this senseless war on innocent Yemeni people.

ICSFT urges the Saudi-led coalition to immediately stop its military invasion. We also call on governments to secure an immediate cessation of hostilities, suspend the supply of arms at risk of being used in Yemen, guarantee unimpeded access and movement for vital imports. Most importantly we urge governments’ and other stakeholders including the UN to vehemently condemn any attacks on civilians and other violations of international humanitarian law by the Saudi-led coalition and

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support international investigations into these violations, including the work of UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen.

#StopSaudiWarinYemen

Aside from the war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is a master of oppression at home too. The Kingdom does not have a constitution that establishes an institutional human rights protection framework. Several legal statutes are imprecisely defined, and there is no independent judiciary system as the king appoints its high-ranking members and civilians in particular, dissidents and political oppositions, are tried under the Specialized Criminal Court that is established to maintain the status quo and protect the power dynamics in the country.

Most importantly, fundamental rights and freedoms are systematically violated under the pretext of combatting terrorism. The 2014 Anti-Terrorism Law contained a vague definition of terrorism, criminalized non-violent acts and failed to uphold due process guarantees. Specifically human rights defenders, women's rights activists, journalists, political oppositions, civil society organizations, Shia minorities, and dissidents in general are targeted and harassed consistently for merely exercising their right to expression. Women and girls face discrimination in law including in the Civil Status Code, Labor Code and Nationality Act, and in practice. Of note, ICSFT is extremely concerned about harsh conditions for HRDs, civil society activists and journalists, including the extrajudicial killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi operatives for criticizing the kingdom.

The viciousness of the Saudi Arabia is matched only by the cynicism and cosmetic condemnation of western leaders. The price is being paid by the children in that school bus and by activists facing possible beheading for peaceful protests; by the millions of Yemenis on the verge of starvation and by thousands of Saudis imprisoned, flogged and executed for wanting basic rights.

ICSFT urges Saudi Arabia to protect the freedom of expression of all human rights defenders, and foster an environment which is conducive to open debate, tolerant

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of dissenting voices, and protects individuals against retribution. And bring its laws into line with international standards under the ICCPR for the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

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