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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 January 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Human Rights abuses in Yemen

Three years have passed since the beginning of the war in Yemen on March, 2015, that led to widespread death, epidemic disease, hunger and displacement.

There have been bombardments targeting, hospitals, schools, religious sites and other civilian infrastructure, killing and injuring civilians¹.

According to a UN Human Rights Office report, at least 16,000 people have been killed in Yemen's three-year-old war, many of them by coalition air strikes kills, and this office have been warned that this figure is likely to be higher². Between March 2015 and August 23, 2018, a total of 6,660 civilians were killed and 10,563 injured³.

According to a report by the UNHCR, over 450 civilians have lost their lives in Yemen in the first nine days of August 2018 alone, making it one of the deadliest periods since the start of the conflict⁴.

At least 40 children all of whom were below 15 years of age were killed in the 9th of August attack. Most of them were under 10 years of age. Also, 79 people including 56 children got wounded in the airstrike.⁵

Food shortages, the danger of famine and Cholera

Following the air/sea/land blockade of Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition, the concerns over the escalation of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, have intensified and international organizations are warnings against the worsening of the situation.

According to (UNOCHA)⁶ More than 22 million people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance or protection. Some 8.4 million people are severely food insecure⁷ and at risk of starvation, 1.8 million of those being children⁸. Also, a cholera outbreak has affected millions of people⁹.

Deterioration of the human crisis is such that, according to the United Nations coordinator for Yemen, if the air strikes will not, 13 million civilians will be killed by hunger¹⁰, while about a month later in November 2018 aid groups announced that about 85000 children have died of starvation¹¹.

Currently, 16 million people are suffering from lack of access to safe drinking water and 16.4 million others are deprived of proper health care¹².

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/>

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-children-dead-bus-airstrike-saudi-coalition-war-attack-a8484626.html>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23479&LangID=E>

⁴ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180829-450-civilians-killed-in-yemen-in-first-nine-days-of-august-confirms-unhcr/>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/17/middleeast/us-saudi-yemen-bus-strike-intl/index.html>

⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

⁷ <https://www.unocha.org/story/yemen-conflict-escalates-more-22m-people-are-left-dire-need-assistance-and-protection>

⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-civil-war-explained-facts-saudi-arabia-bombing-uk-forgotten>

⁹ https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=CjwKEAiAj7TCBRcp2Z22ue-zj4SJCAG7SBEH9uE_raTezclufDr28x3vGe1FFIO2Y7kt4ui1PzWKxoCO5Tw_wcB#!/conflict/war-in-Yemen

¹⁰ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-famine-civil-war-conflict-food-shortage-civilians-starvation-un-deaths-a8585006.html>

¹¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/yemen-famine-children-deaths-1.4914179>

¹² <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-2018-humanitarian-needs-overview-enar>

Yemen's infrastructure has been destroyed (from 26 March 2015 to 15 December 2017)

Within the mentioned time period, an average of 474 aerial attacks per month were conducted, with almost one-third of airborne attacks (31%) targeting civilian sites. Nearly one third of all air raids (31%) targeted non-military sites, this included: 386 air raids targeted farms, 183 air raids targeted market places, 102 air raids targeted water and electricity sites, 62 air raids targeted food storage sites¹³ and 68 air raids targeted medical facilities¹⁴

The United States of America and the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia to be used against the Yemeni people

Over the past three years, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Germany, Canada and among other countries have exported a large amount of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, such as drones, missiles and destructive bombs. Just in 2015, Saudi Arabia's import of military equipment amounted to \$25 billion (£18 billion)¹⁵

Unfortunately, despite the crimes committed by the Coalition against the civilian population of Yemen, the United States has continued to support Saudi Arabia.

International Reactions against Humanitarian Situation in Yemen

The Yemen humanitarian calamity made the international community to react against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates attacks. Part of the international reaction to the situation can be seen in UN resolutions.

The resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 29 September 2017 on human rights, technical assistance and capacity-building in Yemen, condemns the ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen.

The resolution mandates a group of prominent international and regional experts to monitor and report on the situation of human rights and any violation and abuse of international law.

Also, in the United States, more than 50 former government officials and ambassadors wrote a letter to the Senate calling for an end to Washington support for Saudi Arabia in the Yemeni war¹⁶. Besides that, the US Senators agreed to advance a Senate resolution to end US support for the Alliance's aggression¹⁷.

Recommendations

Being concerned with the situation of civilians in Yemen:

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) calls on all parties to remain committed to the decisions being made in Sweden peace talks.
2. ODVV calls on all parties to take adhere to the conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen.

¹³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-accused-of-killing-up-to-30-civilians-in-market-bombing-in-yemen-ahead-of-arms-trade-a6901126.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-accused-of-killing-up-to-30-civilians-in-market-bombing-in-yemen-ahead-of-arms-trade-a6901126.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-accused-of-killing-up-to-30-civilians-in-market-bombing-in-yemen-ahead-of-arms-trade-a6901126.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/27/18114275/yemen-war-senate-vote-letter-sanders-lee-murphy>

¹⁷ <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/418765-senate-advances-yemen-resolution-in-rebuke-to-trump>

3. Noting the valuable findings of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen reflected in A/HRC/39/43, ODVV encourages the Experts to continue their persistent efforts to document the crimes committed in the airstrikes and urges the Human Rights Council to facilitate the work of the Group of Eminent Experts inside the country and their access to the bombarded areas.
 4. ODVV urges the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate all crimes committed in Yemen air strikes and bring perpetrators to justice.
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