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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

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.

[03 June 2019]

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

Civilian Consequences of Yemen War

Four years have passed since the Saudi-led Coalition's bloody war against the people of Yemen, and now, not only Saudi Arabia and its allies have not made any notable military gains, but according to observers and experts assessment no clear perspective is in sight for a peaceful solution to this crisis. A war which according to official UN reports has created one of the biggest human catastrophes in Yemen, in such way that two-thirds of the population of 23 million are in urgent need of aid and relief, and more than 2 million children are left with extreme malnutrition.

War and its effects in a glance

The deaths of approximately 131 thousand people in Yemen as a consequence of war from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2018, and the negative effects of the conflict on 233,000 people – 0.8 percent of the 30 million population of the country¹ is just one aspect of the biggest human catastrophe in the current century.

Sadly alongside the killings and famine, diseases are strife in Yemen. On 16 May 2019, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet pointed out Yemenis again facing the spread of cholera and daily registration of 2 thousand suspicious cases of this disease in April. This is while more than half of Yemeni medical centres, are mainly unusable due to airstrikes, and currently nearly 20 million people – including 10 million children – do not have access to medical and hygiene services. This has caused the death of one child in every 12 minutes in Yemen due to war and its side-effects.

As well as causing death and injuries to thousands of civilians and destruction of countless public infrastructures (schools, hospitals, markets, homes) the war – particularly airstrikes – has taken away Yemeni children's rights to education. Currently, education has become impossible for 2 million Yemeni children and at the same time, the mental and emotional effects of conflict and political instability has suddenly deprived the children from enjoying their childhood.

Furthermore, in May 2019, Médecins Sans Frontières officials reported the deaths of 1018 infants in only two hospitals in frontline towns (E'b and Taaz) from 2016 to 2018 as well as deaths of pregnant women due to lack of access to medical centres. According to the officials, one of the most important causes of infant mortality is lack of mothers' access to medical centres: roads being closed, checkpoints, high cost of fuel, destruction of medical centres and shortage of doctors and medical staff who have not been paid for consecutive months.

Also, in the latest figures released by the World Bank, infant mortality rate (for infants younger than 12 months) is reported to be 4.3 percent in the country from 2017 to-date.²

¹<http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/crisis-response0/assessing-the-impact-of-war-on-development-in-yemen-.html>

²<https://news.sky.com/story/yemens-war-1-000-newborn-babies-have-died-in-just-two-years-11708725>

With the hope for the international community to put aside its current inaction for solving the huge human catastrophe in Yemen, and bring the perpetrators of this human catastrophe to justice, ODVV offers the following recommendations:

ODVV calls on:

-Saudi Arabia Coalition to remove the blockade on a large part of Yemen and allow the free and unimpeded transfer of fundamental items including food, vaccine, and medicine by humanitarian and relief agencies to the people who are in desperate need.

-All parties to avoid attacking educational buildings and take measures to guarantee continuous access of Yemenis to education during the conflict in compliance with the Declaration on Safe Schools.

-Yemen government to immediately close all informal detention facilities and release all persons arbitrarily detained, publish official lists of all individuals currently in detention centres and those who have died in detention.

-The Coalition to immediately cease all acts of violence against civilians, including continuous blind airstrikes, and address the basic needs for all civilian populations.

-Yemen government to cooperate with all UN human rights mechanisms, particularly those who are instrumental to ensure accountability for gross human rights violations, in a constructive and transparent manner.

- Yemen government to further efforts in enhancing the protection of vulnerable sectors including women, children, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons from violence and exploitation.
