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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), 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.

[19 August 2019]

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

ID on HC report on Yemen: Violation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Rights in Yemen

Four years have passed since the launch of the Saudi-led coalition military attack against Yemen, and the world has witnessed the biggest human catastrophe in the country. The United Nations declared the Yemeni conflict as the “world’s worst humanitarian crisis”. Extreme poverty, starvation, famine and destruction of all civilian infrastructures including schools, hospitals, health and treatment centres are all the direct result of the conflict and the Saudi-led coalition’s airstrikes.

The continuation of the violation of humanitarian law and human rights has created a crisis which the UN called an “entirely man-made catastrophe.”¹ Highlighting the following instance of continued violation of human rights in Yemen, ODVV expresses concern over the existing conditions in the country and civilians’ conditions – women and children in particular – and condemns the attacks against civilians.

Food shortage and drought

The scale of the devastation which has befallen Yemen is hard to fathom. Since March 2015, over 70,000 people have died in combat. The total deaths are estimated to reach 233,000 by the end of this year.² As one of the countries with weak economy in the region, the conditions in Yemen have become worse with the destructive conflict, and there are dire food shortages in the country, threatening the starvation of women and children.

About 15.9 million of Yemen’s 29 million population is facing food insecurity, of which 5 million are at a “crisis” point and 63,500 are facing famine.³ More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict, according to human rights groups, and five million children face famine.⁴ As a result of the violence, disease, and food insecurity, a Yemeni child dies every 11 minutes and 54 seconds.⁵

Terrible hygiene conditions and shortages

War-battered Yemen has been hit with more than 460,000 suspected cholera cases so far this year — a sharp rise from the 380,000 cases for all of 2018, the United Nations said on Monday. U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said the increased number of cases has led to 705 apparent cholera deaths since January, dramatically higher than the 75 deaths in the same period last year.⁶ “So far this year, nearly 500,000 cases of cholera have been reported. We have received reports so far of more than 700 deaths as a result, including more than 200 children. The death toll will surely grow.”⁷ Haq said the spread of cholera across the country has been accelerated by recent flash flooding, poor maintenance of waste management systems and a lack of access to clean water for drinking or irrigation.⁸ The lack of a functioning health system as well as limited access to safe water and hygiene makes it very difficult to control the spread of the disease.⁹ 24 million people in Yemen require humanitarian assistance, with 17.8 million lacking access to safe water and sanitation services.¹⁰

¹2017 report of the UN Human Rights Council

²<https://theglobepost.com/2019/06/07/yemen-dehumanize-victims/>

³<https://theglobepost.com/2019/06/07/yemen-dehumanize-victims/>

⁴<https://www.dw.com/en/child-soldiers-used-in-yemen-civil-war-report-says/a-49606125>

⁵<https://theglobepost.com/2019/06/07/yemen-dehumanize-victims/>

⁶https://www.apnews.com/a0c742ffc4ed45768b51b1fd07d95229?utm_campaign

⁷<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1042771>

⁸https://www.apnews.com/a0c742ffc4ed45768b51b1fd07d95229?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Doha%20

[Center&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=74456699.%20David%20Beasley](https://www.apnews.com/a0c742ffc4ed45768b51b1fd07d95229?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Doha%20Center&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=74456699.%20David%20Beasley)

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¹⁰<https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-cholera-factsheet-april-2019>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-cholera-factsheet-april-2019>

Some 22 per cent of rural and 46 per cent of urban populations are connected to partially functioning public water networks, and lack of electricity or public revenue creates significant reliance on humanitarian support.”¹¹

Airstrikes, the displaced and education conditions

Lise Grande, the UN’s coordinator for Yemen, said that as many as 13 million civilians could die from starvation if a Saudi Arabia-led coalition does not halt its bombardment of the impoverished country. ¹²“An estimated 85,000 children under age five may have died of hunger and disease since the outbreak of war in Yemen three years ago, an international aid group said Wednesday.”¹³

Prior to the conflict, Yemen was making progress in education. Primary gross enrollment increased from 73 per cent in 1999 to 101 per cent in 2013, while girls’ enrollment grew from 52 to 92 per cent in the same period. But the conflict has set the country back significantly. An estimated 2,500 schools are out of use due to being destroyed, closed or occupied by IDPs or armed forces, leading to a 20 per cent increase in children not enrolled since the beginning of the conflict.¹⁴

Recommendations

- ODVV calls on parties in conflict to allow free and easy transportation of vital goods of the people that include food, vaccines and medicines by donor nations, humanitarian and aid organizations to people in dire need.
- Saudi-led coalition must halt all violent actions against civilians that include women and children, such as airstrikes against medical centers, schools and homes.
- ODVV calls on the international community and international human rights and humanitarian organizations to make further efforts to establish peace in Yemen.
- ODVV calls on the international community to put pressure on countries that supply arms to the coalition countries who use them in the war in Yemen, particularly the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and Sweden.
- Lack of cash resources prevent humanitarian aid reaching Yemen. Therefore, the ODVV calls on all countries and international organizations to make efforts to facilitate international funds for humanitarian aid to the country.
- ODVV calls on all conflicting sides in Yemen to be committed to the conclusions of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen.
- In view of the contents of the A/HRC/39/43 report, the ODVV encourages the experts who had a mandate in this group to continue their efforts in documentation of crimes that are committed in the conflict in Yemen.

¹¹<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43960.pdf>

¹²<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-famine-civil-war-conflict-foodshortage-civilians-starvation-un-deaths-a8585006.html>

¹³<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/yemen-famine-children-deaths-1.49114179>

¹⁴<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/yemen/General/Docs/ImpactOfWarOnDevelopmentInYemen.pdf>