

Dozens of refugees killed in Saudi-led airstrike on Yemen

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The International Organization for Migration reported on Monday that an airstrike on the Al Mazraq refugee camp in Yemen's Hajjah Province killed at least forty people and injured two hundred others. The attack occurred on the fifth consecutive day of airstrikes carried out by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and backed by intelligence and logistical support from the United States.

According to Doctors Without Borders (MSF) at least five hundred families had entered the camp in recent days to escape airstrikes in northern Yemen being carried out by Saudi Arabia and its allies with the support of the United States.

MSF reported that its doctors treated 34 people wounded in the airstrike at its hospital in the nearby town Haradh. The group also reported that women and children were among 29 people dead on arrival at the facility.

The camp, which currently houses approximately 5,000 people in crude tent shelters, was established in 2009 to house people displaced by fighting between the Yemeni government and Iranian-backed Shiite Houthi militia in the northern provinces. "People in Al Mazraq camp have been living in very harsh conditions since 2009, and now they have suffered the consequences of an airstrike on the camp," Pablo Marco, MSF operational manager for Yemen, said in a statement released on Monday.

The MSF also reported that it has treated more than 500 patients at its emergency surgical unit in the southern port city of Aden since fighting broke out in recent weeks between forces loyal to President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi and Houthi militia backed by forces loyal to former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Saudi-led airstrikes over the weekend destroyed power plants in Houthi stronghold Saada, knocking out

power to most of the province. Jet fighters also hit targets throughout the capital of Sanaa for a fifth straight day Monday. Bombs rained down on the presidential palace as well as air defense systems, missile launch pads and jet fighters. Sanaa has been under the control of the Houthis since last September.

In less than a week, the Saudi-led campaign of unrelenting airstrikes has reportedly destroyed a significant portion of Yemen's air force and anti-aircraft defenses. Military bases and arms depots throughout the country have also come under attack.

The Houthi rebels have continued their assault on Aden, where Hadi had rallied loyal military forces before he fled the country for Saudi Arabia last week. Houthi forces that made an assault against Aden's northeastern suburbs Monday were met with heavy rocket and artillery fire from Egyptian warships.

Saudi and Yemeni officials have asserted that military operations will continue until the Houthi militias are militarily defeated and Hadi is in a position to reassert control over the entire country. Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud promised that his country would continue its military operations "until stability is returned" to Yemen.

Speaking at the Arab League meeting in Sharm El Sheikh on Sunday, ousted Yemeni Foreign Minister Riyadh Yassin rejected the prospect of a negotiated settlement with the Houthis. "The operation will end when Yemen is safe and secure. But we will only negotiate with those who are willing to disarm," he stated. "We won't negotiate with [the Houthis] because they carried out a coup. They used the state's weakness to take over."

Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both close US allies, have backed the expanding campaign of air strikes with the threat of an imminent ground invasion to push back the

Houthis. Saudi Arabia has mobilized as many as 150,000 soldiers and has positioned heavy artillery on its southern border with Yemen. Egypt has reportedly stationed troop ships off the coast of Yemen in preparation for an amphibious assault.

A delegation headed by Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaj Asif and foreign policy chief Sartaj Aziz will be in Saudi Arabia today, where they are expected to officially announce Pakistan's decision to send troops to take part in the military assault in Yemen.

A senior Pakistani official told Reuters on Monday that his government was planning on dispatching a contingent of soldiers to Saudi Arabia to support military operations. "We have already pledged full support to Saudi Arabia in its operation against rebels and will join the coalition," the official stated.

The open participation of Sunni majority Pakistan, which shares a border with Iran, in a ground invasion spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and Egypt and backed by the United States would mark a significant escalation in the conflict. What began as a proxy war between the Shiite Houthis backed by majority Shiite Iran and the Yemeni government backed by the Sunni monarchy of Saudi Arabia could rapidly devolve into an open sectarian conflict drawing in countries from the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.



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