

As cease-fire talks in Geneva collapse

Renewed Saudi-led bombardment kills, wounds dozens of Yemeni civilians

Thomas Gaist
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Saudi-led airstrikes killed at least 15 and wounded scores more this weekend during attacks against targets in Marib, Saada, Lahj, Jawf and Aden, according to Yemeni media.

War planes under the Saudi-led Arab coalition also struck the Sanaa International Airport in Yemen's capital over the weekend, and at least three civilians were killed Sunday by shelling of Aden's Al Naqib hospital.

The latest fatalities add to the more than 3,000 civilians killed since the beginning of Operation Decisive Storm in late March. The real civilian death toll may be as high as 6-8,000 according to differing estimates.

At least 6 million Yemenis currently face starvation or near-starvation conditions, and at least 9 million lack reliable access to water, according to UN estimates released last week.

Saudi forces have continued to deploy illegal cluster munitions against targets in Yemen, according to evidence published by Human Rights Watch last week.

Negotiations between Riyadh and Houthi representatives, supposedly organized to meet the demands of the UN and human rights groups for a ceasefire to enable humanitarian deliveries, ended Friday without any agreement. In an indication of the unserious character of the negotiations, representatives from the Houthi militias were reportedly "like ghosts," remaining inside their hotel rooms for most of the talks, according to reports.

Together with the steady bombardment of Yemeni cities and towns over the weekend, the breakdown of talks has underscored the incapacity of the various forces involved to halt the mounting bloodshed and chaos in Yemen, even temporarily.

The disintegration of of Yemen, increasingly an accomplished fact as large areas are taken over by the

Houthis, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and various militias and former army units loyal to the US-Saudi puppet government of President Abd Mansur Hadi, shows in microcosm the breakdown of the nation-state framework.

Central governments imposed by the colonial powers and developed by the national bourgeoisie are being supplanted by a patchwork of mini states, controlled by tribal and sectarian-based militant groups variously aligned with Saudi, Turkey and Iran, and by extension with their geopolitical patrons in Washington, Brussels and Moscow.

Like Yemen, large areas of Iraq and Syria are now effectively governed by non-state and provincial forces, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Kurdish peshmerga and a growing number of Iranian-backed Shia militias, upon which Baghdad has become increasingly reliant as the US-trained Iraqi Security Forces have proven unwilling to fight on behalf of the central government.

Since being driven from power by the Houthi offensive in the opening months of this year, the Hadi government, working in exile alongside its Saudi paymasters in Riyadh, has sought to reassert control areas of the country through the mobilization of militant factions hostile to the Iran-backed Houthis.

These efforts have included the quiet recruitment of AQAP as proxy fighters against the Houthis, on the side of the US-backed Saudi coalition and the remnants of the old regime. In Yemen, just as in Iraq and Syria, Islamist forces are being mobilized as shock troops on behalf of US imperialism and its allies.

Though propelled by the objective process of capitalist globalization, the breakup of Yemen, Iraq and Syria is also the subject of conscious planning by the imperialist

powers. In testimony to Congress last week, US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said that preparations for end of "a single state of Iraq" are now "an important part of US strategy on the ground."

Just days after Carter's statements, the *Washington Post* and other leading US outlets published an article by leading pro-imperialist pundit Charles Krauthammer, calling for "a new US strategy" which embraces the breakup of Iraq and Syria.

"It's time to rethink Iraq and Syria. It begins by admitting that the old borders are gone, that a unified Syria or Iraq will never be reconstituted, that the Sykes-Picot map is defunct," Krauthammer wrote.

Washington should "abandon anachronistic fealty to the central Iraqi government (now largely under Iran's sway anyway) and begin supplying the Iraqi Kurds in a direct, 24-hour, Berlin-style airlift. And in Syria, intensify our training, equipping and air support for the now-developing Kurdish safe zone," he wrote.

"In Mesopotamia, balkanization is the only way to go," he wrote.

Barely more than a decade after the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq, waged under the pretext of establishing "liberal democracy" in Baghdad and beyond, Washington is striving to shore up its flagging domination over the region through the promotion of a multitude of reactionary forces. Powerful circles in Washington are pushing for a further restructuring of the regional state system, along neocolonial and semi-feudal lines.

The plight of Yemen, overrun by right-wing militias and enduring a renewed Saudi onslaught with no end in sight, further illustrates the nightmare being produced by the new imperialist carve up of the region.

Heightened clashes along the Saudi-Yemeni border over the weekend, including reports of seizures of Saudi military sites in Jizan province by the insurgents on Sunday, have indicated that a major escalation of the ground war is in the offing.



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