

Dozens of civilians killed in US-backed airstrikes on markets in Yemen

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A Saudi-led coalition airstrike on a suburb of the southern port city of Aden killed more than 45 civilians on Monday. The deadly attack on a livestock market in the town of Foyoush also injured 50 civilians.

The bombing, carried out by US-backed coalition fighter jets, left behind a scene of bloody carnage. “I came right after the explosion and saw dozens of dead strewn about and a sea of blood, while the wounded were being evacuated to nearby hospitals,” Abu-Ali al-Azibi told the Associated Press. “(There was) blood from people mixed with that of the sheep and other livestock at the market.”

The Saudi-led campaign of airstrikes against Houthi rebels and allied forces, code named Operation Restoring Hope, is now in its fourth month. The Saudi-led coalition, which includes the monarchies of Jordan, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the military dictatorship in Egypt, has deployed fighter jets and bombs provided by the US, including illegal cluster munitions, since the end of March in its ruthless assault on the population of Yemen.

The US has also been providing Saudi Arabia with logistical support as well as intelligence, establishing a command center in Riyadh staffed by Saudi and US military officers. The US is also facilitating the assault by refueling fighter jets after bombing runs and providing lists of targets to be bombed. The World Health Organization conservatively estimates that more than 3,000 people—the majority of them civilians—have been killed, and another 14,000 wounded since Saudi-led airstrikes began at the end of March.

The Houthis, with the support of military forces loyal to former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, have taken control of most of Yemen’s western provinces. Saudi Arabia is seeking to weaken the Houthis and forces

loyal to Saleh in order to reinstate President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee Yemen for Riyadh by a Houthi advance on Aden in March.

Ceasefire negotiations between Saudi Arabia, Hadi supporters and Houthi representatives fell apart last month in acrimony. A Hadi representative said on Wednesday that he saw the possibility of a humanitarian ceasefire to begin on July 17 and to coincide with the three-day holiday of Eid al-Fitr. “We are now in consultations for guarantees to ensure the success of the truce,” Rajeh Badi, a Hadi spokesman, told Reuters. A previous so-called humanitarian pause in May allowed for some supplies to enter the country but did little to ease the crisis.

Monday’s attack followed a coalition airstrike on the Aahem market in the northern Hajjah province that killed as many as 30 civilians and wounded an as yet unknown number of others. Houthi rebels responded to Sunday’s attack by firing rockets against Saudi military targets across the border, including a military airport in the Saudi city of Najran.

Other airstrikes on Sunday destroyed the headquarters of Saleh’s General People’s Congress party in the capital city of Sanaa. Bombs also rained down on residential neighborhoods in the city reportedly targeting Houthi supporters as well as the home of one of Saleh’s relatives.

Human Rights Watch released a report at the end of June documenting a number of coalition airstrikes on civilian areas in the Houthi stronghold of Saada. The report found at least six homes that were in no way related to military activity destroyed by airstrikes. In one instance, bombs dropped by coalition jet fighters killed 27 members of the al-Ibbi family, including 17 children. Airstrikes were also carried out on at least five separate marketplaces throughout the city between

April and May.

In addition to carrying out daily airstrikes on civilian targets, the US-backed coalition is enforcing a naval blockade of Yemen's ports which has severely restricted the delivery of food, fuel and medical supplies desperately needed by the country's deeply impoverished population. UN special envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, raised a warning last month that the country was "one step" away from famine.

The blockade has successfully cut fuel imports to just 11 percent of their pre-war levels, and by the end of June the country was facing a cereal shortfall of 400,000 metric tons. The UN reported on June 30 that the port of Aden was completely inaccessible and ships carrying humanitarian aid have had difficulties docking at ports throughout the country.

At the beginning of July the UN officially declared that Yemen is experiencing one of the worst humanitarian crises on the planet. With more than 80 percent of the country's 24 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, UN officials agreed to declare a "Level 3" humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the next six months. The designation will reportedly allow for an increase in the amount of aid being delivered to Yemen.

The country has been driven to the brink of a health disaster with more than 15 million people without any access to health care. With millions lacking access to clean water, and garbage and bodies piling up in the streets, diseases such as dengue fever and malaria have become widespread. Every day there is an average of 150 new cases of dengue in the port city of Aden, with 11 people dying from the painful fever. The World Health Organization has warned of the danger of an outbreak of polio in a country that has been officially free of the debilitating disease since 2006.



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