

Obama's war crimes in Yemen

Niles Williamson
15 September 2015

Speaking before the Human's Rights Council in Geneva, the United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, called for an investigation into allegations of human rights violations by "all parties" in the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

In deliberately neutral terms, Prince Zeid pressed for both sides to show "far greater concern for the protection of civilians" in Yemen. According to the official UN tally, more than 2,000 civilians have been killed and another 4,000 wounded since March, when a Saudi-led coalition began raining bombs down on the country.

In recent weeks, thousands of troops from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Egypt have poured into the country, occupying areas around the southern port city of Aden and the northern province of Marib and setting the stage for a massive assault on the capital of Sana'a, which has been controlled by the Houthi since last fall. Armed and trained by the US military, these forces are preparing to unleash even more carnage against Yemen's civilians.

If the High Commissioner truly desires to bring to justice the culprits responsible for the mass suffering being inflicted on the population of Yemen, they will not be hard to find. He could start by calling for the indictment of US President Barack Obama and his administration on war crimes charges for their role in facilitating the onslaught fronted by the Saudis.

The Obama administration has routinely relied on the filthy and blood-soaked Saudi monarchy to serve as its gendarme on the Arabian Peninsula, enforcing American imperialist interests with the utmost brutality. With the full support of the Obama administration, the Saudi monarchy sent its military into neighboring Bahrain in 2011 to crush mass protests and prop up the US-backed dictatorship of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Earlier this month, Obama, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, welcomed with open arms Saudi beheader-in-chief, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, to the White House, where they held friendly discussions about a number of issues important to US interests in the Middle East, including the ongoing assault in Yemen.

The coalition of US puppets led by Saudi Arabia have deployed their American-supplied jet fighters, dropping American bombs guided by American intelligence, in an effort to reinstate the government of President Abdrabuh Monsour Hadi.

The beleaguered president established a government in exile in Riyadh after being forced to flee by Houthi militias, which took over much of the country's western provinces this spring with the backing of former longtime head of state Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The Obama administration has not only provided Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners with bombs, military intelligence and other logistical support in its air campaign. American refueling planes have been flying daily missions to ensure that coalition warplanes can keep pounding targets throughout the country around the clock. American advisers are vetting targets and working alongside Saudi officers in an operations center in Riyadh, which is overseeing military operations in Yemen.

To coincide with the Saudi monarch's visit to the US, it was announced that the Pentagon had reached a deal to sell Saudi Arabia one billion dollars' worth of bombs, refilling the stockpiles which have been drawn down by unrelenting airstrikes against the Yemeni population. The Obama administration previously struck a 20-year, \$60 billion weapons deal with Saudi Arabia in 2010, the largest in US history, agreeing to sell them, among other things, modern fighter jets and attack helicopters.

Now in its sixth month, the war has plunged the

country into the depths of a humanitarian disaster. Human rights organizations estimate that 21 million people, approximately 80 percent of the country's population, are in need of some form of humanitarian aid.

Shortages of food, medical supplies and clean drinking water have placed the lives of millions at risk. Dire warnings from humanitarian aid organizations that the country is on the verge of famine, with half a million children at risk of severe malnutrition, have done nothing to ease the assault.

Saudi warplanes have carried out a continuous barrage of airstrikes against civilian and military targets alike. Residential neighborhoods, workers barracks, factories, market places, schools, hospitals and commercial ports have all been targeted for destruction. Thousand-year-old mosques and other historic archeological sites have been destroyed by coalition bombs.

The only areas which have escaped coalition airstrikes are those parts of the country controlled by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which has proven itself an effective ally of the US in the effort to defeat the Houthis. US drone strikes continue to target individual AQAP leaders, but their fighters have been free to move throughout the country unmolested.

A few examples give a sense of the scale and scope of the criminal devastation being wrought by the Saudi coalition under the direct sponsorship of Obama administration:

On August 30, at least 36 workers were killed when Saudi jet fighters dropped bombs on a water bottling factory in the Abs District of Haajah province. Access to clean drinking water was severely limited prior to the onslaught, which has severely exacerbated the problem and put millions at risk of contracting water-borne diseases. Fuel shortages have also contributed to water shortages in the country.

On August 18, coalition jet fighters dropped bombs on the port of Hodeidah, destroying four cranes used to offload ships and also demolishing nearby warehouses. The port had been the main site for getting humanitarian aid into areas of the country controlled by Houthi forces. A blockade of Yemen enforced by Saudi Arabia and Egypt with the aid of US Navy warships has contributed to a shortage of food, fuel and desperately needed medical supplies. Aid shipments

had already been severely limited prior to the bombing of the port.

On July 24, coalition bombs ripped through dormitories housing power plant workers and their families in the southwestern city of Mokah. 63 people were killed and another 50 were injured in the attack. A reporting team from Amnesty International visited the attack site and found no indications that the housing units had ever been used for military purposes by the Houthis or their allies.

On July 6, a devastating airstrike on a busy livestock market in the town of Fayush, north of Aden, killed 45 people and wounded another 50. Livestock and food markets throughout the country have repeatedly been targeted for airstrikes.

Any one these devastating attacks, if they had been carried out by Russia, China or Iran, would have provoked non-stop headlines and media outrage. Politicians would have gone on televisions to weep crocodile tears over the civilian casualties and demand that something be done to bring those governments to account.

Obama, the onetime candidate of hope and change, has not only continued but expanded the imperialist interventions initiated by the Bush administration. In the last seven years, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia have all been subject to one or another form of American military intervention, inflicting death and destruction, while forcing millions of refugees to flee for their lives into Europe and elsewhere.

The brutal assault on Yemen exposes the grotesque hypocrisy of those who cry out for supposedly "humanitarian" interventions against governments which are not fully under the thumb of American imperialism. Over the last fourteen years, the so-called war on terror, "human rights" and the promotion of democracy have all been exposed as mere pretexts for establishing the hegemony of the US over the Middle East and its vast energy reserves.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact