

Saudi-led air strike on wedding party in Yemen kills at least 131

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As many as 131 people were killed in Yemen on Monday after Saudi coalition air strikes tore through a wedding party in the village of Al-Wahijah on the outskirts of the Red Sea port city of Mocha.

The attack marks the deadliest civilian massacre yet in the six-month-old war being waged by a coalition of Arab monarchies and dictatorships spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, backed to the hilt by the United States.

The missiles targeted the two separate wedding halls that had been set up for the men and women participating in the celebration. A graphic video of the attack site posted online depicts an impact crater and debris as well as the remains of multiple corpses strewn about the ground.

According to the Associated Press, medical officials at the hospital where most of the casualties were treated reported that 80 women were among those killed.

A spokesman for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon released a statement condemning the air strikes and warning of more death and destruction if the conflict continues. “Any intentional attack against civilians is considered a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Violations of international law should be investigated through prompt, effective, independent and impartial mechanisms to ensure accountability,” the spokesman concluded.

An anonymous senior official in the Saudi-supported Yemeni government in exile told the Associated Press that the attack had been the result of “a mistake.”

Saudi coalition spokesman Brigadier General Ahmed Al-Asseri’s assertion that there had been no coalition air strikes in the area and the attack may have been carried out by the Houthi rebels who are fighting the Saudi intervention was quickly exposed by eyewitnesses who saw warplanes fire missiles at the wedding party. The Houthis do not have an air force

while the Saudi coalition has complete control over Yemeni airspace.

Monday’s bloody attack followed an assault against a residential area in Hajjah province on Sunday by Saudi-coalition helicopter gunships that resulted in the deaths of 28 civilians and wounded 17 others.

Innocent men, women and children have borne the brunt of the unrelenting Saudi-spearheaded air assault combined with intense fighting on the ground. They make up more than half of the number killed in the conflict. Saudi coalition jet fighters have repeatedly dropped bombs on nonmilitary targets throughout the country.

Schools, hospitals, markets, mosques, ports, water bottling factories, workers’ dormitories and residential neighborhoods have all been targeted for destruction, often resulting in mass civilian casualties. The UN estimates that at least 2,355 civilians have been killed and 4,863 wounded since the end of March.

The attack on the wedding party in Al-Wahijah came on the same day that US President Barack Obama addressed the General Assembly of the UN and hypocritically presented his administration as a staunch defender of human rights and proponent of peace and stability around the world.

Ultimately the Obama administration bears responsibility for such massacres since it has been providing military aid and intelligence to the Saudi-led coalition in its effort to reinstate President Adbrabbuh Mansour Hadi. The president fled the country in March in the face of a rapid advance by Houthi militias who took control of much of the western portion of the country with the support of military forces loyal to former leader Ali Abdullah Saleh.

US military advisers are stationed at a joint military command center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia providing

intelligence and vetting lists of potential air strike targets. The American military is providing aerial refueling so that Saudi jets can carry out their operations while US drones are providing real-time video of targets.

Obama welcomed Saudi King Salman with open arms to the White House earlier this month to hold discussions on a number of issues including the ongoing war in Yemen. Coinciding with the monarch's visit, a billion-dollar deal was announced to replenish the Saudi Arabia weapons stockpile, which has been depleted by more than 25,000 air strikes in Yemen.

At the same time that the Saudi coalition has continued its air campaign throughout the country's western provinces, tens of thousands of troops have poured into the country, seizing territory surrounding the southern port city of Aden and taking up positions in the central Marib province east of the capital city of Sanaa.

The ground forces, which include troops from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, are setting up for a bloody assault to retake the capital city, which has been controlled by Houthi militias and their allies since last September.

The Obama administration has played a key role in modernizing the armed forces of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies include the United Arab Emirates, selling them billions of dollars worth of equipment including the F-15 fighter jets being used to wreak havoc in Yemen and providing their forces with advanced military training.

The US Navy has played a key role in enforcing a blockade of Yemen's ports, contributing to a severe shortage of food and medical supplies that is pushing the mass of the country's population into a humanitarian crisis. Yemen is reliant on shipments from its ports, importing 90 percent of its food supply by sea prior to the beginning of the Saudi-led assault. The World Food Program has determined that 10 of the 22 provinces in Yemen are confronting emergency food insecurity levels on the brink of famine. As a result, tens of thousands of children are suffering from malnutrition.

The UN estimates that approximately 20 million people, or 80 percent of the country's population, are in need of some form of humanitarian aid. Approximately 1.8 million people have been displaced

from their homes by the assault, with tens of thousands fleeing the country for refugee camps in Somalia and Djibouti.



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