

One year since the launch of the US-backed war

## Vast majority of Yemen population without reliable food, water and sanitation

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More than 80 percent of the Yemeni population is confronting a desperate humanitarian catastrophe as the US-backed Saudi war against Yemen, launched in March 2015 as “Operation Decisive Storm,” enters its second year.

Half of Yemen’s 22 provincial divisions face famine conditions. Some 20 million Yemenis are without reliable access to the most basic goods and services, including food, water and sanitation. More than 2.5 million have been displaced, 6,400 killed, and 30,000 wounded during the Saudi-led campaign, according to the latest UN statistics.

Humanitarian groups reduced food rations by 75 percent as a result of a massive shortfall in funds. The “international community” has provided only 12 percent of the \$1.8 billion in aid requested by the UN.

The year-long Saudi war has targeted Yemen’s population and social infrastructure as a whole, producing a sociocide easily comparable to those perpetrated against Iraq and Libya by the US and European powers. The US-backed Saudi forces routinely have targeted civilian areas throughout the war. A January UN report found that bombing of civilian targets has been “widespread and systematic.”

Saudi planes have carried out at least 119 bombing missions against civilian targets that constituted violations of international law, according to the UN panel. Saudi strikes killed more than 150 civilians in the past few weeks alone, according to UN Human Rights Chief Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. Human Rights Watch and the UN have separately documented multiple cases of illegal cluster bombs usage by Saudi forces against civilian areas.

As a result of this bloody onslaught nearly 2 million

Yemeni children have lost access to education and more than 600 medical facilities have ceased operations.

For all the bloodshed and destruction, the US-backed Saudi coalition has failed to achieve its utterly reactionary objective of restoring the government of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Hadi, a US-Saudi puppet imposed through a stage-managed “democratic transition,” was himself brought to power in an effort to stabilize the country amid the mass struggles that rocked the Middle East and North Africa in 2011.

The ferocity of the violence against Yemen is an expression of the country’s immense geopolitical significance. Hadi’s overthrow by the sectarian Houthi militia movement threatened to break the US-Saudi grip over a country which, despite its poverty, is essential to the world strategy of US imperialism.

Yemen’s coastline overlooks the Bab el-Mandeb straits, which enable passage of 3.2 million barrels of oil per day between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The straits are among the most crucial commercial chokepoints globally, and are central to Washington’s plans for war against China, which include plans to blockade and strangle the Chinese economy.

China’s Maritime Silk Road commercial corridor relies on the straits as its only seaborne access to European markets, a fact which explains the positioning of Beijing’s first naval base in Djibouti, directly across the critical waterway. The Chinese leadership signed a deal with Djibouti in January aimed at making the country a hub for Chinese companies.

In early April 2015, just days after the start of the Saudi war, China deployed its first naval patrol to Yemen. In May 2015, a Chinese squadron including

800 soldiers deployed to the neighboring Gulf of Aden.

The Saudi-led war has pushed the entire region closer to the brink of a general war. Riyadh used the war to rally the core of its new anti-Iranian military alliance, and to prepare expanded operations in Syria, Iraq, and ultimately against Iran itself.

Last month, the regime launched its largest ever war drills, codenamed “Operation Northern Thunder,” which included hundreds of thousands of troops from the militaries of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Senegal, Sudan, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Chad, Tunisia, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Malaysia, Egypt, Mauritania and Mauritius, and a panoply of advanced weapons systems purchased from US arms suppliers.

US imperialism bears ultimate responsibility for the destruction of Yemen. From the first days of the war US aircraft have been providing mid-air refueling in support of the Saudi coalition bombing runs, and US military and intelligence officers advised Saudi counterparts on target selection and strategy from a joint planning center in the Saudi capital. The ongoing slaughter in Yemen illustrates quite starkly that there are no limits to the barbarism which the US ruling class is prepared to employ in its efforts to control the entire planet.



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