UN warns US-Saudi war threatens mass starvation in Yemen

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United Nations aid agencies warned Friday that Yemen, after 18 months of savage bombardment in a US-backed war waged by Saudi Arabia and its fellow oil monarchies, is facing a catastrophic crisis threatening mass starvation.

More than 10,000 people have been killed since the Saudi regime began its bombing campaign in March 2015. Millions more have been displaced, and urban areas and essential infrastructure have been reduced to rubble.

According to statements issued by UN agencies, over 14 million Yemenis, more than half the population, is now living in hunger, while 7 million are on the verge of starvation.

In a press briefing in Geneva Friday, the UN children's agency UNICEF said that at least 370,000 children are at risk of severe malnutrition, and without urgent treatment will die. Fully 1.5 million children are malnourished.

The World Food Program (WFP) reported that almost half the children of Yemen are already suffering irreversibly stunted growth due to malnutrition. "An entire generation could be crippled by hunger," said the WFP's Yemen director, Torben Due.

The UN agency found that at least 10 of the country's 21 governorates are on the brink of famine.

"It is really a dire situation on the ground. When you see mothers who have little to eat themselves and they see their children slipping away, it just breaks your heart," said WFP spokeswoman Bettina Luescher. "It really is shocking and horrible to see this in the 21st century."

The threat of mass starvation is compounded by a rapidly spreading cholera epidemic, which has recorded 1,410 cases in just the three weeks since the outbreak was first detected.

This human tragedy is not merely the byproduct of a war waged by the wealthy and parasitical Gulf monarchies, backed by Washington, against the poorest nation in the Arab world. Rather, it is this war's intended effect.

The supposed aim of this war is to reinstate what is routinely referred to as the "internationally recognized government" of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, a stooge of Saudi Arabia who was placed in power through a 2012 election in which he was the sole candidate. He was supposed to step down in two years, but unilaterally extended his term and then, amid charges of wholesale corruption, was forced to flee the country after the Houthi rebels, based in the north and supported by elements of the military, took over the capital of Sana'a.

The Saudi regime, fearing any opposition in the region, refused to accept the rise of the Houthis, a political movement based on the Zaidi Shia group, which has enjoyed limited support from Iran.

In addition to a murderous bombing campaign that has targeted schools, hospitals, residential neighborhoods and factories, the Saudi-led coalition of Gulf sheikdoms, backed by the US Navy, has also imposed a sea blockade that has choked off the impoverished country's supplies of food and medicine. Before the war, Yemen imported 90 percent of its food. The blockade has sent the price of food and other basic necessities soaring out of reach of much of the population.

There is also mounting evidence that air strikes have been deliberately targeted at destroying the country's ability to provide its own food. The British daily *Independent* cited a study by London School of Economics researchers who documented "357 bombing targets in the country's 20 provinces, including farms, animals, water infrastructure, food stores, agricultural banks, markets and food trucks." Their conclusion: "...the Saudis are deliberately striking at agricultural infrastructure in order to destroy the civil society."

In other words, with the aid of US imperialism, Saudi Arabia and its allies are attempting to starve an entire population into submission in what constitutes one of the great war crimes of the 21st century.

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The UN reports came just days after Reuters photos from a Yemeni hospital of a starving 18-year-old girl, literally reduced to skin and bones, gained some international attention.

The photographs recall nothing so much as the horrific images that came out of Biafra in the late 1960s, when the Nigerian government waged a genocidal war to suppress the secessionist territory. That attempt to starve a people into submission is credited with spawning the modern-day "human rights" movement, with its plethora of NGOs and its overriding imperialist hypocrisy.

There is no such international reaction to the crimes carried out against the people of Yemen, however, which are largely ignored by the Western media and supported by the ruling parties not only in Washington but also the United Kingdom and all the other imperialist powers.

The media and the UN agencies have euphemistically referred to the slaughter being inflicted upon the Yemenis by the Saudi monarchy and the Pentagon as "the forgotten war." In reality, the immense human suffering inflicted by this war of aggression has not been forgotten, it has been deliberately blacked out by those in Washington and Riyadh who are determined to deepen it to the point of mass murder in order to achieve their strategic objectives.

Samantha Power, the US ambassador to the United Nations, who made a lucrative career posturing as a human rights champion, was one of the leading proponents within the Obama administration for US support for the war against the people of Yemen. She has also been one of the principal defenders of the Saudi regime within the United Nations, which on Friday re-elected the blood-soaked monarchy to its human rights council.

Power, who has led the demonization of Russia over alleged war crimes in Aleppo, has, for obvious reason, shown no such sympathy for those dying from starvation and US bombs in Yemen.

Since the beginning of the war, the Pentagon has provided logistical and intelligence support, including the aerial refueling of warplanes, without which the Saudi bombing campaign would be impossible. Moreover, the US has poured a whopping $115 billion in arms into the kingdom since Obama took office, resupplying bombs and missiles dropped on Yemeni homes, schools and hospitals.

Following an October 8 Saudi bombing of a funeral, killing over 140 people, the Obama administration and the Pentagon issued hollow statements about US support to Riyadh not being a "blank check" and Washington's military backing being reevaluated "so as to better align with US principles, values and interests."

Within days, however, a spokesman for the US Central Command told reporters that nothing had changed, and that the US was continuing to provide aerial refueling of Saudi warplanes so that they could strike their targets in Yemen. Then on October 12, the US Navy fired Tomahawk cruise missiles at Yemeni installations in retaliation for what it claimed were failed missile attacks on a US warship.

Earlier this week, US Central Command Chief General Joseph Votel flew to Riyadh for talks with Saudi officials, including the regime's defense minister, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Votel told reporters that he wanted to "hear Saudi concerns" and that it was "important to maintain confidence in the relationship."

The threat of the war in Yemen not only continuing, but seeing a more direct US military escalation is likely to intensify in the aftermath of the US presidential election.

Michael Morell, the former acting director of the CIA and key adviser to Hillary Clinton's campaign, spoke on Tuesday before the Center for American Progress, the think tank founded by the Clinton campaign chairman, John Podesta, calling for a more aggressive US policy to punish Iran for its "malign behavior in the region."

Morell, who has previously advocated bombing Syrian government positions and carrying out military actions to "make Russia pay a price" for its presence in that country, claimed that Iran is shipping arms to the Houthis in Yemen. He said he would support "having the US Navy boarding their ships and if there are weapons on them to turn those ships around."

In other words, the preparations are being made for a far wider US war in the region, with the threat that it will spill over into a global conflict.

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