

Sixty dead, over 100 wounded in Saudi air strikes on Yemeni port city

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The toll from US-backed Saudi coalition air strikes on a fish market and hospital in the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah Thursday has risen to at least 60 people dead and 130 others wounded. The bombardment, which has been all but ignored by the establishment press, comes amid a weeks-long siege of the western city and coalition efforts to destroy vital civilian infrastructure, threatening to sharply escalate the world's most dire humanitarian crisis.

Saudi coalition warplanes struck a crowded Hodeidah fish market as throngs of residents packed in to purchase one of Yemen's only abundant domestic sources of food. Witnesses report a chaotic scene as a warplane overhead fired upon the packed market, then continued to linger above the city. As people rushed the dead and injured to the al-Thawra hospital just 20 meters (60 feet) away, the warplane began bombing the entrance to the hospital, apparently to prevent the injured from receiving treatment.

By all accounts, there were no military targets in the surrounding area, nor even a noticeable presence of armed men. Rather, rights groups and witnesses argue that bombing of the fish market and the follow-up attack on the hospital served no apparent purpose other than to spread terror within Yemeni society following a series of attempts over recent weeks to recapture the city that have all ended in defeat or stalemate for the invading forces. These are comprised primarily of mercenaries from Central America and members of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula from the country's east and south.

A 38-year-old Hodeidah resident, Alaa Thabet, told *Middle East Eye* that he was on his way home when, "I heard a warplane hover over Hodeidah. Then I heard an air strike target the fish market and the buzzing of the warplane was clearer after the attack. After that people

went to take the casualties to several hospitals, including al-Thawra Hospital, but the warplane returned to hover again."

Dr. Yaser Nour was working in the oncology center at al-Thawra Hospital when he heard the sound of air strikes and "saw the smoke rising in front of the gate." He continued: "I was in a state of severe panic. Everyone was running scared while I was heading towards the emergency gate. I saw more than 10 bodies, including four women and a young girl."

The Saudi-led coalition began its offensive against Yemen in March 2015 following the overthrow of the corrupt puppet regime of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi in 2014.

The Houthis, a militant political movement based on the Zaidi branch of Shia Islam, today controls most of the country's densely populated north, including the capital of Sanaa.

The Saudi-led campaign—which could not be waged without vital support from the United States in the form of intelligence, logistics and weaponry—has killed tens of thousands of people in the poorest country in the Arab world due to the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and deliberate destruction of infrastructure. Over the past month, the coalition has targeted water treatment facilities that serve the 600,000 residents of Hodeidah, leading to fears of a deepening cholera outbreak that has already infected over one million, as sanitation is shut off.

The suffering of the Yemeni people at the hands of the Saudis has been compounded by a US-enforced blockade of the nation, which relies on imports for over 90 percent of its food supply, 70 percent of which flows through Hodeidah. This has led to more than one-third of the population of 22 million being at risk of starvation.



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