

Saudi airstrike kills 21 civilians in Yemen

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A United Nations (UN) report released on Thursday confirmed that at least 21 Yemeni civilians were killed and 11 more injured in an October 24 airstrike carried out by Saudi-led coalition forces. The latest civilian target destroyed by Washington's despotic ally was a vegetable packaging facility, located in the town of Bayt el-Faqih, located approximately 43 miles southwest of Hodeidah. The dead and injured consisted of workers, farmers and children.

According to a Yemen health ministry source, as reported to the Middle East Eye, about half of the fatalities were instant. The remaining deaths were a result of rescuers being unable to reach medical facilities in a timely manner. What should be a one-hour drive from Bayt el-Faqih to Hodeidah now takes over six hours to accomplish as the warring factions have set up checkpoints and roadblocks along the contested highway.

Houthi rebels were not seen in the area, nor was any military equipment found in the aftermath of the slaughter. The Associated Press and Al-Jazeera have confirmed via an unreleased video that charred human remains were scattered throughout the facility and marketplace. This is third airstrike launched by the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) in the last week that has resulted in civilian casualties. The RSAF is well equipped and supplied by Western imperialism, featuring US manufactured Boeing F-15 Eagles and the British Aerospace (BAE) Panavia Typhoons.

On Saturday October 20, RSAF jets bombed Zayed Street in Hodeidah, killing a civilian and injuring four others. Prior to the massacre in Bayt el-Faqih on Wednesday, Saudi jets pummeled a motorcyclist in a residential section of Hodeidah, killing 3, including a child, and wounding 6 more, according to Middle East Eye.

The town of Bayt el-Faqih, and the market surrounding it were regarded by civilians as a "safe"

place to prepare fruits and vegetables away from the besieged port city of Hodeidah. Saudi-led strikes have decimated Yemen's infrastructure, reducing water treatment plants and sanitation facilities in the area to rubble. Because of this, workers and farmers have been obligated to travel to the vegetable plant, washing their crops, before making the dangerous journey to the besieged Red Sea port markets.

In response to these latest war crimes, the reliably ineffectual UN, has, once again, called for an investigation into the Saudi air strikes. It is has been established fact since the beginning of the war, that the US and UK have supplied the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with over 12 billion dollars in aircraft and ordinance and vital intelligence in coordinating "appropriate" targets for Saudi warplanes. If no "targets" are immediately available, US Air Force KC-135's are prepared to refuel Saudi bombers, keeping them in sky, ensuring their deadly payload is delivered.

In a January 2016 report, filed by a UN panel to the Security Council, this targeting has included, "...civilians and civilian objects, in violation of international humanitarian law, including camps for internally displaced persons and refugees; civilian gatherings, including weddings; civilian vehicles, including buses; civilian residential areas; medical facilities; schools; mosques; markets, factories and food storage warehouses; and other essential civilian infrastructure, such as the airport in Sana'a, the port in Hodeidah and domestic transit routes."

Echoing the UN's commitment to injustice, Colonel Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition stated the Bayt el-Faqih bombing will be, "fully investigated...using an internationally approved process."

The last time the coalition investigated itself was after Saudi jets savagely bombed a school bus in August,

killing 51 people, including 40 children. That investigation concluded the bus, was not a “legitimate military target,” and that those “responsible *should* be held accountable.” (Emphasis added)

These terror bombings, in addition to the US/Saudi naval blockade of Hodeidah, has placed Yemen on the brink of starvation. Over 70 percent of the country’s imports once passed through the Red Sea ports. Now, due to the blockade, 14 million people—over half of the country’s population—faces famine if the war continues through the rest of the year. UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock warned this week that, “there is a clear and present danger of an imminent and great big famine engulfing Yemen.”

In addition to severe food and water insecurity, Yemen’s currency, the rial, has plunged in value while inflation has nearly doubled from 24.7 percent in 2017 to an estimated 41.8 percent in 2018. The collapse of Yemen’s economy has exacerbated social conditions for what was already the poorest country in the Middle East. According to a World Bank report, as of September 2018, 52 percent of the population subsists on less than \$1.90 a day, while 81 percent make due with less than \$3.20.

Compounding the effects of food shortages and a collapsing economy, Yemen is also suffering the largest cholera outbreak in modern history, with over 1 million suspected cases in 2017. According to the World Health Organization, 30 percent of the cholera cases in Yemen are in children under 5 years old. A 170 percent increase in cholera cases was reported by hospitals run by Save The Children between June and August 2018.

The latest gruesome Saudi airstrikes portend more suffering for the civilian population in Yemen, especially in Hodeidah. A ground offensive by Saudi/UAE forces is being prepared, as anonymous Yemen government officials, loyal to Saudi Arabia, reported that tanks and armored personnel carriers from the United Arab Emirates had arrived in the country on Wednesday.

Suddenly discovering US involvement in Yemen along with other US State Department socialists in the aftermath of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by a Saudi hit squad in Turkey, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, took to the op-ed section of the New

York Times on Wednesday, calling for an “end to the carnage.” Cynically, Sanders declared the war “unconstitutional,” as Congress had not authorized its prosecution. The reason why Sanders did not bring this urgent constitutional crisis to the public’s attention when President Backed Obama facilitated and backed the Saudi-led war at its outset in 2015 was left unstated.



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