

Saudi attack on hospital kills eight as war in Yemen enters fifth year

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A Saudi coalition jet fighter carried out an attack on a hospital in Yemen Tuesday morning destroying the medical facility in Kitaf, a rural area approximately 60 kilometers outside the northwestern city of Saadah. The strike, which hit a gas station just outside the gates of the hospital, killed eight people, including five children, and forced the closure of the facility, which provided much needed medical services to thousands of people in the region.

The criminal attack in Kitaf came four years to the day after a US-backed, Saudi-led military coalition began dropping bombs on Yemen in an effort to push back an insurgency by Houthi rebels that had taken over much of the country, and to reinstate the puppet government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

The attack on the hospital in Kitaf was especially egregious since it had been “de-conflicted,” meaning that its exact coordinates had been provided to the Saudis as part of a no-strike list drawn up to keep any bombs and missiles from falling within a 100-meter radius of the facility.

The missile strike on the hospital also took place just as it was opening for patients in the morning, the busiest time of day. The attack destroyed the hospital’s pharmacy and damaged its medicine supply, emergency power generator and an ambulance. It could take months for the facility to be fully operational again.

One medical worker was injured while treating two children in the hospital’s emergency room. “All people were screaming and running out of the hospital. The structure of the hospital was totally damaged inside,” he reported to Save the Children.

“Our colleague lost two children. They were burned. I got injured in my head and I was bleeding. I ran away from the hospital with my colleague to a safe place but we found nothing that could help me stop the bleeding.

It was the most difficult moments of my life.”

“Not only has this attack shattered the lives of those killed and injured, but it threatens to have a catastrophic impact on health care for 5,000 people in the area,” Jason Lee, Save the Children deputy country director in Yemen warned in a statement Wednesday. “Pregnant women may be forced to give birth without the care that could save them and their babies’ lives. Starving children may go without lifesaving treatment for severe malnutrition.”

Coalition jets have continued to carry out airstrikes in the area. A jet fighter was spotted flying overhead during the funeral for one of the victims on Wednesday, causing mourners to flee for cover out of fear of an imminent missile strike.

The Saudi-fronted war, which began with the backing of US President Barack Obama and continues under Trump, has bogged down into a bloody stalemate, with Yemeni civilians bearing the brunt of the war’s casualties. Researchers from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project estimate that between 70,000 and 80,000 people have been killed as a direct result of the war since the coalition assault began on March 26, 2015.

Three-quarters of Yemen’s population is in need of emergency aid and more than 8 million have been pushed to the brink of starvation by a Saudi blockade of the country, with children suffering a tragically heavy burden. The United Nations estimates that more than 1.3 million children have suffered from severe acute malnutrition over the last four years.

Save the Children estimates that at least 85,000 children under the age of 5 have died of starvation since 2015 as a result of the immense humanitarian crisis sparked by the war. Another 2,500 people died from cholera during the world’s largest outbreak between

April 2017 and October 2018, when more than 1 million cases were recorded.

This grim toll would not have been possible without the support of the United States, which has provided Saudi Arabia with the jet fighters, bombs and other military equipment that it needed to rain down death and destruction on the poorest country in the Middle East. Crucially, the US has provided the Saudi coalition with refueling flights, allowing its fighters to carry out repeated attacks, and helped draw up lists of military targets. Saudi Arabia has even deployed US-made cluster bombs, a deadly munition banned by an international treaty neither country has signed.

Saudi Arabia and its Arab coalition partners have committed flagrant war crimes in Yemen, repeatedly carrying out airstrikes on hospitals, schools, marketplaces, factories and critical infrastructure. Last year, a Saudi warplane dropped a 500-pound bomb on a bus carrying school children, killing 40 children and 11 others and wounding 79, including 56 children.

A bipartisan initiative in the US Congress to invoke the 1972 War Powers Act and bring American military intervention in Yemen to an end is cosmetic and entirely toothless. Trump has already declared he will veto the joint resolution that was passed by the Senate this month and is currently awaiting a vote in the House.

As with Obama, the war in Yemen is seen by the Trump administration as a critical component of American imperialism's efforts to counter Iranian influence in the Middle East and prepare for war against Tehran. Congress approved the sale of more than \$500 million in precision-guided bombs to the Saudi monarchy in 2017, and US special forces have been operating on the Saudi Arabian side of the border with Yemen for more than a year.



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