

US and UK launch war against Yemen

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The US and UK began bombing Yemen tonight, including strikes in the country's densely-populated cities. While the scale of the assault is still emerging, the bombardment is an illegal act of war targeting an oppressed and impoverished nation that had already been ravaged by a years-long onslaught by Saudi Arabia, backed by the US and its allies.

The attack highlights the growing danger of a broad Middle Eastern conflict, as the US seeks to transform Israel's genocide in Gaza into a regionwide offensive, particularly targeting Iran.

In a statement to Reuters, a Houthi official confirmed that strikes had hit the capital city, Sanaa, which has an estimated population of more than three million, as well as Dhamar in the southwest, Sada in the northwest, and Al Hudaydah, the largest Yemeni port city adjacent to the Red Sea.

Associated Press journalists reported hearing five airstrikes in Sanaa. Footage posted to X/Twitter shows large explosions in Al Hudaydah.

A US military statement proclaimed that the attack hit 60 "targets" and involved "Over 100 precision-guided munitions." As of this writing, the toll of dead and injured is unknown.

In comments cited by the *Al Mayadeen* news agency, Hussein al-Ezzi, the Houthi deputy foreign minister, said: "Our country was subjected to a massive aggressive attack by American and British ships, submarines and warplanes, and they will have to prepare to pay a heavy price and bear all the dire consequences of this blatant aggression."

The US and the UK have effectively launched a new war without even a figleaf of Congressional or parliamentary approval. Amid widespread and ongoing popular anger over the Gaza genocide, US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did not front the press to announce the operation or to answer questions about the bombing.

Instead, the White House issued a statement in Biden's name confirming that strikes had begun.

It declared: "Today, at my direction, U.S. military forces—together with the United Kingdom and with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands—successfully conducted strikes against a number of targets in Yemen used by Houthi rebels to endanger freedom of navigation in one of the world's most vital waterways."

Biden concluded by threatening a further escalation. "These targeted strikes are a clear message that the United States and our partners will not tolerate attacks on our personnel or allow hostile actors to imperil freedom of navigation in one of the world's most critical commercial routes. I will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary."

The attempt to present the bombardment as a defensive action, upholding international law, is a fraud on the scale of the lies about weapons of mass destruction used to justify the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The clear aim of the bombardment is to ensure that nothing obstructs the now three-month long US-Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. Since mid-November, Houthi forces have carried out a number of operations in the Red Sea, with the stated aim of blocking war materiel and military-related supplies from being delivered to Israel and used against Gaza.

The US-led bombing campaign is thus of a piece with the Biden administration's funding of the Gaza genocide, to the tune of tens of billions of dollars, and its repeated "urgent" deliveries of munitions to the Zionist regime to ensure that the mass slaughter continues.

The war has been in preparation for weeks. In December, the Biden administration unveiled "Operation Prosperity Guardian," an international

coalition to enforce de facto US and Israeli control over the Red Sea. That included public lobbying of European and allied states to commit warships to the region.

On January 3, a US-orchestrated statement signed by 13 of its “partners” included bellicose threats of conflict with the Houthis. On Wednesday, the US successfully moved a resolution in the United Nations Security Council condemning the Houthis and setting the stage for an attack on Yemen.

The US and the UK are bombing a country that has already been decimated by imperialist-backed war.

In 2014 and 2015, the Houthi movement took over large swathes of Yemen, in a mass struggle against the government of then President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. Hadi had come to power in the wake of a popular uprising in 2011 against the dictatorial regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, but had resolved none of the social issues that gave rise to that upheaval.

Saudi Arabia responded to the advance of the Houthis by launching a brutal war in March, 2015 aimed at restoring Hadi. At the start of 2022, the United Nations estimated that the Saudi onslaught had claimed 377,000 lives.

In the course of the war, Saudi Arabia carried out actions of a genocidal character, in some instances paralleling what Israel is now inflicting on Gaza. That included a blockade of all supplies, initiated in 2015 and then intensified in 2017. Saudi Arabia later claimed to have lifted the siege, but continued to hinder and delay supplies to the country.

Saudi Arabia systematically bombed Yemen’s agricultural crops and foodstuffs, in a policy aimed at deliberately orchestrating a famine. Estimates indicate that up to 60 percent of the death toll is the result of starvation. The onslaught contributed to mass disease outbreaks, including a cholera epidemic that infected a million people in a country of 34 million.

In 2019, the United Nations warned that Yemen had the highest number of people requiring urgent humanitarian aid in the world. That cohort included an estimated 75 percent of the entire population. The following year, Yemen was the second-worst placed country in the world on the Global Hunger Index, as well as the highest on the Fragile States Index.

The war crimes were funded by successive US administrations, beginning with that of Obama.

Between 2015 and 2021, the Defence Department allocated \$54.6 billion of military support to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which also played a central role in the bombardment. The US, together with its allies including Britain, trained Saudi pilots, provided intelligence and politically defended the onslaught.

In bombing Yemen, the US and the UK are not so much returning to the scene of a previous crime, as continuing one that never ended. Notably, Al Hudaydah, one of the cities bombed tonight, was a particular target of Saudi Arabia, because it is a port. Denying Houthi access to the Red Sea was also a key component of the Saudi Arabian blockade.

US backing for the Saudi onslaught was bound up with the fact that the Houthis are a Shia movement with ties to Iran. By taking power, they had threatened the imperialist-dominated status quo as well as the protracted US moves against Iran.

The current attack, occurring as it does amid full-scale US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, Zionist bombing operations targeting Lebanon and Syria, and threats from Washington against Iran, underscores the danger of a massive conflagration throughout the region and more broadly.



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