

# YEMEN

1000 DARK DAYS OF A DISGRACING WAR  
A CARNAGE WE CAN NEITHER FORGET  
NOR FORGIVE AND THAT HISTORY WILL  
RECALL WITH SHAME



Middle East  
*middle east*

EDITED & PREFACED BY ARDESHIR ZAHEDI

# YEMEN

1 000 DARK DAYS OF A DISGRACING WAR  
A CARNAGE WE CAN NEITHER  
FORGET NOR FORGIVE AND THAT  
HISTORY WILL RECALL WITH SHAME

EDITED AND PREFACED  
BY  
ARDESHIR ZAHEDI



# Contents

What's Going On .....	5
Introduction .....	7
Part One: Yemen and World Organisations .....	9
1. UN Security Council Debate .....	10
2. Amnesty International Report on Yemen 2016-2017 .....	29
3. Human Rights Watch 2017 .....	36
4. U.N. Panel.....	45
5. Senator Murphy Demands Congressional Action on Saudi Arabia's Blockade .....	51
6. Congress Says America's Sketchy Role in Yemen War is not Authorized.....	58
7. Rep. Lieu and Members of Congress Urge Ambassador Haley to Call for U.N. Investigation of Yemen Atrocities.....	61
8. Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention.....	66
9. Democratic Veterans in Congress Call for Briefing on Yemen Raid .....	78
10. Emergency Debate in the House of Commons .....	80
11. EU Parliament backs ban on Saudi weapons sales over Yemen war .....	144
12. Recommendations for the EU's policy on Yemen .....	151
13. UN Slams Absurd War .....	161
Part Two: The Media, At Last.....	163
14. Photos Reveal Dimensions of the Tragedy .....	164
15. Let's Be Blunt: With U.S. And U.K. Complicity, The Saudi Government is Committing War Crimes in Yemen.....	168

16. When We're Complicit in War Crimes.....	175
17. What is happening in Yemen? The War and Humanitarian crisis explained .....	178
18. The Catastrophe of Saudi Arabia's Trump-Backed Intervention in Yemen .....	181
19. The Observer View on Saudi Arabia, the US and Yemen	186
20. Stop the Unconstitutional War in Yemen .....	189
21. Yémen, la guerre qu'on nous cache .....	193
22. Yemen's War Is a Tragedy. Is it Also a Crime? .....	196
23. There's a Disaster Much Worse than Texas. But No One Talks About It.....	203
24. Cholera Spreads as War and Poverty Batter Yemen .....	207
25. Saudis Try to Starve Yemen Into Submission.....	213
26. Saudi Arabia's Leader Spent \$450 Million on a Painting. Here's What That Could Do for Victims of His War in Yemen .....	215
27. Is Iran Really to Blame for Yemen Conflict?.....	218
28. Amid the Carnage in Yemen, Civilians Also Face Consequences of the U.S. War on Terror.....	222
29. The Yemen Crucible .....	227
Part Three: A Moving Epilogue to a Tragic Tale.....	231
Forget, A Poem .....	233

# What's Going On

At one time,  
We bombed Vietnam.  
We said we were Fighting Communism,  
But it was all a lie.  
We killed innocent people  
In Southeast Asia  
Because it was PROFITABLE  
To do so  
And due to INDIFFERENCE.  
Most Americans  
Didn't know much  
About Vietnam.  
Now,  
We say we're "Against Terrorism",  
But we are arming Saudi Arabia,  
To Commit Massacres  
Of innocent people in Yemen.  
Yemen,  
Simply doesn't exist to most Americans.  
It's not a place we have  
Any Familiarity with.  
So,  
Killing Innocent People  
Isn't viewed as a Crisis.  
It's not that most people  
SUPPORT the War there.  
They just don't know  
What's going on.

Daniel Steven Moskowitz  
April 2016

AZ



Ardeshir Zahedi served as Foreign Minister of Iran from 1966-71. He was also Iranian ambassador to the United States and Great Britain.

# Introduction

It is now more than 1000 dark days the world is witnessing with shame the horrors of one of the most inhuman, unjust, unnecessary wars in the course of modern history; an unauthorised war that in the words of the United Nations has created “the largest human crisis.”

Figures speak louder than words: the war in Yemen has left more than 10.000 killed, three million displaced, 300.000 besieged, 50.000 deaths because of famine, lack of medicine and diseases spread by war, more than a million—mostly innocent children in the tender years of their childhood—victims of cholera, diphtheria or other contaminated water diseases. Every five to ten minutes another child dies. This cruel war has forsaken more than 7,000,000 on the brink of famine ... but the savage war continues to feed producers and dealers of arms of massive destruction. The ballistic missiles and ultra-sophisticated Saudi Arabia’s military aviation and warfare machinery has brought more than 4.6 billion pounds to British companies and over 115 billion dollars to their American counterparts. Yemen, the near-total devastation of the country and the torments of the guiltless people of this poorest nation of the world do not seem to trouble of the conscience of the perpetrators.

Only recently and after a long period of complicit silence, some committed figures have raised their voice against the carnage. It started with the journalists and reporters in BBC, the French media, European diplomats, Members of the House of Commons, a few American Senators and Congressmen, and above all world organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Watch and recently the UN Security Council. Their courage and conviction opened the eyes of the world and began to mobilize global opinion and humanitarian efforts.

What follows is a modest echo of these voices. I hope that you would also contribute to the collection so that a more solid document may remain for the annals of time. May this serve to shock, to wake up and



to warn so that such barbarity and brutality may stop and not happen again.

Let us hope and raise our hands to pray that 2018 would be a year of return to wisdom and human responsibility.

Ardeshir Zahedi.  
Montreux. January 2018

# **Part One:**

## **Yemen and World Organisations**

# 1. UN Security Council Debate

United Nations Security Council Seventy-second year  
8066th Meeting October 10, 2017

President:	Mrs. Gueguen/Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Bolivia	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, and Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Responsive Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

**Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed** (*spoke in Arabic*): The parties to the conflict in Yemen are pursuing a futile and cruel military conflict, which is eroding the path to peace. At the same time, the people of Yemen are suffering from an entirely man-made humanitarian catastrophe. Clashes and exchanges of heavy fire have continued on all major frontlines, including Taiz, Ma'rib, Al Jawf, Al Bayda, Hajjah and Sa'dah

governorates, and the Saudi-Yemen border areas. The recent sharp increase in civilian casualties show the parties' continued disregard for the loss of civilian life and their obligations under international humanitarian law. An airstrike against a residential suburb of Sana'a took place on 25 August reportedly resulted in the killing of 14 civilians and the injury of 16 others, and caused further damage to civilian infrastructure.

In Taiz city, shelling of residential areas from zones controlled by Houthi forces and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh has continued. In two incidents on 15 and 18 September, rocket-fire killed and injured tens of civilians, including eight children. In addition, on 23 September the coalition intercepted a Houthi missile fired towards the Saudi city of Khamis Al-Mushayt. The Houthis' recent threats to expand the firing of ballistic missiles towards other countries in the Gulf region represent a counterproductive escalation of rhetoric.

Resolution 36/31, recently adopted by the Human Rights Council, supports the Yemen National of Inquiry and establishes a group of experts to examine alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and international law. It is a significant sign of the increased engagement of the international community and a step forward towards accountability and reducing future violations.

I have consistently reminded the warring parties of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law and human rights law, including their obligation to stop the recruitment of child soldiers and to end sexual and gender-based violence. Targeting civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are unacceptable.

The conflict is creating a desperate situation in every facet of daily life. The economy is shrinking even further and the use of dwindling State revenues to fund the war continues to hinder the salary payments on which millions of Yemenis depend. There are continuing efforts to reactivate the Central Bank and stabilize the Yemeni economy, as recently discussed in the track-II event held in Germany for the interest

of repayment of salaries to Yemeni civil servants, including those in the education and health sectors. This will hopefully decrease the humanitarian and economic strife.

Approximately 17 million individuals are food insecure, and over one third of the country's districts are now in severe danger of famine. The destruction of infrastructure and the breakdown of public services have fuelled the world's worst outbreak of cholera, which has already killed more than 2,100 individuals and continues to infect thousands each week.

If things remain unchanged, future Yemeni generations will have to suffer and bear the burden of this conflict—including the massive destruction, malnutrition, lack of education and economic deterioration it has caused. In the absence of a political solution, the outlook can only become bleaker. An agreement to end the war is urgently needed so that a new Yemeni unity Government, supported by the international community, can be formed and begin the process of rebuilding the country's economy and State institutions.

I welcome the efforts of the World Bank and UNICEF to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis. The first disbursement of cash assistance to the most vulnerable Yemeni households took place on 20 August. The \$400 million programme will reach all of its beneficiaries in the coming weeks and months. The programme is providing vital support to those households and is maintaining a critical safety-net system.

There are no winners on the battlefield in Yemen. The losers are the Yemeni people, for it is they who are suffering from this war. They are getting poorer while their influential leaders are getting richer. These leaders are not interested in finding solutions because in a settlement they will lose their power and control. Nevertheless, the parties have to commit to ending all hostilities and start discussions for a comprehensive peace agreement.

Common ground must be found in order to relieve the effects of conflict, hunger and disease and to increase mutual trust. An agreement

that provides for secure access for humanitarian and commercial goods to reach Hudaydah and get distributed to the rest of the country, for the opening of the Sana'a airport and for ensuring more consistent civil-service salary payments will be an essential step in alleviating the humanitarian crisis. However, those steps cannot replace the broad solution we are trying to achieve, which will be a part of a larger comprehensive peace agreement.

To reach such a peace agreement, I held meetings with Yemeni and international officials during the opening week of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly in New York. I continue to be in communication with the parties. I am currently in the process of discussing a proposal that includes humanitarian initiatives to rebuild trust and steps to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. We will discuss the details of this proposal with the Government of Yemen and the alliance of the Houthis and General People's Congress, which have committed to engaging in further discussions on the details of the proposal. We hope that this commitment will translate into action by the parties and that it will deepen their engagement with me with respect to those initiatives, with a view to achieving a peaceful political solution.

The bloodshed and destruction in Yemen has to end. There are no excuses. There are no justifications. People are asking the United Nations to provide a solution for salary-payment issue while others are actively working to hinder talks on the issue as if they able ignore the fact that millions of Yemenis are suffering. Many of the powerful in Yemen benefit from the current conflict at a time when their citizens are facing the worst suffering in the history of the country.

At a time when the gap between the Yemeni people and those in power is growing, the people want this war to end. Yemeni young people, women and civil-society groups are calling for peace, stability and accountability for crimes committed. In the southern governorates, past injustices and calls for greater autonomy remain unaddressed despite the urgent need for them to be addressed. The Yemenis

themselves are not without many positive ideas for tackling these issues in a peaceful manner, but the parties need to show greater flexibility and listen to the people. If they do not do so, the fissures in Yemen's political and social fabric will only become wider, thereby increasing the danger of further fragmentation and with it the potential for terrorism.

The United Nations is using all its political, logistical, administrative and advisory capabilities to support the Yemeni cause, but only the warring parties can decide to reach peace. They are the ones who will be held to account for a failure. I reiterate that the only viable path for the future of Yemen is a negotiated settlement. The proposals that I have put forward meet the concerns of both parties. Their implementation would bring real benefits to the Yemeni people.

Finally, I request the Security Council to use all its political and economic power to apply pressure on all parties to commit to a path of peace. The parties must climb out of their trenches and put an end to hostile rhetoric. Instead of fighting over Yemen, let us cooperate for the best interests of Yemen.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ging.

**Mr. Ging:** Last month, Yemen entered the third year of its armed conflict with no clear end in sight. The human cost of this conflict has been devastating. Air strikes, shelling and ground fighting continue in urban areas, where civilians are being injured or killed and the critical infrastructure they rely on is being destroyed. The international community has witnessed the devastation in which the Yemeni people now live, and because of the crisis approximately 15 million people lack adequate access to clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, or health services; and about 7 million people are faced with the threat of famine. Worse, all of this has been exacerbated by the largest single-year outbreak of cholera ever recorded. As the conflict continues, some 2 million people remain displaced. They live in crowded, unsafe,

unsanitary and undignified spontaneous settlements, where shelters made of rags, cardboard and just about anything their residents can find in the streets are exposed to the elements. The conflict in Yemen remains a man-made crisis, generating intolerable suffering for the Yemeni people.

I take this opportunity to highlight three of the challenges facing the Yemeni people, and humanitarian in particular—humanitarian access and its limitations, the impact of civil-servant-salary interruptions on food insecurity and critical services, and the ongoing risks in commercial access to the country.

Humanitarians face unacceptable obstacles from all sides in carrying out relief efforts in Yemen. The biggest problem is actual prevention of humanitarian access. For example, the authorities in Sana'a regularly deny access and have arbitrarily delayed or denied dozens of requests for humanitarian personnel to enter the country via Sana'a. Furthermore, for several weeks now, humanitarian partners have been reporting a freeze on the issuance of visas by the authorities in Aden for international non-governmental organizations.

Such obstacles are abhorrent in a country where the threat of famine looms over millions, where there are over 800,000 suspected cases of cholera across 90 per cent of communities, and where only 45 per cent of health facilities are functioning. Quite simply, these obstructions cost lives. We hope that the recent commitments made by the parties will translate into giving priority to unfettered humanitarian access.

The interruption of regular salary payments for 1.25 million civil servants is an additional driver of humanitarian need, particularly food insecurity, as affected public employees and their families represent nearly a quarter of the population. Where food is available in markets, people now lack the cash to buy basic necessities. The prices have risen significantly. Recent market analysis puts the average price of a food basket 30 per cent higher than pre-crisis prices, and in some cases as much as 60 per cent higher, despite the United Nations Verification and



Inspection Mechanism's facilitating the majority of Yemen's average food requirements each month. The price of cooking gas in Aden and Hudaydah is more than 70 per cent higher than the pre-crisis level. That reality is having a negative effect on the capacity of the population to cope. People are now taking to such acts as selling their assets and taking on debt to buy food.

Children are paying a particularly high price, not least the 460,000 who are severely malnourished. Even if the fighting were to stop today, stunted growth and delayed cognitive development would linger for an entire generation. The loss of livelihoods for adults also means that thousands of children are forced to work rather than go to school, with child marriage rates also increasing as families claim incapacity to support their children.

In addition, the lack of civil-servant salaries has disrupted the provision of basic services to the wider population. Already stressed critical services are unavailable if employees are not present to operate them, most notably in the health, water and sanitation and education sectors. We seek the support of the Council in finding a way to prioritize salaries for those sectors. It is not difficult to draw a clear link between the near-absent health, water and sanitation services and the unprecedented cholera outbreak.

As the Council is aware, Yemen has long been reliant on the importation of commercial goods to meet its basic food and fuel needs. However, commercial traffic to Yemen, by both sea and air, remains challenging. Any significant decline in imports due to bureaucratic delays risks making the threat of famine a reality. In that regard, we renew our calls for the protection and continued operation of Hudaydah port and for the unconditional instalment of the four World Food Programme mobile cranes. The closure of Sana'a airport to commercial traffic has blocked thousands of Yemenis from travelling for medical care, and students from attending universities abroad. A resumption of commercial flights is urgently and immediately needed. There appears

to be no legitimate reason that the inspection mechanism operated by the coalition prior to August 2016 cannot be reinstated.

The Yemen humanitarian response plan is 55 per cent funded, with \$1.3 billion of the \$2.3 billion required to reach the 12 million people in need of humanitarian support and protection this year. We thank Member States for their generosity and funding. Despite the complexity of the response, this year humanitarians have already reached 7 million people with direct assistance. We therefore encourage Member States to directly support our efforts and to do more through the response plan. This year, the Yemen Humanitarian Fund has reached \$128 million, the largest globally. The Fund was nimble in rapidly responding to the cholera outbreak and famine prevention. Over 21 per cent of the Fund's allocations have gone to national partners. We salute them for their efforts on the front lines of the humanitarian response and, again, we thank donor Member States for their generosity.

As we desperately wait for a political solution and an end to the conflict, we call upon all States to exert their influence on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law and human rights law. The Human Rights Council's recent adoption by consensus of resolution 36/31 is one example of the influence States can exert. The parties and their supporters need to show greater commitment to finding a political solution. We need the international community to step up its efforts in support of a viable solution that addresses the root causes and restores the hope of the Yemeni people for a better future. They deserve nothing less.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ging for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and the Director of the

Operational Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Ging, for their briefings. We express our full support for their work.

Despite the numerous pronouncements made by the Security Council on the situation in Yemen, including the presidential statements of 15 June (S/PRST/2017/7) and 9 August (S/PRST/2017/14), and in spite of the repeated calls that the Council has made to the parties with a view to their commitment to a cessation of hostilities and initiation of dialogue to achieve a political solution to the conflict, the situation in the country has not improved, and the humanitarian crisis unfortunately continues to worsen without signs of progress.

Aside from the conflict, which has generated nearly 3 million internally displaced persons, and has left 9.8 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, according to data published on 1 October by the World Health Organization, the cholera outbreak has spread to 96 per cent of governorates in Yemen, causing over 2,000 deaths and possibly infecting 750,000 people, a one third increase over the number reported at our previous briefing, in August (see S/PV.8027), where the figure was around 500,000 people.

Regrettably, the presence of armed groups, checkpoints and indiscriminate airstrikes, especially in the governorates of Al-Yauf, Marib, Sa'ada, Hudaydah and Sana'a, among others, continue to hamper the distribution and deployment of humanitarian assistance, not only because of the transit and transit restrictions that those entail, but because of the high risk that humanitarian workers are subjected to when entering those places, where they have been subject to attacks with firearms on a number of occasions, the origin of which should be a matter deserving of the careful attention by the Council. In that regard, we reiterate to the parties involved in the conflict that they must allow and guarantee the security and integrity of the agencies that provide humanitarian assistance. We also remind them that it is prohibited to identify such agencies as military targets by any reasoning. Moreover,

they must ensure the unconditional and unrestricted access of aid to all places where it is needed.

With regard to the food shortage in Yemen, as reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations last September 60 per cent of the population lives with food insecurity, and 7 million people are at risk of famine. This situation is aggravated by the fact that 90 per cent of the food staples required by the population to survive are imported. Furthermore, the ports that are currently providing services do not do so in full capacity and are not capable of meeting the demand. In that regard, we call on the parties to ensure the full operation of all ports and routes of access to the same, including the port of Hudaydah and Sana'a airport.

For all of those reasons, we reiterate our call on the Council and the membership in general to maintain a unanimous and firm position in condemning belligerent acts and campaigns that aggravate the crisis in Yemen and that generate the damaging instability that threatens the lives of millions of innocent people.

We also reiterate our call on the parties involved in the conflict to comply with the provisions of resolution 2216 (2015), to commit to a cessation of hostilities and to establish a sustained process of dialogue and negotiation that will allow for a peaceful, inclusive and orderly political transition that meets the demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, and that is framed in respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Yemen.

Finally, we consider it important to reiterate the request made by the former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, to create an independent international body to investigate possible violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, thereby preventing impunity from silencing the voices of the thousands of victims that this conflict has claimed.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I should like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr.

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and to the representative of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Ging, for their briefings. We also thank the French presidency for convening this public briefing.

Uruguay sees no other way to arrive at a solution to the bloody conflict in Yemen except through a Yemeni led negotiation process in which all parties involved participate in an inclusive, peaceful and democratic manner. There is no military solution to the conflict. Uruguay emphatically urges the parties to return to the negotiating table without preconditions and in good faith and to agree to put an end to the armed conflict in a peaceful way as quickly as possible. On a military basis, none of the contenders will prevail.

Uruguay also calls on the parties to the conflict to fully comply with the cessation of hostilities to facilitate negotiation and as a first step towards establishing peace. They should understand that, if the war were to continue, it would favour the actions of Al-Qaida and Da'esh. Furthermore, those countries that have influence on the parties must cooperate in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The lack of concrete results in the peace process continues to create suffering for Yemeni civilians, causing great harm every day to the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is on the verge of collapse, which is aggravated by famine and the outbreak of cholera.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Uruguay is concerned by the dire situation of civilians, in particular that of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children. According to a recently published report by Yemen Protection Cluster, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, during the first half of 2017 the number of air attacks reported exceeded the total number of air attacks for all of 2016, with a monthly average almost three times greater for the present year. The same phenomenon applies to the data on armed clashes. Civilians are the ones paying the highest price for those acts—with their lives.

Uruguay condemns each and every violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law that are taking place in Yemen. In that connection, we urge all parties to distinguish at all times between the civilian population and the combatants. Civilians are not a target, and humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach them without restrictions or interruption.

My delegation has spoken on several occasions in the Council about the need for accountability for the serious widespread violations of international humanitarian law committed by all warring parties. We are pleased by the recent adoption by the Human Rights Council of a resolution that provides for the establishment of a panel of experts to monitor the situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses committed by all the parties to the conflict since September 2014. In that regard, Uruguay calls on the parties, in accordance with the provisions of that resolution, to provide full and transparent access to the international investigative committee and to cooperate with it so that it can fulfil its mandate.

All parties involved in this prolonged conflict have committed war crimes and other serious violations of international law—and continue to do so with total impunity. They must be held accountable before justice for their actions. Accountability is crucial to achieve a lasting settlement to the conflict.

Similarly, Uruguay welcomes and appreciates the annual report (S/2017/821) of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, as well as the inclusion in the attached list of perpetrators of serious violations against children in Yemen.

Finally, allow in particular to thank the Special Envoy for his work and reiterate our strong support to him. We are also grateful for the continuous work carried out by humanitarian workers and agencies in Yemen, who are trying to help millions of persons under extremely difficult conditions.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

**Mr. Alyemany** (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I extend to the Security Council a greeting of peace on behalf of the people of Yemen, who aspire to peace.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your excellent leadership of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to express our great gratitude to you, Sir, for giving us this opportunity to speak before the Council today. We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General and his Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed for the great efforts they are undertaking. The Yemeni Government fully supports their efforts aimed at achieving at a sustainable peace agreement that would put an end to the coup against the Yemeni State and end the war that has been waged by the Houthi-Saleh coalition against our people since September 2014.

The Council meets today two weeks after a great deal of activity at the United Nations following the opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. The Republic of Yemen participated in the opening of the session with a high-level delegation, led by His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. The meetings and dialogues held with various senior United Nations officials, as well as Security Council Member States, with regard to the situation in Yemen were especially important. The primary message of those meetings can be summarized in the willingness of the Yemeni Government to immediately meet the requirements for sustainable peace and in order to put an end to the war in Yemen under the auspices of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Yemen.

However, we cannot put an end to the war and achieve peace unilaterally. On the contrary, putting an end to the war requires the acceptance by the coup party to return to the negotiating table and to

accept the elements of peace, as well as the terms of reference, in order to put an end to the suffering of our patient Yemeni people.

The opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly coincided with the three-year anniversary of the war, which is being waged by the Houthi/Saleh coalition against the people of Yemen. The war runs contrary the national consensus, embodied in the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its means of implementation, and the outcomes of the National Dialogue for a peaceful political transition in Yemen, which was adopted under the auspices of the United Nations and with the blessing of the Security Council. The Security Council held an extraordinary meeting in Sana'a in January 2013 in order to support the aspirations of the Yemeni people towards building a democratic federation based on justice, equality, human rights and good governance.

Three years have passed since the Houthi/Saleh coup d'état—the greatest catastrophe ever witnessed by Yemen—began, and the miserable circumstances in my country are apparent. The coup has displaced millions of Yemeni people, inside and outside Yemen. It has killed tens of thousands of Yemeni citizens and it continues to indiscriminately shell the heroic city of Taiz. It has caused the spread of cholera and turned

Sana'a into an enormous prison detaining thousands of Yemen's best citizens in terms of thinkers, academics, students and journalists, not to mention the fact that children are being recruited. The coup has demolished the homes of its opponents and has changed the educational curriculums in line with a narrow, dynastic, religious perspective that proclaims a divine right to govern the population without observance of the principles of democracy and pluralism in which we all believe.

Three years after the beginning of this human suffering, which is unprecedented in the history of Yemen, all observers can see that the Houthi/Saleh alliance is exploiting the security, stability, sovereignty and humanitarian situation in Yemen. The spread of health-related



disasters is being used in a strategy of precariousness hatched by Tehran in the context of its expansionist view of the region and carried out with the Houthi tentacles in Yemen. In Yemen we can either accept the rule of the Houthi militias and the imposition of a Hizbullah-like model or face death and destruction, as well as the spread of instability and tension in the region.

The Houthi-Saleh alliance continues to usurp authority. According to the final report of the Panel of Experts established in accordance with resolution 2266 (2016), that alliance has looted 70 per cent of the State's resources (see S/2017/81). It rejects the peace initiatives that have been submitted and presented by the Special Envoy to the Secretary-General on Yemen in Geneva and Kuwait, the most recent of which was the Hudaydah initiative, which was welcomed by the Yemeni Government and discussed in detail by the President during his meetings in New York. What cannot be disputed is that the Houthis do not have the political will to directly engage with the requirements for peace in Yemen. The political will of the Houthis is being held hostage by outside forces that do not hope for security and stability in Yemen or the region.

The Yemeni Government continues to believe that war cannot be the means by which the Yemeni crisis will be settled. As everyone knows, the Yemeni Government did not resort to taking up arms when the Houthi militias controlled Sana'a. The Government has made concessions in order to arrive at the controversial Peace and National Partnership Agreement, which was rejected by the party responsible for the coup. That party then hijacked the State, thinking that they would get away with it by killing the State's leadership and its opponents and burying the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the results of the National Dialogue Conference, which all Yemenis agreed to. The attendance and participation of the party that carried out the coup in all the rounds of negotiation in the past were simply manoeuvres used in order to gain time and impose a criminal scheme that aims to destroy Yemen and assault neighbouring States. That is all within an agenda

that is being carried out by Iran in order to spread tension and destabilize the region by creating tension and fabricating conflicts, which fuel sectarian violence and swell feelings of hatred. Such actions spread violence and chaos within the region.

Sustainable peace will not be achieved if Iran does not stop interfering in Yemen's affairs and in the affairs of the region. The world must today take a collective stand in order to reign in Iran's expansionist greed. The experience of the Ayatollah's oppressive regime, which was rejected by the Iranian people, cannot be imposed on Yemen. The terms of reference for peace in Yemen, which are embodied in the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, include the necessary elements to guarantee a sustainable solution to the Yemeni crisis. Moreover, resolution 2216 (2015) is gaining more strategic importance with time. The framework of reference for the international community is growing, along with the unified position of the Security Council regarding the Yemeni crisis. It strongly confirms that any sustainable solution to the Yemeni crisis can be based only on the withdrawal of the militias responsible for the coup and the return of power to the State, as well as the handing over of weapons and rockets of the State. Only the State should be in possession of weapons.

Before the General Assembly, President Hadi said that the rockets targeting the territories of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as those that the militias have threatened to use against the territories of the United Arab Emirates, which have a range of over 600 kilometres, are Iranian rockets (see A/72/PV.11). He said that they are distinct from the rockets that are in the possession of the Yemeni army.

The Yemeni Government has limited capabilities and is undergoing a very complicated situation. Additionally, it faces great challenges in the economic, security and services sectors because of the war and the destruction that it has wrought on all facets of daily life. Yemen is in dire need of international assistance in order to support its own efforts to entrench peace and security and activate services in the liberated

areas, commence reconstruction and remedy security breaches. It must also continue with its efforts to combat terrorism. Yemen continues to need support, due to the levels of poverty and the lack of food security, especially in areas that are being shelled on a daily basis by the militias, such as the besieged city of Taiz, which has been under siege for over two and a half years. In the governorates under control of the coup forces, there is a dire humanitarian situation, as a result of the rebels' refusal to pay wages to employees of the State in the sectors of health care and education. The militias continue to loot funds and resources from the customs and tax authorities. They continue to loot the reserves of the Central Bank in order to fund the so-called Houthi popular committees and war efforts. They continue to fully drain economic and financial institutions.

The role of the private sector has diminished, and, in its place, a sector of war merchants has been created. That has been enabled by capital being gained during the war by people who are taking advantage of opportunities to rob humanitarian aid in order to traffic fuel and weapons, loot public funds and impose mafia style protection tactics on normal citizens who are being deprived of their monthly wages. School curriculums have not been safe from the onslaught. They have been replaced by extremist, racist curriculums that encourage a culture of conflict, violence and religious sectarianism, which represents a clear reproach to the rest of the world. The Yemeni Government calls upon the international community to pressure the rebels to accept the Hudaydah initiative of Mr. Cheikh Ould Ahmed. There must be further initiatives in order to build confidence and mobilize the resources of the State and transfer tax and customs revenues at the Hudaydah port to the branch of the Central Bank in Hudaydah, in coordination with the branch in Aden. The Government has also pledged to cover the deficit accrued from paying the salaries of civil servants, especially in major sectors, such as education and health care and areas under militia control.

Our people have not been paid in a year and the militias refuse to cooperate with the Yemeni Government, the Special Envoy or international organizations, such as the World Bank, to pay the wages of our people. Faced with such a catastrophic situation, we call upon Member States to shoulder the responsibilities of the Yemeni crisis by pressuring the rebel forces to implement Security Council resolutions and offering real concessions, so that Yemen can be spared from further bloodshed. We must work towards allowing access to humanitarian aid for all Yemenis living under the control of rebel forces.

The Yemeni Government is most concerned with alleviating the suffering of our people. The Yemeni Government has repeatedly expressed its readiness to reopen the airport in Sana'a to humanitarian flights, provided that the militias exit the airport and hand over management duties of the airport to the professional staff that ran it before September 2014, under the supervision of the United Nations. We could open the airport in Sana'a today if the militias abided by those conditions.

Dealing with the Yemeni crisis from a humanitarian perspective, despite its importance, without paying due attention to the political perspective or working towards arriving at a sustainable political solution to the Yemeni issue, is simply an exercise in damage control that would prolong the war and suffering caused by the coup carried out by the Houthi-Saleh militias. Therefore, the Security Council's serious desire to deal with the humanitarian situation in Yemen is being put to the test, because it must help deal with the root causes of the crisis, as opposed to just treating the symptoms.

In conclusion, we highly value the great efforts being exerted by the international community and the Ambassadors of the Group of 18 to achieve security and stability in Yemen. I take this opportunity to reiterate the call made by President Hadi to the friends of Yemen to resume their efforts to implement peace and reconstruction in the country. On behalf of Yemen, I would like to renew our thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

Emirates, as well as to the rest of the States of our coalition, for their efforts to restore legitimacy, security and stability in Yemen and aid its people.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11 a.m.*

## 2. Amnesty International Report on Yemen 2016-2017

All parties to the continuing armed conflict committed war crimes and other serious violations of international law with impunity. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition supporting the internationally recognized Yemeni government bombed hospitals and other civilian infrastructure and carried out indiscriminate attacks, killing and injuring civilians. The Huthi armed group and forces allied to it indiscriminately shelled civilian residential areas in Ta'iz city and fired artillery indiscriminately across the border into Saudi Arabia, killing and injuring civilians. Huthi and allied forces severely curtailed the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in areas they controlled, arbitrarily arresting critics and opponents, including journalists and human rights defenders, forcing NGOs to close. They subjected some detainees to enforced disappearance and to torture and other ill-treatment. Women and girls continued to face entrenched discrimination and other abuses, including forced marriage and domestic violence. The death penalty remained in force; no information was publicly available on death sentences or executions.

### **Background**

The armed conflict between the internationally recognized government of President Hadi, supported by a Saudi Arabia-led international coalition, and the Huthi armed group and allied forces, which included army units loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, continued to rage throughout the year. The Huthis and forces allied to former President Saleh continued to control the capital, Sana'a, and other areas. President Hadi's government controlled southern parts of Yemen including the governorates of Lahj and Aden.

The armed group al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continued to control parts of southern Yemen and to carry out bomb attacks in Aden and in the port city of al-Mukallah, which government

forces recaptured from AQAP in April. US forces continued to target AQAP forces with missile strikes. The armed group Islamic State (IS) also carried out bomb attacks in Aden and al-Mukallah, mostly targeting government officials and forces.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 4,125 civilians, including more than 1,200 children, had been killed and more than 7,000 civilians wounded since the conflict began in March 2015. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that more than 3.27 million people had been forcibly displaced in the conflict by October and nearly 21.2 million people, 80% of the population, relied on humanitarian assistance.

In April, UN-sponsored peace negotiations between the parties to the conflict began in Kuwait, accompanied by a brief lull in hostilities. Fighting intensified after the negotiations collapsed on 6 August. On 25 August, US Secretary of State John Kerry announced a “renewed approach to negotiations”; this had produced no clear outcome by the end of the year.

Huthi and allied forces appointed a 10-member Supreme Political Council to rule Yemen, which in turn appointed former Aden Governor Abdulaziz bin Habtoor to lead a government of “national salvation”. In September, President Hadi ordered the Central Bank to move from Sana’a to Aden, deepening the fiscal crisis caused by the depletion of its reserves and the humanitarian crisis by curtailing the ability of the de facto Huthi administration in Sana’a to import essential food, fuel and medical supplies.

### **Armed Conflict. Violations by armed groups**

Huthi and allied forces, including army units loyal to former President Saleh, repeatedly carried out violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. They endangered civilians in areas they controlled by launching attacks from the vicinity of schools, hospitals and homes, exposing residents to attacks by pro-government forces, including aerial bombing by the

Saudi Arabia-led coalition. They also indiscriminately fired explosive munitions that affect a wide area, including mortars and artillery shells, into residential areas controlled or contested by opposing forces, particularly in Ta'iz city, killing and injuring civilians. By November, Huthi and allied forces had reportedly carried out at least 45 unlawful attacks in Ta'iz, killing and injuring scores of civilians. One attack on 4 October killed 10 civilians, including six children, and injured 17 others in a street near the Bir Basha market, the UN reported. The Huthis and their allies also continued to lay internationally banned anti-personnel landmines that caused civilian casualties, and to recruit and deploy child soldiers. In June, the UN Secretary-General reported that the Huthis were responsible for 72% of 762 verified cases of recruitment of child soldiers during the conflict.

In Sana'a and other areas, they controlled, the Huthis and their allies arbitrarily arrested and detained critics and opponents as well as journalists, human rights defenders and members of the Baha'i community, subjecting scores to enforced disappearance. Many arrests were carried out by armed men belonging to Ansarullah, the Huthi political wing, at homes, workplaces, checkpoints or public venues such as mosques. Such arrests were carried out without judicial warrant or stated reasons, and without disclosing where those arrested were being taken or would be held.

Many detainees were held in unofficial locations such as private homes without being told the reason for their imprisonment or allowed any means to challenge its legality, including access to lawyers and the courts. Some were subjected to enforced disappearance and held in secret locations; Huthi authorities refused to acknowledge their detention, disclose any information about them or allow them access to legal counsel and their families. Some detainees were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. In February, one family reported seeing guards beat their relative at the Political Security Office detention facility in Sana'a.



Anti-Huthi forces and their allies led a campaign of harassment and intimidation against hospital staff, and endangered civilians by stationing fighters and military positions near medical facilities, particularly during fighting in the southern city of Ta'iz. At least three hospitals were shut down due to threats against their staff.

The Huthis and their allies also curtailed freedom of association in areas under their de facto administration.

### **Violations by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition**

The international coalition supporting President Hadi's government continued to commit serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law with impunity. The coalition's partial sea and air blockade further curtailed the import of food and other necessities, deepening the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict, and prevented commercial flights to Sana'a.

Coalition aircraft carried out bomb attacks on areas controlled or contested by Huthi forces and their allies, particularly in the Sana'a, Hajjah, Hodeidah and Sa'da governorates, killing and injuring thousands of civilians. Many coalition attacks were directed at military targets, but others were indiscriminate, disproportionate or directed against civilians and civilian objects, including funeral gatherings, hospitals, schools, markets and factories. Some coalition attacks targeted key infrastructure, including bridges, water facilities and telecommunication towers. One attack in August destroyed the main road bridge between Sana'a and Hodeidah. Some coalition attacks amounted to war crimes.

In August, the humanitarian NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) said it had lost "confidence in the Coalition's ability to avoid such fatal attacks". MSF withdrew its staff from six hospitals in northern Yemen after coalition aircraft bombed an MSF-supported hospital for the fourth time in a year, killing 19 people and injuring 24. In early December, the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) created by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition to investigate alleged violations by its forces

concluded that the strike was an “unintentional error”. The JIAT public statement contradicted MSF’s own investigations which found that the incident was not the result of an error, but rather of hostilities conducted “with disregard for the protected nature of hospitals and civilian structures”.

On 21 September a coalition air strike on a residential area of Hodeidah city killed 26 civilians, including seven children, and injured 24 others, according to the UN. On 8 October, a coalition air strike killed more than 100 people attending a funeral gathering in Sana’a and injured more than 500 others. The coalition initially denied responsibility for the 8 October attack but admitted liability after it was condemned internationally, and said the attack had been based on “incorrect information” and that those responsible would be disciplined.

Coalition forces also used imprecise munitions in some attacks, including large bombs made in the USA and the UK that have a wide impact radius and cause casualties and destruction beyond their immediate strike location. The coalition forces also continued to use cluster munitions made in the USA and the UK in attacks in Sa’da and Hajjah governorates although such munitions were widely prohibited internationally because of their inherently indiscriminate nature. Cluster munitions scattered explosive bomblets over a wide area and presented a continuing risk because of their frequent failure to detonate on initial impact. In December the coalition admitted that its forces had used UK-manufactured cluster munitions in 2015 and stated that it would not do so in the future.

### **Impunity**

All parties to the armed conflict committed serious violations of international law with impunity. The Huthis and their allies took no steps to investigate serious violations by their forces and hold those responsible to account.

The National Commission of Inquiry, established by President Hadi in September 2015, had its mandate extended for another year in

August. It conducted some investigations but lacked independence and impartiality; it was unable to access large parts of the country, and focused almost entirely on violations by the Huthis and their allies.

The JIAT created by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition to investigate alleged violations by its forces was also seriously flawed. It did not disclose details of its mandate, methodology or powers, including how it determines which incidents to investigate, conducts investigations, or verifies information; nor what status its recommendations carry either with coalition commanders or member states.

### **Lack of humanitarian access**

All parties to the conflict exacerbated the suffering of civilians by restricting the provision of humanitarian assistance. Huthi forces and their allies continued to curtail the entry of food and vital medical supplies into Ta'iz, Yemen's third most populous city, throughout the year, exposing thousands of civilians to further suffering. Elsewhere, humanitarian workers accused Huthi security officials of imposing arbitrary and excessive restrictions on their movement of goods and staff, seeking to compromise the independence of aid operations, and forcibly closing some humanitarian aid programmes.

Humanitarian aid workers accused the Saudi Arabia-led coalition of hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance by imposing excessively burdensome procedures that required them to inform the coalition of their planned operations in advance, in order to avoid possible attack.

### **Internally displaced people**

The armed conflict caused massive civilian displacement, particularly in the Ta'iz, Hajjah and Sana'a governorates. In October, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that some 3.27 million people, half of them children, were internally displaced within Yemen, an increase of more than 650,000 since December 2015.

### **International scrutiny**

The UN Panel of Experts on Yemen released its final report on 26 January. The Panel concluded that all parties to the conflict had repeatedly attacked civilians and civilian objects, documenting “119 coalition sorties relating to violations of international humanitarian law”, including many that “involved multiple air strikes on multiple civilian objects”. A subsequent report to the UN Security Council by a new Panel of Experts, leaked in August, accused all parties to the conflict of violating international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In June, the UN Secretary-General removed the Saudi Arabia-led coalition from an annual list of states and armed groups that violate the rights of children in armed conflict after the Saudi Arabian government threatened to cease funding key UN programmes.

In August, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for the establishment of an “international, independent body to carry out comprehensive investigations in Yemen”. However, the UN Human Rights Council resolved in September that the High Commissioner would continue providing technical support to the National Commission established in 2015 and allocate additional international experts to their Yemen office.

### **Women’s and Girls’ rights**

Women and girls continued to face discrimination in law and in practice and were inadequately protected against sexual and other violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and other abuses.

### **Death Penalty**

The death penalty remained in force for many crimes; no information was publicly available about death sentences or executions.

### 3. Human Rights Watch 2017

#### The Annual Report on Yemen



The Saudi Arabia-led coalition's aerial and ground campaign against Houthi forces and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh continued in 2016. The campaign began on March 26, 2015, in support of the government of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and has been supported by the United States and the United Kingdom.

As of October 10, at least 4,125 civilians had been killed and 7,207 wounded since the start of the campaign, the majority by coalition airstrikes, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Dozens of coalition airstrikes indiscriminately or disproportionately killed and wounded thousands of civilians in violation of the laws of war. The coalition also used internationally banned cluster munitions.

Houthi and allied forces committed serious laws-of-war violations by laying banned antipersonnel landmines, mistreating detainees, and launching indiscriminate rockets into populated areas in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia, killing hundreds of civilians.

Yemeni warring parties began peace talks in Kuwait in April, following a cessation of hostilities, but airstrikes and fighting on the ground continued. This latest round of peace talks broke down in August, subsequent efforts to bring the parties back to negotiations have failed, and coalition airstrikes and ground fighting continue.

None of the states' party to the conflict carried out meaningful investigations into their forces' alleged violations.

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition killed several dozen civilians in three apparently unlawful airstrikes in September and October 2016. The coalition's use of United States-supplied weapons in two of the strikes, including a bomb delivered to Saudi Arabia well into the conflict, puts the US at risk of complicity in unlawful attacks.

### **Airstrikes**

Human Rights Watch has documented 58 apparently unlawful coalition airstrikes since the start of the campaign, which have killed nearly 800 civilians and hit homes, markets, hospitals, schools, civilian businesses, and mosques. Some attacks may amount to war crimes. These include airstrikes on a crowded market in northern Yemen on March 15 that killed 97 civilians, including 25 children, and another on a crowded funeral in Sanaa on October that killed over 100 civilians and wounded hundreds more.

Repeated coalition airstrikes on factories and other civilian economic structures raise serious concerns that the coalition deliberately sought to inflict damage to Yemen's limited production capacity. Human Rights Watch investigated 18 apparently unlawful strikes, some of which used US or UK-supplied weapons, on 14 civilian economic sites. The strikes killed 130 civilians and wounded 173 more. Following the attacks, many of the factories ended production and hundreds of workers lost their livelihoods.

### **Cluster Munitions**

Human Rights Watch has documented the coalition using internationally banned cluster munitions in at least 16 attacks that targeted populated areas, killing and wounding dozens.

Human Rights Watch has identified six types of air-dropped and ground-launched cluster munitions in multiple locations in Yemen, including those produced in the US and Brazil. Amnesty International has further documented the use of UK-made cluster munitions.

In May, the Obama administration suspended transfers of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia after reports of their use in civilian areas in

Yemen. Textron, US-based manufacturer of the CBU-105, announced it would stop production of the weapon in August.

Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and other coalition states are not party to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. At a meeting in Geneva on May 19, a Yemeni official said the Hadi-led government is considering ratifying the convention following use of the weapons in Yemen.

### **Landmines**

Houthi and allied forces laid numerous landmines, including banned antipersonnel mines, in Yemen's southern and eastern governorates of Aden, Abyan, Marib, Lahj, and Taizz since the beginning of the current conflict. Landmines have killed and wounded dozens of civilians, including children.

Human Rights Watch investigated the cases of five people maimed by antipersonnel mines in Taizz since March 2016, including one man trying to return home with his brother following months of displacement. Landmines killed at least 18 people and wounded over 39 in two districts in Taizz governorate between May 2015 and April 2016, according to a local nongovernmental organization (NGO). Medical professionals and Yemenis clearing mines told Human Rights Watch the actual number of mine victims is likely much higher. In June, one doctor said he had treated 50 people in Taizz who had one or more limbs amputated since April who he believed were injured by landmines.

Yemen suffers from a shortage of equipped and trained personnel who can systematically survey and clear mines and explosive remnants of war.

### **Indiscriminate Attacks**

Before and since the coalition air campaign, Houthi and allied forces have used artillery rockets in indiscriminate attacks in the southern cities of Aden, Taizz, Lahj, and al-Dale'a.

Since March 2015, Human Rights Watch has documented seven indiscriminate attacks by Houthi and allied forces in Aden and Taizz that killed 139 people, including at least 8 children.

Shelling by the Houthi-aligned Popular Committees and army units loyal to former president Saleh was responsible for killing 475 civilians and wounding 1,121 between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016, according to the UN.

Houthis have also launched artillery rockets into the Najran and Jazan regions in southern Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities said 29 civilians had been killed and 300 injured in Najran in August alone due to cross-border shelling, Reuters reported.

### **Attacks on Health and Restrictions on Humanitarian Access**

Human Rights Watch has documented numerous airstrikes that unlawfully struck or damaged health facilities in Yemen. On August 15, 2016, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit an Medecins Sans Frontiers, MSF-supported hospital in Hajja, killing 19 people, and the fourth on an MSF facility. Following the strike, the organization pulled its staff out of six hospitals in northern Yemen.

Houthi and allied forces engaged in military operations around Aden, Taizz, and other areas repeatedly exposed hospitals, patients and health workers to unjustified risk.

According to OHCHR, as of 2016, over 600 health facilities have closed due to damage caused by the conflict, shortage of critical supplies and lack of health workers.

More than 80 percent of the country's total population – 20 million people – have been in need of humanitarian assistance. Parties to the conflict have continued to block or restrict critical relief supplies from reaching civilians.

Houthi and allied forces have confiscated food and medical supplies from civilians entering Taizz and blocked humanitarian assistance from reaching the city, contributing to the near collapse of the health system.

The coalition has imposed a naval blockade on Yemen, limiting the importation of vital goods like fuel, which is urgently needed to power generators to hospitals and pump water to civilian residences. In August



2016, the coalition suspended all commercial flights to Sanaa. This is “having serious implications for patients seeking urgent medical treatment abroad,” according to the UN.

Aid workers have been kidnapped, unlawfully detained, and killed while engaged in humanitarian operations in Yemen. Humanitarian agencies are frequently denied access to areas controlled by Houthi and Saleh-aligned forces.

### **Children and Armed Conflict**

Among repeated violations against children by parties to the conflict, Human Rights Watch has documented 58 apparently unlawful coalition airstrikes that killed at least 192 children, and multiple airstrikes that struck or damaged schools. The Houthis have also endangered schools and used child soldiers.

The UN secretary-general included the Houthis, government forces, pro-government militias, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and, for the first time, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition on his annual “list of shame” for grave violations against children during armed conflict.

The coalition was responsible for 60 percent of the 785 children killed and 1,168 children wounded, and nearly half of the 101 attacks on schools and hospitals, according to the report.

Houthi forces, government and pro-government forces, and other armed groups have used child soldiers, an estimated one-third of the fighters in Yemen. The UN found in 2015 that 72 percent of 762 verified cases of child recruitment were attributable to the Houthis, with an overall five-fold increase in recruitment of children and a shift towards forced or involuntary recruitment.

Under Yemeni law, 18 is the minimum age for military service. In 2014, the government signed a UN action plan to end the use of child soldiers. Without an effective government in place, the action plan has not been implemented.

On June 6, 2016, the UN secretary-general's office announced it was removing the Saudi-led coalition from its "list of shame," "pending the conclusions of [a] joint review" of the cases included in the report's text after the Saudi government apparently threatened to de-fund UN programs, which could have put children who depend on these programs at risk.

The US again placed Yemen on its list of countries to which arms sales are restricted by the US Child Soldiers Prevention Act, although President Barack Obama granted Secretary of State John Kerry authority to restart aid to Yemen that would otherwise be prohibited by the law.

### **Terrorism and Counterterrorism**

Both AQAP and armed groups loyal to the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) claimed responsibility for numerous suicide and other bombings that killed dozens of civilians.

The US continued its drone attacks on alleged AQAP militants and began to publish basic data related to the strikes. By November, the US reported it had conducted 28 drone strikes in Yemen, killing at least 80 people described as AQAP operatives. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a media organization, reported the US had possibly conducted 11 more strikes over the same period.

### **Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances**

After Houthi and allied forces seized control of the capital, Sanaa in late 2014, they cracked down on dissent. Houthi authorities closed several dozen NGOs and barred human rights advocates from travelling. In March, Houthi officials confiscated the passport of prominent rights advocate Abdulrasheed al-Faqih, the second such travel ban the Houthis imposed on a rights advocate. By November, Al-Faqih's passport had yet to be returned.

Houthi and allied forces have committed enforced disappearances, tortured detainees, and arbitrarily detained numerous activists, journalists, tribal leaders, and political opponents. Since August 2014,

Human Rights Watch has documented the Sanaa-based authorities' arbitrary or abusive detention of at least 61 people. In 2016, Human Rights Watch documented two deaths in custody and 11 cases of alleged torture or other ill-treatment, including the abuse of a child.

### **Women's Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity**

Women in Yemen face severe discrimination in law and practice. They cannot marry without the permission of their male guardian and do not have equal rights to divorce, inheritance, or child custody. Lack of legal protection leaves them exposed to domestic and sexual violence. In the absence of a functioning government, no advances were made to pass a draft constitution that includes provisions guaranteeing equality and prohibiting discrimination based on gender, and a draft Child Rights Law that would criminalize child marriage and female genital mutilation. Forced marriage rates have increased during the ongoing conflict, according to UNFPA.

Under the 1994 penal code, same-sex relations are outlawed with punishments ranging from 100 lashes to death by stoning.

### **Accountability**

None of the warring parties carried out credible investigations into their forces' alleged laws-of-war violations in Yemen.

The coalition-appointed Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) concluded initial investigations into nine allegedly unlawful strikes. JIAT's results differed drastically from those of the UN, Human Rights Watch and others who documented some of the same strikes. JIAT did not release full investigation reports nor detailed information on their members, their methodology, including how they determine which strikes to investigate, or whether or not they have the power to ensure prosecutions of individuals responsible for alleged war crimes.

The US is not known to have conducted investigations into any alleged unlawful strikes in which its forces may have taken part.

In August, the UN high commissioner for human rights recommended establishing an independent, international mechanism to

investigate alleged abuses by all sides in Yemen, finding the coalition-backed Yemeni National Commission was “unable to implement its mandate in accordance with international standards.” Three UK parliamentary committees called on the UK to support an independent international inquiry “as a matter of urgency” in September.

In September, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution laying out two complementary processes for investigations, through the OHCHR itself, strengthened by the allocation of additional human rights experts, and through the Yemeni National Commission with OHCHR support.

### **Key International Actors**

The US has been a party to the conflict since the first months of fighting, providing targeting intelligence and in-air refuelling. In May, the US said it had deployed some troops in Yemen to aid the United Arab Emirates and its own campaign against AQAP. In October, the US responded to Houthi missile launches, which the Houthis later denied, against US warships with multiple strikes at Houthi-radar sites.

The UK was “providing technical support, precision-guided weapons and exchanging information with the Saudi Arabian armed forces,” according to the UK Ministry of Defence. The UK also prepared first drafts of all UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen. The Security Council issued resolutions on the crisis in February and April 2015.

Foreign governments have continued to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, despite growing evidence the coalition has been committing unlawful airstrikes. US and UK lawmakers, whose governments altogether approved more than \$20 billion and \$4 billion worth of weapons sales, respectively to Saudi Arabia in 2015 alone, have increasingly challenged the continuation of these sales. Human Rights Watch called on all countries selling arms to Saudi Arabia to suspend weapons sales until it curtails its unlawful airstrikes in Yemen and credibly investigates alleged violations.

On February 25, the European parliament passed a resolution calling on the European Union’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini “to launch an initiative aimed at imposing an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia” due to its conduct in Yemen.



## 4. U.N. Panel

(November 17, 2017)

### Confidential U.N. Document Questions The Saudi Arabian Blockade That's Starving Yemen

A U.N. PANEL OF experts found that Saudi Arabia is purposefully obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid into Yemen and called into question its public rationale for a blockade that could push millions into famine. In the assessment, made in a confidential brief and sent to diplomats on November 10, members of the Security Council-appointed panel said they had seen no evidence to support Saudi



Arabia's claims that short-range ballistic missiles have been transferred to Yemeni rebels in violation of Security Council resolutions.

“The Panel finds that imposition of access restrictions is another attempt by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition to use paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015) as justification for obstructing the delivery of commodities that are essentially civilian in nature,” the U.N. experts wrote. Resolution 2216 was passed in April 2015, a month after the Saudi-led international coalition began its intervention in Yemen's civil war. Paragraph 14 calls for U.N. member states to take measures to prevent the supply, sale, or transfer of military goods to a rebel alliance led by a group called the Houthis, which is backed to an unclear degree by Saudi Arabia's regional rival, Iran. The panel of experts was established by a previous 2014 resolution and expanded to five members by resolution 2216.

The Saudi-led coalition began enforcing a total blockade of Yemen after a ballistic missile was launched from Yemen at Saudi Arabia's

capital airport on November 4. The coalition, which has the backing of the U.S., said the ratcheted-up blockade was necessary to prevent weapons sent by Iran from reaching the Houthis and their allies, who are loyal to former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

After the blockade was put in place November 6, U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock told the Security Council that the restrictions on aid to Yemen would result in “a famine killing millions of people, the likes of which the world has not seen for many decades.” This week, Saudi Arabia played down the situation. “There is no embargo,” said Saudi Ambassador to the U.N. Abdallah al-Mouallimi. “There are many sources of supply to Yemen.” On Monday, the Saudi Coalition said they would reopen several ports that had been cut off within 24 hours—but only those in areas already under the coalition’s control. Ports in Houthi-controlled areas were not on the list; ports along the Red Sea at Hudaydah and Saleef, through which nearly 80 percent of imports travel into Yemen, including the bulk of humanitarian aid, were not slated to open.

The Saudis said that before access to all ports is reinstated, the U.N. cargo inspection mechanism known as the U.N. Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen, or NVIM, would have to be augmented to include the monitoring of smaller boats. However, even large ships with aid cargos that are already inspected by UNVIM are being held up, while the smaller ships that Saudi Arabia says pose a threat will for now presumably be subject to the same scrutiny as before. On Thursday, the U.N. again called for an immediate end to the blockade—even in its reduced form—though it remains still unclear how the this impasse will be resolved.

ACCORDING TO THE most recent U.N. figures, the embargo has blocked 29 ships—carrying roughly 300,000 metric tons of food and 192,000 metric tons of fuel—from reaching Yemen. The U.N. has repeatedly warned that some 7 million people in Yemen are now on the verge of starvation. Yemen is also in the throes of a cholera epidemic that has infected more than 900,000 people. Though the number of

new cases has decreased for eight weeks running, U.N. officials say the epidemic will “flare up again” if the embargo is not lifted. A U.N. boat holding more than 1,300 metric tons of “health, wash, and nutritional supplies” is currently stopped short of docking at a port in Hudaydah.

The U.N. experts’ panel brief was delivered prior to the opening of Yemen’s southern ports, but its other notable conclusion was the explicit questioning of evidence presented by the Saudi-led coalition that the missile fired on November 4 was connected to Iran. This allegation was used to justify the ensuing blockade. The coalition, the panel noted, has cited a separate July 22 missile attack which it said used a Qiam-1 short-range ballistic missile of Iranian provenance.

“The supporting evidence provided in these briefings is far below that required to attribute this attack to a Qiam-1 SRBM,” wrote the panel. “The Saudi-Arabia led coalition has not yet though attributed the attempted attack against KKIA”—King Khalid International Airport, in the Saudi capital Riyadh—“to any particular type of SRBM.”

“The Panel has seen no evidence to support claims of SRBM having been transferred to the Houthi-Saleh alliance from external sources in violation of paragraph 14 of resolution 2216,” the brief went on. “Analysis of the supply route options by land, sea or air identifies that any shipments of the large containers used to ship and protect the missiles in transit would stand a very high chance of being interdicted in transit by the Saudi-Arabia-led [sic] coalition forces or the Combined Maritime Forces naval forces deployed in the region. No such interdictions have been reported to the Committee in accordance with the requirement to report arms or arms related material seizures in accordance with paragraph 17 of resolution 2216.”

The panel, however, only has access to evidence that members states are willing to share. In the report, it recommended that Saudi Arabia share additional technical data and asked that the council approach Riyadh for full access to “all SRBM fragments recovered.” On November 10, Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian, the top U.S. Air Force



official in the Middle East, also claimed that the missile had “Iranian markings” but did not provide more evidence. A report in Reuters this August alleged that Iran’s Revolutionary Guards were employing a new route in the ocean between Kuwait and Iran to circumvent the arms embargo.

The Yemeni military, the panel added, retained existing stockpiles of SCUD-B and Hwasong-6 missiles that were not completely destroyed by earlier Saudi airstrikes. The panel cite a Houthi spokesperson who said missiles that had been damaged were subsequently repaired and modified. “The panel has not discounted though that Yemen based foreign missile specialists may be providing advice,” the brief cautioned. The panel raised the possibility that missiles may have been altered to extend their range to reach targets farther into Saudi Arabia. Panel members were investigating a shipment of “industrial process equipment, which almost certainly originated in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and may be related to the production of the oxidizer used in the liquid bi-propellants of SRBM rocket motors. Part of the shipment consisted of corrosion resistant storage tanks virtually identical to those used to support SCUD SRBM operations.”

The panel of experts also concluded that the Houthi missile attacks were as much to aid their own morale as to inflict losses on Saudi Arabia. “The primary purpose of the Houthi-Saleh missile force is not to cause substantive military damage to Saudi Arabia, but to directly support a sophisticated strategic media operations campaign,” they wrote.

SOME U.N. AND aid officials that spoke with The Intercept this week said it seemed Yemeni ports in places like Aden had only been closed—and then announced as reopened—as cover for the continued strangulation of what are actually Yemen’s most vital points of entry. The U.N.’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs this week underscored the importance of these northern ports: “Approximately 71 percent of the people in need in Yemen, and 82 percent of all cholera cases (as of 31 October) are located in areas

controlled by the authorities in the north part of the country and in close proximity to these ports,” the U.N. office wrote in an alert released Monday. The U.N. panel of experts has also documented the Houthis obstructing the flow of aid and profiting from the sale of fuel on the black market.

In a statement this week, the Saudi government said it would be “preparing proposals for the ongoing operation of Hodeida port and Sanaa airport,” Yemen’s primary airport. Since last summer, the airport has only been used for humanitarian flights, with commercial access cut off by the Saudi-led coalition. “The airport is critical to get supplies in,” said one Security Council diplomat, who asked for anonymity in order to discuss ongoing council matters. “There are a bunch of UNHAS air flights”—from the U.N.’s humanitarian air service—“that are standing packed waiting to fly in.” On Tuesday, the Saudis bombed the airport twice, damaging its communication equipment.

Five months into the Saudi-led campaign, coalition bombs rendered four cranes used to offload cargo at the Hudaydah port inoperable. The coalition then refused to let the U.N.’s World Food Program install temporary replacements, the acquisition of which had been financed by the U.S. up until this month, Hudaydah’s diminished capacity was already a major cause of shipping delays, in addition to those imposed by the coalition itself. This year, Human Rights Watch reported that in at least seven instances between May and September, the coalition “arbitrarily diverted or delayed fuel tankers headed for ports under Houthi-Saleh control.” One of the ships laden with fuel was held up for over five months.

In February 2016, Saudi officials dispatched letters to both the U.N. and humanitarian organizations operating in Yemen instructing them to leave areas not under the coalition’s control. This would have obstructed aid from reaching most Yemenis. Though Saudi Arabia later walked back the language, humanitarian officials said it had a chilling effect.

A month after the notes were sent, in March 2016, the Security Council began to consider drafting a new resolution focused on humanitarian access and protection of civilians in Yemen. With the idea of a new text under consideration, the Saudi ambassador, Mouallimi, held a press conference in which he bizarrely relayed that senior U.N. aid officials had said such intervention was necessary. Later, it emerged that members of the Gulf Cooperation Council held meetings around this time with officials from France, the U.K., and the U.S.—the permanent members of the Security Council hailing from Western countries. A resolution headlining humanitarian access never materialized. Last week, the Security Council saw the circulation of a statement about Yemen—drafted by the Saudis and circulated by Egypt, another member of the coalition—that made no reference to the humanitarian situation the Security Council had just been warned was of cataclysmic proportions.

“This will likely get worse, given the blockage of vaccines outside the country and potential increases in malnutrition as people struggle to feed their families. So, we can confidently say that more children will likely die if this continues for much longer,” said Samir Elhawary, a senior U.N. humanitarian official based in Yemen. If U.N. partners that distribute nutritional assistance cannot resupply over the next month, he said, “80,000 children with severe acute malnutrition are at risk of losing their lives.”

On other occasions in the course of its war, the Saudi-led coalition has taken deliberate action that stymied the delivery of humanitarian aid. In August 2016—a year after it bombed the cranes at the port—coalition jets repeatedly bombed the main bridge used to carry goods from Hudaydah to Sana’a, and across which 90 percent of U.N. World Food Program aid travelled. The bridge was destroyed despite its presence on a U.S.-provided no-strike list.

## 5. Senator Murphy Demands Congressional Action on Saudi Arabia's Blockade

Senator Chris Murphy demands congressional action on Saudi Arabia's Blockade in Yemen

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

WASHINGTON – Days after Saudi Arabia imposed a blockade on Yemen, preventing aid and vital commodities from flowing into the country, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) – a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee – demanded that the Senate take action to make clear to the Trump administration that they do not have Congressional authority to participate in the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen that is now deliberately using mass starvation as a tactic of war. The campaign has already caused an outbreak of cholera, empowered terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS, and led to thousands of civilian casualties. Murphy continued to call on Saudi Arabia to fully lift the blockade.



“Thousands and thousands inside Yemen today are dying. The Saudi-led coalition that has been engaged in an incessant two-year-long bombing campaign in Yemen is blockading Yemen – not allowing any humanitarian relief, not allowing fuel or food or water to get into the country. It would be one thing if the United States was a mere observer, but we are a participant in this,” said Murphy. “This horror is caused in part by our decision to facilitate a bombing campaign that is murdering

children, and to endorse a Saudi strategy inside Yemen that is deliberately using disease and starvation and the withdrawal of humanitarian support as a tactic.”

“That kind of unconditional endorsement of intentional humanitarian pain, it’s un-American,” continued Murphy. “The Saudi blockade needs to end today. There is no legal authorization for the United States to be part of a war inside Yemen. This Congress, this Senate cannot remain silent. We need to press the administration to tell the Saudis to end this blockade. We need to start using our ability as appropriators and authorizers to send messages to the Saudis that this kind of conduct cannot continue.”

Murphy has been a vocal critic of U.S. support for military campaigns in Yemen that have led to devastating humanitarian consequences and a security vacuum that has empowered terrorist groups. Murphy introduced bipartisan legislation to limit U.S. support for Saudi Arabia’s military campaign in Yemen and called on the Saudi government to take action to address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

## Full Text of Senator Murphy's Presentation

*"My colleagues, cholera is a truly awful way to die. It is a manmade disease, a man-caused disease that this world could easily eradicate from existence. You become so dehydrated, you vomit so much liquid, your body dispenses so many nutrients, so much water through unending diarrhoea that your body is thrown into shock. You literally die from vomiting and diarrhoea, sometimes over the course of hours, sometimes over the course of days, sometimes over the course of weeks. Inside Yemen today, by the end of this year, there will be one million people diagnosed with cholera.*

*This is a hard image to see. I'll replace it with that one. One million people will be diagnosed with cholera. Thousands and thousands inside Yemen today are dying because of this disease. There is a humanitarian catastrophe inside this country that very few people in this nation can locate on a map of absolutely epic proportions. And this humanitarian catastrophe, this famine – one of four famines across the world today – is being caused in part by actions of the United States of America.*

*And it's time that we do something about it as a body. As we speak today, the Saudi-led coalition that has been engaged in an incessant two-year-long bombing campaign in Yemen is blockading Yemen – not allowing any humanitarian relief, not allowing fuel or food or water to get into the country. The coalition's blockade has grounded U.N. flights. It's prevented humanitarian workers from flying in and out of the country. It's barred ships from delivering lifesaving food, fuel, and medical supplies. A 25,000-metric ton World Food Programme ship is currently, as we speak, being denied access to the port. Hospitals and aid organizations inside Yemen are shutting down as we speak today because they do not have enough fuel to continue operating. Vaccines will run out in the country by the end of the month. Prices for food and medicine are spiking such that they are unaffordable to the majority of Yemenis. 2,000 people have died because of cholera alone. Thousands of other civilians have died because of other humanitarian nightmares, including a lack of access to the medical system.*

*I mentioned that the blockade is being run by the Saudi-led coalition. The United States is a member of that coalition.*

*For two years, the United States has been aiding the government of Saudi Arabia in a bombing campaign of the Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. That bombing campaign has caused this outbreak of cholera. Why is that? The bombing campaign deliberately targeted the electricity grid of Yemen in and around Senna. The water treatment facility runs on the electricity from that grid, and so as you can read in a lengthy story in "The New York Times" from two days ago, the country now no longer has the ability to treat water that goes to its capital because the Saudi-led bombing campaign has knocked out electricity; because the fuel that has helped temporarily run the water treatment facility is no longer available either because the Saudi-led bombing campaign has targeted the infrastructure that allows for fuel to be delivered.*

*So today the water is undrinkable, it is toxic. And yet because there aren't other supplies of water, millions of Yemenis are ingesting it, are eating food that is also toxic, because of the inability to treat water, because of the flow of sewage and feces throughout the capital city and almost a million people have contracted cholera. That bombing campaign that targeted the electricity infrastructure in Yemen could only happen with U.S. support. It is the United States that provides the targeting assistance for the Saudi planes.*

*It is U.S. refuelling planes flying in the sky around Yemen that restock the Saudi fighter jets with fuel, allowing them to drop more ordnance. It is U.S.-made ordnance that are carried on these planes and dropped on civilian and infrastructure targets inside Yemen. The United States is part of this coalition. The bombing campaign that has caused the cholera outbreak could not happen without us. The official position of the State Department with respect to the blockade which was imposed by the Saudis about a week ago, is that they should end it at least for the purposes of allowing into the country humanitarian resources. That has not happened.*

*As I mentioned, there is literally a World Food Programme ship waiting to get into the capital to help families like this. And though that may be the official position of the State Department, we clearly aren't articulating that position to the Saudis because the Saudi blockade, which happens with U.S. military support, continues. Maybe that's because the State Department and the White House are simply operating on two different planets.*

*While on his trip to Asia, President Trump said that he has full confidence in the Saudi King, that he knows what he's doing. Well, let me tell you what he's doing. He is using starvation and disease as a weapon of war, which is in contravention of international human rights law. You cannot use starvation. You cannot intentionally cause this kind of disease in order to try to win a military conflict.*

*And so, maybe the Saudis do know what they're doing, but what they are doing is a gross violation of human rights law. And it would be one thing if the United States was a mere observer, but we are a participant in this. This horror – and I'm sorry, it's hard to see – is caused in part by our decision to facilitate a bombing campaign that is murdering children, and to endorse a Saudi strategy inside Yemen that is deliberately using disease and starvation and the withdrawal of humanitarian support as a tactic.*

*Last night, the House of Representatives passed a nonbinding resolution making clear that there is no legal authorization for the United States' participation in the Saudi-led campaign against the Yemeni people. Importantly, the resolution also made clear that there are multiple bad actors in Yemen today. The vast majority of cholera cases today – upwards, I think, of 80% – are in Houthi-controlled areas. But the Houthis do not have clean hands and their patrons, the Iranians, do not have clean hands. There have been human rights abuses, attacks on civilian targets by the Houthi forces as well. And the Iranians should stand-down immediately, as should the Saudis, as they continue to whip up this proxy war between regional powers that is killing civilians inside Yemen. But without U.S. leadership in the region, there is no hope for that stand-down to happen.*



*In the Obama administration, at least Secretary Kerry was personally, actively engaged in trying to bring some resolution to the war inside Yemen. But since President Trump took office and Secretary Tillerson became Secretary of State, there is zero U.S. leadership on this question. We don't have an Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East. We don't have any envoy for this crisis. All we have is a president who says that the Saudi government knows what it's doing.*

*That kind of unconditional endorsement of intentional humanitarian pain, it's un-American. We have stood up time and time again for human rights all across the world. We have been the people who deliver humanitarian salvation to people who are at risk of disease and famine and death. And instead of rescuing the people of Yemen during this moment of blockade, we are contributing to the deterioration of the quality of life inside that country. The Saudi blockade needs to end today, and a partial lifting of the blockade is not enough.*

*The coalition this morning did say that they are going to allow some humanitarian access to the ports they control, but we need access to the ports near where the majority of the population actually lives – Hudaydah and Saleef. Allowing access to the ports that the Saudis control, which are not the ports where the majority of humanitarian aid flows through, is not sufficient. It will not do the job. Medicine, vaccinations will continue to dry up. Price spikes will continue to go through the roof. The cholera epidemic will continue.*

*We have a responsibility as a nation to ensure that the coalition, of which we are a part, is not using starvation as a weapon of war. This is a stain on the conscience of our nation, if we continue to remain silent. I hope the Senate takes the same action that the House does. I hope that we make clear that there is no legal authorization for the United States to be part of a war inside Yemen. Congress has not given the authorization for this president to engage in these military activities. And, by the way, the civil war inside Yemen has aided the enemies for which we actually have declared war against.*

*Al Qaeda is getting stronger inside Yemen, because as more and more of the country becomes ungovernable because of this war, Al Qaeda is moving into that territory. ISIS, against which we have not declared war, but we are engaged in active military activity in the region against, is getting stronger inside Yemen, too.*

*And so even if you don't believe that there is a humanitarian imperative attached to the United States' withdrawal from this coalition, there is a national security imperative because we are just strengthening the most lethal elements of the extremist element worldwide.*

*I know many other members of this body on both sides of the aisle feel as strongly about this as I do. We are not going to get leadership on this question from the administration. They have given a blank check to the Saudis. They have turned a blind eye to this epidemic inside Yemen, an epidemic that is getting worse by the day since the Saudi blockade began. Leadership will have to come from this body. We need to make clear to the administration they do not have the authority to participate in this military coalition.*

*We need to press the administration to tell the Saudis to end this blockade. We need to start using our ability as appropriators and authorizers to send messages to the Saudis that this kind of conduct cannot continue. We have tools at our disposal to lead as a Congress on this question. The world's worst humanitarian catastrophe happening right now as we speak, getting worse by the hour inside Yemen. This Congress, this Senate cannot remain silent.*

*I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum."*

## 6. Congress Says America's Sketchy Role in Yemen War is not Authorized

(John Haltiwanger. *Newsweek*. November 14, 2017)

### Congress Says America's Sketchy Role in Yemen War is not Authorized

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a nonbinding resolution Monday that declared the U.S. government's military assistance to Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war is unauthorized.

But the war has led to numerous civilian casualties as well as a major humanitarian crisis, leading human rights groups to describe the move as "too little, too late."

The nonbinding resolution does not end U.S. support to Saudi Arabia, which has included the sale of arms linked to incidents in which civilians were killed, but instead "expresses the urgent need for a political solution in Yemen." It also publicly acknowledges the Pentagon has provided Saudi Arabia and other allies intelligence on targets and refuelled warplanes used for targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, which is not authorized under pre-existing legislation.

Yemen has been consumed by a civil war since September 2014 after Iranian-backed Houthi rebels captured the capital Sanaa and overthrew President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government. And since March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition of more than half a dozen nations (with the support of Western countries like the U.S. and United Kingdom) have been fighting against the Houthi rebels.

Additionally, the resolution calls on all parties involved to "increase efforts to prevent civilian casualties and increase humanitarian access" and "allow for unobstructed access for humanitarian organizations, human rights investigators, medical relief personnel and journalists."

At least 10,000 civilians have been killed in the Yemen conflict since it began. The U.S. has undeniably helped fuel that conflict. In 2015 alone, the U.S. sold \$1.29 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia.



*Seven million people are on the brink of famine in war-torn Yemen.*

The escalating crisis has led to concern in Congress from Democrats and Republicans alike. Referencing the situation in Yemen in a tweet Tuesday morning, Senator Chris Murphy wrote, “U.S. support for the Saudi coalition has made us complicit in this humanitarian nightmare.”

In this context, human rights groups like Amnesty International feel Monday’s resolution in the House doesn’t go far enough.

“The House resolution that passed yesterday is too little, too late. Next month will mark 1,000 days since the war on Yemen started, so passing a nonbinding resolution condemning ‘deliberate targeting of civilian populations’ is not enough. US-made weapons have been used to kill civilians in Yemen,” Raed Jarrar, Amnesty International’s advocacy director for the Middle East and North Africa, told *Newsweek*.

“By continuing to sell weapons to the Saudi-led coalition, the U.S. government may be complicit in violations of international law, including war crimes,” Jarrar added. “Rather than passing this symbolic resolution, Congress should vote to block the sale of any more weapons to the Saudi-led coalition.”

Meanwhile, the Saudi-led, U.S.-supported coalition continues to maintain a blockade that prevents civilians, including children, from getting much needed supplies. It’s estimated seven million people are on the brink of famine in war-ravaged Yemen.

## 7. Rep. Lieu and Members of Congress Urge Ambassador Haley to Call for U.N. Investigation of Yemen Atrocities



September 14, 2017

WASHINGTON - Today, Congressman Ted W. Lieu (D | Los Angeles County) led a letter to U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley urging her to join the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in calling for an independent, international investigation into the allegations of human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. On September 13, 2017, the Netherlands and Canada unveiled a draft resolution to establish such an international commission of inquiry.

In July 2017, the House of Representatives passed Congressman Lieu's amendment to the National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 that requires the Departments of Defence and State to report to Congress on whether the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners are abiding by their commitments in Yemen to avoid civilian casualties.

In May 2017, Congressmen Lieu and Ted Yoho (R-FL) called on House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce to review the proposed sale of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia. Congressman Lieu also introduced legislation to place conditions on all air-to-ground munitions sales to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The three conditions relate to avoiding civilian casualties, facilitating humanitarian aid, and targeting U.S.-designated terrorist organizations such as AQAP and ISIS.

In April 2017, Congressman Lieu led a letter with a bipartisan group of 30 Members of Congress to Secretary of defence Mattis and Secretary of State Tillerson requesting information related to the operational conduct of the Royal Saudi Air Force in Yemen.

In November 2016, Congressman Lieu led the Lantos Human Rights Commission in holding a hearing on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. In August 2016, Congressman Lieu led a bipartisan group of 64 Members of Congress in sending a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to postpone the sale of new arms to Saudi Arabia. The letter raised concerns regarding the Saudi-led Coalition's killing of civilians. Previously, Congressman Lieu had repeatedly raised similar concerns, sending letters to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretaries John Kerry and Ash Carter. He also introduced legislation to establish new guidelines for weapons sales to Saudi Arabia.

The Full Text of the Letter

Congress of the United States

December 20, 2017

Prince Khaled bin Salman bin Abdulaziz  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States  
601 New Hampshire Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20037

His Excellency Yousefal Otaiba  
Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the United States  
3522 International Court, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Prince Khaled bin Salman and Ambassador Otaiba:

Nearly 1,000 days after the military intervention into Yemen by the Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates-led coalition, we write to request that your governments implement a robust humanitarian relief plan of action in Yemen, including concrete and urgent steps, that will advance our mutual interests while preventing the world's worst humanitarian crisis from spiralling even further out of control.

We recognize and welcome the steps you have taken to ameliorate humanitarian conditions in Yemen over the past few days including by allowing ships carrying humanitarian aid to dock in Hudaydah and Saliffor the first time in weeks, and granting permission for a limited number of UN humanitarian flights into Sana'a—but the size and pace of these gestures are not proportionate to the emergency on the ground. The rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen puts millions of civilian lives at risk of starvation and disease, and it also threatens regional stability and damages the long-term national security interests of our great nations.



Our countries have long been allies and partners, and it is with that history in mind that we write to raise a critical and urgent concern: put simply, the humanitarian status quo in Yemen cannot continue. With the death of Ali Abdullah Saleh, we anticipate that humanitarian need will transform, and may expand.

We implore your governments to immediately develop and implement a humanitarian plan of action that will end the blockade of Yemen, provide for humanitarian and commercial access to all of Yemen's seaports, airports, and land crossings—including Hudaydah port, Sana'a airport, and other points of entry not under the Hadi government's authority. Unless a humanitarian plan of action is implemented immediately including ending restrictions on vessels carrying fuel and commercial goods that are essential to the humanitarian response --1 millions of Yemeni civilians could die from famine.

\* Beyond immediately lifting the blockade, we request that your governments take several specific steps that would help to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Yemen:

\* Facilitate without delay the delivery and installation of the four cranes for Hudaydah port that the U.S. Government financed last year;

\* Eliminate restrictions and delays on all vessels bound for Hudaydah and other Yemeni ports that have been cleared by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism, including commercial vessels;

\* Allow both humanitarian and most commercial flights to Sana'a (with the exception of Iranian air carriers and those that have a track record of facilitating the movement of Iranian personnel and their proxies) to resume unobstructed;

\* Agree to the pre-positioning of a World Food Program vessel off Aden, to facilitate more rapid humanitarian assistance;


\* Work with the international community to prevent the diversion of humanitarian assistance and associated commercial goods, including by

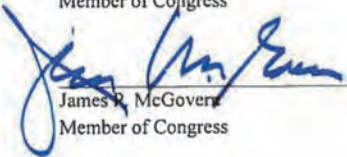
Ansar Alla and others, while ensuring that the flow of humanitarian and associated commercial goods into Yemen are increased.


So long as the conflict in Yemen continues, threats to our countries will continue to emanate from Yemen. This has been made clear by both the U.S. Intelligence Community and the U.S. Department of State, which have found that the conflict in Yemen is strengthening both Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Yemeni branch of ISIS. As you implement your robust humanitarian plan of action, we commit to working with you to increase efforts against the Government of Iran for its destabilizing activities in Yemen, including through the interdiction of Iranian weapons to the Houthis and enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216.


We look forward to our countries continuing to address shared regional threats and challenges together. It is in this spirit of collaboration that we urge you to take these steps, without delay, to prevent Yemen from suffering a famine worse than any seen this century.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James R. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Randy Hultgren  
Member of Congress

## 8. Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention



Jeremy M. Sharp. Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs  
December 7, 2017

**Summary** This report provides information on the ongoing crisis in Yemen. Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and members of a coalition it established have been engaged in military operations against an alliance composed of the Houthi movement and loyalists of the previous President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In early December 2017, the Houthi-Saleh alliance unravelled, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4, 2017. The killing of Saleh and the end of his forces' alliance with the Houthis may have changed the dynamic of the war.

In the coming months, it is possible that on-the-ground fighting may escalate, as the Saudi-led coalition and remnants of Saleh's allies join forces to isolate the Houthis. Health facilities in Yemen reported 8,757 conflict-related deaths and over 50,000 injuries from the start of hostilities in March 2015 through October 2017. However, due to the high number of non-functional health facilities in Yemen as a result of the war, the United Nations estimates that the death toll in Yemen is significantly underreported. The actual number of casualties is likely much higher, with more than 2,200 Yemeni deaths associated with a cholera outbreak alone in 2017.

On November 4, 2017, the Houthis fired a ballistic missile into Saudi Arabia. In response, the Saudi-led coalition accused Iran of supplying

more sophisticated missile technology to the Houthis, and said in a statement that the attack “could rise to be considered as an act of war” by Iran. The coalition then announced that it was temporarily closing all Yemeni ports, including the main commercial port of Hodeida, on November 6, 2017. Many humanitarian agencies decried the closing of all ports of entry into Yemen, asserting that the Saudi-led coalition was violating international law by using starvation as a weapon.

The total closure of all Yemeni ports lasted until November 24, 2017, when the Saudi-led coalition announced that it would begin allowing humanitarian aid to resume entering Hodeida port. The Saudi-led coalition did lift its blockade on select humanitarian deliveries as of early December 2017, but it is unclear whether the coalition is permitting commercial goods to be imported. The Trump Administration welcomed the coalition’s actions while further stating, “We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need....

All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority. We remain committed to supporting Saudi Arabia and all our Gulf partners against the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ aggression and blatant violations of international law.” Since March 2015, the United States has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. In FY2017, the United States provided over \$635 million in humanitarian aid from multilateral accounts in response to Yemen’s humanitarian crisis.

### **Conflict Overview**

In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and members of a coalition it established (hereinafter referred to as the Saudi-led coalition or the coalition) launched a military operation aimed at restoring the rule of Yemen’s internationally recognized president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.<sup>1</sup> Prior

---

<sup>1</sup> The coalition includes Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Senegal. The Saudi-led coalition also relies on local

to the start of hostilities, Hadi's government had been gradually supplanted by an alliance composed of the Iran-supported Houthi movement<sup>2</sup> and loyalists of the previous President, Ali Abdullah Saleh (hereinafter referred to as Houthi-Saleh forces). In early December 2017, the Houthi-Saleh alliance unravelled, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4, 2017.

Despite multiple attempts by the United Nations to broker a peace agreement, all sides have remained deadlocked, as battle lines had become static and the conflict itself stalemated.<sup>3</sup> Saleh's death and the fraying of his forces' alliance with the Houthis may have changed the dynamic of the war. In the coming months, it is possible that on-the-ground fighting may escalate, as the Saudi-led coalition and remnants of Saleh's allies join forces to isolate the Houthis.

---

Yemeni forces to carry out most ground operations. These allied units comprise a mix of Yemeni army units, tribal forces, Islamist militias, and southern separatists opposed to Houthi rule.

<sup>2</sup> The Houthi movement (also known as *Ansar Allah* or Partisans of God) is a predominantly Zaydi Shiite revivalist political and insurgent movement. Yemen's Zaydis take their name from their fifth Imam, Zayd ibn Ali, grandson of Husayn. Zayd revolted against the Umayyad Caliphate in 740, believing it to be corrupt, and to this day, Zaydis believe that their imam (ruler of the community) should be both a descendent of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad) and one who makes it his religious duty to rebel against unjust rulers and corruption. A Zaydi state (or Imamate) was founded in northern Yemen in 893 and lasted in various forms until the republican revolution of 1962. Yemen's modern imams kept their state in the Yemeni highlands in extreme isolation, as foreign visitors required the ruler's permission to enter the kingdom. Although Zaydism is an offshoot of Shia Islam, its legal traditions and religious practices are similar to Sunni Islam. Moreover, it is doctrinally distinct from "Twelver Shiism," the dominant branch of Shi'a Islam in Iran and Lebanon. The Houthi movement was formed in the northern Yemeni province of Sa'da in 2004 under the leadership of members of the Houthi family. It originally sought an end to what it viewed as efforts to marginalize Zaydi communities and beliefs, but its goals grew in scope and ambition in the wake of the 2011 uprising and government collapse to embrace a broader populist, anti-establishment message. Skeptics highlight the movement's ideological roots, its alleged cooperation with Iran, and the slogans prominently displayed on its banners: "God is great! Death to America! Death to Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory to Islam!"

As of late November 2017, the United Nations had not revised a January 2017 death toll estimate of 10,000 people killed since the start of hostilities (March 2015). The actual number of casualties is likely much higher, with more than 2,200 Yemeni deaths from a 2017 cholera outbreak alone.

On November 6, 2017, after a Houthi missile strike on Saudi soil near King Khalid international airport in Riyadh, Saudi forces imposed a full closure of air and sea access to Yemen. The United Nations warned that total restrictions on aid deliveries could produce famine, especially in northern Yemen. The total blockade was partially lifted on November 24, and the White House responded, stating, “We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need. The magnitude of suffering in Yemen requires all parties to this conflict to focus on assistance to those in need.

All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Latest Developments**

### **Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh Killed by Houthis**

The Houthi-Saleh partnership, which had been under strain for months, ended abruptly in early

December 2017, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4. The Houthi Saleh split had been brewing since spring 2017, when rumours of secret talks between Saleh and the Saudi-led coalition began circulating. The Houthis publicly accused Saleh of treason in August 2017,<sup>4</sup> leading to violent exchanges between Houthis and Saleh loyalists.

---

<sup>3</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement from the Press Secretary on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, November 24, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> “Yemen war: Cracks emerge in Houthis-Saleh alliance,” *The National* (UAE), August 20, 2017.

Intra-alliance fighting resumed in late November 2017 and, on December 2, 2017, Saleh gave a speech in which he called for the Saudi-led coalition to ease its blockade of Yemen, promising in return to “turn a new page by virtue of our neighbourliness.”<sup>5</sup> The Saudi-led coalition welcomed Saleh’s remarks, and even began conducting air strikes against Houthi positions around the capital Sana’a. In response, the Houthis moved against Saleh’s forces in the political district of the capital. On December 3, 2017, Saleh formally annulled his alliance with the Houthis. A day later, former President Saleh was killed while trying to escape the capital after days of violent confrontation between his loyalists and his former Houthi partners.

Saleh’s death and the end of the Houthi-Saleh partnership may change the Yemen war in numerous ways. In the short term, it could set back the Saudi-led coalition’s attempt to gain advantage in the conflict; it now faces a more ideologically determined enemy, who may be less willing to negotiate an immediate political settlement. According to one expert, “If Saudi Arabia wanted a negotiated exit, that opportunity seems lost for now.”<sup>6</sup> In the weeks and months ahead, it appears that the Houthis may attempt to consolidate control over geographic areas previously held by Saleh loyalists.

However, even if the Houthis succeed in consolidating control over most of northern Yemen, in the long term, their forces may be stretched thin, as it also appears that Saleh’s son, Ahmed Ali Saleh, who had been in the UAE (first as Yemen’s ambassador there and then under “house arrest”), may seek to return to Yemen and lead his father’s forces against the Houthis. Ahmed Ali has reportedly travelled from the UAE to Riyadh to lead a new ground offensive against the Houthis.<sup>7</sup> On

---

<sup>5</sup> “Yemen’s Saleh says ready for ‘new page’ with Saudi-led coalition,” *Reuters*, December 2, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> “Yemen’s Ex-President Killed as Mayhem Convulses Capital,” *New York Times*, December 4, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> “What’s Ahead for Yemen Now That Saleh’s Gone?” *Stratfor*, December 5, 2017.

December 5, Ahmed Ali was quoted on Saudi television stating, “I will lead the battle until the last Houthi is thrown out of Yemen.”<sup>8</sup>

The end of the Houthi-Saleh alliance also raises the possibility that the Saudi-led coalition may increase its efforts to capture key Yemeni cities, such as Taiz, Sana’a, and Hodeida. According to one analysis by *Jane’s*,

The collapse of the alliance is now presenting Saudi Arabia with an exit strategy from the Yemeni conflict as the coalition can now build a single front against the Houthi dominated government in Sana’a by co-opting Saleh’s Republican Guards, Special Forces, and Sunni tribal militias who can attack the Houthis in the north, around Sana’a and in Taiz. Even if the Houthis are successful in defeating Saleh loyalists in Sana’a, they will not be able to prevent coalition-backed forces from surrounding the capital, or of resisting a prolonged siege. Although the increasing isolation of the Houthis might force the movement to sit down at a negotiating table, in the meantime the collapse of the alliance signifies a sudden escalation of the Yemen civil war.<sup>14</sup>

### **Houthi Missile Attack and Port Closure**

Fighting between Houthi and Saleh forces was preceded by a weeks-long Saudi-led coalition closure of the main commercial port of Hodeida, which the coalition fully blockaded after the Houthis fired a ballistic missile deep into Saudi territory on November 4. While Saudi Arabia claims to have intercepted the missile using U.S.-supplied Patriot missile batteries, according to one account, “the missile’s warhead flew unimpeded over Saudi defences and nearly hit its target, Riyadh’s airport [King Khalid International Airport].”<sup>9</sup> In response to the missile attack, the coalition then announced that it was temporarily closing all Yemeni ports, including the main commercial port of Hodeida, on November 6, 2017. A week later, the Saudi-led coalition did permit

---

<sup>8</sup> “Son of Slain Yemen Leader Is Said to Vow Revenge,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> “Did American Missile Defence Fail in Saudi Arabia?” *New York Times*, December 4, 2017.



ports in allied government-controlled territory to open (Aden), though all northern Yemeni ports remained closed.

It is unclear what, if any, negative political or economic effects the blockade placed on Houthi-

Saleh forces, but humanitarian officials and advocates warned of the blockade's effects on Yemeni citizens. In the days and weeks following the November 4 closure, food and fuel supplied in northern Yemen dwindled, and gas and water prices skyrocketed, leading international aid agencies to warn of impending famine. On November 20, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (Fews Net) issued an alert, warning that "if all ports remain closed, or re-open but are unable to support large-scale imports of essential goods, Famine is likely in many areas of the country within three to four months. In less accessible areas with the most severe current food insecurity, Famine could emerge even more quickly."<sup>10</sup> During the blockade, aid agencies announced that five cities had run out of clean water (Sa'ada, Taiz, Hodeida, Sana'a and al Bayda).<sup>11</sup> Humanitarian agencies decried the closures, asserting that the Saudi-led coalition was violating international law by using starvation as a weapon.<sup>12</sup> However, the Saudi-led coalition claimed that it was acting legally, citing Paragraph 14 of UNSCR 2216 (see below), which calls on states to take measures to prevent the supply of military goods to the Houthis.<sup>19</sup>

The total closure of all Yemeni ports lasted until November 24, 2017, when the Saudi-led coalition announced that it would begin allowing humanitarian aid to resume entering Hodeida port. The White House responded by issuing a press statement welcoming the coalition's actions

---

<sup>10</sup> "Alert: Famine (IPC Phase 5) likely in Yemen if Key Ports remain Closed," The Famine Early Warning Systems Network, November 20, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> "1-2.5 million Yemenis now lack access to clean water - Red Cross," *Reuters*, November 21, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> "Saudi Claims to Ease Yemen Blockade a Cruel Fiction," Human Rights Watch, November 13, 2017.

while further stating, “We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need.... All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority. We remain committed to supporting Saudi Arabia and all our Gulf partners against the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ aggression and blatant violations of international law.”<sup>13</sup> However, while the Saudi-led coalition lifted its blockade on select humanitarian deliveries, as of early December 2017, it is unclear whether the coalition is permitting commercial goods to be imported.<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has called for the urgent resumption of all commercial imports.

On December 6, 2017, President Trump issued a statement calling on Saudi Arabia to “completely allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it. This must be done for humanitarian reasons immediately.”<sup>15</sup> A day earlier, USAID Administrator Mark Green stated that “all parties must enable the unfettered and increased flow of commercial goods and fuel from all ports of entry to reach nearly 21 million people in need.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Yemen at the United Nations**

As the war in Yemen approaches its fourth year, it has steadily evolved from a contest between competing local elites to a complex conflict involving a combination of Yemeni and foreign forces waging war in an increasingly fragmented landscape. While the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya seem to have garnered more media attention than Yemen, the Yemen war has been a major focus of various United Nations entities

---

<sup>13</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement from the Press Secretary on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, November 24, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> “Yemenis fear Starving to Death as Saudi Siege Bites,” *Middle East Eye*, November 30, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Yemen, December 6, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> USAID, Office of Press Relations, Statement from USAID Administrator Mark Green on Yemen, December 5, 2017.

and deliberative bodies since the Saudi coalition's intervention in March 2015.

From the start of hostilities, Saudi Arabia was able to secure the support of the United Nations Security Council, a key development in providing the Saudi-led coalition with international approval for its intervention. On April 14, 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2216, which imposed sanctions on individuals undermining the stability of Yemen and authorized an arms embargo against the Houthi-Saleh forces. It also demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all areas seized during the current conflict, relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions, cease all actions falling exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen, and fully implement previous council resolutions.

One of the key aspects of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2216 is that it authorizes member states to prevent the transfer or sale of arms to the Houthis or to former President Saleh and also allows Yemen's neighbours to inspect cargo suspected of carrying arms to Houthi fighters. To implement this authority in UNSCR 2216, some member states (the European Union, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States) formed the U.N. Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), a U.N.-led operation designed to inspect incoming sea cargo to Yemen for illicit weapons. UNVIM can inspect cargo, while also ensuring that humanitarian aid is delivered in a timely manner.

Beyond the Security Council, the U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed is one of the primary officials responsible for trying to broker a political settlement to the conflict. On humanitarian side, Mark Lowcock is the current head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA categorizes Yemen as one of the most complex of humanitarian emergencies worldwide. Recent notable U.N. activities include the following:

- In October 2017, the United Nations Secretary General released its 2016 report on children and armed conflict. The report noted that a total of at least 1,340 children were killed or maimed in the Yemen conflict in 2016.<sup>17</sup>
- In September 2017, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that, among other things, condemned ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen. It required that the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights establish a group of experts to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen. Some members of the council had called for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry, which was not adopted.<sup>18</sup>
- In June 2017, the Security Council issued a presidential statement on Yemen that, among other things, called on all parties to engage in peace negotiations, comply with international humanitarian law, and allow access for humanitarian supplies. The statement also sought an increase in commercial and humanitarian shipments through the main northern port of Hodeida.<sup>19</sup>
- In April 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland, the United Nations sponsored an international donors' conference to secure

---

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, Promotion and protection of the rights of children: Children and armed conflict, A/72/361– S/2017/821, August 24, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> "In a Compromise, U.N. Rights Experts Will Examine Abuses in Yemen's War," *New York Times*, September 29, 2017

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Security Council, Security Council Issues Presidential Statement Calling on Parties in Yemen to Engage Constructively in Good-Faith Effort for Conflict Resolution, 7974<sup>th</sup> Meeting, SC/12873, June 15, 2017. <sup>34</sup> UN OCHA, Yemen: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017.

\$2.1 billion in funds to meet the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. At the conference, donors pledged \$1.1 billion.

### **Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis and U.S. Response**

Yemen is consistently described as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. According to UN OCHA, out of a total population estimated at 29 million, 22.2 million Yemenis are in need of assistance and 11.3 million are in acute need. The United Nations often describes Yemen as "the world's largest man-made food security crisis."<sup>34</sup> Whereas food is available in markets across the country, the war has hampered distribution networks and 1.25 million public employees have gone nearly a year without receiving salaries, which has contributed to a liquidity crisis in the banking sector. Aid agencies estimate that 17.8 million people are now food insecure.

With millions of Yemenis lacking access to basic health care and clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, the country is experiencing the world's largest ongoing cholera outbreak. As of November 5, 2017, more than 900,000 suspected cholera cases and 2,200 associated Yemeni deaths were reported.

### **Hodeida Port and Humanitarian Access**

The surrounding maritime space around Hodeida port remains under the control of the Saudi-led coalition, and even before its total closure on November 4, humanitarian access was challenging, as ships often have to undergo a clearance process involving inspections from both UNVIM and Saudi-led coalition forces. Hodeida port has been damaged, and there are a lack of berthing spaces and staffing shortages. Electricity availability also is sporadic. Shipping insurance costs also are higher for carriers destined for Hodeida. However, many international aid organizations would prefer to use Hodeida port, as shipping through Aden adds additional costs owing to the movement of aid overland through the current battle lines of control. In 2016, the United States took steps to repair the port of Hodeida by providing the World Food Program with funds to purchase four cranes to replace those damaged in

previous Saudi-led coalition airstrikes. However, the cranes have not been delivered to Yemen and are being stored in Dubai. According to one account, the World Food Program received permission from the Saudi-led coalition to deliver the cranes to Hodeida in early 2017, but permission was eventually revoked due to concern over ongoing military operations in the area.<sup>20</sup>

Since March 2015, the United States has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid to

Yemen. Funds were provided to international aid organizations from USAID’s Office of Foreign

Disaster Assistance (OFDA), USAID’s Food for Peace (FFP), and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM). Overall, the United Nations Yemen 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan is 57% funded with \$1.3 billion funded of the \$2.3 billion requested.

**Table 1. U.S. Humanitarian Response to the Complex Crisis in Yemen (in millions of dollars)**

Account	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
IDA (USAID/OFDA)	19.946	45.087	61.819	49.858	76.844	81.528	227.996
FFP (UDAID/FFP)	20.013	54.803	50.208	55.000	56.672	196.988	369.629
MRA (State/PRM)	22.500	19.738	18.886	8.900	45.300	48.950	38.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>62.459</b>	<b>119.628</b>	<b>130.913</b>	<b>113.758</b>	<b>178.816</b>	<b>327.466</b>	<b>635.750</b>

*Source: Yemen, Complex Emergency—USAID Factsheets.*

<sup>20</sup> “U.S. Plan to help Yemenis obtain Humanitarian Aid Falters, amid Growing Food Crisis,” *Washington Post*, March 15, 2017.

## 9. Democratic Veterans in Congress Call for Briefing on Yemen Raid

February 3rd, 2017

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman Seth Moulton (D-MA), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), and Anthony Brown (D-MD) sent a letter to the Secretary of defence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on the recent U.S. military operation in Yemen. Moulton, Gallego, and Brown serve on the House Armed Services Committee and request an urgent briefing on the decisions that went into the operation.

“As Commander in Chief, President Trump has a responsibility to keep our nation and service members safe, and that means making smart national security decisions,” said Congressman Seth Moulton (D-MA). “We therefore request a briefing on the decisions and decision-makers involved in the Yemen raid.”

“The House Armed Services Committee has a solemn responsibility to learn more about how the chaotic operation in Yemen was planned, approved and executed,” said Rep. Ruben Gallego (AZ-07). “The members of our Committee and the American people deserve more information about how President Trump weighed the risks to our military personnel before and during the raid.”

### Full Text of the Letter:

As members of the House Armed Services committee, we write to express concern and request an urgent briefing (in a classified format, if necessary), from both the Office of the Secretary of defence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on the recent U.S. military operation in Yemen.

U.S. Central Command and press reports have confirmed U.S. Navy SEAL, Chief Special Warfare Operator William “Ryan” Owens was

tragically killed in a January 29 raid on an Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) compound in Al-Bayda, Yemen. Our hearts go out to Chief Owens family during this incredibly difficult time.

Local sources have said that about 30 people, including 10 women and children were also killed which was corroborated by an investigating team from U.S. Central Command.

We are particularly concerned about reports that U.S. military officials have indicated the operation was hastily executed, and approved without sufficient intelligence, ground support, or adequate backup.

We are also concerned that reporting has indicated the only non-Department of defence officials involved in approving the operation apart from the President were White House Strategist Steven Bannon and White House Advisor Jared Kushner. This troubling development is consistent with other decisions by the President that marginalize the advice and expert opinion of the intelligence community and wider National Security Council as conceived in the 1947 National Security Act of the United States.

Therefore, we are requesting an urgent briefing on the planning process behind the operation, the targeting procedures involved, the extent to which the advice and input of the intelligence community was included, as well as a post-operation civilian casualty assessment.

We have no higher responsibility than to keep our nation and our service members safe. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us meet this responsibility.



## 10. Emergency Debate in the House of Commons



(Standing Order No. 24)

HANSARD 30 November 2017 12.56 pm

**Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)**

I beg to move, that this House has considered the current situation in Yemen.

I am extremely grateful to Mr Speaker for granting this debate. There is rapidly rising concern in Britain about what is happening in Yemen and the part that Britain is playing in this crisis. There is deep concern that an almighty catastrophe of biblical proportions is unfolding in Yemen before our eyes, and a considerable fear that Britain is dangerously complicit in it.

I had the opportunity, thanks to Oxfam and the United Nations, to visit Yemen early this year, and I am most grateful to the Saudi Arabian authorities for facilitating that visit. I think I remain the only European politician to have visited Sana'a and the northern part of Yemen in the past three years. I want to pay tribute to the extraordinary work that the humanitarian agencies and the UN are carrying out, particularly the work that Jamie McGoldrick and his team at the UN are so brilliantly doing in almost impossible circumstances.

I returned from Yemen deeply concerned at what I had learned and seen, and I expressed my concern to both the Foreign Office and the British Government privately, and to the Saudi authorities, courtesy of His Excellency the Saudi Arabian ambassador. I regard myself as a friend of Saudi Arabia, albeit a candid one. Like many, I have great respect for the domestic reforms and modernisation currently in progress in the kingdom, which are being led by the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

My visit to Yemen enabled me both to spend time with the humanitarian agencies and to meet the Houthi leadership, the former President of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh and those currently leading what is the largest political party in Yemeni politics, the General People's Congress.

**Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)**

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing this debate, and I join him, as I am sure the whole House does, in offering our thanks to the humanitarian workers. Does he agree that although the roots of this terrible war are deep and complex, there is absolutely no justification whatsoever for repeated blockades of the ports and the airports? The blockades are denying the long-suffering people of Yemen the food and medicine that they require, and as a result they are suffering grievously. There is a threat of famine, and people are dying of diseases, including cholera.

**Mr Mitchell**

The right hon. Gentleman is right in every syllable of every word that he has just said. I hope to set out both the extent of the problems that he has identified and what I think the British Government can do to assist in their resolution.

I was talking about those I met when I was in Yemen and about the Houthis. There is an idea that persists that Yemen has been captured by a few thousand terrorists of Houthi origin who have stolen the country. This analysis is not only wrong; it is an extremely dangerous fiction. The Houthis are in complete control of large parts of the country, and

together with their allies, the GPC, have established a strong and orderly Government in the north, particularly throughout the capital city of Yemen, Sana'a. They will not be easily shifted. The Houthis commit grave violations against the civilian population too, including forced disappearances and siphoning vital resources from public services to fund violence. But for most people in Sana'a, the only violence and disorder that they experience is that which rains down on them from the skies night after night from Saudi aircraft.

**Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab)**

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for securing the debate and for giving way.

A recent BBC documentary showed the Houthis in Sana'a putting posters up everywhere, sacking all the Sunni clerics from the mosques and putting Shia clerics in. The poster slogans and the chants in the mosques were "Death to America", "Death to Israel" and "Curse on the Jews". Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that is right and progressive and that the Houthis represent a peaceful way forward?

**Mr Mitchell**

The point I have just been making is that the Houthis are responsible for violence and for disappearances. In the few sentences before I gave way to him, I was making clear precisely what the position is in respect of the Houthis. The fact is that they are in control of large parts of Yemen and they will not be easily shifted.

During my visit, I was also able to travel to Sa'ada in the north, which has been largely destroyed. Posters in the city in Arabic and English say that Yemeni children are being killed by the British and Americans. No fewer than 25 humanitarian agencies wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 13 November. In my many years of working with humanitarian organisations, I have seldom seen such a clear, convincing and utterly united approach from so many of our world-leading NGOs and charities.

I want to be clear about the situation on the ground as of last night. The position is as follows. Some humanitarian flights into Sana'a resumed on 26 November following the intensification of the blockade imposed on 5 November. Some limited shipments are coming into Hodeidah, Yemen's principal port, and Saleef, but very small amounts. Two initial shipments to those ports have brought just 30,000 metric tonnes of commercial wheat—less than 10% of what Yemen needs a month to keep its population alive—and 300,000 metric tonnes of wheat was turned away in the first two weeks of the blockade. This morning three vessels loaded with food are outside Hodeidah awaiting permission from the Saudi authorities to enter.

One humanitarian air cargo flight landed last weekend with 1.9 million doses of diphtheria vaccine. These vaccines will help contain the current outbreak of diphtheria—a disease known as the strangling angel of children; a disease that we no longer see in Britain and Europe and which since August has produced more than 170 suspected cases and at least 14 deaths so far.

There has been no access for fuel. Fuel is critical to the milling and trucking of food to vulnerable people in need as well as the ongoing operation of health, water and sewerage systems. Humanitarian agencies need at a minimum 1,000,000 litres of fuel each month. Without fuel, hospitals are shutting down due to lack of power and water. At least seven whole cities have run out of clean water and sanitation and aid agencies are unable to get food to starving families. The destruction of clean water and sanitation facilities is directly responsible for the outbreak earlier this year of cholera affecting nearly 1 million people.

To summarise, the effect and impact of the blockade could not be graver. Yemen is a country ravaged by medieval diseases and on the precipice of famine. With rapidly dwindling food and fuel stocks and the dire humanitarian situation pushing at least 7 million people into famine, it is now vital that there is unimpeded access for both humanitarian and commercial cargo to enter Hodeidah and Saleef, including those carrying fuel. Approximately 21 million Yemenis today

stand in need of humanitarian assistance, but to be clear, humanitarian aid alone is not enough to meet the needs of the entire country. Without access for critical commercial goods, the likelihood of famine and a renewed spike of cholera remain. The international humanitarian agencies are doing their best to support around 7 million people, but the rest of the population rely on the commercial sector and the lack of food and fuel is causing desperate problems, with price hikes over 100% in costs for essential commodities.

**John Spellar (Warley) (Lab)**

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for drawing breath and giving way. He is right to identify and highlight the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. He does that cause no service by glossing over the causes of the situation, particularly the Iranian-backed Houthi rebellion, with the violence that has accompanied it. Many of my constituents whose families are still in Aden are terrified by the prospect of the Houthis taking over. Does he acknowledge that the Government of Yemen are internationally recognised and are being supported by the Saudi-led coalition? Can we have a bit of balance on the causes of this event?

**Mr Mitchell**

If we are able to detain the right hon. Gentleman for the rest of my remarks, I will directly address many of the points that he has made.

The Saudi pledge to open some ports for urgent humanitarian supplies does not come close to feeding a population reliant on commercial imports for 80% of its food. The best analogy for Hodeidah is the equivalent of the port of London; 80% of all that Yemeni's eat is imported and 70% comes through Hodeidah Port. As the UN Secretary General said last week:

“the flour milling capacity of Hodeida and Saleef Ports and their proximity to 70% of people in need makes them indispensable to the survival of Yemen. ... Unless the blockade on these Ports is lifted famine throughout Yemen is a very real threat including on the southern border of Saudi Arabia”.

So the recent Saudi proposal in respect of opening other ports completely misses the point. No one should accept the Saudis' minor concessions on humanitarian access as a victory. Allowing some UN flights to land and ships to dock does not constitute the unhindered humanitarian access that Saudi Arabia is required to provide under international humanitarian law. Humanitarian cargo alone will not avert a famine in Yemen. All it will do is slow the inevitable descent into disease and starvation for millions of Yemenis.

**Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con)**

I was under the impression that the Government had opened the ports, including Hodeidah, but that the rebels still have not opened ports. Obviously, we want all the ports in Yemen to be opened as fast as possible. Right now, my understanding is that the Government and the Saudis have opened up the ports that they control. Am I wrong?

**Mr Mitchell**

My hon. Friend is partially wrong. The two critical ports are Hodeidah and Saleef, for the reasons that I have explained. Shipping is not being allowed to enter those ports in an unfettered way.

I want to be very clear about this. Humanitarian support without commercial imports coming into the country—especially food, fuel and medicine—will condemn millions of Yemenis to certain death. So what does this mean on the ground? Every hour 27 children are diagnosed as acutely malnourished. That is 600 more starving children every day. According to the World Food Programme, as things stand, 150,000 malnourished children could starve to death in the coming months and 17 million people do not know from where their next meal is coming. As of today, at least 400,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, as medically defined.

When children have severe malnutrition, they reach a critical point at which they are no longer able to eat for themselves and need to be fed by naso-gastric tubes. Prior to that point, we can assist them: we can revive them quickly with nutritional biscuits such as Plumpy'nut at a cost of a few pence per child. But once they are so starved of nutrition

that they require medical assistance and their organs begin to fail, they cannot play, and they cannot smile. Parents have to be told that their children still love them, but they are just too weak to show it.

I repeat that malnutrition in Yemen today is threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. The imagery on our television screens, captured by only the most intrepid of journalists due to Saudi restrictions on media access, seem to be from a bygone era—emaciated children and tiny babies in incubators, their tenuous hold on life dependent on fuel for hospital generators that is fast running out. Nawal al-Maghafi's award-winning reporting for the BBC showed shocking and heart-breaking images of famine and shattering health systems, even before the current blockade.

**Graham P. Jones**

The right hon. Gentleman says that there are limitations on journalism, but actually Al-Jazeera has a lot of access and does not report the Saudi position favourably to the world. We have only to go on YouTube to see an awful lot of modern media from inside north Yemen and Sana'a—and from Saudi Arabia, where Houthis regularly kill Saudi people.

**Mr Mitchell**

The hon. Gentleman will, however, accept that where a blockade specifically targets journalists to stop them from coming in, it is reasonable to assume that the regime in control has something to hide, which it does not want journalists to see. After all, if there were nothing to hide, presumably journalists would be allowed access.

The 25 humanitarian agencies that wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 13 November did so because Britain is part of a coalition that is blockading and attacking Yemen. As the pen holder on Yemen at the United Nations, we are responsible for leading action at the Security Council. We bear a special responsibility—physical, as well as moral—to lead the international response to end this conflict. Yet our Government have declined to call this what it is: an illegal blockade. Saudi Arabia is in direct violation of humanitarian law and specifically

in breach of Security Council resolution 2216, which “urges all parties to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to reach people in need of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance”.

That is what the resolution says—it could hardly be clearer. The Security Council resolution was initiated and drafted by the UK in 2015. The British Government were right to condemn the attempted Houthi missile attack on Riyadh airport, as the Minister for the Middle East did in the House last week, but where is the British condemnation of the 1,000 days of intensive Saudi bombing of Yemen?

On each of the three nights I spent in Sana’a earlier this year, there were six bombing runs by the Saudi air force attacking the city. I was in no danger whatever, as I was safe with the United Nations, but imagine the fear and horror of families and children who night after night are the subject of crude bombing attacks, which most usually destroy civilian and non-military targets. Throughout this conflict our “quiet diplomacy” has failed to curb outrage after outrage perpetrated by our allies as they destroy bridges, roads and hospitals. No wonder the UN Secretary-General has called this a “stupid” war.

Despite holding the pen at the UN Security Council, the UK has so far failed to take any steps whatever to use it to respond to the recent escalation. We have not condemned the illegal restrictions on humanitarian aid and vital imports of food, fuel and medicines. We have not called for parties to end violations against civilians or to set out a revitalised peace process given the political stalemate and the widespread recognition that resolution 2216 constitutes a barrier to a realistic political process. The UK did not even dissent from a draft UN Security Council statement, circulated by Egypt, that failed entirely to mention the dire impact of the blockade. This silence is shameful: it not only lets down the Yemenis, but threatens our position on the UN Security Council as other nations fill the void left by our abdication of leadership.



The senseless death of millions is not the only risk. By tightening the noose around a starving nation, Saudi Arabia is fuelling the propaganda machines of the very opponents it wishes to vanquish. More than collective punishment of the Yemenis, this is self-harm on a grand scale.

When I went to Sa'dah, I visited a school that had been bombed by the Saudi air force. Children were being taught in tents and with textbooks largely financed by the British taxpayer. On my arrival, the children started chanting in much the same way as children in our primary schools declaim nursery rhymes. On inquiring of the translator what they were saying, I was told they were chanting, "Death to the Saudis and Americans!" In deference to my visit, they had omitted from their chanting the third country on their list.

Far from helping to make Saudi Arabia's borders safer and diminishing the threat of international terrorism, we are radicalising an entire generation of Yemeni young people, whose hatred of us for what we are doing to them and their country may well translate into a potent recruitment tool for international terrorists. Every action of the Saudis currently bolsters and serves the narrative of Saudi Arabia's enemies, who want Saudi Arabia to be seen as the aggressor so that they win the support of the general population.

**Keith Vaz**

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. He was present at the meeting earlier this week when we heard from the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, who said that the Saudi Arabian Government do not believe that this war can be won. What is the point of continuing with a war that cannot be won?

**Mr Mitchell**

Well, I will now turn directly to the position of Saudi Arabia, whose impressive Foreign Minister, Ahmed al-Jubeir, generously came to the House of Commons on Tuesday this week to speak to the all-party group, as the right hon. Gentleman has just said. During the course of the conversation, during which the right hon. Gentleman and I were

pretty forthright, he asked for advice, making it clear that Saudi Arabia had not fought a war of this nature before.

My advice is as follows: there must be an immediate end to this appalling blockade. Of course, working with the UN, the Saudis are within their rights to search shipping and other transport for illicit weapons, but they cannot impound or obstruct vessels carrying vital food and medical supplies. Currently, the Saudis are refusing to allow 26 ships that have been cleared by the UN to be offloaded. If the Saudis have doubts about the effectiveness of UN inspection, they must of course be part of it.

There must be an immediate ceasefire and a return to reinvigorated, inclusive peace talks. A new Security Council resolution is long overdue. It is widely recognised that resolution 2216 is an anachronism that constitutes a barrier to any peace process. There can be no preconditions from either side. The Houthis and the General People's Congress are in control of Sana'a; they will not be easily shifted—certainly not by an air campaign that day after day consolidates support for them on the ground and directs the hatred of the local population to those who are dropping the bombs.

The Houthis did not start out as allies of the Iranians; the Houthis are Zaidis, not Shi'a. But of course in a region where “my enemy's enemy is my friend”, it is not hard to understand why the Houthis look to Iran, although, given the blockade, it is not easy for Iran to arm the Houthis in any significant way. The prolonging of the conflict and the resulting cost to Saudi Arabia in regional instability is a gift to Iran.

### **Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)**

My right hon. Friend is making an extremely powerful point about the nature of Iran's arming of the Houthis. Does he not, however, accept the research by Conflict Armament Research that clearly points out that weapons from Iran have come through Yemen and are now being used against Saudi Arabia? He makes the absolutely valid point that Saudi action is only further encouraging such violence, but does he not also

accept that Tehran is wilfully undermining and destroying an Arab state to use it as a proxy against Saudi Arabia?

**Mr Mitchell**

I strongly agree with my hon. Friend that blockading weapons—from any country, but certainly from Iran—is the right thing to do, but I am condemning without reservation a blockade that is likely to lead to the famine and death of very large numbers of people.

The price for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of continuing on its current path will be certain failure and utter humiliation, both in the region and more widely. The clock is ticking. Already in Yemen a child dies every 10 minutes. Yemen is a time bomb threatening international peace and security. Our failure to denounce these crimes and use our leverage to stop them condemns millions of Yemenis to death in the future. Shying away from demanding compliance, by all, with the international rules-based order that we in Britain helped to take root also weakens a strained system that keeps British citizens safe.

Britain's policy is riddled with internal inconsistencies. While one limb of the British Government is desperately trying to secure entry into the port of Hodeidah for vital food, medicine and fuel, another limb is assisting with the blockade and, indeed, the targeting of attacks. One limb supports the erection of seven new cranes that are vital for unloading essential supplies, while another supports the destruction of those same cranes.

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt)**

My right hon. Friend is doing an excellent job in explaining some of the background to the conflict, but I will not have him stand in the House of Commons and say that the British Government are involved in the targeting of weaponry being used by the coalition. That is just not true, and I would like him to withdraw it.

**Mr Mitchell**

If my right hon. Friend will give me an undertaking that it is totally untrue that any serving British officer has been engaged with the

targeting centre in Riyadh, or in any other part of Saudi Arabia, to try to assist in ensuring that the targeting is better, I will of course withdraw my remark.

**Alistair Burt**

British personnel are there to observe what is happening in relation to international humanitarian law, so that they can be part of the process of ensuring that it is adhered to. They are not part of the operational process. They are not under command to do that or anything else. They are not taking part in the targeting or anything like it, and have not been so.

**Mr Mitchell**

I want to be absolutely clear about what my right hon. Friend is telling the House of Commons today. There is no question of any serving British officer being engaged in instructing and assisting—certainly to ensure that international humanitarian law is observed—with the programme of targeting that is being carried out by the Saudi air force?

**Mr Mitchell**

If my right hon. Friend gives me such an undertaking, I am happy to withdraw that very specific point.

I have never called for an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia, because the kingdom is surrounded by enemies and is wealthy. Saudi Arabia is absolutely entitled to defend itself, and we as its friend and ally are entitled to sell it weapons as long as we do so in accordance with one of the strictest licensing regimes in the world. We may also have some influence that we could exercise to ensure that weapons are used in accordance with the rules of war. I cannot help observing, however, that British munitions are causing destruction and misery in Yemen that the other limb of the British Government, to which I referred earlier, is seeking to staunch through aid and assistance paid for by the British taxpayer.

I have no doubt that, during her current visit to the middle east, the Prime Minister will use every political, economic and security argument

available to her to persuade the Saudis of the moral and strategic failure that they are pursuing in Yemen. I profoundly hope that the lifting of the blockade on Yemen will be the No. 1 priority on her visit. We must use every inch of our leverage—diplomatic, political and economic—to demonstrate to our allies that they have more to gain from peace than from a fruitless military strategy that is exacerbating the world’s largest humanitarian catastrophe and undermining the international rules-based order that keeps us all safe.

**Hilary Benn**

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way to me again, On the question of arms sales, given that the final report of the United Nations panel of experts on Yemen found that the coalition had conducted airstrikes in violation of international humanitarian law, and given the consolidated criteria—the rules governing arms sales from the United Kingdom—is there not a bit of a problem if the UK Government do not pause their sales, which is what I called for, along with the Leader of the Opposition, when I was shadow Foreign Secretary, since we have an obligation to see those claims investigated? Otherwise, is there not a risk that the sales will be in breach of our own law?

**Mr Mitchell**

I agree that it is important for these incidents to be investigated, and investigated impartially, because otherwise the investigation will carry no credence.

I have completed the speech that I intended to make, but I think it worth adding that I have steered away from a debate on an arms embargo, because I think it would have taken our eye off the critical ball. We must see an end to this blockade, for humanitarian reasons and for reasons of international humanitarian law.

**Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)**

I am grateful to Mr Speaker for granting the debate, and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) on securing it. His speech was nothing less than a tour de force, and I congratulate him on that as well—and I mean it.

We are talking about what has been widely recognised to be the world's biggest humanitarian crisis, and it is threatening to become one of the worst such crises for decades. In those circumstances, an emergency debate is more than appropriate. It is regrettable in many ways that the House is not packed today. On too many occasions the war in Yemen has been described as a forgotten war, and indeed it is. The role that we play in it is important, and needs to be more widely acknowledged.

It is welcome that, since the Minister's statement on the crisis 10 days ago, we have seen a partial easing of the blockade of Yemen's ports and airports to allow some consignments of food and medical supplies to be brought into rebel-held areas, but, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield said, it is not nearly enough to address the scale of the humanitarian needs. Hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent children still face death over the coming weeks owing to malnutrition and disease. If they do not receive the food, clean water and medical supplies that they need in order to survive, and receive them in the long-term quantities that are required, we know what will happen.

If those children are to obtain the relief that they need, all parties must be willing to do whatever it takes, including the complete cessation of violence, the full lifting of the blockades, the opening of humanitarian corridors over land, and a guarantee of safe passage for aid convoys. I hope that the Minister will be able to update us today on what is being done to achieve those ends.

We all understand the backdrop to the current crisis. We understand the anger of the Saudi Government at the firing of a ballistic missile at their own country by the Houthi rebels on 4 November. That was an act that all Opposition Members unequivocally condemn, just as we condemn the Saudi airstrike on 1 November which killed 31 people, including six children, at a market in the Sahar district of Sa'ada. Both sides are guilty of attacking civilians, both sides should be equally condemned for doing so, and, in due course, both sides should be held to account for any violations of international humanitarian law.

Following the Houthi missile strike, the Saudis strengthened their blockade of all rebel-held areas of Yemen. As a result, what little supplies there were of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods were choked off for at least three weeks, and remain just an inadequate trickle today. The damage that will have been done to millions of children who were already facing severe malnutrition, a cholera epidemic and an outbreak of diphtheria, will, as the UN has said, be measured in the lives that are lost. As the World Health Organisation, the World Food Programme and UNICEF have stated, the tightening of the blockade has made “an already catastrophic situation far worse.”

They concluded:

“To deprive this many from the basic means of survival is an unconscionable act and a violation of humanitarian principles and law.”

In that context, I must go back to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North East (Fabian Hamilton) 10 days ago: how do the Government view this month’s blockade as compatible with international humanitarian law, a body of law that clearly states that starvation of civilian populations cannot be used as a weapon of war and any blockades established for military purposes must allow civilian populations access to the food and other essential supplies that they need to live?

### **Graham P. Jones**

The situation in Yemen is of course terrible and catastrophic, but does my right hon. Friend not agree that the main reason for that is the collapse of the economic system within Yemen?

### **Emily Thornberry**

However we got here, it cannot be made better by there being a blockade and millions of starving children. It is my view—and I believe the view of this House—that the blockade should be lifted and that we must find a peace process and a way of moving the sides apart to allow these children to survive over the winter.

When a tactic of surrender or survive was used by President Assad in Syria, the Foreign Secretary was happy to condemn it, but he has uttered not a single word of criticism when the same tactic has been used by his friend Crown Prince Salman of Saudi Arabia, the architect of the Yemen conflict, or, as the Foreign Secretary likes to call him, “a remarkable young man.” So let me ask the Minister this specifically: while the blockade was fully in place over the past three weeks, apparently in clear breach of international humanitarian law, were any export licences granted for the sale of arms from the UK to the Saudi-led coalition?

When my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North East raised this issue last week, the Minister seemed to suggest that the blockade was justified from a military point of view because of the alleged smuggling of missiles from Iran to the Houthi rebels. But I ask him again why he disagrees with the confidential briefing prepared by the panel of experts appointed by the UN Security Council and circulated on 10 November. That briefing has been referred to already, but let me quote from it:

“The panel finds that imposition of access restrictions is another attempt by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition to use...resolution 2216 as justification for obstructing the delivery of commodities that are essentially civilian in nature.”

It goes on to say that, while the Houthis undoubtedly possess some ballistic missile capacity: “The panel has seen no evidence to support claims of” ballistic missiles “having been transferred to the Houthi-Saleh alliance from external sources”.

If the Minister disagrees with that assessment, which I understand he does, can he state the evidence on which he does so, and will he undertake to share that evidence with the UN panel of experts? However, if there is no such evidence, I ask him again: how can the blockade be justified from the perspective of international humanitarian law, and how can the Government justify selling Saudi Arabia the arms that were used to enforce that blockade?



We know that, even if the blockade of Yemen's ports is permanently lifted, the civilian population of Yemen will continue to suffer as long as this conflict carries on, and the only way that suffering will finally end is through a lasting ceasefire and political agreement. As the whole House knows, it is the UK's ordained role to act as the penholder for a UN ceasefire resolution on Yemen. That is a matter I have raised many times in this House, and I raise it again today. It has now been one year and one month since Britain's ambassador to the United Nations, Matthew Rycroft, circulated Britain's draft resolution to other members of the UN Security Council, and this is what he said back then:

"We have decided...to put forward a draft Security Council resolution...calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a resumption of the political process."

That was a year and a month ago, and still no resolution has been presented. That is one year and one month when no progress has been made towards peace, and when the conflict has continued to escalate, and the humanitarian crisis has become the worst in the world.

**Keith Vaz**

I thank my right hon. Friend very much for what she is saying, and she is absolutely right. Twelve months have elapsed since the promise that there would be a resolution before the UN. The Quint met last night in London, and the Foreign Secretary tweeted a photograph of himself with the participants, but there is no timetable. Does my right hon. Friend agree that these meetings are meaningless without a timetable for peace with all the parties at the table at the same time?

**Emily Thornberry**

My right hon. Friend is right: warm words butter no parsnips, as my grandmother used to say. Matthew Rycroft says now that

"the political track...is at a dead-end. There is no meaningful political process going on".

If we are wrong about that, we would be very grateful for some reassurance from the Minister, but we have been waiting and waiting, and children are dying, and we have to do something about it.

We are bound to ask, for example, what has happened to that draft resolution: why has it been killed off—indeed, has it been killed off? Is the situation as the Saudi ambassador to the UN said when first asked about the UK’s draft resolution this time last year?

“There is a continuous and joint agreement with Britain concerning the draft resolution, and whether there is a need for it or not”?

We must ask this Minister: is that “continuous and joint agreement” with Saudi Arabia still in place? If so, why has it never been disclosed to the House?

The fear is that Saudi Arabia does not want a ceasefire and that it sees no value in negotiating a peace—not when Crown Prince Salman believes that the rebellion can still be crushed, whatever the humanitarian cost. If he does believe that, are we really to accept that the UK Government are going along with that judgment?

The Minister will, of course, point to the so-called peace forum chaired by the Foreign Secretary this week—the Quint—and say that that is evidence that the UK is doing its job to move the political process forward, but when the only participants in the peace forum are Saudi Arabia, two of its allies, and two of the countries supplying most of its arms, that is not a “peace forum.” I respectfully suggest that far from being a peace forum, it is a council of war. What we really need—what we urgently need and have needed for more than a year and a month—is the moral and political force which comes from a UN Security Council resolution obliging all parties to cease hostilities, obliging all parties to allow humanitarian relief, and obliging all parties to work towards a political solution.

I ask the Minister: how much longer do we have to wait? When will the Government finally bring forward the resolution? If the answer is that, because of opposition from the Saudis and the Americans, they will

never present that resolution, do they not at least owe it to fellow members of the UN Security Council, and to Members of this House—and, indeed, to the children of Yemen—to admit that the role of penholder on Yemen is no longer a position they can in good conscience occupy and that they should pass on that role of drafting a resolution to another country which is less joined at the hip to Crown Prince Salman and President Donald Trump?

Let me close my quoting my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in his last letter to the Prime Minister on the subject of Yemen:

“Whilst the immediate priority should be humanitarian assistance...it is time the Government takes immediate steps to play its part in ending the suffering of the Yemeni people, ends its support of the Saudi coalition’s conduct in the war and take appropriate action” through the UN “to bring the conflict to a peaceful, negotiated resolution.”

Those are the three tests of whether the Government are willing to take action today, and I hope that by the end of this emergency debate we will have some indication of whether they are going to take that action, or whether it is just going to be more of the same.

#### **The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt)**

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for securing this opportunity to discuss what we all understand to be a significant humanitarian crisis in Yemen. I appreciate the fact that he visited Yemen earlier this year, and he clearly has a deep and passionate knowledge of the situation there. A number of questions have come up, but I would like to start with the issue that tends to be the most neglected—namely, the origins of the conflict. We seem to start these debates partway through. I will get to the questions that have been raised, but it is important to set out the background because it explains the complexity with which a number of Members have approached the issue. It is not as clear cut as some might suggest.

The causes of the conflict are numerous and complex. Since unification in 1990, Yemen has suffered internal power struggles, unrest and terrorist attacks. After a year of protests in 2011, the 33-year rule of President Saleh transferred to President Hadi as part of a unity Government brokered with regional support. A national dialogue process began, which offered an opportunity for a democratic future. Tragically, that opportunity was lost when the Houthi insurgency movement, which claimed to have been excluded from the national dialogue process, sought to take power through violence.

In September 2014, Houthi rebels took the capital by force, prompting President Hadi to flee to the southern city of Aden. The Houthis then began advancing on the south of the country. President Hadi, as the internationally recognised leader of the legitimate Government of Yemen, requested military help from the Saudi-led coalition. The conflict between the Government of Yemen, backed by the coalition, and the Houthis and their allies, backed by former President Saleh, has so far lasted 1,000 days. Let us also remember the attacks carried out by al-Qaeda, Daesh and non-state groups against the Yemeni people, other countries in the region and international shipping lanes. Those groups use ungoverned space, which Yemen has been in the past and threatens to become again.

The impact of conflict and terrorism on the Yemeni people has been devastating. Let me read a letter that has been sent to the House today from the ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to the United Kingdom. He says:

“I represent the Government of Yemen, which came to power after the popular overthrow of former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh. This government is elected, UN- mandated and constitutionally legitimate. It was driven from the capital Sana’a by force, by the Houthi militias in alliance with Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The Arab Coalition is in Yemen at our request, to restore constitutional government and reverse the Houthi coup. Actions that undermine that Coalition also undermine us.

In the last two weeks the Houthis added extra taxes and customs checkpoints that increased the prices in areas under their control by more than 100%. As an example the Yemeni government sells a gallon of petrol at the cost of 850 Yemeni Ryals in cities like Aden and Mareb which are under the government's control while in Houthi controlled areas it costs 1700 Yemeni Ryals. The prices of wheat and flour face a similar increase.

The Houthis continue to place the city of Taiz, in central Yemen, under siege preventing any aid from going in. People living in Taiz are forced to smuggle in food, medicine and even water. Last week an entire family were executed in Taiz under the hands of Houthi armed men, we have an obligation as a government to protect our citizens.”

I start there because, all too often, that side of the discussion is just not raised at all. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield for making it clear that, contrary to a lot of media reports, there are two sides to this. It is important to understand what is going on there and what the coalition—which, as the ambassador says, is acting in support of a legitimate UN-mandated Government—is attempting to prevent and stop. That brings us to our role and to what is happening at present.

**Graham P. Jones**

The Minister is making a valid point. Is not the validity of it reinforced by the fact that this House should be upholding international law and a democratic Government, as well as trying to bring peace and alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Yemen?

**Alistair Burt**

Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right. The role of the United Kingdom is to do what it can in the circumstances, first, to address the urgent humanitarian situation and also to address an international governance

point that is often missed. The legitimate Government, fighting against an insurgency, have been joined by others, and that is the basis of the conflict.

The part of the debate that I have found most difficult up to now is what has been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield and the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) about the United Kingdom's role and what we have been trying to do. I am well aware, from the time I have been back in the office in the summer and from what was done before, of the significant efforts made by the United Kingdom at the UN, and principally through the negotiation process with the parties most involved, to try to bring things to a conclusion and to do all we can in relation to the humanitarian situation.

Let me now address the UK's role, which will lead me to talk about some of the allegations made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield and to make clear what it is we do and do not do. I shall then address the humanitarian situation, if I may. President Hadi asked the international community for support "to protect Yemen, and deter Houthi aggression".

The Saudi-led coalition responded to that call. The United Kingdom is not a party to that conflict, nor a member of the military coalition. The UK is not involved in carrying out strikes, or in directing or conducting operations in Yemen. Let me fill that out a bit more.

Royal Air Force and Royal Navy liaison officers monitor Saudi-led coalition operations in Yemen and provide information to the UK Ministry of Defence. The liaison officers are not embedded personnel taking part in Saudi-led operations, they are not involved in carrying out strikes and they do not direct or conduct operations in Yemen. They are not involved in the Saudi-led coalition targeting decision-making process. They remain under UK command and control. Sensitive information provided by the liaison officers is used by the Permanent Joint Headquarters and MOD officials when providing advice on Saudi-

led coalition capability and when conducting analysis of incidents of potential concern which result from the Saudi-led coalition air operations in Yemen. The operations directorate maintains a database, referred to as the tracker, which records incidents and subsequent analysis. We have been tracking 318 incidents of potential concern since 2015, and this is used to inform the MOD's advice to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**Bob Stewart**

I have visited the command and control centre in Riyadh. It is true that Royal Air Force personnel are present, but they are not involved in the targeting. When I spoke to them, part of their role seemed to be to help the Saudis and their allies to ensure that the rules of engagement resulted in minimum casualties. Their intention was to try to get the rules of engagement to be as good as our own, and they seemed to be doing that quite successfully while I was there.

**Alistair Burt**

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his personal observations.

The question of arms control has been raised. We have a rigorous legal and parliamentary process, and ensuring that international humanitarian law is not breached is clearly a vital part of that. The information supplied by those liaison officers is crucial to ensuring that our international obligations are observed. That is why they are there.

**Mr Mitchell**

This debate is, above all, about the humanitarian consequences, and the UN Secretary-General has said that Saudi Arabia is, through the blockade, in breach not only of resolution 2216 but of international humanitarian law. I say to my right hon. Friend, who is a long-standing personal friend of more than 30 years, that I think he may be in danger of having misled the House earlier in his response to me about the role of British servicemen. Would he like to correct the record and use this opportunity to make this very clear? Otherwise, what he said may be open to misinterpretation.

**Alistair Burt**

I do not quite know what bit of what I have said my right hon. Friend is referring to. I have read out the details in relation to the work of our liaison officers on international humanitarian law, and I cannot say anything different. If I have said anything that he thinks is wrong, he can correct me either now or at the end of the debate when he has an opportunity to say something else. I have put on record what our situation is. If he thinks that that is misleading, I am here to be corrected, but I am reading out what I believe is the Government's position very clearly.

**Emily Thornberry**

I wonder whether the Minister could clarify something that has always genuinely confused me about the role of the military in Saudi Arabia. Is there just one targeting centre, or is it correct that there is another in the south? Are military personnel involved in the south of the country? Indeed, are people from British companies, BAE Systems in particular, involved in the south of the country? If they are supposed to be there to ensure that international humanitarian law is not breached, what are they doing? Are they ensuring that targeting is better or that things are not targeted? If they are ensuring that targeting is better, how is it that so many civilian targets seem to get hit?

**Alistair Burt**

The answer to the last part of the right hon. Lady's question comes from the investigations into incidents where there is legitimate concern that there may have been civilian casualties. That process was started by the coalition; it was not in place at the beginning. We have provided advice not only so that information can be given to us, but to assist in the process of ensuring that the coalition targets legitimate military targets. I understand that thousands of places have been deemed not to be targets. As in any conflict—this is one of the reasons why my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield was safe—there are indications of where attacks should not happen, and I believe that we



have been part of the process of ensuring that the coalition understands the international rules of engagement.

I cannot directly answer the question about BAE Systems personnel being elsewhere as I just do not know the answer, but I have noted what the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury said, and I will come back to that.

**Hilary Benn**

Rose-

**Alistair Burt**

I want to move on to discuss the humanitarian situation, but I am of course happy to give way to right hon. Gentleman.

**Hilary Benn**

I am grateful to the Minister. Since the House understands the Government's position to be that they do not feel there have been breaches of international humanitarian law, because they would otherwise have had to invoke the arms control criteria, and given that the UN panel of experts that I quoted earlier was of the view that breaches of international humanitarian law had taken place, will the Minister tell the House what other sources of information the Government have drawn upon in reaching their conclusion? Do they include the views of the military officers who are offering the advice that he has just described to the House?

**Alistair Burt**

The observations of those whose role it is to see what is happening in order to report on potential breaches of international humanitarian law are clearly a vital part of that process. There is other, more sensitive information that I will not go into, but there is a clearly a process that has been designed to try to give reassurance to all of us. This is a difficult situation, and we have continued to support an ally that is under attack from external sources and engaged in an effort to restore a legitimate Government. In supporting that effort, we have done what is right to ensure that international humanitarian law is observed. We have

used all the information made available to us, so that we are sure of the circumstances. Should that be challenged—it is possible to challenge it through both the House and the courts—the circumstances would change.

**Emily Thornberry**

Will the Minister give way?

**Alistair Burt**

I will, but I do want to move on to the humanitarian situation.

**Emily Thornberry**

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for indulging me one more time. I understand that some of the information may be sensitive, but are the British Government in a position to share the information that makes them so confident that there have been no breaches of international humanitarian law? The UN panel of experts seems to have come to a different conclusion.

**Alistair Burt**

The initial responsibility to investigate any incidents lies with the state involved, and Saudi Arabia has been doing that with its investigations. I genuinely do not know the process of transferring that information to the UN should the UN request to see it, but I will have an answer for the right hon. Lady.

I know that there has been an instruction to be mindful of the time, Mr Deputy Speaker, so I will be as tight on time as I can, but I want to talk about both the blockade and the humanitarian response before moving on to the negotiations. As for the restrictions brought in after the missile attack of 4 November, I will deal first with where the missile came from. The right hon. Lady asked me whether we disagree with the UN's assessment, and yes, we do. That draft assessment was written some time ago, and there is the possibility that a different assessment by the UN has not been made public. The United Kingdom is quite confident that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the missile came from an external source. If it did not, the right hon. Lady and

others can answer the question of where such a missile came from in Yemen, but it is quite clear to us that it came from an external source. We therefore disagree with the UN's initial draft report, and the evidence will come through in due course when a further report is published. That is all I can say.

The coalition's response to a direct attack on Riyadh airport was sharp and severe. It wanted to be able to protect itself and, in doing so, placed restrictions on the ports in order to control what was coming in. Now, we do not disagree with what was said either by the right hon. Lady or my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield, and the UK's clear position is that it is imperative that those restrictions are relieved. I am not going to dance on the head of a pin here; if Members want to call it a blockade, it is a blockade. There is no point in dancing around that. However, humanitarian and commercial supplies must be allowed in order to feed the people.

As my right hon. Friend said, and as the House knows well, the vast bulk of food, water and fuel that comes into Yemen to keep the people alive is not humanitarian aid; it is ordinary commercial stuff. We have been clear right from the beginning of the restrictions that the UK's view is that they should be lifted, and we have maintained that, so to be told that we have not done enough is just wrong. As evidence of some degree of success, there was some easing of the restrictions last week, but not enough. I have an update that I am happy to share with the House. It states:

“Humanitarian and commercial vessels are beginning to enter Hodeidah and Saleef ports. Since Sunday, three vessels have arrived and are being unloaded. This includes 2 commercial vessels into Hodeidah carrying respectively 5,500 metric tonnes and 29,520 metric tonnes of wheat flour. One humanitarian vessel has arrived into Saleef with supplies to support 1.8 million people for a month (and 25,000 metric tonnes of food). In addition, approximately 23 vessels have been cleared by UN Verification Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) although not yet permitted to unload.”

It is essential that they are permitted to unload, and we are making representations to that effect. However, the fact that there has been some movement in response to representations made by, among others, the highest levels of the British Government indicates that the urgency of relieving the humanitarian situation is being heard. At the same time, we recognise the security needs of those who are threatened by missiles targeted at their commercial airports and civilian areas.

**Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op)**

I welcome the fact that the Minister has described the situation as a blockade. If the blockade is not lifted completely, what is his estimate of how close Yemen is to famine—days or weeks?

**Alistair Burt**

Reports differ depending on the area. Five cities have already run out of fuel, meaning that power supplies, sanitation and other things cannot be maintained. On average, food supplies appear to be better and may be measured in months, but that will not apply to every individual area because some will be worse than others. A Minister will not stand here and say that because things can be measured by a few more days, the situation is less urgent; it is not. It is absolutely top of our priorities. In a variety of different ways, the UK has sought to make clear the importance of responding not only to the security needs of the coalition, but to the humanitarian situation.

I want to put the following on the record. On 5 November, there was a Foreign and Commonwealth Office statement condemning the attempted missile attack. On 13 November, my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for International Development spoke to Mark Lowcock of the UN about the humanitarian situation. On 15 November, an FCO statement stressed the need for immediate humanitarian and commercial access. On 16 November, I spoke to the UAE's Minister of State. On 18 November, the Foreign Secretary made a call to the UN Secretary-General. On 20 November, I spoke to the House. On 21 November, I spoke to the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister. On 23 November, the Foreign Secretary spoke to Saudi

Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. On 29 November, as we speak, the Prime Minister is visiting Riyadh, where she said:

“I am also clear that the flow of commercial supplies, on which the country depends, must be resumed if we are to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. During my discussions with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh last night, we agreed that steps needed to be taken as a matter of urgency to address this, and that we would take forward more detailed discussions on how this could be achieved.”

The Foreign Secretary hosted talks in London this week, after which we will intensify efforts with all parties to reach a settlement that will sustain security for Saudi Arabia, the coalition and Yemen.

For the House to feel in any way that there is not a serious response to the catastrophic situation that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield set out with passion and determination is not correct. We are doing everything we can, at the highest level, to deal with the humanitarian crisis and the security situation.

#### **Mr Mitchell**

I am grateful for the Prime Minister’s powerful words in Riyadh last night, which my right hon. Friend has just read out. Those words will be welcomed on both sides of the House. This is the nub of the argument he is trying to address: I am sure the House feels that the extent of the crisis and the Government’s response are not equal. I have no prescription for the political answer to the humanitarian crisis we have described today, but the breaches of international humanitarian law are so egregious that they call for a tougher and firmer response from Her Majesty’s Government.

#### **Alistair Burt**

We are getting to the nub of it now. We are all agreed on this, and we know how serious it is. I have set out what we have been trying to do. If there was another lever to pull that would deal with the situation—my right hon. Friend has just said that he does not know the political answer—we would pull it, but that is not the case. The best lever to pull

is in the negotiations process that we have discussed. We do not think this can be done through the UN. It is much better to deal with the parties, on both sides, who have the opportunity and the responsibility to get something done around the table.

The other day, the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) rightly mentioned the Quint talks, in which a number of states are involved. It is unfair, on reflection, to call it a war council. The Omanis, for example, would be deeply upset with that reference. The talks involve those who have the capacity not only to make decisions on one side—the coalition side—but to make sure that the other side, the side of the Houthis and their Yemeni allies who have been estranged from the UN process by their own decisions for many months, re-engages in the negotiations. We need to have parties there who can do it, including the UN. That is the purpose of the talks, which the United Kingdom has led.

As colleagues have recognised, the only way to end both the humanitarian suffering in the longer term and the conflict is for the parties to agree on it. It is not a military solution; it is a political solution. That is what the United Kingdom has been doing for some months and will continue to do until we get the answer.

### **Keith Vaz**

I thank the Minister for updating the House so regularly and for engaging with the all-party parliamentary group on Yemen and its officers, the hon. Members for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) and for Charnwood (Edward Argar) and me, on these issues.

The meeting of the Quint was yesterday. What is the timetable to mandate the Omanis to bring the Houthis to the negotiating table so that we can conclude this matter? That is the issue, is it not?

### **Alistair Burt**

Again, if we could have a timetable we would have one, but we cannot because we are dealing with people who are not yet parties to this process. They have been and need to be brought back into the process.

The only words that can adequately describe it, as the House would wish, are, “As soon as possible.” The Houthis should be re-engaged with the UN in a process to start the deescalating that will lead to the end of the conflict. That is what we have been seeking, and that is what we are continuing to do.

I will conclude, because the House has been generous in giving me a great deal of time. I have not, although I could have, said a lot about the direct humanitarian aid that is being delivered by the United Kingdom—that aid is significant and important. We have been working consistently, and £155 million has gone in to support the people of Yemen, and it has been used through indirect agencies, the UN and various non-governmental organisations. I entirely concur with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield said about the bravery of those who are engaged, and it would help if the Yemeni Government would pay public health workers in particular. Some of the work that is needed to prevent the return of cholera could then be done, and it would assist food distribution. The aid agencies have worked extremely hard in the circumstances, but the only thing that would allow their work to be effective is an end to the conflict, which we are working so hard to achieve through the negotiations.

Although it has taken some time, and although it is clear how strongly Members present and people outside the House feel about the issue, to believe that there is more the United Kingdom could do is, to a degree, unfair, but it does not matter. We are the Government, and we must do all we can on delivering humanitarian aid, on engaging with the parties who can do something about it and on ensuring that we are on the right side of the law.

Should there be anything in the record that needs correcting, I assure my right hon. Friend that I will correct it. I am confident about what I read out earlier but, if there is anything I need to correct, I will do so. We seek to do what we can in this dreadful situation. The most important thing is that there is a continued release of the restrictions on the ports, which is what we are working towards at the highest level, as

Members can tell from the Prime Minister's speech. If we do not achieve our aims, I know the House will bring us back again.

**Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)**

I thank the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for securing the debate. I agree with much of what he said—his expertise on the matter is valuable. I also agree with much that the shadow Foreign Secretary said. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who is steadfast in his work with the all-party parliamentary group on Yemen, and to the aid agencies that are working in circumstances that are incredibly difficult both for their staff and for the people they are working with in Yemen.

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield mentioned the difficulties in reporting from Yemen, and I rely heavily on some of the first-hand testimony coming through from Twitter, which seems a reasonable way of getting information out of the country. I mentioned the case of Hisham al-Omeisy in a letter to the Government. He was taken by the Houthis on 12 August 2017 and has yet to be seen again. I ask the Government to do all they can to try to secure the safety of journalists in Yemen.

Today I am missing the opening of the new Silverdale nursery in Dalmarnock. The nursery has 140 places for children under five and, while thinking about Yemen, it struck me that if 140 children in Dalmarnock were to die today, we would do something about it. If they were to die tomorrow, we would do something about it. Some 130 under-fives are dying every day in Yemen. If that were happening in this country, we would do something about it urgently and seriously. We would not have our own children dying from the very preventable cause of extreme malnutrition and disease, which take hold so easily when children do not have the food and resilience they need.

One child is dying every 10 minutes in Yemen. It is shocking even to think of the number who have died since the start of this debate. We cannot accept that any longer; it has been going on for far, far too long,



and we have a global responsibility to children, wherever they are, to make sure that they are safe, that they are fed and that they will live a happy and healthy life. Anything we can do to that end we must do urgently.

For the children who survive, the impact will be lasting. Millions of children are, and have been, out of school. They do not have a nursery to go to. They are living with stunting, a lifelong condition that will affect their growth and development, including their cognitive development, throughout the rest of their lives. In 2012, UNICEF was already warning of stunting, saying that 58% of children under five were stunted, and that was before this latest conflict. That is a generation being left with a life-limiting condition that we could do more to prevent.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported yesterday that it had purchased 750,000 litres of fuel to ensure that the water pumps in Hodeidah and Taiz can operate. Those pumps will last only a month on that fuel. The ICRC also reports that nine other cities do not have sufficient fuel to run their water supplies, which is a critical situation given that Yemen has already experienced one of the largest cholera epidemics in history, which has already left about 2,000 people dead. Although the outbreak seems to be on the wane, without water and access to appropriate sanitation it will almost certainly come back. As the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield mentioned, diphtheria, a very preventable disease that we do not even see here, is also taking hold. So I ask the Minister—I know he will do his best on this—to tell us what the Government are doing to ensure that fuel gets into the country, because without it the petrol pumps will run dry, which will have a knock-on effect on food prices.

Aid very much needs to get in, and aid agencies say so, but all agencies are also stressing the absolute necessity of getting commercial goods in. The scarcity and fuel prices mean that prices are high, and even where there is food people cannot afford to feed themselves. They do not know where their next meal is coming from. It must be incredibly heart-

breaking for people to be able to see food on a shelf but not be able to afford to buy it to feed their family. We must bear in mind that many employees in Yemen have not been paid for some time—over a year in some cases at least. Médecins sans Frontières reported in October that 1.2 million Yemeni civil servants have received little to no salary for more than a year. MSF pays the salaries of 1,200 public health staff that it is using in its clinics, but clearly that is not enough by any manner of means. If the doctors trying to treat the people who are starving have no money to feed themselves either, the situation is a disaster. I urge Ministers to consider what else they can do to get more money in to allow staff to be paid, to get the economy restarted and to make sure people have something to live on.

I also urge, as I have urged following previous statements, that we need to see aid getting into the country in the first place, so the blockade must be removed as soon as possible. But that aid also needs to be able to travel around Yemen, and the border posts, the visas and the difficulties the aid agencies are facing in getting around the country are preventing that flow of aid. It is also clear that the different factions in the conflict are using the system as a means of diverting aid to their own people, so that aid that might be intended to go to one place of desperate need is being diverted. That is not to say that people there might not need it, because I am sure they do, but it is being diverted from the people who need to get it. We need to make sure that it can get through to those who need it and that it is appropriately used when it gets there. I urge Ministers to do anything they can to make sure that aid convoys going through the country can actually get to where they need to be.

Finally, I wish to touch on the issue of arms sales, because they are a crucial part of the influence and leverage our country has in this conflict. Sadly, the communiqué that came out of the Quint meeting concentrated far, far more on weapons and the security situation, which I know and appreciate is difficult, than on the humanitarian situation and the need to get goods in through the ports. I am sure the 25 aid

agencies that contacted the Foreign Secretary in their open letter will feel very let down by that, and I echo the shadow Foreign Secretary's comments about how the attendance list of that meeting could have been broader. Efforts need to be made to get more people from Yemen—from civil society and from organisations working there on the ground—involved in such things. In addition, if we look at the picture from the meeting, we note that there may be one woman at the back of the photograph, but women are not being included in this process. We need women as part of the process to help make the peace and make it sustainable.

### **Alistair Burt**

When the national dialogue process was going on—I was out in Yemen for that—we spoke to women and young people who had not been part of the governance process. The national dialogue was giving them an opportunity, but the Houthi involvement and the conflict killed that opportunity. Otherwise, there would have been more women involved—that, I think, is what some of the people are fighting for.

### **Alison Thewliss**

I absolutely appreciate that, and the testimony I heard from some of the aid agencies and women's organisations that came to visit, meeting the right hon. Member for Leicester East and I some time ago, reflected that. They want to be part of the process. Those organisations do exist, and the Government must keep reaching out to them and keep involving them in that process. If we are to get a lasting peace, it must be a lasting peace for all the people of Yemen; it must be as wide as possible, and the attendance must include those organisations.

We lose a huge amount of credibility in this whole discussion, and we cannot be a broker for peace, while we are involved in arming a side in the conflict. We are complicit in what happens. The Minister mentioned 318 incidents of concern, and he may wish to clarify that. How many more incidents are acceptable to the Government, given that 318 incidents of concern have been picked up by the people involved and the armed forces on the ground in Yemen? That is a huge amount

of “concern” to have. The amount of aid that has gone in is welcome, and it is good. The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe we have put in £202 million in aid since 2015, which is dwarfed by the £4.6 billion in arms sales. A huge amount of money is going into producing absolute brutality and desperation on the ground. If we want the country to be a success, we should be putting all the money and all the effort into rebuilding it, not into destroying what little is still there.

**Graham P. Jones**

The hon. Lady talks about arms sales, and I accept the point that we should care about people, but we need to look at the current situation. Is she aware that some 80 rockets have been fired into Saudi Arabia? What is preventing those rockets from killing people is the US Patriot defence missile system. That is defence equipment sold by the US to Saudi Arabia to prevent 80 rockets from landing on ordinary people and killing them. Does she agree with those defence sales?

**Alison Thewliss**

What I agree with is that we are putting more arms into the situation, which is continuing to escalate it, not—

**Graham P. Jones**

*rose—*

**Alison Thewliss**

The hon. Gentleman will have his time later on, as I am sure he will wish to contribute. Adding more weapons to the situation is not going to help.

You will be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that my daughter has been sent home from nursery sick today. She will be picked up from her nursery by my husband, and she will get medicine, treatment and access to a doctor if she needs it. Unlike parents in Yemen, I will not have to choose which child to save and which child to let die. That is a situation parents in Yemen are facing every single day. Every 10 minutes a child there will die, and parents will have that for the rest of their lives; they will have seen children die before them. We must be committed to

finding peace. We must secure, first and foremost, a ceasefire, in order to let aid in. We have had plenty of words, commitments and talk, but Yemen cannot wait. We need action now.

**Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)**

If you will forgive me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about this country for which I hold a deep affection, having studied Arabic there just over 20 years ago. It is a country of great richness and great culture. In many ways, it is absolutely the heart of Arabia. It is there that the camel was domesticated, which allowed the colonisation of the rest of Arabia. So it is, for most Arabs, very much seen as the heart of the culture; indeed, Yemeni Arabic is seen as the purest—the closest to Koranic Arabic that is currently spoken. So to see the country so ruined, so destroyed is a matter of great sadness for all of us who love Arabian culture, the Arabic language and the Arab people.

We have to be clear about what is causing that destruction. It is absolutely right to say that the blockade on Yemen is wrong—there is no doubt in my mind that Saudi Arabia has a particular responsibility to address the humanitarian concerns facing the Yemeni people today—but it would be wrong to point solely at Riyadh. The decisions being made in Tehran today are having an effect that is being felt throughout the region. It would be wrong to be silent in the face of such aggression, and it would be wrong to ignore the roots of it.

When we look at Zaidi Islam, which as we all know descends from the fifth branch of Shi'a Islam—from the son of the son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali Husayn—it is worth remembering that Iranian involvement in Yemen is nothing new. Indeed, it is said that the Prophet himself was born in the year of the elephant, which is so named because it is the year in which the Shahanshah, the King of Persia, landed elephants in Yemen in order to invade what was then called “Arabia Felix”—happy Arabia.

Since then, Iranian involvement in the region has been frequent, and it is so again today, when the Iranians are landing not war elephants but

missiles, small arms and rifles. They are equally poisonous to the politics of that region of Arabia today as they have been for nearly two millennia. Just because it is true that Saudi Arabia's treatment of the Yemeni people today is not acceptable, that does not mean that we should ignore the crimes being committed by Iran.

I urge the Minister, who has done so much for the region—he has done so much not only for the countries and our relationships with them, but for the people themselves—and who understands so well the countries that make up this beautiful and important part of the world, to remember the history that is playing out. I urge him to remember that we have real friends in the region. We have real friends in Yemen whom, of course, we must help. We have real friends in Saudi Arabia, whom we must help to defend themselves. We have real friends in Oman and in the Emirates who are also fighting against Iranian aggression. As we stand up for our friends, we must urge them to remember that they, too, have a responsibility.

**Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op)**

I am grateful to my friend, the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for giving way. He referred to the role Iran is playing in Yemen, but are not the Iranians also trying to influence and destabilise other countries on the Arabian Peninsula and even trying to increase their influence in Oman?

**Tom Tugendhat**

The hon. Gentleman, who certainly is a friend, is of course absolutely right. The actions of the Iranian Government over the past few years of the Khomeini-ite dictatorship have been taken to destabilise many areas of the middle east. If one looks at Oman today, one can see the actions of Iranian-backed insurgencies. If one looks at Bahrain today, one can see violent insurgencies, rather than just the political groups that one sees in Oman. Look at the eastern seaboard of Saudi Arabia. I am not going to praise the Saudis for their treatment of the Shi'as in eastern Saudi Arabia, around Dhahran, because frankly it is not great, but bearing in mind the way the Iranian Government are seeking to

radicalise Shi'a groups in eastern Saudi Arabia, it is right of the Government in Riyadh to see threats coming from the east. They are right, because that is what is happening.

All that does not excuse the human rights abuses of the blockade. It does not excuse the famine and punishment that is being made collective against the whole people of Yemen, and I will not excuse it, but we must remember that this is a war being fought against an aggressive regime that has several times now fired missiles at Riyadh and at civilian populations in Saudi Arabia. The hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) is absolutely right that the death of the children in Yemen is a crime that cries out for justice, but we must also remember that if Iranian weapons were being landed in Glasgow, we would take action. If Iranian weapons were being fired from France into London, we would take action. I understand that the Saudis are right to take action about it.

Of course, we would not practice collective punishment, we would not blockade, and we would not abuse human rights to defend ourselves. We must understand that although there is a legitimacy of Saudi action, as friends of Saudi Arabia and supporters of the welcome changes that are happening in that country today, we have a role and a right to speak out. I welcome the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Mohammad Bin Salman only a few hours ago. She is absolutely right, and she speaks for the United Kingdom with passion and honour when she calls on him to act, and to act now.

**Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op)**

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) not only on securing this debate but on his powerful speech. I associate myself with his remarks. I shall resist the temptation to address some of the broader political questions that have come up during the debate so far and focus on the sheer scale of the humanitarian crisis, and particularly the impact of the blockade. I join the right hon. Gentleman and other speakers, including the Minister, in paying tribute to all those who are working on the ground to try to make a difference in this

terrible situation, including the United Nations, aid agencies, the Department for International Development and, above all of course, the long-suffering people of Yemen.

The scale of the crisis is enormous. As we have heard, Yemen could be just weeks away from a once-in-a-generation famine. The UN estimates that 85% of Yemen's population is in immediate need of humanitarian assistance. That has increased over just the past 12 months by 2 million people. Some 10 million people are at immediate risk of death, and our own the Department for International Development says that they "may not survive if they do not receive humanitarian assistance" in some form or another.

It is difficult to get fully accurate figures from sources on the ground, or elsewhere, of the precise human cost of this tragic conflict. It would be very useful if the Minister was able to give us an estimate of how many civilian lives have already been lost since the conflict in Yemen began. As the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield reminded us, Yemen has long been reliant on imports for its food. Even before the war, nearly 90% of Yemen's food was imported. Yemen requires monthly food imports of 350,000 metric tonnes, of which 80% comes through the two ports of Hodeidah and Saleef. While the ports were fully blockaded, no goods were coming in at all, leaving a dangerous and deadly backlog.

Since the full blockade began three weeks ago, the situation has got even worse. Cholera is widespread, with a suspected 1 million cases and at least 2,000 deaths. As well as having one of the largest recorded cholera outbreaks since records began, Yemen is facing the threat of diphtheria, an extremely contagious and deadly disease the symptoms of which include high temperatures, difficulty breathing and a sore throat. Around one in 10 adults who contract diphtheria will die; for children, the proportion is closer to one in five.

In this country, we have almost eradicated diphtheria. Since 2010, the UK has recorded 20 cases, with one tragic recorded fatality. That is in



the past seven years; in the past two months, Yemen has reported 120 cases, with 14 fatalities, and the numbers are rising. Given how contagious the disease is, it is surely only a matter of time, unless something changes dramatically, before hundreds, if not thousands, of Yemeni people contract diphtheria, with devastating consequences for that country.

The life-saving medication and humanitarian aid that is used to treat these diseases has been withheld from innocent civilians as a direct consequence of the Saudi blockade. Even with the modest easing over the past week, about which we heard from the Minister, lives remain at risk. As has been said, before the blockade, 17 million Yemenis—more than 60% of the population—were food insecure, with an estimated 7 million at immediate risk of famine. That represents a 20% increase over the last year. Half a million children were suffering from severe, acute malnutrition. Last week, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network released an alert saying that “famine is likely in Yemen if key ports remain closed.”

That is why this issue of the blockade is so important. The report went on to say that “if the ports remain closed or if the ports are unable to handle large quantities of food, famine is likely with thousands of deaths each day due to lack of food and the outbreak of disease.”

Four governorates in Yemen have malnutrition rates above the emergency threshold and seven others exceed the threshold of “serious”.

**Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op)**

My hon. Friend is passionately outlining the current humanitarian crisis and the need to remove the Saudi blockade. I absolutely agree. Does he not also agree that the problem with Yemen is that it was already the poorest country in the middle east and that it attracted far too little attention from the international community? The UK had always been generous through the Department for International Development, but it was, none the less, one of the poorest countries,

and this conflict and this crisis have come on top of already shocking statistics.

**Stephen Twigg**

My hon. Friend has been a consistent and powerful advocate on behalf of the Yemeni people, including the diaspora living in his own constituency. I absolutely agree with him and take the opportunity of his intervention to pay tribute to DFID, both for its longer-term involvement in Yemen, which pre-dates the conflict, and for the work that it has sought to do during the current crisis.

As of Monday, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that 29 vessels carrying food and fuel had been denied entry. As the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield said, over the weekend, the Saudi coalition did allow a single ship into the port of Hodeidah. That ship was carrying 6,000 tonnes of flour, which roughly equates to 10 million loaves of bread for the nearly 21 million people on the brink of starvation. Clearly, it is not enough, and the people who are being punished are the innocent civilians of Yemen.

A number of ships are now in the holding area off the Red sea ports, carrying crucial supplies, including ships with nearly 170,000 metric tonnes of desperately needed food. Last night, a vessel carrying 30,000 metric tonnes of wheat was able to berth. However, four vessels carrying fuel and three carrying food are still waiting for permission to dock. I urge the Government to use their good offices to ensure that those vessels carrying desperately needed supplies are able to berth in Hodeidah as soon as possible.

As others have said during the debate, fuel remains at the centre of the ongoing crisis in Yemen. Only two of the ships currently off Yemen are carrying petrol. Farmers in Yemen are reporting that they simply do not have enough fuel to run the agricultural equipment, which further compounds the risk of famine. What little fuel is left in Yemen is being sold at extortionate prices. Humanitarian organisations carried out an assessment, which suggested that a minimum of 1 million litres of fuel is

needed for non-governmental organisations to operate at their pre-blockade level.

The two ships with fuel have enough petrol to last just 16 days. Estimates from Sana'a suggest that, unless something changes, petrol will run out in six days and diesel in 17 days. If that happens, the people will suffer even more, with hospitals and waste treatment facilities not being able to function properly. Without fuel, many of the humanitarian supplies waiting off Yemen will not have the opportunity, even if they can dock, to be moved around the country.

It is estimated that, within days, 8 million people will be without running water as the fuel required to pump the water runs out. Safe water and sanitation are vital to combating the outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria. Yemen's three largest cities have had to shut down their water and sewage treatment facilities and a further five cities will do so within days. In Hodeidah, untreated water and sewage has been washing up into the streets for several days now.

As the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) said in her excellent speech, the International Committee of the Red Cross took the very unusual step this week of buying fuel stocks to help to restart the water and sewage treatment facilities in Yemen's second and third largest cities—Hodeidah and Taiz. However, given the extortionate price of fuel, they were able to buy only enough supplies to last a month. May I praise the ICRC for doing that? It acknowledges that it was an unusual but necessary step to help the people of Yemen. I now implore the Government to do all they can to work with NGOs and others on the ground to ensure that much-needed fuel gets into and around Yemen as soon as possible.

As we have heard, health facilities have been destroyed during the conflict: one in six has been completely destroyed and barely half are functional at all. Many have had to close because of the lack of access to clean water. Only 30% of the required medical supplies are getting into Yemen. As a result, many diseases go untreated, compounding an

already horrific situation. Although vaccines are slowly making their way back into Yemen through aid flights, much, much more needs to be done to ensure that the entire population is protected against diseases that are both preventable and curable.

On Saturday, I will be taking part in a vigil for Yemen in Liverpool. I am delighted that my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden), is here, and I know that he will be joining that vigil with members of the Yemeni diaspora in Liverpool. It is so important that we send a clear message that this conflict is not forgotten. When I speak to the Yemeni diaspora in Liverpool, it is clear that the one thing that they want is peace in Yemen. They recognise that that will be achieved through diplomatic means.

I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister is in the region. It is vital that she presses loudly and clearly for the full lifting of this blockade. This debate today is timely and important. The message is clear that the blockade must be lifted immediately, but we recognise that even the lifting of the blockade, vital as that is, is far from sufficient. We need to keep coming back in this House to the issue of Yemen until we see a ceasefire, a political solution and an end to the bloodshed.

**Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con)**

It is an honour to follow the Chairman of the International Development Committee, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), who has spoken powerfully on this matter not only today, but on several previous occasions. His commitment is wholehearted, as is that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), whom I congratulate on securing this debate today and who I know takes a huge personal interest in the matter. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Minister, because I know just how hard he works on this issue, and how close it is to his heart. He brings to his work a passion, which, if not unique, is certainly hugely important in Government.

I wish to use the words of other people in my speech, as I do not know a huge amount about the area. International development is something of great concern to me, as is foreign affairs. I thought that I would write to somebody I know who has much more experience of the situation in Yemen and who has been working with the World Food Programme. He has sent me a couple of emails this week, and I will quote from them and from a couple of other things that he has sent me. He writes:

“From a food perspective, the situation is ‘beyond bleak’. It is a catastrophe beyond anything that I have ever seen before. We are talking of 17 million food insecure people. The World Food Programme is giving food and vouchers to around 6.5 million people across most of the country. Obviously, this has been hampered over the last three weeks due to the blockade. Thankfully, that horror is now over and ships are docking. Remember that even pre-crisis Yemen was almost entirely dependent on food imports.”

He goes on:

“The blockade only served to make food a weapon of war. The World Food Programme expects that 3 million of the 17 million will be pushed into a deeper level of food insecurity as a result of the blockade. Market availability is acceptable but remains inaccessible due to inflation”—hence the high prices.

He goes on:

“Cholera I believe is stabilising but still at around 800,000 people. It is the largest outbreak in modern history and utterly shameful.”

I will not go into the statistics, because the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby has done so already.

**Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab)**

Like the hon. Gentleman, I have had letters from constituents voicing grave concerns about the situation in Yemen, particularly the blockade, food shortages and lack of medical supplies, so I agree wholeheartedly that something has to be done.

## Jeremy Lefroy

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. There is a huge lack of critical medical supplies, including vaccines and treatments to control the spread of cholera, and now of course that deadly disease, diphtheria.

I come to the second of my quotations from an eyewitness—Mark Lowcock, the emergency relief co-ordinator, whom the Chairman of the International Development Committee, I and several other colleagues met a couple of weeks ago. After a visit earlier this month, he said:

“Everywhere I went, I saw roads, bridges, factories, hotels, and houses that had been destroyed by bombing or shelling... I visited hospitals... Both had barely any electricity or water... I met seven-year-old Nora. She weighs 11 kg – the average weight for a two-year-old, not a seven-year-old. Dr. Khaled, the manager of Al Thawra hospital, where she is being treated, said staff there regularly turn away gravely ill malnourished children because they cannot accommodate them.”

There is, of course, a solution. I believe that a political solution is the only way forward: a lifting of the blockade, a cessation of hostilities. Without that, we will indeed face the worst humanitarian disaster in decades. The numbers sometime seem almost too vast. There are other consequences as well.

I will quote again, finally, from the OCHA report, about a widow and mother of six—five daughters and a son—who

“had to abandon her home in.... At Taiziah district in Taizz governorate, fleeing airstrikes and fighting in the area. The family left their village with only the clothes they were wearing, and settled in a nearby, somewhat more peaceful village. Uloom rented a small shop, but the business is struggling and cannot sustain the family’s basic needs such as food, water and medicines. To ease the burden, Uloom decided to marry off her three young daughters. ‘I didn’t have money and couldn’t feed all of the children’, she said. ‘I didn’t want to marry off my daughters so young, but I couldn’t stand them crying and starving. I regret what I did very much’”.

That is one of the desperate individual human consequences of what we are seeing now.

Yesterday, I had the honour of chairing in Speaker's House a meeting at which we discussed the tremendous progress made on countering malaria over the last 17 years. Millions of lives, including children's lives, have been saved. Here we have an entirely preventable disaster looming. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of lives, perhaps even more, mainly of children and women, are at risk. We have the opportunity to act globally. I ask that the coalition, the Government of Saudi Arabia and their allies lift the blockade immediately to ensure that those lives can be saved. I thank the Prime Minister for what she said yesterday and today, and I urge the Government to continue in their efforts, day in, day out, until the crisis is resolved.

**Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab)**

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). He did himself a huge injustice in saying that he did not know much about the subject; he knows a great deal, and his passion was evident in what he said. I thank him for his remarks. I also commend the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), not only for calling this debate but for his incredible work as International Development Secretary. I think that he will go down as one of the best we have ever had. While he occupied that post, he did so much for Yemen and gave it so much of his time, for which we were very grateful. He gave a brilliant speech today.

It is important that we discuss Yemen on the Floor of the House. We do not get the opportunity to do so often enough. As chair of the all-party group on Yemen, and as one of two Members born in Aden, I believe that this has become a forgotten war, as the Foreign Secretary said. Allowing us to discuss this in prime parliamentary time means that it is forgotten no more.

I thank the hon. Members for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) and for Charnwood (Edward Argar) for being such excellent officers of the

all-party group. Yemen has very many friends in the House. This is a Thursday afternoon, but the House is packed. I also thank the young and swashbuckling Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who learned about Yemen when he went to live there to learn Arabic, and who spoke beautifully about its contribution to the history of the Arab world, and of course my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), who has made this a priority in his role as Chair of the International Development Select Committee. I miss Flick Drummond and Angus Robertson. Both, whenever they spoke about Yemen, made sure the House listened, and I am glad that the shadow Foreign Secretary, who is extremely busy, came to speak today. It shows that she is very concerned.

As we approach 20 December and the 1,000th day of Yemen's war, it is clear that the conflict is still no closer to being resolved, and the United Kingdom is sadly no nearer to developing a coherent policy on Yemen. Time and again, I and others have stood in the Chamber calling for our Government to utilise all their immense diplomatic skills, talent and muscle to bring an end to the conflict, but it has not happened, and we are here again asking for the same thing. This debate demonstrates the cross-party consensus in Parliament for an end to this awful war.

As we stand here today, Yemen continues to bleed to death. Yemenis face death from cholera, malnutrition, bombing and starvation. The cloud of death hangs over Yemen: 10,000 dead from the fighting, 40,000 mutilated; each day, 130 Yemeni children dying from preventable causes. As the hon. Member for Glasgow Central said, by the time this debate ends, another 17 Yemeni children will have died. Some 20 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian aid. By the end of the year, 1 million people will be suffering from cholera, which is more than the entire populations of Edinburgh, Newcastle and Hull combined.

The war has destroyed Yemen's civilian infrastructure. Its hospitals—including the one where I and my sisters were born—and water sanitation facilities have been decimated by the fighting and bombing.



As we have heard, state sector workers have not been paid for well over a year, and aid agencies have been asked to fulfil all major functions of the state. It is an impossible task.

The all-party parliamentary group on Yemen will be launching its inquiry into UK policy towards Yemen on 13 December—on Yemen day, to be held here in Parliament. We will hear contributions from all the agencies that have been taking part in this action of mercy: Médecins sans Frontières, Oxfam, Islamic Relief, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee. I hope that many Members of the House, especially those representing the diaspora in Cardiff, Liverpool, Sheffield and elsewhere will come to Yemen day because it will allow us not just to grieve but to press for the action that, I am afraid, is still lacking.

The conflict in Yemen has raged for the past two and a half years, but there has been a sharp escalation this month. On 4 November, an Iranian-supplied missile was fired at Saudi Arabia from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen, landing near Riyadh airport. We condemn this missile attack in the strongest possible terms. One death is not a justification for another, and targeting civilians at an airport is a cowardly act. The response by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to this attack has been quick and deadly, increasing bombing raids in Yemen and issuing a full blockade of the country. Despite an outcry from humanitarian groups and the United Nations, the full blockade lasted for three weeks. We have heard the passionate arguments that this is in breach of article 33 of the Geneva convention.

Although I welcome the ending of the blockade announced this week, acknowledge that the start of the aid has begun and welcome the update given to us by the Minister today, this is not a solution to Yemen's problems. Aid access to the country is still far lower than is required by the 20 million people who need immediate assistance. Yemen is a country that imports 90% of its food. Restrictions on commercial imports are still present, while Yemeni citizens are starving to death. A

return to the pre-November status quo is an unacceptable outcome. It is clear that the only way to stop the suffering of the Yemeni people is with a peace agreement between the parties, and I will not rest until there is peace in Yemen.

In recent months, I have been meeting some of the key interlocutors in the region. Six months ago, I went to Oman and Doha to meet Ministers there. I was on my way back to Aden, but never made it. I was told that if I landed at the airport, there was no guarantee that the plane would take off again. I have also meet the ambassador from Iran to the United Kingdom, Hamid Baeidinejad, who told me that Iran was not involved in Yemen and that Iran wanted peace. But in recent weeks, I have meet the Saudi ambassador, Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, and the Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel bin Ahmed al-Jubeir, both of whom wanted peace and both of whom made it very clear that Iran was involved in supplying arms actively to the Houthis. I think we all have to accept that it is clear that that is the case.

The United Kingdom has the capacity to end this conflict as the penholder of the United Nations. It is good to see what the Prime Minister said in Riyadh today, and that she is there to address the Yemeni issue, but I would like her to stay in the region until she gets everyone back at the peace table. A speech is welcome, but it is not enough. We need to get people back and this is a huge opportunity. There is a clarion call for peace all over the world. Three weeks ago at the United States Congress, Democrat Ro Khanna and Republican Congressman Mark Pocan introduced a bipartisan Bill concerning arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Last week, the Leader of the Opposition wrote to the Prime Minister, calling for arms sales to Saudi Arabia to be suspended, and the Scottish National party has had this position for some time. On no other issue except Yemen would we see an alliance that brings together the United States Congress, the Leader of the Opposition and the Scottish National party.

Yesterday, after a long wait, the Foreign Ministers of the UK, the USA, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman met in the

Quint meeting. But there is no timetable for peace. Unless we have a timetable, we cannot get peace. The Foreign Secretary tweeted a picture of himself after the meeting yesterday. My message to him is that we need to spend less time talking about Brexit and more time talking about Yemen. His predecessor, Lord Hague, took an active role in the peaceful transition from President Saleh to President Hadi, and I want to see this Foreign Secretary do the same.

I thank the Minister for the Middle East for his work on the issue. He is always willing to meet, engage and come to Parliament in order to update us.

There was a slight dispute between the Minister and the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield. The Minister has known him for 30 years, and I have known him for 40 years; he is responsible for my entering politics because he gave me my first speech at university, and I have not stopped since, so he is to blame. However, the fact is that the Saudi Foreign Minister did tell us that the British were there to help them with targeting the bombing. The Minister was not there, but that is exactly what the Foreign Minister said we were doing, and he thanked us for it. Maybe clarification is required on exactly what that means, but I must defend the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield: that is exactly what we all heard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you will know that this is my 30th year in Parliament. Some may say that is too long, but for my remaining years in this place, I want to dedicate myself to ensuring that there is peace in Yemen. I cannot bear to think of what is happening to this once beautiful country—it fills me with such pain. The images broadcast by the BBC and Al-Jazeera this week are just too harrowing to watch. My children had to turn away from the television set, it was so terrible. One day, I want to return to Aden and to have breakfast on the veranda of the Crescent Hotel, overlooking the Arabian sea, where my sisters and I spent so many happy days as children, watching the great ships on their way to the Suez Canal.

This is no biblical disaster, but a disaster that has been made by men. In a recent letter to the Prime Minister, I suggested that just as parliamentarians of the 20th century was judged on their reactions to the genocides in Rwanda, Kosovo and Somalia, we will be judged on our reactions to the tragedy in Yemen. Once fabled as the land of the Queen of Sheba, Yemen is now the graveyard of the middle east, and our lack of action is an object of shame for all of us. Unless we act now, the verdict of history will be very harsh indeed.

**Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con)**

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) on securing this important debate.

It has been nearly 1,000 days since the Yemen crisis started—1,000 days of suffering for the people of Yemen. Two days ago, in an attempt to help to alleviate that suffering and to reinforce what must be an unimaginable effort of humanitarian work, a UN-chartered aid ship docked in the west Yemeni port of Hodeidah. Until this crisis is resolved, and the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels are defeated, we must strive to ensure that access to support humanitarian work is the norm and not the exception.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has met the Saudi Government to raise those very concerns. The United Kingdom is one of the five largest bilateral aid donors to Yemen. We should be proud that the UK is leading the global response, with £155 million of UK funding providing people with food, clean water, sanitation and nutritional support. A further £8 million is being allocated to tackle the spread of cholera.

The people of Yemen are facing a horrendous famine, one that we must bring to an end. With 70% of the population requiring urgent aid, the blockade must be rolled back as much as is practical to ensure that vital assistance reaches those who need it. Without unconstrained access to shipments, hospitals will be without power, leaving the sick and

injured without vital medical care, and Yemeni people could experience a long and devastating famine. We cannot allow this to happen.

I welcome the fact that the UK proposed and co-ordinated the UN Security Council presidential statement calling for uninterrupted access for humanitarian assistance into Yemen, and that the Government continue to lobby for Yemen to remain open to humanitarian access.

While I accept the necessity for the UK, alongside our allies in the US and France, to provide vital logistical and intelligence support to Saudi Arabia, which continues to lead a broad international coalition of countries from across the region, that must not come at the expense of many lives, which have been, and will continue to be, lost if this blockade continues.

I am pleased that the UK Government have already taken the lead by lobbying others in the international community, including at the United Nations, to ensure that humanitarian access is granted as rapidly as possible. The UK must continue to use its influence to ensure that all parties respect these clear, unified demands from around the globe.

I continue to urge the Government to make that a priority—to act and to ensure that aid reaches those in need, and to help bring about a long-lasting solution to a long-standing crisis, so that once more the people of Yemen may live safely in their country and in their homes without fear.

**Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab)**

I thank the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for obtaining the debate. It is important that we debate this issue, and do so frequently, such is the scale of the catastrophe. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), the Chair of the International Development Committee, for his speech, which was very illuminating, very focused, and spoke to the heart of the problem.

There are two issues—today's crisis and tomorrow's crisis. I believe there is a consensus in the House that today's crisis—the blockade—must end. We must help the people of Yemen right now, irrespective of

all the other issues. This is about life and death and nothing else, and that is what we should be focused on. In today's crisis, it is imperative that the UK Government, other Governments, and all our agencies, bring pressure to bear so that the blockade is lifted, allowing aid into Yemen, so that those people in Yemen can be relieved of their suffering.

Some issues transcend today's crisis and tomorrow's crisis, and the blame for them cannot be laid at anyone's door—local warlords; fights over economic assets, including oil, within the country; roadblocks; illegal taxes; theft of aid. It is a complex situation, which we must understand in order to prevent tomorrow's crisis, because we do not want a crisis tomorrow. We must try to resolve the situation in Yemen so that the country has a future and is not in eternal crisis. That requires the conditions that people have spoken about—primarily, it requires peace. In requiring peace, and if we are to find a long-term solution, we must look at the circumstances that led to what is happening now.

I will mention some important issues that have not been raised. The Gulf Co-operation Council and the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, were the largest donors to Yemen. They remain so today, and will continue to be so in the future. What dwarfs that fact is that what Yemen really needs is a better relationship with Saudi Arabia. The border is currently closed because of the Houthis; one of the biggest elements of Yemen's economy is the remittances from the 1.5 million Yemeni workers who work in Saudi Arabia. They no longer work in Saudi Arabia because of this conflict; they are victims of it. Open trade has ended. The economy in Yemen is suffering. We need a relationship between Saudi Arabia—the principal partner of Yemen—and Yemen, and that is part of the future. That is part of the peace-building process.

But what has led to this conflict, and why has Saudi Arabia taken the action that it has? Although I do not agree with the blockade, I believe that we need to understand the motivation for it. Many speakers have referred to the rocket fired on 4 November, but that is only one rocket. I thought there were 54, but I am now told—and I stand to be corrected—that there have been 80 rockets. The original rockets, with a

range of 1,000 km, were Scuds provided by North Korea, but we now understand that in the latest development, the rockets that are being provided into the area or supplied to the Houthis are Iranian-made—they are coming from Tehran.

If we are to resolve this situation, there needs to be demilitarisation. UN resolution 2216, which is at the heart of this, says that the Houthis must withdraw from all occupied areas; that they must relinquish all arms and military assets; that they must refrain from provocation; and that they must enter peace talks, and there are sanctions on individuals because of the actions that they have taken in the name of the Houthi-Saleh alliance. Let us look at what happened when resolution 2216 went through the United Nations, which has 15 voting members. We say that there is no alliance, and we talk about chaos, but the world was clear. Fourteen members voted for the resolution, and only one member—the Russian Federation—abstained, presumably on the principle of the intervention in Syria. No members voted against. The world was united in condemning the Houthis.

Incursions are among the provocations that Saudi Arabia faces. As I mentioned in an intervention, on the internet there are a plethora of videos showing Houthis engaging in extreme violence—killing Saudi Arabian citizens, attacking schools and killing Saudi Arabian armed forces personnel—inside Saudi Arabia. A violence surrounds the Houthis.

I was fortunate enough to meet the Iranians at the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in St Petersburg, where they were asked about the arms that are currently in Yemen. Although the Iranians admitted that there were Iranian arms in Yemen, they said that those arms were being supplied by Hezbollah, not Iran. [*Interruption.*] I thought for a moment that the Minister was going to ask me to give way.

There is real concern about the evolving situation in north Yemen and the fact that the Houthis still will not come to the table, even after 70 accords and agreements. An empty chair is waiting for them, and they

will not sit in it. They have no excuse for failing to engage with a process that would afford them peace talks and a path to the future prosperity of their people.

Why should we be concerned? In the BBC documentary that was filmed undercover in Sana'a, we see oppression, and we see the posters going up. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield mentioned children chanting "Death to America", and said that that was some sort of reprisal. I think he omitted the remainder of the words on those posters and the chant that the schoolchildren were forced to sing. The chant is: "Death to America! Death to Israel! Curses upon the Jews!" I do not see that as a step along the pathway to peace, and I begin to understand why the Houthis' chair at the table is empty. What has Israel to do with this conflict, and why should there be a curse on the Jews? How is that relevant to this conflict? It is not.

There are many other points I could make, but I want to wrap up and allow others to speak. The Houthis must be forced to come to the table, otherwise we will not get peace. Removing the blockade and sending in as much aid as we want may solve today's crisis, but it will not solve tomorrow's. Tomorrow's crisis has to be solved by diplomacy, and that means everybody getting around the table and achieving demilitarisation. People in this House and across the world have to accept and face up to the difficulties in Yemen and start to meet the challenges.

It has been suggested today that the United States should not sell defence missile systems to Saudi Arabia. But the US Patriot missile system is a defence battery, and the 80 missiles fired by the Houthis were shot down by Patriot missile systems supplied by the United States. Is this House really saying that the United States should not have sold the missile defence systems that were used to shoot down the rockets that were fired on 4 November? I do not think so. People need to accept that the situation is very complicated. Finally, we need the Houthis to come to the table.



**Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab)**

On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Although I accept that this debate on Yemen is worthy and important, the two debates that come afterwards—one of which, on RBS and the Global Restructuring Group, I am sponsoring—are also critical. A lot of people on both sides of the House want to speak in the debate that I am sponsoring, and the guillotine as it is today will leave insufficient time to give the subject the due and proper attention. With that in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am prepared to pull my debate if you can speak to the Leader of the House to secure more substantial time for it.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle)**

May I say that I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman? The debate in his name that we were going to come on to is very well subscribed, and I would not want to have to curtail it because I think there is a lot to be said. I think the suggestion being offered to the House is the right one, and I will of course speak to the Leader of the House about it. More to the point, however, I have already spoken to the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, who has assured me that he will make bringing this debate back to the House a priority. I think everybody recognises that we would not want to curtail such an important debate, given the limited amount of time left, so we will absolutely speak to whoever we need to in order to make sure that time for the debate is provided. I thank the hon. Gentleman.

**Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab)**

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for securing this incredibly important debate. I also thank him for the work he has done in the House and elsewhere in putting Yemen squarely on our agenda, and I pay a similar tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) for all the work he has done and the inquiry that he is shortly to launch.

As we have heard today, even before the conflict, Yemen was the poorest country in the region, but the war has devastated it and its infrastructure. Oxfam has reported that the ports, roads and bridges on

the supply routes, along with warehouses, farms and markets have been destroyed by all sides, draining the country's food stocks. At least 10,000 civilians have already died in the conflict, and at least 40,000 have been injured.

The Saudi blockade started on 5 November, following the firing of a ballistic missile into Saudi territory from Yemen. In response to the missile, Saudi Arabia closed all land, air and sea ports in Yemen, grounded humanitarian flights and stopped all other aid for a number of weeks. The Saudi Government may have partially lifted the blockade, but vital imports of food, fuel and medicines remain severely restricted, particularly in the rebel-held north, which is home to the majority of the population.

There has been no clearance for ships containing fuel, preventing the milling and transportation of food stocks, as well as the operation of generators for health, water and sewerage systems. Humanitarian agencies need at least 1 million litres of fuel each month. Fuel shortages have shut down hospitals, and deprived entire cities of clean water and sanitation.

Aid agencies are gravely concerned about the implications of the blockade on the existing crisis, with starvation and the outbreak of diseases, including cholera and diphtheria. The conflict has had a devastating impact on civilians both directly from the violence on both sides and from its impact on Yemen's economy and critical services. As we have heard, the country has experienced the largest cholera outbreak in recent history, peaking at almost 900,000 suspected cases.

Let us be clear: Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The country is on the brink of the world's largest famine, with 80% of the population—20.7 million people—in need of aid. As the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) pointed out so vividly, 130 children die every day in Yemen from hunger or disease, which is the equivalent of a child every few minutes.

These deaths are as senseless as they are preventable. That is the conclusion of Save the Children, which has been working in the country for some time. It has also pointed out the sheer scale of need, with Yemen requiring 350,000 metric tonnes of food imports every month, 80% of which must come through the two ports of Hodeidah and Saleef, which are currently closed.

We have heard a little more this afternoon about the relaxing of the blockades, but according to the information received to date, only a pathetically small amount of aid has got through, compared with the overall scale of need. The country's stocks of wheat and sugar will not last for longer than a few months without a full lifting of the blockade.

Opposition Members acknowledge that UK aid has been vital—it is really important that it reaches the people on the ground in Yemen—and that DFID has given £155 million. We also need to take time to pay tribute to the NGOs, including Save the Children, Oxfam and Médecins sans Frontières, that are working on the frontline to provide emergency food and other supplies. We should acknowledge their work as an advocate for the region, highlighting some of the devastating consequences not only of the conflict but of the blockade.

Oxfam has described the conflict in Yemen as the forgotten war, so we must acknowledge the important work that the aid agencies are doing in this incredibly difficult situation. Humanitarian support can only meet part of the need. We need commercial shipments to be allowed to continue.

The UK Government are the second largest donor to the UN Yemen appeal, but efforts to address the humanitarian situation and push for political progress have unfortunately been inconsistent with the ongoing support for the actions of the Saudi-led coalition. The UK is the penholder for Yemen on the UN Security Council, as well as one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid. We are a major arms supplier to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, so we are uniquely placed to demonstrate the political leadership that is needed to bring an end to

the crisis in Yemen. I listened closely to what the Minister said this afternoon. Many Opposition Members have a lot of respect for the Minister and the work that he does, but he needs to work harder to ensure that there is not an incoherence between foreign policy on Yemen and Saudi Arabia and DFID's humanitarian policies.

In the last few minutes of my speech I want to say something about what needs to happen now. The UK is a member of the Quint grouping alongside the UAE, Saudi Arabia, the US and Oman, and we led on a UN Security Council presidential statement in June, which called on all parties to engage in peace talks and allow unhindered access for humanitarian supplies. We know that a meeting took place yesterday of the Quint members, and Ministers agreed that all parties had a shared responsibility to ensure safe, rapid and unhindered access for goods and humanitarian personnel. Ministers said that they would back

“a redoubling of efforts to reach a political solution which remains the only route to ending the conflict and addressing security threats to Yemen's neighbours. Ministers recognised the need for all sides to show flexibility and abandon pre-conditions and called on the Houthis and their allies to engage the UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed on the political process. The Ministers agreed that this urgent issue would necessitate them meeting and consulting regularly to coordinate approaches and identify concrete steps leading to a political settlement.”

The difficulty we have today is that we do not know what any of that means, so I have a few asks of the Minister. Can we have a lot more information about what the statements made after the meeting yesterday will mean in practice, including a timescale? Will the Government use their considerable leverage to ensure that the Saudi blockade is lifted immediately to let humanitarian aid flow? Will they put more effort into a new UN resolution to condemn what is going on in Yemen and ensure that progress can be made? Will the Government do all they can to ensure greater transparency about what is happening in Yemen, including greater access for aid agencies and the media?

We in this House should not put Yemen on the “too difficult” pile and get bogged down in the origins of the conflict. We should concentrate our efforts on alleviating the huge distress being caused to people in that country and work towards a political solution.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)**

“A catastrophe of biblical proportions” was the phrase used by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), a former International Development Secretary—and that was quite a statement to make. It has been adumbrated further by many right hon. and hon. Members, who have described eloquently and chillingly the miasma of despair and death that hangs over the people of Yemen.

What has alarmed me throughout this debate—I commend the right hon. Gentleman for having secured it—is that we could extract the word “Yemen” and replace it with “Syria” in so many circumstances. The two conflicts are very different, but the suffering, pain, misery and death are all too familiar in debates such as this. It is important for us not to become desensitised and that, as the hon. Member for City of Durham (Dr Blackman-Woods) said, we do not put Yemen into the “too difficult” box.

The other thing that alarms me—this also has parallels with Syria—is the weaponization of food, leading to some of the most horrifying tales of hunger and deprivation, and medieval-style outbreaks of disease that are killing people in their hundreds of thousands.

I do not want to take up too much time, so I shall wind up my remarks with this point. The Prime Minister is in the region right now, as the House debates this issue. It has been said that she has raised and will raise the issue of Yemen. Of course, I would prefer she did that than otherwise—it is at least a start. But it is only a start. Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I am tired of hearing about Government Ministers raising things; I do not quite know what that means sometimes.

My first debate in the House two years ago was about the case of Raif Badawi, an imprisoned Saudi writer, and the broader issue of human rights in Saudi Arabia. I remember consulting some of the researchers from the House of Commons Library, who told me at the time that it was sometimes known for Ministers to raise issues not by verbalising their views, but by writing things on sheets of paper and holding them up so that they could be read by other people in the room.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald**

The Minister shakes his head; I would not dream of accusing him of doing anything like that; I respect him as a thoughtful, good Minister. But it is about time we started to see some action. The Prime Minister should not return from her trip until she has secured something in respect of the blockade of Yemen.

Right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and my party leader has also raised the issue with the Prime Minister. We get billions in arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which fill up the coffers of the Exchequer with tax receipts, yet we spend only millions on aid. I accept that we are one of the biggest donors—that, of course, is to be commended—but the aid is bastardised by the fact that we are facilitating the shelling of the very people whom we are trying to help with the aid. We find ourselves in the most perverse situation. Although I do not blame this Minister in particular for that, the situation seems to characterise British foreign policy in not only this conflict but many political situations in which we have been involved for a great many years.

I commend the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield for securing the debate, and for all the work that he does, along with the chair of the all-party group—the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who is no longer in the Chamber—and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss). How much better might it be if the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield occupied the chair of the Foreign Secretary at the Cabinet table, rather than the person who occupies it now?

## **Alistair Burt**

With the leave of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will respond. I will take no more than the two minutes allotted to me, so that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) can make some closing remarks. I thank him again for raising the issue. I also thank other colleagues for the way in which they have dealt with the debate and the constructive way in which nearly all of them spoke.

We are agreed that we want immediate access for humanitarian and commercial aid to the ports in Yemen. I do not want to dance on the head of a pin when it comes to the word “blockade”: that is what colleagues have called it in the House, and that is what it is. There are international rules governing whether something is a blockade. International humanitarian law prevents the starvation of civilians “as a method of warfare”, and that includes blockading with the intent of causing starvation. The publicly made statement by the Saudis was that their intent is not to cause starvation but to ensure that missiles do not enter Yemen. I would be failing in my duty if I did not put that on the record, and, as we have seen, there has been an easing in recent days.

What we are all agreed on, however, is first that we want that greater access, and secondly that we want an end to the conflict. I have sought to assure colleagues that we are straining every sinew in our efforts to assist in a process of which we are not fully in control, and in which not all parties are yet engaged in the same way as the coalition parties are engaged with the UN.

Finally, let me commend my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, who has made securing access to humanitarian aid one of her top priorities in Yemen. We have been feeding millions of people, and we are determined to continue to do so. We are providing food for 1.8 million people for at least a month, nutritional support for 1.7 million people, and water and sanitation for 1.2 million. The country is doing what it can on the aid side. As we all know, however, commercial access has to be granted. We need more food; we need an end to the urgency of the situation. We also need to

support those who are trying to ensure that a legitimate Government are protected against those from outside and from internal insurgency. We need to bend all our efforts to resolving the conflict, and the United Kingdom will do so to the very best of its ability.

**Mr Mitchell**

I will not take up much of the House's time, Mr Deputy Speaker.

This has been a most useful debate. I think that there is agreement across the House on two key things. First, the British Government must do everything they can to ensure that the blockade is lifted, because it is a breach of international humanitarian law. It is a collective punishment beating for the 27 million people who live in Yemen, and it must be lifted. Secondly—and here the British Government have a most important role to play—a political process that is inclusive must get going. Those are the two key messages that I hope the Minister will take back to the Foreign Office today.

In different ways, nearly every speaker on both sides of the House drew attention to the fault line in the Government's current policy, and it was set out with exemplary clarity by the hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) a few moments ago. It makes those two objectives more difficult to achieve, but they are the objectives that I hope the Minister will take away with him, and the whole House will wish him all success in achieving them.

*Question put and agreed to. Resolved*



## 11. EU Parliament Backs Ban on Saudi Weapons Sales Over Yemen War

(Alex MacDonald *Middle East Eye* December 1, 2017)

British MEPs criticise ‘hypocritical’ position of UK government, who are responsible for the largest number of arms exports to Saudi Arabia



Campaigners have welcomed a call by the European Parliament for an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia, as the death toll in the war in Yemen continues to mount.

In a resolution adopted on Thursday, MEPs called for a political solution to the conflict in Yemen and a resolution to the “catastrophic” humanitarian crisis in the country.

They also called on Iran to end its support for Houthi rebels and an end to indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) lauded the EU’s move.

“The European Parliament has sent a clear, strong and unambiguous message to governments like the UK, that have been utterly complicit in the destruction of Yemen,” said Andrew Smith, a spokesman for the campaign.

European weapons have played a central role in the bombardment. The situation has become even worse over recent months with the devastating blockade of Yemeni ports, and the worst cholera outbreak on record.

“Despite the pain and the destruction, the arms sales have only continued,” said Smith. “It’s time for Theresa May and the other leaders to take action and end their support for the Saudi regime and the terrible bombardment that has been inflicted on Yemen.”

The EU’s resolution follows a visit to Saudi Arabia by the British prime minister in which she called on the Kingdom to “avert a human catastrophe” in Yemen.

May’s office said in a statement that she “made clear that the flow of commercial supplies...must be resumed if we are to avert a humanitarian catastrophe” during her meeting with King Salman and the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

“They agreed that steps needed to be taken as a matter of urgency to address this,” it added.

Saudi Arabia is Britain’s largest trading partner in the Middle East, and London has signed off on more than £4.6 billion (\$6.2 billion) worth of arms sales to Riyadh since March 2015.

France, the second biggest exporter of arms to Saudi in the EU, still exports less than half that supplied by the UK.

Molly Scott Cato, a British Green Party MEP who campaigned on the issue, said that the vote was a step toward resolving the crisis in Yemen, but criticised the UK government position.

“I am very proud that the European Parliament has called previously for an arms embargo on Saudi and repeated the call this week in connection with the appalling humanitarian crisis in Yemen,” she told Middle East Eye.

“But on the other hand I am deeply ashamed at the behaviour of my government.”

She said that the UK Foreign Office had given her a letter in response to her queries in which they said they “leave it to the Saudis themselves

to investigate human rights abuses” which Cato described as an “abdication of responsibility”.

“The FCO position is hypocritical because while they claim concern for Yemeni children, the reality is that their priority is to protect the huge proportion of our arms sales that go to Saudi,” she explained.

The main opposition Labour party has also regularly called for an arms ban to be imposed on Saudi Arabia.

### **Blockade needs to be ‘wound down’**

An estimated 10,000 people have been killed and two million people forced from their homes in the already poverty-stricken country.

Aid workers and medical supplies arrived in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa on Saturday after the easing of a nearly three-week military blockade imposed by the Saudi-led coalition.

However, the UN has called for the Saudis to fully lift the blockade on the country as seven or eight million people in the country are “right on the brink of famine”.

“That blockade has been partially wound down but not fully wound down,” said UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock on Friday.

“It needs to be fully wound down if we are to avoid an atrocious humanitarian tragedy involving the loss of millions of lives, the like of which the world has not seen for many decades.”

The coalition’s easing of the blockade allowed aid ships into the Red Sea ports of Hodeidah and Salif, as well as UN flights to Sanaa.

But the UN has warned that Yemen cannot rely on humanitarian aid alone and needs commercial imports too. Imports are responsible for the vast majority of food, fuel and medicine in the country.

The coalition has said it wants tighter UN verification and inspection for commercial ships entering port of Hodeidah, which is controlled by the Houthi rebel group whom they have been targeting since intervening in the country in March 2015.



*UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock visits a camp for displaced people in the Yemeni province of Hajjah on 26 October 2017 (AFP)*

“I’ve called for five things in respect of the Saudi blockade,” Lowcock added. “Some of them have happened like the resumption of humanitarian air services, like partial reopening of the ports of Hodeidah and Saleef on the Red Sea.

“What I’m interested in is finding solutions

Four political groups in European parliament urge EU foreign policy chief to propose arms embargo over Yemen campaign

Federica Mogherini has the right to propose an arms embargo but would need to win the backing of EU member states, including the UK. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Jennifer Rankin in Brussels

Thu 26 Oct ‘17 16.38 BST Last modified on Mon 27 Nov ‘17 14.49 GMT

The European Union is under mounting pressure from MEPs to ban arms sales to Saudi Arabia in response to the Gulf state's bombing campaign in Yemen.

The leaders of four political groups in the European parliament have urged the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, to propose an EU arms embargo on Saudi Arabia, because of the devastating war in Yemen that has left nearly 20 million people in need of humanitarian aid.

In a letter to Mogherini, seen by the Guardian, the MEP leaders accuse the EU of flouting its own rules, by selling weapons to Saudi Arabia in defiance of a 2008 common code on military exports. Mogherini has the right to propose an arms embargo, but would need to win the backing of EU member states, including the UK, one of the biggest arms exporters to the Gulf kingdom.

#### **EU parliament votes for embargo on arms sales to Saudi Arabia**

The latest call for a ban would run into immediate opposition from the British defence secretary, Michael Fallon, who urged MPs on Wednesday not to criticise Saudi Arabia in the interests of a fighter jet deal.

The EU code on arms exports lists eight grounds for turning down an arms export licence, including respect for the obligations of international organisations, such as the UN. In particular EU member states must show "special caution and vigilance" when issuing licences to countries where serious violations of human rights have been established by the UN or other bodies.

The UN has described Yemen as the world's largest humanitarian crisis: in September it agreed to send war crimes investigators to the devastated country to examine alleged human-rights violations committed by both sides during the two-and-a-half-year civil war.

After Saudi Arabia launched a bombing campaign against the Houthi rebels in March 2015, at least 10,000 people were killed in the first 22 months of the conflict, the UN humanitarian office said, almost double

other estimates. At least 2,100 people have died from cholera, while thousands more are being infected with the disease every week following the collapse of water supplies and sanitation.

Bodil Valero, Swedish Green party MEP, said the EU could not continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia when faced with “the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world”.

“We have our common European values, we have a common position [on arms sales], we shouldn’t sell arms to a country that doesn’t respect humanitarian law or human rights,” said Valero, who drafts the parliament’s annual arms control resolution.

“I think it is clear we are breaking the common position, at least when it comes to new products, new licences,” said Valero. “We should say no to selling weapons to Saudi Arabia because the common position wouldn’t allow it.”

France, followed by the UK, issued the most valuable arms-export licences to Saudi Arabia in 2015, according to the latest EU arms export report, which shows that 17 EU member states sold arms to the Gulf state

The UK issued licences to Saudi Arabia worth €3.3bn (£2.9bn), but did not reveal the value of weapons shipped to the country that year. France issued licences worth €16.9bn, but the value of shipments was €899m.

EU member states refused seven arms export licences to Saudi Arabia, but the report does not name the country or countries that did so, or why.

The letter to Mogherini states: “It is our view that any such [arms] exports to Saudi Arabia are in direct violation of at least criterion two of the common position in regard to the country’s involvement in grave breaches of humanitarian law as established by competent UN authorities.”

It is signed by the leaders of the Socialists, the Liberals, the European United Left and the Greens, who together have 48% of MEPs in the European parliament.

The parliament passed a symbolic resolution in favour of an arms embargo in February 2016, but member states, which hold the levers of EU foreign policy, have so far ignored calls for action.

As the EU's foreign policy chief, Mogherini can put the issue on the agenda, but is reluctant to do so unless it is likely to succeed.

The UK will no longer be bound by the EU's arms export code after Brexit, but could align itself with the bloc. Norway, Canada and Albania are among eight non-EU countries that have chosen to sign-up to EU arms export policy.

A spokeswoman for Mogherini said: "The final decision whether to authorise or deny an export remains at national discretion of member states. Decisions on issuing an arms embargo lie fully with the council [of foreign ministers]; deciding an arms embargo would require political agreement by unanimity within the council."

On Yemen, she added: "our position is that a political solution is the only way out of this conflict... The EU continues to support the peace process, to supply humanitarian assistance and will play an active role in a coordinated response of the international community to address post conflict needs of the Yemeni population."

## 12. Recommendations for the EU's policy on Yemen

As a result of the current war in Yemen, the Political Development Forum identified the methodology of collecting the feedback on the recommendations on EU internal policy in Yemen<sup>21</sup>, which is in two ways, sending emails to those who are outside Yemen and conducting a round-table meeting in Yemen for key stakeholders, taking into consideration the wide representation of political and societal components to ensure various perspectives. Twelve relevant stakeholders have attended the meeting and they were so passionate discussing the recommendations, hence we have accomplished a successful meeting. For getting comprehensive feedback, we have sent emails; some participants were responsive, while a few of them were not.

This report briefly documents the discussion of the stakeholders attended the roundtable meeting as well as the responses we got from emails so that the EU could further take measures to ensure coordination of partners involved and to be inspired of which methodology should optimize the impact of policy recommendations. This report follows the Chatham House rule.

To structure the discussion, the stakeholders were asked the following questions:

- Are the recommendations realistic/feasible?
- Do they reflect the lessons learned from the previous period in Yemen based on your understanding?
- Is there anything that was missed?
- Any feedback you might have?

---

<sup>21</sup> The recommendations document presented is available upon request (and is included in D5.5).





The recommendations were presented one by one as stipulated in the meeting's agenda and discussion was followed in order to identify the pros and cons as well as to collect feedback on the above questions. The stakeholders approved that all the recommendations are needed and feasibly implemented, furthermore they believed that these

recommendations reflected the lessons learnt that Yemen went through starting from the youth uprising and afterwards. The general arguments we got from

stakeholders was that the recommendations were well developed apart from the fact that Yemen is suffering from war and no precise recommendation or policy was devoted to highlight the current war nor the EU's role in ending the war. Therefore, the stakeholders recommended that the EU has to develop an internal policy to be effectively involved in ending the war as a prerequisite to feasibly implement the seven recommendations. The stakeholders agreed that the implementation of these recommendations needs to be under the EU supervision and therefore the EU has to develop a mechanism of monitoring and supervising the policy implementation that ensures EU

direct involvement. The stakeholders reasoned the chronological order of the recommendations; the recommendations need to be organized again on the principle of what is needed to be done first so that the EU could build a whole project of interventions based on tangible outputs to be taken further to the next stages. The stakeholders identified that the recommendation Nr. 4 should come first due to the importance of preliminarily locating Yemen within the EU's policy structures, so that the rest of recommendations will be based on it. Then comes the third recommendation to the second step for EU to use its leadership and capacity to supporting the enabling environment for peace building and embedding democracy, which is considered to be the milestone towards stability. This might identify the EU measures to stop the war and conduct practical steps towards peace building. Recommendation Nr. 5 is the last one as it concerns the EU outreach strategy. Having mentioned that, the EU needs to focus more on its communication strategy presenting their implemented projects in Yemen both internally and within the EU external partners so that they enhance synergies and avoid project duplications. One potential problem they perceived with these recommendations was that it may encourage further fracturing of the negotiation process. Right now, the EU is actively involved in mediation, so is the UK, so is Oman on occasion. Sometimes the Russians get involved and even the Chinese of late. What is missing is any coordinating mechanism for these various groups, especially a core team of regional and international players to carry the process forward – which is sorely needed in light of the absence of main international player (USA). A recommendation regarding tackling the economic and financial issues of Yemen need to be developed as this dilemma was a result of conflict and was not taken into consideration while developing the study though it was the major problem.

The stakeholders reflected on each recommendation, so we will briefly present the vital feedbacks that we got regarding each one.

Recommendation 1: Push for more meaningful representation for the post-2011 ‘newcomers’ to the political arena by pressuring the parties to observe the NDC quotas for women and youth, and engage in consultations with marginalized groups parallel to the peace process.

This recommendation was the most important one for the stakeholders and the majority agreed that it is realistic and feasible to be implemented into programs. Despite the national dialogue outcome that guarantees quota for women (30%) and youth (20%), the international communities have not done anything in that regards to impose the quota at political and institutional level. The role played by women and youth should be emphasized and supported but they should not be pushed without being equipped with the adequate knowledge and skills to be effectively participating in political arena. Some of them argued that this policy is too general and not tailored geographically to represent the southerner’s women and youth nor this policy is concrete in terms of how to do so. Hence, they recommend to conduct an assessment study to better come up with feasible program to undertake interventions. They also questioned how women and youth could be involved while Yemen is going through war and their participation by political parties is not of importance besides the priority at this phase is not women and youth quota as it was in 2011. The most vital stage to enhance the quota for women and youth is when war ends, and constitution is being revised so that they ensure their constitutional rights. They agreed that each party should be committed to apply women and youth quota provided that Yemen is in transition and stabilized. The stakeholders reach consensus that the marginalized groups should not be part of this recommendation as this one should only emphasize the women and youth, to avoid ambiguity and a vague recommendation. Marginalized groups have not been identified in the recommendation, so they questioned how to guarantee the societal and political inclusiveness without having a baseline study on marginalized groups. They agreed to exclude the marginalized groups and restrict this policy on women and youth.

Recommendation 2: The EU should regularly evaluate the shifting power dynamics on the ground, engage directly with local leaders and groups, and partner with the UN and other international stakeholders in doing so.

The stakeholders recalled the mistakes that happened in the representation of National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in a way that the most powerful representatives of the tribal/military structure were not included. In some ways, the NDC failed because there was not enough buy-in from the traditional elites, who proceeded to ignore and undermine NDC. That is why this recommendation is significant to evaluate and figure out the new faces and leaders with influence on the ground, especially outside of the capital who were excluded, from the south in particular. The international perspective is to take more time to allow grassroots selection of representation so that new leaders go to the conference with meaningful popular support, rather than new faces appearing as part of an internationally guided process. The stakeholders agreed that this recommendation is still valid, realistic and feasible to be implemented as there were marginalized groups and now they are the ones in charge of governing territories, i.e. Herak and Houthi. They argued that to engage with the local leaders at the current stage of war is complicated for EU, as the local communities have not positioned themselves as before the war. Some of them criticized the neglecting of such groups who now dominate the geographical territories and before their case was being advocated by the activists or/and local community leaders. They recommended to conduct studies for evaluating the shifting of power; one covers the South and the other covers the North. This would be to critically study these emerging groups and to what extent their issue is as serious as the stakeholders claimed, as now the southerners issue is not like before due to the fact that southerners deal with northerners as a minority and they take away their properties. Meanwhile the southerners believe that they have issues, but national, regional, and international actors have not been responded to meet their demands, therefore they have merged into organized group (Herak).

Therefore, the question raised was how could it be evaluated seriously, locally and really bring their concerns to the political tables.

**Recommendation 3:** The EU should use its leadership and capacity to support the enabling environment for peace building and embedding democracy.

Besides what was recommended to prioritize this recommendation as the second one, the stakeholders identified the EU role to be a direct moderator as they enjoy the neutral reputation amongst national, regional and international actors. EU peace building and democracy programs need to be aligned with human rights standards and focus on conflict and post-conflict programs. They recommended that the EU initiate fact-finding mission in Yemen for human rights violations and make the membership open for international actors who want to be a part of it. The EU could support developing best practices for peace building and embedding democracy. Civil Society Organizations are implementing peace projects and they need more support to assist the community overcoming conflicts and enhance their contributions in peace building and conflict prevention. EU has already invested in enhancing the capacity of many CSOs in Yemen, so it is recommended to continue supporting these CSOs when it comes to implementing peace building and democracy projects. Embedding democracy requires well-defined approaches of doing so, particularly through tailored projects to assist introducing feasible democratic measures that do not follow the patterns of developed countries nor developing ones that enjoy the minimum standards of security and democracy, unlike Yemen, as it should be taken as an exceptional case.

**Recommendation 4:** Locate Yemen more concretely within the EU's policy and funding structures for the Middle East and increase coordination among member states. As mentioned above, most of the stakeholders agreed that this recommendation has to be the first one, while the others argued that this recommendation is an extension of the third recommendation. This recommendation has to address Yemen today not based on the main report findings and recommendations, as

nowadays we have variables that need to be taken into account. They suggested that the priority in this recommendation is the EU should consider whether to place Yemen with the Horn of Africa group instead of placing it within Jordan group, which would not cater better to Yemen's geographic location, social and political make-up. They agreed that this recommendation is of importance. They advised the EU to figure out and know exactly how Yemen should fit into the EU policy making structure.



Recommendation 5: The EU should develop a stronger communications strategy to inform the public of its neutrality, values, and humanitarian/development support.

As already highlighted, the stakeholders agreed that this recommendation should be the last one; that also indicates the importance of such recommendation in a way that EU has implemented projects in Yemen previously, but the Yemeni citizens/CSOs didn't recognize these projects due to the EU outreach shortcomings. The

stakeholders claimed that the Yemeni citizens have lost their trust in EU, hence the EU has to implement humanitarian and development programs in order to regain the trust back. They also added that the EU has to make sure to balance between sending and receiving messages, i.e. EU should receive feedbacks so that EU could undertake corrective measures, if needed.

They emphasized on the role of the EU on humanitarian and development support based on their assurance that EU has no military or/and political interest in Yemen and that is why the EU is perceived as a neutral partner who could support Yemen in the conflict and post-conflict agenda. Recommendation for implementing conflict-sensitive communication program should be implemented amongst journalists and social media actors so that they convey the EU message impartially and in a credible manner. The EU also has to have three audiences to tailor their messages: 1) the EU member countries; 2) international community; and 3) Yemeni citizens; and it should better understand the needs of each audience to avoid ambiguity.

Recommendation 6: The EU should balance immediate humanitarian assistance with more sustainable livelihood and development interventions.

They suggested for EU to achieve sustainable livelihood and development interventions are to support local initiatives/ councils/ authorities as well as to create a partnership between citizens and local authorities. Moreover, the stakeholders emphasized on the equilibrium principle in order to avoid the failure of international organizations that only focus on immediate humanitarian reliefs and neglect sustainable development. They also proposed that the EU could implement security and stability measures and to build the public institutional capacities to enable them delivering sustainable services. The stakeholders were concerned about how the EU could do so and maintain the sustainability of livelihood and development interventions. Therefore, they suggested that the EU has to implement a direct supervisory



mechanism so that the humanitarian and development support is being absorbed for the citizens' sake.

That way the EU would also mitigate corruption happening in conflict and transitional phases. They suggested that the EU should support the civil society organizations at the national level. The southerners argued that the assistance and support are only directed to South. Thus, they prefer to have clear recommendation in that regards to ensure a given support to them particularly in terms of sustainable development, for which further support is needed in infrastructure and public institutional development for service accessibility. The current crisis that started in 2014 up to now, affected negatively the function of the government and its ability to provide public services. Moreover, the legitimate government suggests to provide immediate humanitarian support as well as implementing sustainable development programs that contribute to solving some of the catastrophes such as implementing water and energy projects. As for the humanitarian assistance, they highlighted that the EU might use the Sphere handbook of the humanitarian charter. The EU has to keep monitoring the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, such as Cholera, and provide the needed humanitarian/ medical assistance on time to limit epidemics.

Recommendation 7: The EU should help strengthen state institutions, including through technical expertise, and should develop modalities to channel funds to local authorities.

The stakeholders wondered why good governance pillars were not highlighted under this recommendation. They clarified the on-going state institutional dilemma representing the absence of good governance principles and therefore the state institutions fail utilizing the technical assistance and corruption occurs. The EU has to be more specific in identifying state institutions; either they are the national institutional or local (district or provincial). Thus it is advisable for the EU to work with a formula to determine which ones to work with in what areas, as this will probably vary. They questioned how they could channel the funds to local authorities while there is no legitimate government on the



ground. They agreed on the principle of first ending the war so that we have legal authority to channel the funds to distribute it to the local level. So, this recommendation is not realistic nor feasible at the current time, as we have a fragmented society. If imposed, the EU image will be damaged as each party will understand that the EU is not impartial. In spite of that, some of the stakeholders thought of creating local communities that undertake local projects so that we would mobilize the community and identify them in order to channel the fund apart from the government and local authority. For this recommendation to be feasible in the war scenario, the EU has to organize a conference representing the parties to conflict, societal components, youth, women, CSOs and local authority representatives to jointly implement the policy recommendation, reflected into state reform programs, and come up with a signed document obliging the parties under the EU supervision to implement this policy alongside its outlined project for each state sector, e.g. judiciary, education, health...etc at both national and local level. To provide the technical assistance, the EU has to implement a database on citizen's registry, so that support can be directed to the segment of communities. It would be also helpful later for the government in the form of the state.

### 13. UN Slams Absurd War

28.12.2017



*UN humanitarian coordinator Jamie McGoldrick said Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen had shown a ‘complete disregard for human life’ after 68 civilians died in one day.*

Sixty-Eight Yemeni civilians were killed in two separate air raids by the Saudi-led Arab coalition in one day, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Yemen Jamie McGoldrick said on Thursday.

The first airstrike on Tuesday hit a “crowded popular market” in the Taiz province, killing 54 civilians including eight children and wounding 32 others, the UN official said in a statement.

The second raid was in the Red Sea province of Hodeidah and killed 14 people from the same family, the statement said. “I remain deeply disturbed by mounting civilian casualties caused by escalated and indiscriminate attacks throughout Yemen,” McGoldrick said. In addition to the casualties from Tuesday’s two air raids, another 41 civilians were killed and 43 wounded over the previous 10 days of fighting, he said.

“These incidents prove the complete disregard for human life that all parties, including the Saudi-led coalition, continue to show in this absurd war that has only resulted in the destruction of the country and the incommensurate suffering of its people,” McGoldrick said. He said civilians “are being punished as part of a futile military campaign by both sides”.

“I remind all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi-led coalition, of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure and to always distinguish between civilian and military objects,” he said.

The UN official said the conflict in Yemen has no military solution and could be resolved only through negotiations.

A Saudi-led coalition has been waging an air campaign against Yemen’s Houthi rebels since March 2015 in an attempt to shore up the internationally-recognised government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi.

Fighting and air raids have intensified since December 19, when Saudi air defences intercepted a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis towards the kingdom’s capital Riyadh.

More than 10,000 people have been killed in the conflict since the coalition’s intervention in the impoverished country, where more than 2,000 people have also died of cholera this year.

The coalition has also imposed a crippling blockade on Yemen’s sea and airports, stopping life-saving aid from reaching starving civilians.

## Part Two: The Media, At Last...

A Child Dies In Yemen Every 5 Minutes



This is Buthaina, a girl believed to be 4 or 5 who was the only survivor in her family of a bombing by the Saudi coalition that killed 14 people.

## 14. Photos Reveal Dimensions of the Tragedy



*A Yemeni boy stands in front of a damaged house in the village of Bani Matar, 2015. (Photo credit: Mohammed Huwais/AFP/Getty Images)*







*A Houthi Shiite fighter stands guard as people search for survivors under the rubble of houses destroyed by Saudi airstrikes near Sanaa Airport, Yemen, Thursday, March 26, 2015. (AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)*





*Yemenis stand amid the rubble of houses destroyed by Saudi-led airstrikes in a village near Sanaa. April 2015 (AP Photo)*



*A Yemeni man stands near his house destroyed by Saudi airstrikes near Sanaa Airport, Yemen, March, 2015. (AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)*

*Yemenis search for survivors at the site of a Saudi air strike against Houthi rebels near Sanaa Airport on March 26, 2015. (Mohammed Huwais/AFP/Getty Images)*

*A Yemeni man inspects his house destroyed by Saudi airstrikes (AP Photo)."*



## **15. Let's Be Blunt: With U.S. And U.K. Complicity, The Saudi Government is Committing War Crimes in Yemen.**

New York Times Opinion 31. August 2017

“The country is on the brink of famine, with over 60 percent of the population not knowing where their next meal will come from,” the leaders of the U.N. World Food Program, UNICEF and the World Health Organization said in an unusual joint statement.

Yemen, always an impoverished country, has been upended for two years by fighting between the Saudi-backed military coalition and Houthi rebels and their allies (with limited support from Iran). The Saudis regularly bomb civilians and, worse, they have closed the airspace and imposed a blockade to starve the rebel-held areas into submission.

That means that ordinary Yemenis, including children, die in bombings or starve.

Human Rights Watch has repeatedly concluded that many Saudi airstrikes were probable war crimes and that the U.S. shares responsibility because it provides the Saudis with air-to-air refuelling and intelligence used for airstrikes, as well as with much of the weaponry.

Yet victims like Buthaina aren't on our television screens and rarely make the news pages, in part because Saudi Arabia is successfully blocking foreign journalists from the rebel-held areas. I know, because I've been trying for almost a year to get there and thought I had arranged a visit for this week—and then Saudi Arabia shut me down.

With commercial flights banned, the way into rebel areas is on charter flights arranged by the United Nations and aid groups. But Saudi military jets control this airspace and ban any flight if there's a journalist

onboard. I don't think the Saudis would actually shoot down a plane just because I was on it, but the U.N. isn't taking chances.

This is maddening: Saudi Arabia successfully blackmails the United Nations to bar journalists so as to prevent coverage of Saudi atrocities.

The Saudis don't want you to see children like this one, Alaa, severely malnourished and photographed by a World Food Program team. Two days later, Alaa died.

"The situation in Yemen is a disgrace that brings shame to our global community," says Michelle Nunn, president of Care USA. "More than 20 million Yemenis are in need of emergency assistance, and a child dies every five minutes. Yet few Americans know about the daily bloodshed, near-famine conditions and a raging cholera epidemic."

We should cut off military transfers to Saudi Arabia until it ends its strangulation of Yemen.

The civil war in Yemen started as a local conflict, but Saudi Arabia rushed in because of exaggerated fears of Iranian influence there. All parties have behaved outrageously. But it's our side that appears to be responsible for the most deaths: A draft U.N. report says that the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for 65 percent more deaths of children than the Houthis and their allies, and it's the Saudis who have imposed the blockade that is leading to starvation.

In addition, the world's worst cholera epidemic has broken out in Yemen, partly because so many people are malnourished. An additional 5,000 Yemenis are infected with cholera each day.



*Yemeni children suspected of being infected with cholera received treatment at a makeshift hospital in Sana in June 5. Mohammed Huwais/Agence France-Presse—Getty Images*

The Saudis say, correctly, that they are also providing large amounts of aid to Yemen. But bombing and starving civilians is not excused if one provides Band-Aids afterward.

This catastrophe started under President Barack Obama, although he tried—not nearly enough—to rein in Saudi Arabia. President Trump has removed the reins and embraced the rash and inexperienced Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who is overseeing the assault on Yemen.

“Yemen is a moral, humanitarian and strategic disaster for America,” says Aaron David Miller, a former State Department Middle East analyst who advised both Republican and Democratic administrations. “U.S. policy is being driven by its pro-Saudi proclivities and its own desire to contain Iran. But by enabling Riyadh, it’s only making an already fraught situation worse.”

What do we do?

Jan Egeland, a former senior U.N. official who now leads the Norwegian Refugee Council, urges an immediate cease-fire, a lifting of the embargo on Yemen, and peace talks led by the U.N., the U.S. and the U.K., forcing both sides to compromise.

A glimpse of moral leadership has come from the U.S. Senate. A remarkable 47 senators in June voted to block a major arms sale to Saudi Arabia, largely because of qualms about Saudi conduct in Yemen. Those senators are right, and we should halt all arms transfers to Saudi Arabia until it ends the blockade and bombings.

We Americans have sometimes wondered how Russia can possibly be so Machiavellian as to support its Syrian government allies as they bomb and starve civilians. Yet we're doing the same thing with Saudi Arabia, and it's just as unconscionable when we're the ones complicit in war crimes.



*As Donald Trump embarks on his first international trip, including to Saudi Arabia, stand with us to end US support for the Saudi-UAE led war in Yemen.*

The Trump administration has approved the resumption of sales of precision-guided munitions to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in a heartless reversal of the previous administration's freeze over concerns about heavy civilian casualties. Now, Trump & co. are offering a \$110

billion weapons deal to one of the world's leading human rights abusers, and just days ago, the administration approved a \$2 billion arms deal to the United Arab Emirates, the US and Saudi Arabia's closest ally in the devastating war in Yemen. The US should not be selling weapons to major human rights abusers and some of the most undemocratic and repressive governments in the world.

Yemen is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis, and the US-backed Saudi-UAE led coalition is responsible. Since their bombing campaign in Yemen began two years ago, more than 10,000 people have been killed, and millions have been forced from their homes. As a weapon of war, the Saudi Coalition is inflicting starvation on the population by blockading the country's ports. Fourteen million out of 26 million Yemenis are food insecure and Yemen is standing at the brink of famine.

Right now, all eyes are on the Port of Hodeida, which is a main entry point for a vast majority (70%) of Yemen's food, medicine, and aid which 80% of the population depends on. Coalition forces have already imposed a blockade on the port and destroyed many of the vital roadways and bridges in Hodeida province. Now, many fear a military attack on the port, which would threaten the lives of over a million children already suffering from malnutrition. In response to the threat, the United Nations and aid organizations are busy preparing humanitarian contingency plans.

The attack can be prevented. As Reuters stated, "the coalition of Gulf Arab countries might still be waiting for a go-ahead from its Western allies [to] launch the Hodeida offensive." The US must act now and use its influence to stop provoking militarism and start using diplomacy in Yemen.

In 2016, UFPJ and our partners, helped kick-off a campaign to challenge the problematic US-Saudi alliance and recently, we have supported the leadership of some members of Congress who have stood up to the war-makers in Washington on Yemen.

In September of last year, your calls, letters, and coordinated efforts pushed 26 senators to support a bipartisan proposal to block a pending \$1.15 billion United States arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

“We are complicit and actively involved with war in Yemen. There’s been no debate in Congress, really no debate in the public sphere, over whether or not we should be at war in Yemen”, said Senator Rand Paul at the time. “We are currently doing in-flight refuelling of bombers, Saudi Arabian bombers that are bombing in Yemen. We are helping to select sites and we actually have had Special Forces involved in these decisions in the theatre as well.”

“There have already been thousands and thousands of civilians killed”, said Senator Chris Murphy. “If you talk to Yemenis, they will tell you that this is perceived inside Yemen as not a Saudi-led bombing campaign, which it’s broadly advertised in the newspapers, but as a US bombing campaign or at best a US-Saudi bombing campaign. There is a US imprint on every civilian death inside Yemen, which is radicalizing the people this country against the United States.”

That Senate resolution failed, but in December growing pressure amid concerns over the Yemen War led the Obama administration to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

In March, Congressman Ted Lieu and Congressman John Conyers, Jr. led 52 Members of Congress in sending a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson “urging him to use all diplomatic tools to help open the Yemeni port of Hodeida to international humanitarian aid organizations to allow them to deliver critical food, fuel and medicine into northern Yemen”,

Weeks later, Representatives Mark Pocan, Justin Amash, Ted Lieu, Walter B. Jones, and Barbara Lee were joined by 55 of their peers in a letter to the President stating that: “engaging our military against Yemen’s Houthis when no direct threat to the United States exists and without prior congressional authorization would violate the separation of powers clearly delineated in the Constitution. For this reason, we

write to request that the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) provide, without delay, any legal justification that it would cite if the administration intends to engage in direct hostilities against Yemen's Houthis without seeking congressional authorization."

"Administration officials have proposed the US. participate directly in an attack on Yemen's major port", said Rep. Mark Pocan. "Such an attack could push the country into full-blown famine, where nearly half a million children in Yemen are facing starvation".

"President Trump does not have the authority to send US forces to battle the Houthis in Yemen, period", Congressman Ted Lieu said. "Once again, the Administration appears ready to ramp up US involvement in a complicated civil war without a clear strategy in place or the necessary authorization from Congress. A unilateral decision for direct US involvement in Yemen would be met by swift, bipartisan opposition".

While Donald Trump goes to Saudi Arabia to sell weapons to the murderous Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, tell Congress that US should be working for a ceasefire and peace negotiations instead.

Peace activists are pressing forward through protest, lobbying, vigils, and even fasting to end to the war in Yemen. Our movement must continue to lead with actions to prevent an imminent attack on Hodeida, to stop arming and aiding the Saudi led coalition, and to support the work of humanitarian aid organizations on the ground in Yemen.

## 16. When We're Complicit in War Crimes

(Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*. August 31, 2017)

It's of a young Yemeni boy, acutely malnourished like 2 million other children in Yemen—caught up in what the United Nations calls the “world's largest humanitarian crisis.”

Their suffering is largely a result of monstrous misconduct by a Saudi-led coalition that is supported by the United States and Britain. Let's be blunt: With U.S. and U.K. complicity, the Saudi government is committing war crimes.

“The country is on the brink of famine, with over 60 percent of the population not knowing where their next meal will come from,” the leaders of the U.N. World Food Program, UNICEF and the World Health Organization said in an unusual joint statement.



Yemen, always an impoverished country, has been upended for two years by fighting between the Saudi-backed military coalition and Houthi rebels and their allies (with limited support from Iran). The Saudis regularly bomb civilians and, worse, they have closed the airspace and imposed a blockade to starve the rebel-held areas into submission.

That means that ordinary Yemenis, including children, die in bombings or starve.

Buthaina, a girl believed to be 4 or 5, was the only survivor in her family of a bombing last week by the Saudi coalition that killed 14 people. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly concluded that many Saudi airstrikes were probable war crimes and that the U.S. shares responsibility because it provides the Saudis with air-to-air refuelling and intelligence used for airstrikes, as well as with much of the weaponry.



Yet victims like Buthaina aren't on our television screens and rarely make the news pages, in part because Saudi Arabia is successfully blocking foreign journalists from the rebel-held areas. I know, because I've been trying for almost a year to get there and thought I had arranged a visit for this week—and then Saudi Arabia shut me down.

With commercial flights banned, the way into rebel areas is on charter flights arranged by the United Nations and aid groups. But Saudi military jets control this airspace and ban any flight if there's a journalist on board. I don't think the Saudis would actually shoot down a plane just because I was on it, but the U.N. isn't taking chances.

This is maddening: Saudi Arabia successfully blackmails the United Nation to bar journalists so as to prevent coverage of Saudi atrocities.

"The situation in Yemen is a disgrace that brings shame to our global community," says Michelle Nunn, president of CARE USA. "More than 20 million Yemenis are in need of emergency assistance, and a child dies every five minutes. Yet few Americans know about the daily bloodshed, near-famine conditions and a raging cholera epidemic."

If we feel that shame, we should cut off military transfers to Saudi Arabia until it ends its strangulation of Yemen.

The civil war in Yemen started as a local conflict, but Saudi Arabia rushed in because of exaggerated fears of Iranian influence there. All parties have behaved outrageously. But it's our side that appears to be responsible for the most deaths: A draft U.N. report says that the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for 65 percent more deaths of children than the Houthis and their allies, and it's the Saudis who have imposed the blockade that is leading to starvation.

In addition, the world's worst cholera epidemic has broken out in Yemen, partly because so many people are malnourished. An additional 5,000 Yemenis are infected with cholera each day.

The Saudis say, correctly, that they are also providing large amounts of aid to Yemen. But bombing and starving civilians is not excused if one provides Band-Aids afterward.

This catastrophe started under President Barack Obama, although he tried—not nearly enough—to rein in Saudi Arabia. President Donald Trump has removed the reins and embraced the rash and inexperienced Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who is overseeing the assault on Yemen.

“Yemen is a moral, humanitarian and strategic disaster for America,” says Aaron David Miller, a former State Department Middle East analyst who advised both Republican and Democratic administrations. “U.S. policy is being driven by its pro-Saudi proclivities and its own desire to contain Iran. But by enabling Riyadh, it’s only making an already fraught situation worse.”

What do we do? Jan Egeland, a former senior U.N. official who now leads the Norwegian Refugee Council, urges an immediate cease-fire, a lifting of the embargo on Yemen, and peace talks led by the U.N., the U.S. and the U.K., forcing both sides to compromise.

A glimpse of moral leadership has come from the U.S. Senate. A remarkable 47 senators in June voted to block a major arms sale to Saudi Arabia, largely because of qualms about Saudi conduct in Yemen. Those senators are right, and we should halt all arms transfers to Saudi Arabia until it ends the blockade and bombings.

We Americans have sometimes wondered how Russia can possibly be so Machiavellian as to support its Syrian government allies as they bomb and starve civilians. Yet we’re doing the same thing with Saudi Arabia, and it’s just as unconscionable when we’re the ones complicit in war crimes.

## 17. What is happening in Yemen? The War and Humanitarian crisis explained

Ben Winsor Australian SBS News/TV Dec 6.2017

Yemen has been devastated by a war with Saudi Arabia and is now facing a humanitarian tragedy on the same scale as Syria.

The coup had started in late 2014 as Mr Hadi's government was becoming increasingly unpopular. His predecessor Ali Abdullah Saleh had been deposed during Arab Spring protests. But the former president, then in his seventies, saw weakness in his successor and eyed a return to power. Mr Saleh still controlled elements of the security forces and struck up an unlikely alliance with Houthi tribesmen from the north of the country. With Houthi support, he quickly took control of Sana'a and began wresting control of the rest of the country.

In March 2015, the situation dramatically escalated. Saudi Arabia formed a coalition of mostly Arab states – supported by the US, UK and France – and launched a military intervention aimed at restoring Mr Hadi to power.

Saudi Arabia maintains that their regional nemesis Iran is closely linked to the Houthis, something Iran denies.

Coalition forces began pounding Yemen with airstrikes, establishing a punishing naval blockade which has led to mass starvation and shortages of medical supplies. But after more than two-and-a-half years of war and failed negotiations, the conflict has remained, for the most part, a stalemate.

Like the Ottomans and Egyptians before them, the Saudi coalition has found Yemen's mountainous north to be an arid, hostile terrain for foreign forces. Houthi rebels control the population centres to the north, the Saudi-backed government controls the south.

The United Nations has attempted to pressure Saudi Arabia to seek a negotiated end to the crisis, but there is no strong pressure from key Saudi allies in the US and Europe. Most observers believe that the only way to end the war is with a negotiated political agreement.

**How bad is the current situation?**

The situation in Yemen is one of the world's largest humanitarian disasters. United Nations figures, which the organisation admits are likely lower than reality, paint a devastating picture.

The UN has counted more than 13,000 civilian deaths - including more than 1,500 children - and tens of thousands of people who have been injured. UN officials blame both sides but say the Saudi coalition strikes have been responsible for the majority of deaths and injuries.

Bombs have landed on mosques, markets, factories, funerals, schools and hospitals. The UN has counted more than 1,500 children who have been recruited as child soldiers, mostly by the Houthi/Saleh forces. But the deaths only tell part of the story.



The destruction of infrastructure and a Saudi naval blockade has led to crippling medical supply shortages and pushed a quarter of the country's population to the brink of famine.

UNICEF estimates that every 10 minutes at least one child dies in Yemen as a result of preventable causes such as malnutrition, diarrhoea or respiratory tract infections.

In dusty fields near towns and makeshift displacement camps, rocks and cinderblocks act as headstones for tiny graves. Close to half a million children suffer from severe acute malnutrition, the most serious stage of starvation.

Yemen's health system has collapsed. Without power and supplies, less than half of the country's health facilities are fully functional. A massive cholera epidemic could affect up to one million people in 2018.

UNICEF estimates that every 10 minutes at least one child dies in Yemen as a result of preventable causes

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said that war crimes are being committed by coalition and rebel forces. Alleged crimes include indiscriminate airstrikes on civilians, the use of child soldiers, the deployment of landmines and cluster-bombs, sniper attacks against civilians, arbitrary imprisonment and forced evacuations.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have also documented the use of several types of cluster munitions (cluster bombs) made in the US, the UK, and Brazil. Despite strong resistance from Saudi Arabia and its Arab and Western allies, in September 2017 the UN Human Rights Council ordered an independent investigation into human rights violations.

## 18. The Catastrophe of Saudi Arabia's Trump-Backed Intervention in Yemen

Nawal Al-Maghafi. *The New Yorker* November 17, 2017



*A father carries his daughter, who suffers from malnutrition, at a feeding centre in Yemen, where a blockade led by Saudi Arabia has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis.*

In the main hospital in the Yemeni port city of Hudaydah this August, the malnutrition ward overflowed with patients. In the corridor, a man sat on the floor, with two children beside him whose ribs protruded under their pale skin. Inside the makeshift ward, every bed held two skeletal children. Saleha, a mother in her thirties, sat on the corner of a bed with her nine-year-old daughter, Fateena, on her lap. The child appeared thin and weak, and gasped for air. She urgently needed tests, according to doctors, but the hospital's labs were overwhelmed. Saleha told me that the local hospital in her village was closed. It took the family three days of hitchhiking with strangers most of the way to reach

the city, on the west coast of Yemen, and its hospital. “The war has really taken its toll on her,” Saleha told me, pointing to her daughter. “Now she just lays there until her body seizes again.” The staff of the government-run hospital said that they hadn’t been paid for months. “We are hungry, but we might as well come to work than starve to death at home,” one doctor told me. “We can’t go to war on the frontline, but this is our way of fighting against the aggression, by saving people.”

On Thursday, the heads of three United Nations relief agencies called on a nine-nation military coalition led by Saudi Arabia to end a tightened blockade it imposed on Yemen after Houthi rebels fired a ballistic missile into Riyadh, the Saudi capital, last weekend. “Closure of much of the country’s air, sea and land ports is making an already catastrophic situation far worse,” a joint statement issued by the United Nations Children’s Fund, World Food Program, and World Health Organization, said. “The space and access we need to deliver humanitarian assistance is being choked off, threatening the lives of millions of vulnerable children and families.”

The U.N. officials said that more than twenty million people, including more than eleven million children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; at least 14.8 million lack basic medical care, and a cholera outbreak has infected more than nine hundred thousand. Yemenis are caught in a nearly three-year conflict that began as a domestic power struggle and evolved into a brutal proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, killing more than ten thousand people and shuttering more than half of the country’s medical facilities. Saudi armed forces, backed by more than forty billion dollars in American arms shipments authorized by the Trump and Obama Administrations, have killed thousands of civilians in air strikes. They have also blockaded the country to varying degrees for two years and intermittently prevented journalists and human-rights researchers from flying into the country.

On Monday, the House of Representatives passed a resolution stating that sending American military assistance to Saudi Arabia for its campaign in Yemen is not authorized under legislation passed by Congress to fight terrorism. While some members of Congress have criticized the humanitarian cost of the Saudi intervention, the measure has no legal power and is primarily a symbolic effort by Congress to reassert its power to declare war. The Trump Administration has enthusiastically embraced Saudi Arabia as an ally and trumpeted U.S. arms sales as a way to create American jobs.

Reporting in Yemen with a local BBC film crew this summer, I entered the country by making a fifteen-hour drive through remote areas to avoid coalition and Houthi forces. It was my sixth trip to the country in three years, and it revealed a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. Food shortages that plagued remote villages had spread to large cities in the country of twenty-eight million. Along with the cholera outbreak, the number of meningitis cases was surging.

Since the Yemeni government lost control of Sanaa, the capital, more than a year ago, thousands of teachers, doctors, and civil servants have not been paid by the government and are struggling to find food and other basic necessities. Meanwhile, Houthi rebels have looted state resources in the areas under their control and have used the tax system to fund military operations instead of public services.

The conflict erupted when Houthi rebels, allied with loyalists of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, succeeded in ousting the government of his successor, Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi. Saudi Arabia, fearing that Iran was backing the Houthi rebels, formed a nine-nation coalition—backed by the U.S. and Britain—that carried out a military intervention and bombing campaign to restore Hadi to power. The Obama and Trump Administrations supported the campaign by authorizing the sale of more than forty billion dollars of weaponry to Saudi Arabia, and by providing intelligence and logistical assistance, including American airborne tankers refuelling Saudi F-16s before they make bombing runs into Yemen.



In the final days of Obama's Presidency—as human-rights groups and some U.S. lawmakers criticized the civilian death toll from Saudi bombing—Obama curbed some U.S. support for the Saudi air campaign. He halted a planned three-hundred-million-dollar sale of precision-guided munitions, curtailed some intelligence sharing, and pushed for training updates to improve the Saudi Air Force's targeting. Obama, however, continued other arms sales to the Saudis that were already in the pipeline, and continued to provide logistical support for the coalition. After President Trump took office, he removed Obama's limits and resumed U.S. arms sales. In response to international pressure, the Saudi-led alliance lifted its blockade of areas controlled by government forces on Sunday. But it continued its blockade of humanitarian aid to rebel-controlled areas, including Hudaydah, which has a population of four hundred thousand and is currently under the control of Houthi rebels.

During my trip with the BBC film crew, we toured a camp on the outskirts of Hudaydah that housed some of the nearly three million Internally Displaced People (I.D.P.s) living in Yemen. Parents in the camp washed their children in the open air with water from a bucket, and then, with their clothes on, washed themselves. As we filmed, an old woman approached me and invited us to her home, not far from the camp, which was a small brick house. Inside, a small child, pale and thin, lay on a mattress on the floor. "This is my granddaughter," the woman told us. "She's nearly two." She said that her family received less assistance because they lived outside the camp. "They give aid to the people in the camps, yet we, too, have lost everything. We have no food to feed our children, no money, nothing. This war took away everything. Tell them. Even the people in the brick houses are now starving." The woman said that her family had tried sell its house, but no one has money to buy a home.

The following day, I returned to the hospital in Hudaydah to check on Saleha and Fateena. Tests had shown that the child had meningitis, an infection of the brain and spinal cord that can cause hearing loss,

seizures, brain damage, and even death. A doctor told me the disease is increasingly common in the area. But Saleha said that she had barely any money for food, let alone for medical treatment. She had decided to take Fateena home to their village without treatment.

## 19. The Observer View on Saudi Arabia, the US and Yemen

(*Observer* editorial Sunday 19 November 2017)

Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, is a young man in a hurry. So, too, is Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser. Together, they make a dangerous combination. By all accounts, the two men have become firm friends, forging a strong bond melding youth and power. Kushner, 36, made his third visit to Saudi Arabia this year at the end of October. He reportedly talked late into the night with Salman, 32, at the latter's desert ranch.

Shortly after the meeting, three things happened: Salman began a sweeping purge of wealthy royal rivals; he launched a silent coup in Lebanon; and the Saudi armed forces imposed an aid blockade on Yemeni ports, which (though now partly eased) threatens a humanitarian catastrophe. The White House, supportive of its Saudi friends, made no criticism. Trump tweeted support for the purge. Thanks in part to Kushner, his first foreign trip was to Riyadh, where he was feted by the autocratic regime. He feels a connection.

The strong links between Salman, the de facto Saudi ruler, and the influential Kushner, Trump's personal overseas trouble-shooter and Middle East envoy, are nevertheless a big worry for American diplomats and the Pentagon. Officials told the *New York Times* they were not briefed on the Salman-Kushner talks. Such secretiveness is apparently the norm. "Jared is a bit of a black hole. There is no sense of the positions he has advocated. We can only guess, based on what he has done and where he has been," an official said. "The Saudis have been very careful to cultivate him and bring him along."

How the US under Trump runs its foreign policy is its own business. But when reckless, impulsive and confrontational actions, destabilising the world's most volatile region, are the result, it's a problem for

everyone. That is what is happening now. As defence minister in 2015, Salman launched the military intervention in Yemen. Its aims were to defeat Shia Muslim Houthi rebels and reduce Iranian influence. It has failed miserably in both. What it has done is turn one of the world's poorest countries into a killing ground, ravaged by violence, disease and malnutrition.

UN relief organisations warned last week that millions could perish. Save the Children said an estimated 130 Yemeni children are dying every day. More than 50,000 children are believed to have died this year alone – an horrific figure that, coming on the eve of World Children's Day tomorrow, is deeply shaming.

As Clive Myrie's graphic BBC television reports last week suggested, the disaster in Yemen is as unacceptable as it is avoidable. But Saudi actions, including alleged crimes against humanity, pass unchallenged by Kushner and a collusional Trump administration.

Visceral Saudi fear of its great regional rival, Iran, lies at the heart of Salman's many foreign policy miscalculations and mistakes – the cause of growing alarm among western allies, oil buyers and arms suppliers. A furious row has erupted with Germany over Riyadh's alleged role in forcing the resignation of Lebanon's prime minister, Sa'ad Hariri, over his refusal to crack down on Iran-backed Hezbollah. Hariri, who his supporters claim was kidnapped by the Saudis, has now taken refuge in Paris.

Circumventing the White House's silence on Lebanon, Rex Tillerson, the US secretary of state, warned last week the country must not become "a venue for proxy conflicts". His implied criticism of Riyadh as well as Tehran was significant. France and Germany, mindful of the blockade against Qatar that Salman imposed earlier this year over its links to Tehran, have expressed similar concerns about a widening arc of instability. As Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's foreign minister, reportedly put it: "Another trouble spot is the last thing people in the Middle East need now."

Salman's campaign of attrition in Yemen even provoked a mild rebuke from Britain's foreign office last week, which called for "immediate access for commercial and humanitarian supplies". This was unusual, given the British government's habitual subservience to Riyadh. Boris Johnson, the foreign secretary, may have ulterior motives. He is in deep trouble over his mishandling of the case of the wrongly imprisoned British-Iranian woman, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Johnson is due to visit Tehran soon. Perhaps he hopes to curry favour before he arrives.

The sclerotic House of Saud has been viewed historically in the west as a necessary if unattractive force for stability in the Middle East. The biggest criticisms concerned its undemocratic governance, its appalling record on human and civil rights and the ultra-conservative nature of the regime, notably its role in the propagation of Sunni fundamentalism and jihadist ideology. But Salman's Saudi is increasingly viewed in quite a different light: as an unpredictable, dangerous loose cannon proficient at starting or fuelling conflicts it cannot finish. Its many failings now look less tolerable.

Saudi Arabia is under pressure not just from Iran's ambitions but also from falling oil revenues, shrinking national wealth and mounting demands for reform. Big changes are undoubtedly required—and in train. Salman's foolish, headstrong behaviour, sanctioned by his unaccountable pal in the White House, risks it all.

## 20. Stop the Unconstitutional War in Yemen

(Ro Khanna, Mark Pocan And Walter Jones New York Times Oct. 10, 2017)

WASHINGTON—Imagine that the entire population of Washington State—7.3 million people—were on the brink of starvation, with the port city of Seattle under a naval and aerial blockade, leaving it unable to receive and distribute countless tons of food and aid that sit waiting offshore. This nightmare scenario is akin to the obscene reality occurring in the Middle East’s poorest country, Yemen, at the hands of the region’s richest, Saudi Arabia, with unyielding United States military support that Congress has not authorized and that therefore violates the Constitution.

For nearly three years, the United States has been participating alongside a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in a brutal military campaign in Yemen. The United States is selling the Saudi monarchy missiles and warplanes, assisting in the coalition’s targeting selection for aerial bombings and actively providing mid-air refuelling for Saudi and United Arab Emirates jets that conduct indiscriminate airstrikes—the leading cause of civilian casualties. Meanwhile, the Saudi coalition is starving millions of Yemenis as a grotesque tactic of war.

This is horrifying. We have therefore introduced a bipartisan congressional resolution to withdraw American armed forces from these unauthorized hostilities in order to help put an end to the suffering of a country approaching “a famine of biblical proportions,” in the words of Jan Egeland, the head of the Norwegian Refugee Council. After all, as Foreign Policy has reported, the Saudi coalition’s “daily bombing campaign would not be possible without the constant presence of U.S. Air Force tanker planes refuelling coalition jets.”

### **How did we get to this point?**

In March 2015, the United States introduced its armed forces into the Saudi regime's war against an uprising of Yemen's Houthis, a rebel group that rapidly took control of Yemen's capital, Sana, and eventually most of the country's cities, by allying with forces loyal to an ousted former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. But the Shiite Houthi rebels are in no way connected to the Sunni extremists of Al Qaeda or the Islamic State, which the United States has been going after across the globe under the Authorization for Use of Military Force of 2001. American participation in the war in Yemen is not covered by that authorization.

Al Qaeda has been referred to by The Associated Press as a "de facto ally" of Saudi Arabia and its coalition in their shared battle against the Houthis. This raises the question: Whom are we actually supporting in Yemen?

American involvement in this unauthorized conflict against the Houthis was pursued by the Obama administration for political purposes—"a way of repairing strained ties with the Saudis, who strongly opposed the July 2015 nuclear deal with Iran," as Foreign Policy put it.

There's a good reason that the Constitution reserves for Congress the right to declare war—a clause taken in modern times as forbidding the president from pursuing an unauthorized war in the absence of an actual or imminent threat to the nation. Clearly, the founders' intent was to prevent precisely the kind of dangerous course we're charting.

The State Department found that the Saudi war against the Houthis has allowed Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State's Yemen branch "to deepen their inroads across much of the country." In other words, the power vacuum left by the war has made Al Qaeda's deadliest branch stronger than ever—yet there's never been a public debate over the American role in deepening that threat to our own national security.

Four decades ago, as a bloody United States military campaign across Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos drew to a close, Congress overrode President Richard Nixon's veto to enact the War Powers Resolution of 1973, reflecting the legislature's determination to confront executive overreach as a coequal branch of government. Now we congressmen are invoking a provision of that 1973 law, which defines the introduction of armed forces to include coordinating, participating in the movement of, or accompanying foreign military forces engaged in hostilities.

That law affords our bill "privileged" status, guaranteeing a full floor vote to remove unauthorized United States forces from Saudi Arabia's war against Yemeni Houthis. In doing so, we aim to reassert Congress's sole constitutional authority to debate and declare war.

This resolution may create discomfort for some of our colleagues who have been content to cede Congress's oversight responsibilities to the White House and Pentagon in recent decades. But now more than ever, the House of Representatives must serve as a counterweight to an executive branch that has long run roughshod over the Constitution—especially at a time when our president has threatened, in front of the United Nations, to "totally destroy" an entire country, North Korea.

Exercising our constitutional duty is the key to alleviating the catastrophe that's engulfing Yemen.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs declared last April that "Yemen is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world," and in August the charity Save the Children warned that million malnourished Yemeni children were at risk of contracting cholera. Nowhere else on earth today is there a catastrophe that is so profound and affects so many lives, yet could be so easy to resolve: halt the bombing, end the blockade, and let food and medicine into Yemen so that millions may live.

We believe that the American people, if presented with the facts of this conflict, will oppose the use of their tax dollars to bomb and starve



civilians in order to further the Saudi monarchy's regional goals. Our House resolution is a first step in expanding democracy into an arena long insulated from public accountability. Too many lives hang in the balance to allow this American war to continue without congressional consent. When our bill comes to the floor for a vote, our colleagues should consider first the solution proposed by the director of UNICEF, Anthony Lake, for stopping the unimaginable suffering of millions of Yemenis: "Stop the war."

Ro Khanna, a California Democrat, and Walter Jones, a North Carolina Republican, are members of the House Armed Services Committee. Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat in the House, is a co-chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

## 21. Yémen, la guerre qu'on nous cache

(Manon Quérrouil-Bruneel. *Paris Match*. 30/11/2017)



*A Sanaa, le 5 novembre. Place Al-Sabeen, dans les tribunes présidentielles, après l'une des ripostes de l'Arabie saoudite, visée la veille par un missile yéménite. Véronique de Viguerie*

Les tensions entre L'Iran et L'Arabie Saoudite amènent les puissances pétrolières du Golfe à détruire le plus pauvre des pays arabes. Pour la Première fois, nos reporters ont pu pénétrer dans la zone rebelle.

Depuis Aden, pour rallier Sanaa assiégé, il faut cahoter une douzaine d'heures entre oueds et hauts plateaux. Contourner Taëz, la ligne de front. Franchir un nombre incalculable de barrages militaires, sans plus chercher à comprendre quelle faction – forces loyalistes, rebelles houthis, djihadistes d'Al-Qaïda – contrôle quel pan de territoire. Avant d'apercevoir, enfin, les maisons en pisé qui se serrent derrière Bab Al-Yemen. La porte centenaire qui marque l'entrée de la vieille ville est taguée du slogan rouge et vert des miliciens houthis d'Ansar Allah, qui

s'en sont emparés en septembre 2014: «Dieu est grand! Mort à l'Amérique! Mort à Israël! Maudits soient les juifs! Victoire pour l'Islam!»

Six mois plus tard, ces rebelles, alliés aux troupes de l'ex-président Saleh, étaient aux portes d'Aden. Des unités de l'armée se soulevaient. D'autres restaient fidèles au président Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, soutenu par une coalition d'une dizaine de pays arabes. La guerre civile commençait. Aujourd'hui, le bilan est de 15 000 morts, 3 millions de déplacés. Sanaa, la capitale rebelle, enfouit ses plaies sous une apparente normalité. La guerre colle au quotidien au point de s'y dissoudre. Tous les matins, comme on va chercher le pain, on s'affaire avec des bidons pour trouver un peu d'eau. La nuit, on s'endort sans plus penser aux bombes qui pleuvent sans discontinuer. Les enfants ne vont plus à l'école, mais sont devenus incollables sur les avions de chasse. Comme de vieux briscards, ils montrent le ciel en disant «Mig».

Mohammed Al Najjar dînait près de son fils endormi. Le souffle de la détonation a arraché la fenêtre sous laquelle il s'est retrouvé prisonnier près d'une heure, pendant que le petit garçon de 3 ans hurlait de terreur. Les secours partis, il reste prostré dans le salon dévasté, son grand corps secoué de sanglots. Mohammed vend des œufs dans la rue pour survivre, et pleure la seule chose qu'il possédait: un toit. Dehors, une foule en colère se masse sous les étoiles pour crier sa haine de l'Arabie saoudite. Son indignation, aussi, face au silence complice de la communauté internationale. Devant les bâtiments détruits de la capitale, des statues de la Liberté au visage maculé de sang poussent comme de mauvais champignons, en hommage aux centaines de civils fauchés par des raids aveugles.

Dans le quartier de Faj Attan, dans le sud de la capitale, Misarah Mohammed Maisar est allongée sous une couverture dans un petit salon impeccablement tenu. Ses deux filles se tiennent bien droites à son chevet, encadrant deux places vides, comme si elles posaient pour un portrait de famille incomplet. Le 25 août dernier, le raid qui visait une position militaire installée dans les plis des montagnes alentour a

pulvérisé leur maison. A son réveil à l'hôpital, Misarah a appris la mort de son fils de 3 ans et de sa fille de 14 ans. Et aussi qu'un fragment d'obus s'était niché dans sa colonne vertébrale, paralysant ses membres inférieurs. Ses foutues jambes refusent de la porter jusqu'à la tombe de ses enfants. L'opération qui pourrait peut-être lui permettre de remarcher coûte 5 000 dollars: elle en a fait le deuil – le seul possible.

Depuis six mois, les caisses du ministère de la Santé sont vides. Tout le système s'effondre. Même les soins de base sont difficilement assurés. Ghassan Abou Chaar, chef de mission pour Médecins sans frontières, décrypte la crise avec le parler cash de ceux qui mettent les mains dans le cambouis: «On focalise sur la famine qui existait avant la guerre. Mais aujourd'hui, les gens meurent d'une diarrhée. On peut avoir des programmes de 100 millions d'euros de distribution de nourriture, mais si l'on n'a pas de médecins pour soigner, ça ne sert à rien.» Après quatorze mois sans salaire, forcément, la tentation de déserter est grande.

## 22. Yemen's War Is a Tragedy. Is it Also a Crime?

(Megan Specia Nov. 22, 2017 *New York Times*)

Looming famine. Rampant disease. Deadly airstrikes.

This is the daily reality for the residents of Yemen suffering a staggering humanitarian crisis driven by a fierce civil war.

United Nations experts have warned that some of the actions carried out by the warring parties—the Saudi-led coalition and the Iran-backed Houthi rebels—could amount to crimes against humanity because of their systematic and widespread execution.

The calls for accountability have been heightened since a Saudi-led coalition tightened a blockade of sea, air and land ports earlier this month after a missile fired by Houthi rebels was intercepted near the Saudi capital. The blockade has since been loosened, but it is still cutting civilians off from desperately needed humanitarian aid and food.

Which aspects of the war could amount to crimes against humanity? And what, if anything, can be done to hold the perpetrators accountable?

### **When food is a weapon**

Many Yemenis are starving as a direct result of the war, which has inflated food prices, leaving most unable to afford the supplies.

Since Saudi Arabia joined an offensive against the Houthi rebels in 2015, an estimated 17 million people in Yemen have been classified by the United Nations as “food insecure.” Put simply, that means they do not have reliable access to food and are at risk of hunger.

Even before the latest blockade, Yemen was on the brink of famine.

All ports under Houthi control are still blockaded, and the majority of food that enters the country comes through these ports.



*A malnourished Yemeni child getting treatment at a hospital in the port city of Al Hudaydah on Nov. 5. Abdo Hyder/Agence France-Presse—  
Getty Images*

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network, a monitoring group founded by the United States Agency for International Development, warned Tuesday that in three to four months, much of Yemen will be suffering from famine. And the Houthis, too, have been supplies in the past, though on a smaller scale.

On Wednesday, Saudi Arabia, under intense pressure, announced plans to reopen the port of Al Hudaydah, a major lifeline for residents of Houthi-controlled areas and to reopen the airport in Sana, the capital, to United Nations aid planes.

Famine can amount to a crime against humanity if food restrictions are used as a weapon of war, according to United Nations officials.

“It is an international crime to intentionally block access to food, food aid, and to destroy production of food,” the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to food, Hilal Elver, told journalists in October,

speaking generally on the topic. “Such acts are crimes against humanity, or war crimes.”



*Collecting water from a well believed to be contaminated with cholera on the outskirts of Sana, Yemen’s capital, in July. Credit Hani*

### **When disease is no accident**

The war has also decimated the health care sector. Destroyed infrastructure has left many without clean drinking water and set off a cholera epidemic. It was the largest single-year outbreak of the disease ever recorded.

Dozens of hospitals were intentionally targeted, according to a report from Save the Children, by Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition.

The cholera outbreak has disproportionately affected areas controlled by the Houthis, in part because more public water systems, hospitals and residential areas have been destroyed there, forcing people into crowded and unsanitary conditions.



And yet with health care more important than ever, dozens of hospitals have been intentionally targeted by both Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition, according to a report from Save the Children.

The spread of cholera had been waning, but the World Health Organization warned that if the current coalition blockade was not lifted, it would flare up again. Much-needed chlorine tablets that sanitize water have been blocked from delivery to the country, as have hundreds of tons of other medical supplies.

And several cities have been cut off from supplies of fuel for pumping in fresh water and for processing sewage. The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Monday that the new blockade put 2.5 million people at risk of a renewed cholera outbreak and other waterborne diseases.

The International Criminal Court considers “inhumane acts” that are “intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health” to be crimes against humanity.





*Buthaina Muhammad Mansour, believed to be 4 or 5, was rescued from the site of a Saudi-led airstrike in Sana on Aug. 25, 2017. Eight of her family members were killed. Credit Khaled Abdullah/Reuters*

### **When civilians are targeted**

A panel of United Nations sanctions monitors in 2016 warned that Saudi-led coalition airstrikes were targeting civilians in a “widespread and systemic manner.”

A United Nations Human Rights Council report from September detailed more than 5,000 civilian casualties from March 2015 to August 2017. Children accounted for more than 1,000 of the victims. Not all of them were killed by airstrikes, and some died at the hands of Houthi rebels, but the report made clear that the vast majority of civilian casualties were from coalition strikes.

### **The Interpreter Newsletter**

Understand the world with sharp insight and commentary on the major news stories of the week.

Some 3,233 of the civilians killed were reported to have been killed by coalition forces, and in some cases, were directly targeted.

“In many cases,” the report says, “information obtained ... suggested that civilians may have been directly targeted, or that operations were conducted heedless of their impact on civilians without regard to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack.”

Houthi rebels and their allies have also reportedly indiscriminately shelled residential areas in the city of Taiz and have fired artillery indiscriminately across the border into Saudi Arabia, killing and wounding civilians.

The International Criminal Court lists several acts “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack” as amounting to crimes against humanity.

## Will anyone be held accountable?

Even if the violence playing out in Yemen and the humanitarian disaster it has set off are determined to amount to crimes against humanity for any of the parties involved, the process of holding anyone accountable could be a long and winding one.



*Digging graves in Sana for victims of an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition in August 2017. AP*

In September, the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva appointed a group of experts to examine rights abuses and potential crimes by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. The experts will report to the Human Rights Council next year.

But that move fell short of a formal International Commission of Inquiry, which would have the power to refer a case to the International Criminal Court. Saudi Arabia and its allies blocked more severe measures.

So justice may be far down the road.

In the short term, humanitarian organizations warn of a far more urgent need: freeing up the flow of food, medicine and other supplies.

On Wednesday, the International Rescue Committee issued a statement saying that just two weeks of the blockade had had a “direct and dire impact” in a country already in crisis.

“We are far beyond the need to raise an alarm—what is happening now is a complete disgrace,” Paolo Cernuschi, Yemen country director at the International Rescue Committee, said in a statement. “The responsibility of failing to act to prevent collective punishment is on us all.”

## 23. There's a Disaster Much Worse than Texas. But No One Talks About It

(Jonathan Freedland *The Guardian*)

In this story America is not the victim. Along with Britain, it is on the side of the *perpetrator* – helping to cause the world's worst humanitarian crisis

As it happens, Harvey has killed an estimated 44 Texans and forced some 32,000 into shelters since it struck, a week ago. That is a catastrophe for every one of those individuals, of course. Still, those figures look small alongside the havoc wreaked by flooding across southern Asia during the very same period. In the past few days, more than 1,200 people have been killed, and the lives of some 40 million others turned upside down, by torrential rain in northern India, southern Nepal, northern Bangladesh and southern Pakistan.

That there is a disparity in the global attention paid to these two natural disasters is hardly a novelty. It's as old as the news itself, expressed in one, perhaps apocryphal Fleet Street maxim like a law of physics: "One dead in Putney equals 10 dead in Paris equals 100 dead in Turkey equals 1,000 dead in India equals 10,000 dead in China."

Most of this amounts to a pretty basic form of racism to which, lord knows, the media are far from immune. Perhaps Eurocentrism would be more accurate. But whatever term you favour, it surely represents the most fundamental form of discrimination one can imagine: deeming the lives of one group of people to be worth less than those of another – worth less coverage, less attention, less sympathy, less sorrow.

Still, blaming the media is the easy option here. It allows everyone else to assume that, left to their own devices, they would be perfectly equitable in their distribution of empathy. But many western consumers of news would be more truthful if they admitted that images of a

submerged US city do indeed strike them with greater force than images of a drowning Nepalese one, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps because the American city looks more like their own, or at least more familiar, thanks to films and television. Or simply because havoc in the US is more surprising than natural disaster in, say, India or Bangladesh – developing nations where extreme suffering and regular beatings from the elements have come to seem like part of the terrain.

The media deserve to be attacked for the discrimination they have shown this week. But if those attacks are predicated on a presumption that were it not for all those wicked editors, the audiences they serve would be full of universal fraternity and undifferentiated, boundless compassion, then they are built on shaky foundations.

But I've not yet given an answer to my quiz question. Full marks if you put your hand up to say ... Yemen. In July the UN determined that it was "the world's largest humanitarian crisis". If you think it's hard to get westerners interested in flood victims in Nepal, just try talking about Yemen.

The scale of the suffering in the Arab world's poorest country is clear. Since it became the site of a proxy war in March 2015, 10,000 people have been killed, with 7 million made homeless. The UN is especially anxious about cholera, which has already killed 2,000 people and infected more than 540,000. It threatens to become an epidemic. That's no surprise, given that sewage plants have been among the infrastructure bombed from the sky. The Saudi-led coalition has kept Sana'a airport closed, which means food and medicines cannot get in and the sick cannot get out for treatment. Pictures of gaunt children, listless babies and starving mothers recall the worst of Africa's famines – but this disaster is entirely human-made.

Nor is this a remote story utterly unconnected to us. On the contrary, the Saudi government is armed to the hilt with weapons supplied by the UK and the US: £3.3bn worth of British firepower in the first year of

this vicious war alone. And yet Yemen has barely registered in the western consciousness, let alone stirred the western conscience.

Of course, there are all the usual factors explaining public indifference to horrible events far, far away. But there is one that is relatively new. Before 2003, whenever word came of some distant catastrophe that posed no threat to our own safety, a discussion soon followed on what “we” should do about it. The two sides would take up their positions: the “something must be done” brigade pitted against those who argued that, however awful things were, it was none of our business and we would only make matters worse. Sometimes the latter camp would prevail – think of Douglas Hurd and mid-1990s Bosnia; sometimes, the former: witness Tony Blair and Kosovo.

After Iraq, that changed. Thanks to the invasion, as well as the bloodshed and mayhem in Afghanistan and Libya, the argument is now settled – and the non-interventionists won. The test case is Syria, where Bashar al-Assad has killed hundreds of thousands of his own people – more than Saddam ever did – and yet has been allowed to retain his throne untroubled by outside challenge.

If there has been little western public appetite for action to shield Syria’s people from their dictator, there’s less to protect the people of Yemen. There’s not much interest even in pressuring London and Washington to stop arming the Saudi regime that is responsible for the country’s torment, despite the warnings that Yemen risks becoming the next Syria: its soil soaked in blood, rendered fertile for the next generation of violent jihadists.

This is not the place to re-litigate all the old arguments for and against intervention. (In the Yemen case, there is already western intervention – on the side of those doing most of the killing.) But it is worth noting one consequence of this shift: it’s as if, now that we know that we will do nothing about these distant tragedies, we have lost interest in them altogether. If we are not going to act, then why bother knowing about them?

The result is that the children of Yemen are dying cruel deaths, while the rest of the world ignores them. They are not drowning in Texas or Mumbai. They are dying under a hot desert sun, killed by our allies – and by our inattention.

## 24. Cholera Spreads as War and Poverty Batter Yemen

Shuaib Almosawa and Nour Youssef. *New York Times*. July 7, 2017



*Women being treated in May at a hospital in Sana, Yemen. Cholera has spread to 21 of the country's 22 provinces, killing over 1,600 people. Credit Yahya Arhab/European Press photo Agency*

HAJA, Yemen—The Yemeni farm labourer was picking crops in a hot field when the call came. His children, all seven of them, had fallen gravely ill.

Some were vomiting, others had diarrhoea, and all were listless, indicating that they had fallen victim to the latest disaster to afflict this impoverished corner of the Arabian Peninsula: one of the worst outbreaks of cholera infection in recent times.

The labourer, Abdulla Siraa, set about frantically trying to raise money to treat the children—\$240, or about six times what he typically earns



in a month—and raced as fast as he could on the 30 miles home over roads virtually destroyed in Yemen’s civil war.

“I spent the whole journey reciting Quranic verses and praying for the survival of my children,” he said.

But when he arrived, he learned that his 4-year-old daughter, Ghadeer, had already died, after hours of calling out for him, though the rest of his children would survive.

For much of the world, cholera, a bacterial infection spread by water contaminated with feces, has been relegated to the history books. In the 19th century, it claimed tens of millions of lives across the world, mainly through dehydration and electrolyte imbalance.

That ended with modern sanitation and water systems. When it pops up now, it is usually treated easily with rehydration solutions and, if severe, with antibiotics.

But the war currently battering Yemen has damaged infrastructure and deepened poverty, allowing the disease to come roaring back. Cholera is also on the rise in the Horn of Africa because of long-simmering conflicts there. Yemen’s African neighbours, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, have had a total of about 96,000 cholera cases since 2014, international aid groups say.

The crises in Africa, however, pale in comparison to the one in Yemen.

Since a severe outbreak began in late April, according to UNICEF, cholera has spread to 21 of the country’s 22 provinces, infecting at least 269,608 people and killing at least 1,614. That is more than the total number of cholera deaths reported to the World Health Organization worldwide in 2015.

Yemen’s conflict began when Shiite rebels known as the Houthis took over the capital, Sana, in 2014, later toppling the government. In response, the Sunni kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries launched an air campaign against the rebels with support from the United States in March 2015.

The campaign has so far failed to reinstall the internationally recognized president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, but the fighting and airstrikes have killed more than 8,000 people and displaced at least three million, the United Nations says.



*A school building in the city of Taiz that was destroyed by an airstrike. The war has damaged infrastructure and deepened poverty, allowing cholera to come roaring back. Ahmad Al-Basha/Agence France-Presse*

In October, the government stopped paying civil servants, prompting strikes from sanitation workers and leading to garbage pileups and septic backups. That contaminated the wells that many Yemenis rely on for water, providing the ideal environment for cholera to spread. The outbreak picked up speed in April, after dirty rainwater further polluted the wells.

Not everyone who is exposed to cholera will contract the disease. But in places like Yemen, where more than 14 million of Yemen's 27 million people lack access to clean water and 17 million do not have enough food, people are far more vulnerable—particularly malnourished children.

“The average person lives on tea and bread. It’s just one meal a day,” said Jamie McGoldrick, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Yemen. “They are in a weakened state, and that is why they are getting sick.”

Making matters worse, the war has damaged 65 percent of Yemen’s medical facilities, denying more than 14 million people access to health care.

The extent of the crisis was clear during a recent trip through some of Yemen’s hardest hit areas, where clinics are overburdened and short on supplies, and families struggle to reach them and pay for treatment. Some watch their relatives suffer and die.

Before the war, Yemen was already the Arab world’s poorest nation, and its people never enjoyed high-quality infrastructure. But travel by car, the only means available, has become far more difficult because the Saudi-led bombing campaign has shattered bridges and left huge bomb craters in the main roads.

A simple 20-mile ride that would have taken an hour before the war is now a maze of complex routes that can take many more hours and cost more than what many families live on for an entire month.

To pay for rides to the hospital, many families borrow money or sell heirloom gold—the equivalent of an American family liquidating retirement accounts. Some who cannot pay carry their loved ones through the rugged terrain on trips that can aggravate dehydration.

Cholera medications are supposed to be freely provided by Yemen’s two competing administrations, but both have favoured their military efforts over public health, forcing many families to buy medications from private pharmacies. Acute cases also require families to buy diapers or carry their infected relatives to the toilet several times an hour.

Mr. Siraa, the farm labourer, spoke of his family’s tragedy at a school that a local philanthropist had turned into a clinic in Haja Province, which has been hit hard by the cholera epidemic and the war.

The bridge connecting it to the rest of Yemen was destroyed in an airstrike last year. The clinic has 35 beds, but only a couple of IV fluid bags, two fans and four nurses.

When asked about his trip to the clinic, his family's illness and the death of his daughter, Mr. Siraa was almost speechless.



*People filling cans with safe drinking water in Sana. More than 14 million people in Yemen do not have access to clean water. Credit Mohammed Huwais/Agence France-Presse—Getty Images*

“Thank God for everything,” he said. “We Yemenis don’t like to complain because we believe that God punishes complainers.”

Others had suffered through similar ordeals.

“We are too poor for a taxi. We had to walk,” said Saif Ahmad, an unemployed labourer, who stood nearby, wet and dishevelled.

To reach the clinic, he and his wife had hiked through a valley known for dangerous flash floods. He had his cholera-infected son on his back.

“It took us five hours to get here. Now we have to beg for money,” Mr. Ahmad said. His son, 7, lay on a bed receiving treatment, his mouth agape and his eyes half-shut.

The epidemic has also taxed medical workers, who often work in dirty clinics with resources that fall far short of their suffering patients’ needs. They sometimes have to ask their patients’ families to help them clean the floors and bathrooms in their facilities.

“It is not a nice thing to ask someone to do, but we can’t do everything,” said Abdulla Abu Fas, a doctor in the port city of Hodeida. “We can’t work with the smell of feces and flies everywhere.”

The United Nations says it needs \$2.1 billion for its work in Yemen this year, but it has received only 29 percent of that amount despite repeated pleas for donations from aid groups.

Cultural issues have also aggravated the crisis, said Mr. McGoldrick, the United Nations coordinator. Many Yemenis do not seek help immediately after they show symptoms because “they just don’t want to admit that they have cholera, because they think it makes them look dirty or poor,” he said.

Although the epidemic has hit Yemen’s poor the hardest, it has spread among other classes as well. Aziz Ramadan, a Yemeni Coast Guard officer from Hodeida, nearly lost his wife to cholera last month.

The mother of Ahmad Saif Hashid, a member of Yemen’s Parliament, died of cholera last week, he wrote on his Facebook page.

While more medicine and better treatment would help control the epidemic, Mr. Ramadan said, it will very likely continue as long as the war does.

“People will continue to get sick, and they will always be treated like cattle here,” he said. “The international community should just make people stop fighting and help our hospitals.”

## 25. Saudis Try to Starve Yemen Into Submission

(Editorial Board. *The New York Times*. November 16, 2017)



*The people of Yemen have suffered unbelievable misery after more than three years of unrelenting war. Credit Hani . AP*

Yemen would suffer “the largest famine the world has seen for many decades, with millions of victims” if Saudi Arabia did not immediately allow food and medicine to be offloaded at all of Yemen’s seaports, and permit the resumption of air services to the cities of Sana and Aden, the United Nations official Mark Lowcock warned Security Council diplomats last week.

Saudi Arabia tightened its blockade against Yemen on Nov. 5 after Iran-backed Houthi rebels threatened Riyadh with a ballistic missile. The Saudis have since partly lifted the blockade, but only of ports controlled by its allies. That is not nearly enough to get urgently needed food to nearly seven million Yemenis facing famine.



Misery has been Yemen's lot after more than three years of unrelenting war. At least 10,000 people have been killed, many by Saudi-coalition bombings carried out with military assistance by the United States. A raging cholera epidemic has sickened some 900,000 people, and 17 million Yemenis are now completely dependent on humanitarian aid for survival. Ships and cargo planes ferrying food, medicine and vital fuel to Yemen's war-ravaged civilians are inspected by the United Nations to make sure they are not transporting arms.

Impeding humanitarian assistance and using famine as a weapon are war crimes, and Saudi Arabia must realize that the world is finally taking notice.

On Monday, the United States Congress passed a resolution denouncing the targeting of Yemeni civilians and calling for all parties involved to "increase efforts to adopt all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent civilian casualties and to increase humanitarian access." The vote should serve as a warning to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is intent on expanding Saudi Arabia's regional influence, that while he may have the unreserved blessing of President Trump, American lawmakers are less tolerant of flagrant violations of international law and of basic humanity.

The only way to end the Yemeni people's hell is for Congress and the United Nations to keep pressing all parties for a political solution.

## 26. Saudi Arabia's Leader Spent \$450 Million on a Painting. Here's What That Could Do for Victims of His War in Yemen

(Akbar Shahid Ahmed, Huffington Post. December 8, 2017)

*20.7 million people need some kind of aid in Yemen.  
Those dollars could feed them all for more than a month.*

WASHINGTON—Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman, secretly spent \$450.3 million on a Leonardo da Vinci painting last month, according to a Wall Street Journal report on Thursday based on U.S. government intelligence and an interview with a top Middle East figure in the art world.

The Journal noted that news of the prince's purchase—the highest ever in an art-world auction—damages his claim that he will impose more transparency on the money accumulated by various members of the sprawling Saudi royal family. It suggests a huge amount of hidden wealth and, damningly for a man whose supporters paint him as a populist, excess.

Above all, it throws into stark relief the way the oil-rich monarchy continues to spend on luxuries while it pummels neighboring Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world.

The New York Times corroborated the Journal story independently on Thursday. While the Saudi Embassy in Washington and the government of Abu Dhabi—where the painting is to be displayed—disputed that the crown prince was behind the purchase, and said a friend of his bought the piece on behalf of Abu Dhabi, the Financial Times later reported that the Saudi leadership bought the artwork as a gift for the Abu Dhabi government, a close regional partner.

The Yemen intervention is the chief product of the bond between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Pioneered by Mohammed



in his capacity as defense minister, the U.S.-backed and Saudi-led campaign has now lasted more than two-and-a-half years and claimed thousands of civilian lives, many of them children, while causing the some of the worst starvation and disease crises in the world.

The Saudi-UAE coalition has caused significantly more pain there since Nov. 4, with the tightening of the blockade on the entry of shipments to Yemen. That action was taken in response to a missile strike over Riyadh launched by the Iranian-aligned Yemeni Houthi rebels they're fighting, which Saudi officials say was a result of Iranian weapons transfers.

World leaders and humanitarian groups have urged the kingdom to ease the restrictions so food, fuel, medicine and other aid can get in—so far to no avail. President Donald Trump, a vocal supporter of the Saudi leadership, joined the chorus on Wednesday with a surprise statement calling for complete aid access “immediately.”

“The past month’s escalation has killed thousands and condemned thousands more to die in the near future,” Oxfam America said in a statement Wednesday. “Millions will die in a historic famine and public health crisis if President Trump’s call is not heeded.”

Given the unprecedented suffering in Yemen—and the failure of countries involved like Saudi Arabia, the U.S., the U.A.E. and Iran to fully supply the close to 21 million people there who are in need—the hundreds of millions of Saudi dollars spent on the painting could perhaps have been put to better use. Here’s a few examples of the impact that money could have had:

- Every single one of those people in need could be fed for more than 5 weeks. (Oxfam told HuffPost it estimates that the cost of feeding one person in Yemen for one week is \$4.)
- Every single family in need in Yemen could receive a sanitation kit that would help protect them from the huge outbreak of cholera, a vicious waterborne disease that was far

less common before the outbreak of the war. (One kit to help a family costs \$23, Oxfam said; around 3.5 million families are in need, so the total cost would be \$80.5 million.)

- \$450,000 spent over a year in a United Nations-managed project helped more than 12,800 people receive mattresses, blankets, gas stoves, buckets and emergency food rations. Those provisions could be supplied many times over.
- For the price of the painting and a yacht the prince bought last year, he could have filled the gap in the U.N.'s emergency plan for Yemen, journalist Samuel Oakford noted on Twitter.

Saudi Arabia does fund significant relief for Yemen, and its officials note that it has accepted hundreds of Yemenis displaced by the fighting.

But experts say peace is nowhere in sight and that there's little sign of any serious talks to end the conflict between the Houthi rebels and the Saudi-backed international government.

In the meantime, as the Saudi-led campaign continues to drop bombs and block access to sea and airports, Yemen's desperation continues to grow.

This story has been updated to include reactions from the governments of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, as well as additional reporting about the art purchase.

## 27. Is Iran Really to Blame for Yemen Conflict?

(Seyed Hossein Mousavian,  
Professor of Political Sciences, Princeton University)

The deaths of at least 1,000 Yemenis, including 115 children, and over 3,500 injuries has seemingly been the main result of the Saudi-led military strikes against the country. The conventional wisdom of these attacks on Yemen has been that it is the latest battlefield in a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Such portrayals of the conflict often frame Iran as the aggressor, parroting claims that Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen was somehow forced due to Iranian meddling in its backyard. However, such assertions ignore not just the realities of Yemen's internal politics, but also more than a little bit of history.

To gain a better understanding of the recent actions of the Houthi forces, it is vital to understand the broader historical context of their origins. The Houthis, who call themselves Ansar Allah, are members of the Zaydi sect of Islam. The adherents of Zaydi Islam, an offshoot of Shiite Islam, comprise upward of 40% of Yemen's population.

Yemen was effectively ruled by Zaydi "Imams" for over 1,000 years up until 1962, when military officers led a coup that overthrew the Zaydi-led state and attempted to establish a republican system. The ensuing civil war saw the heavy involvement of outside powers, in particular Egypt, under the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser. At its peak, the conflict saw the deployment of 70,000 Egyptian troops to Yemen and ultimately cost the lives of over 10,000 of them. Ironically, given the current events, Saudi Arabia supported the return to power of the Zaydi imams.

At its conclusion, the conflict left Yemen fractured. The republicans prevailed in the northern part of the country while the southern part of the country became a separate communist state. Despite the triumph of

the republican officers supported by Egypt, Saudi Arabia still managed to co-opt the new North Yemen government and bring it firmly into its sphere of influence.

For the past several decades, Saudi-backed strongmen such as Ali Abdullah Saleh ruled over North Yemen and, later, unified Yemen. Saleh's tenure was marked by the persecution of the country's Zaydi minority, even as Saleh himself was nominally Zaydi. Saleh was also a strong supporter of Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War. After the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, Yemen became a refuge for Baathists, garnering Saleh the nickname "Saddam Saghir" (Little Saddam). After 34 years, Saleh's fall from power came in 2012, when he signed onto an agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to transfer power to his vice president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, in the midst of Arab Spring-inspired protests.

The Houthis have long described their grievances as derived from the socio-economic and political oppression faced by many Yemenis at the hands of their government, as well as the influx of divisive Saudi-sponsored Salafist propaganda in the country. They have also opposed US intervention in their country, making it a key part of their platform. The Houthis' armed insurgency against the Saleh government began in 2004, with six wars being fought between the two sides until Saleh's 2012 ouster.

The Houthis also played an integral role in the protests that led to the removal of Saleh from power, and by all accounts were a significant power in the country when Hadi was sworn in as president. However, they were sidelined from the GCC-led political process that brought Hadi to power. Their continued marginalization from the transitional government and its seeming refusal to recognize the Houthi movement as a legitimate player soon led to protests, which eventually morphed into renewed military conflict.

The Houthis have been able to make impressive advances because they reflect in large part the genuine grievances of many Yemenis, regardless

of sect. They have also proven themselves to be shrewd pragmatists and have made the most out of an alliance of convenience with former President Saleh. Hence, it is not only an exaggeration to attribute Houthi gains to supposed Iranian support, but it would also be disingenuous given the reality of the conflict inside Yemen.

This is first and foremost a Yemeni civil war, in which Saudi Arabia and other states have unwisely chosen to dramatically intervene. Furthermore, alleged direct Iranian intervention in Yemen not only contradicts Iran's intrinsically defensive posture in the region—which many US policymakers and institutions have acknowledged—but also greatly overstates Iran's capability to influence events in Yemen in such a decisive way.

By attacking the Houthis, Saudi Arabia is further contributing to the destabilization of its southern neighbor and border, and weakening one of the only groups in Yemen that has successfully been fighting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. As numerous similar foreign interventions in Middle Eastern civil wars have demonstrated over the years, Saudi Arabia has little chance in achieving a positive outcome in Yemen. In all likelihood, Saudi Arabia will only succeed in exacerbating the situation. It is easy to envision a scenario where al-Qaeda fills the power vacuum in Yemen and the Islamic State even potentially establishes a presence in the country.

To end hostilities and stabilize Yemen, the six world powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia should have an immediate meeting to discuss an inclusive plan aimed at reaching an immediate and complete cease-fire; ending all foreign military incursions; providing widespread humanitarian assistance; resuming broad national dialogue; addressing the concerns of the various factions and stakeholders inside the country in a non-zero-sum manner; agreeing on a power-sharing system; and establishing a national unity government. This needs to be done with a keen understanding of the root issues and concerns that have led to the present situation in the country and the Houthis taking the actions that

they have, not through a reckless belief in self-deluding and simplistic narratives that blame everything on Iran.

Iran has, in fact, already made strides in this direction, with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sending a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlining a four-point peace plan for Yemen. Zarif emphasized the need for an inclusive dialogue between all respective parties and the “establishment of an inclusive national unity government.”

As the Yemen attack shows, Saudi Arabia’s regional strategy is bent on using Iran as a scapegoat to justify its own aggressive policies. These policies appear geared at maintaining and expanding uncompromising Saudi hegemony across the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East. However, by aiming to preserve authoritarian governance in Yemen and further marginalizing vast segments of Yemeni society, Saudi Arabia is only damaging its own interests and opening the door for violence to spill over into its own territory. The Saudis should be cognizant that, just as it is with other crises in the Middle East, the only solution to the Yemeni conflict is a political solution based on addressing the concerns of all parties involved.

## 28. Amid the Carnage in Yemen, Civilians Also Face Consequences of the U.S. War on Terror

(Bethan McKernan. *The Independent*. November 18th 2017)

Locals say five Yemeni civilians died in a US Navy Seal raid targeting al Qaeda earlier this year, with Washington investigating the claims. *The Independent* spoke to survivors about their struggle for justice Children sit amidst the rubble of a house hit by Saudi-led coalition planes; amid that bombardment they also face raids by US forces searching for terrorists.

Six months after US Navy Seals raided their village in search of al Qaeda jihadis, neither the mental or physical wounds endured by the Adhal family are healing.

Twelve-year-old Othman Mohammed Saleh al Adhal spoke quietly, focussing on the middle distance rather than his interviewers, as he recounted what happened in tiny Adhlan in Yemen's Marib province on 23 May.

"I was sleeping outside because it was hot," he said.

"Then you could hear the planes and helicopters. I was scared so I ran back to the house to find my mum. That's when an American appeared. I screamed ... He shot me twice."

Othman gestured to his forearms, both of which bear bullet wound scarring. By the time the gun battle died down an hour later and Othman found his mother, she was weeping over the bodies of his two older brothers.

As well as the Adhal siblings, locals said two other young men and one partially-sighted 70-year-old, Nasser Ali Mahdi al Adhal, were killed in the raid.

Human rights group Reprieve, which conducted the initial investigation, alleges that the elderly man was killed after leaving his house to wave to the US special forces, mistaking them for visitors to the village.

Reprieve and other organisations, using eyewitness accounts, estimate that between 10 to 15 planes and Apache helicopters descended on Adhlan at around 1am that night.

Their target was a house which was sheltering seven men suspected of being members of al Qaeda, a statement from US Central Command said at the time, as well as gathering equipment such as phones and laptops in order to gain “insight into AQAP’s [al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] disposition, capabilities and intentions”.

In the daylight the morning after the raid, however, US-made bullet casings and discarded water bottles with English text on them were the only insight the villagers had into what had happened.

None of the survivors The Independent spoke to said they were aware of any militants in the village at the time. They said the seven men unknown to them who were also killed in the raid must have arrived during the night.

Central Command (CentCom), which coordinates US military operations across the Middle East, and the US Department of Defence, launched an investigation into the events of 23 May in Adhlan after petitions from activists.

The US maintains that to the best of its knowledge no civilians were harmed or killed during the operation. CentCom did not respond to The Independent’s request for an update on the case.

In a previous statement on the raid, a Centcom spokesperson said: “Centcom takes all allegations of civilian casualties seriously. We work



diligently and deliberately to be precise in our air strikes. We comply with the law of armed conflict and take all reasonable precautions during the planning and execution of air strikes to reduce the risk of harm to civilians”.

Before the attack the US had been regarded with some respect in the village – USAID funding went towards several school programmes in the area – but now, for many residents, the name conjures fear and pain. Several people have trouble sleeping at night. Loud noises bring on post-traumatic stress and anxiety attacks, and the lives of those injured have changed forever.

Othman’s elder brother Murad, 22, has been unable to return to university since the raid. His leg is in such bad shape after the initial injury and lack of appropriate follow-up care doctors say it needs to be amputated – something he refuses on the grounds that better treatment must be available somewhere.

“These families told us that they lost loved ones, they lost valuable property, and they watched people bleed to death before their eyes. They don’t have the funds or ability to access necessary medical care,” said Sarah Knuckey, a Columbia University international law professor who has extensively researched drone strikes and US counterterrorism.

“So now young men and women fear the United States, and students who should be studying are stuck at home, dealing with daily physical pain. How does this help defeat al Qaeda?”

Washington has increasingly relied on drone strikes as well as ground raids in the war on terrorism since Barack Obama entered office in 2009.

Among the military and tribal leaders of Marib, the province the Adhal family is from, opinion is split on how best to deal with terrorists, and how much to rely on the US and Arab coalition’s help in combating the extremism that has flourished in Yemen’s almost three-year-old civil war.

Almost every single source The Independent met in Yemen – political, military, civilian – said improved access to education and economic opportunities in impoverished communities were better ways of implementing real, lasting change.

While he understood the US need to combat al Qaeda, co-ordination with local forces could be improved, said powerful local sheik Ali Abdurabbu al Qadhi.

### The Situation in Yemen

“We could be entrusted to handle it ourselves more,” he said.

Yemen’s war encompasses many overlapping issues and competing interests. The Saudi-led Arab coalition propping up Yemen’s exiled government and bombing Houthi rebels has been accused of causing thousands of deaths – not to mention country-wide blockades against the Houthi contributing to a famine affecting 7.3 million people and the worst cholera outbreak in history. Riyadh maintains that it abides to international law and humanitarian norms in its role in the conflict. It can be hard to criticise the coalition or US’ methods, Marib-based activist Amatela al Hammadi said.

“It is difficult to get the local authorities here to investigate drone strikes or raids or escalate these grievances to Riyadh or Washington. They don’t want to speak badly of the people who provide the funding and planes,” she said.

The survivors of the Adhlan raid said that no one from the US has contacted them or sent representatives to the village in the six months since the raid, despite Central Command’s official investigation.

The perceived lack of care or justice for those caught up in friendly fire is fuelling grievances and having long-term effects on those affected, Ms Knuckey warned.

“The suffering families experience after losing a loved one in a sudden attack is made even worse as the US so rarely acknowledges the harm, and there are few prospects for justice,” she said.

“Where and how should Yemeni families make a complaint about harm caused to them? There’s no clear system in place.

“The message the US sends when it doesn’t acknowledge or seek to remedy the harms is that impunity reigns and these families aren’t worthy of recognition. Their allegations need to be seriously investigated by the United States. The families are ready and willing to meet with US officials.”

“We just want people to hear our story, and hear the truth,” said Abdulrahman Saeed al Adhal, an older family member who acts an advocate for his young relatives.

“If the US can be held accountable, maybe it won’t happen to other families in future.

## 29. The Yemen Crucible

(The Editorial Board. *The New York Times* December 27, 2017)



*A Houthi fighter on rubble from the Republican Palace in Yemen's capital, Sana, after Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on Dec. 5. Credit Agence France-Presse—Getty Images*

The Trump administration has long applied a double standard to the violence in Yemen, the world's worst humanitarian crisis. It fiercely condemns Iran for supporting the indigenous Houthi insurgents and allegedly supplying them with short-range ballistic missiles and other weapons. At the same time, it has nothing bad to say about (and is indeed enabling) Saudi Arabia's savage bombing in support of Yemen's government—an air campaign that is worsening a civilian death toll among a population already suffering from a famine and cholera.

That Iran is providing the Houthis with missiles and other weapons has not been proved. If the charge is true, Iran could be in violation of a 2015 United Nations Security Council resolution barring it from selling

or transferring certain weapons outside the country without Security Council approval. It would also deserve condemnation for escalating a crisis that could elevate what is already a proxy war between two of the region's major powers—Saudi Arabia, a Sunni Muslim nation, and Shiite Muslim-led Iran—into direct conflict.

For the moment, however, Saudi Arabia's bombing campaign and its blockade of Yemen's major ports and airports are the main drivers of the crisis. The United States has provided the Saudi-led coalition, which includes the United Arab Emirates and other Persian Gulf states, with precision-guided munitions, intelligence and refuelling capability.

At a recent press conference at a military base near Washington, Nikki Haley, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, conspicuously ignored America's involvement. Among the props displayed were pieces of what Pentagon officials claimed were Iranian-made Qiam missiles, including one allegedly fired by Houthi militants at an airport in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, last month.

Not a word was said about Saudi-American cooperation in the war, and officials, in response to basic questions from reporters, were unable to prove their charges about the source of the missiles. The purpose of this dog-and-pony show—the Pentagon declassified the weaponry for the occasion—was to reinforce the administration's campaign to rally international support for punishing (and perhaps, someday going to war against) Iran on grounds that Tehran is largely responsible for destabilizing activities in the region.

The whole performance was eerily reminiscent of Colin Powell's presentation to the Security Council as secretary of state in 2003 (which he later came to regret) of the case for war against Iraq, in which he accused Iraq of hiding weapons of mass destruction.

Iran, though sympathetic to the Houthis, provided limited support for the war effort until 2015, when Saudi Arabia, determined to do whatever was necessary to check Tehran's influence, began the first of more than 15,000 airstrikes, killing thousands of civilians and turning

the Yemen fighting into a proxy war. With Yemen dependent on imports for most basic needs, Saudi Arabia tightened the siege further last month by imposing a land, sea and air blockade after a missile allegedly fired by the Houthis came close to Riyadh.

Despite all this, the Saudi-led coalition has failed to defeat the Houthis, who now control the capital, Sana. Meanwhile, the toll on Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, is mounting: Some 10,000 people have died, eight million are at risk from famine and nearly one million have contracted cholera.

President Trump, eager for close ties with the new Saudi leadership, has largely turned a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis. The administration has been under mounting pressure from members of the Senate who have threatened to cut aid to Saudi Arabia and who delayed until Dec. 19 the confirmation of Mr. Trump's pick for State Department legal adviser, Jennifer Newstead. It also is being pushed by international aid and human rights groups to persuade Riyadh to stop the carnage.

There are other pressures as well. Ms. Newstead told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Saudi Arabia could be violating American and international law by restricting the flow of humanitarian aid to Yemen. Human rights advocates have called for imposing United Nations sanctions on Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince, and other coalition officials directing the Yemen war.

There are signs the administration is beginning to listen and even exert a constructive influence on the Saudis, who last week said they would open the main port of Hudaydah for 30 days so humanitarian aid can flow. Even so, a long-term solution to the war will take far more than that.

For starters, the Saudis could fully lift the blockade and challenge the Houthis and the Iranians to join in an immediate unconditional cease-fire. This is just the sort of opening Mr. Trump could be urging; if he has the kind of relationship with the Saudis that he boasts about, he might get them to listen—and save countless Yemini lives in the bargain.

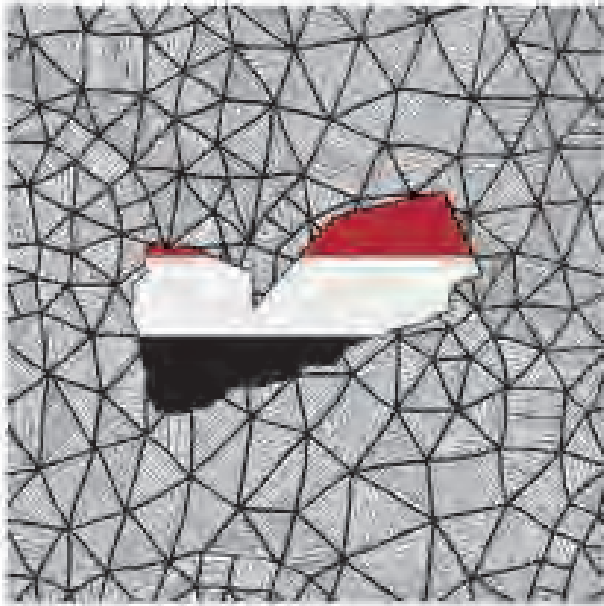


# Part Three: A Moving Epilogue to a Tragic Tale

*“Because we turn around  
look at ourselves and forget”*







*We started with the words from the hearts. These emotions recollected in tranquillity can conclude.*

# Forget, A Poem

(by Samar Almont. May 2017)

Forget

I wonder if we care  
Does it actually matter

When a child is broken in two  
When his entrails splatter  
and there is no glue

I wonder if we care  
Does it actually matter

What we view  
What we think, feel or do

I wonder if we care  
Does it actually matter

Because we turn around  
look at ourselves  
and forget

you

Can you see



*Yemeni children demonstrate on the occasion of the UN's Universal Children's Day in front of the UN offices in the capital Sanaa (AFP)*



Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world. Every five to ten minutes another child dies. The silence of the international community and media towards the crimes against humanity in Yemen is itself a crime against humanity.

