

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN YEMEN

– UN REPORT

In August 2018, the United Nations issued a damning report implicating the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in gross human rights violations and possible war crimes in Yemen.

Yemen has been devastated by a conflict that escalated in early 2015 when, in response to Houthi rebel advancement, a coalition of nine Arab countries launched a military offensive in the country. The United Arab Emirates play a significant role in this coalition, providing ground forces and fighter jets.

From March 2015 to June 2018, there were at least 16,706 civilian casualties; however, the real figure is likely to be significantly higher.

Thousands more civilians have died from preventable causes, including malnutrition, disease and poor health.

COALITION AIR STRIKES

Coalition air strikes have caused most of the documented civilian casualties:

- In the past three years, such attacks have hit residential areas, markets, funerals, weddings, detention facilities, civilian boats and even medical facilities.
- On 15 March 2016 coalition air strikes on a market killed more than 100 civilians, including 25 children.
- On 8 October 2016 coalition forces struck mourners at a funeral, killing at least 137 civilians and injured 695, including 24 children.
- Despite the special protection afforded to medical facilities under international humanitarian law, on 11 June 2018, an air strike hit a cholera treatment centre. The coordinates of the hospital had been shared with the coalition on 12 separate occasions.



BLOCKADES: ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

International humanitarian law requires all parties of the conflict to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including medicine, food and other survival items.

- Prior to the conflict, Yemen imported nearly 90 percent of its food, medical supplies and fuel.
- On 9 August 2016, the coalition effectively closed Sana'a International Airport to commercial traffic. This has prevented thousands of Yemenis from seeking medical care abroad.
- On 6 November 2017, in response to missiles fired at Saudi Arabia by Houthi forces, the coalition imposed a total blockade on all the borders of Yemen, preventing all humanitarian aid and most commercial trade from entering the country.
- As a direct result of the blockade, by April 2018, nearly 17.8 million people were food insecure and 8.4 million were on the brink of famine.
- In April 2018, the coalition announced that all ports were reopened; however, as of November 2018, restrictions remain.

CHILD SOLDIERS

- The Group of Experts revealed that all sides in the conflict have conscripted children as young as 8 years old into armed forces or groups.



VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- The Group of Experts have reasonable grounds to believe that, since September 2014, parties to the conflict in Yemen have severely restricted the right to freedom of expression.
- Hundreds of individuals have been detained for perceived opposition to the Government or to the United Arab Emirates. Many are being held in detention facilities or undeclared centres under the control of the United Arab Emirates.
- Detainees were not informed of the reasons for their arrest, were not charged, were denied access to lawyers and were held incommunicado for prolonged or indefinite periods. Some remain missing.
- The Group of Experts also investigated accounts of torture and sexual violence in detention facilities under the control of the United Arab Emirates.
- In addition, human rights defenders have faced relentless harassment, threats and smear campaigns from the Government and coalition forces.

CONCLUSION

The Group of UN Experts concluded that it had gathered substantial information implicating the Governments of Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in gross human rights violations: the unlawful deprivation of the right to life, arbitrary detention, rape, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, child recruitment, and serious violations of freedom of expression and economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to health, among others.