

War of Extermination In Yemen Accelerates

by Ulf Sandmark

Feb. 3—The ongoing genocide in the Yemen civil war is now the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The blockade of the country has drastically reduced imports of food, fuel, and medicines, while roads and bridges, dams, hospitals, schools, and markets are being systematically bombed. Twelve percent of the population is now suffering from “acute malnutrition”—3.3 million of Yemen’s 28 million.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is also implicated, in that UNSC [Resolution 2216](#) violates the UN Charter by putting blame exclusively on one party in a domestic conflict.

The years of malnutrition are now beginning to take their devastating toll. Civilian deaths from the war were estimated at 11,403 in November 2016 after 20 months of bombing. Now deaths from starvation have far overtaken the direct war casualties. [UNICEF reported](#) Jan. 31 that 63,000 Yemeni children had died during 2016 of malnutrition; the report does not give a figure for the adult deaths. Almost half a million children are now in a state of “severe acute malnutrition,” that is, they are about to die. Overall, 3.3 million Yemenis, 2.2 million of whom are children, are suffering from “acute malnutrition.”

[Currently](#) 14 million people (half of the population) are “food insecure,” of

whom half are “severely food insecure.” This means that at least 7 million people need emergency food assistance to survive.

UN Security Council Inaction

Having disregarded the Yemen crisis since October 2016, the UNSC received a briefing on Jan. 26 from the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), on the initiative of the Swedish chairmanship of the UNSC, according to a source close to the Swedish government. The genocide has so far been played down at the UN in general. The OCHA report indicated that the Yemen genocide is accelerating and that it is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world now.

The UNSC discussed the possibilities of opening the airport and Houdeida harbor for emergency human-



CC/Ibrahim Qasim

Destroyed house in the south of Sana'a.



UNICEF/UNI191720/Yasin

A malnourished 2-year-old girl receiving treatment at a hospital in Sana'a.

itarian assistance. There are 20,000 people waiting to go abroad for specialized medical treatment. The Sana'a airport, closed because it has been bombed, is also important for bringing in journalists, as it is almost impossible to travel to Yemen now and very little independent news comes out. The only harbor under the control of the Sana'a government, Houdeida, is blockaded from the sea. The harbor's cranes were bombed by the Saudis, who support president-in-exile Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Four new mobile cranes, brought by the World Food Program, are not being allowed to land and are waiting aboard ship at sea.

But there is no new resolution—or amendment to Resolution 2216—in the pipeline, according to the source. The British are the UNSC “penholder” for this issue, which means that the British UN representatives are the ones who

must write any amendment. In the language of *Security Council Report*, a watchdog independent of the UNSC, “As the penholders take the lead in drafting Council decisions, they normally ‘trump’ chairs, notwithstanding the formal title and mandate of the latter.”

Denying Food, Bombing Schools

There are many tricks in the implementation of the resolution that have to be exposed. One such trick is that most imports of food, medicine, and fuel are stopped even before they leave the harbor of origin, as an application for import permission has to be approved. It is almost never accepted. The application goes to the Yemeni transport ministry of the Hadi government now in Riyadh, which rejects it, blocking imports to the North. Even humanitarian assistance has difficulty in getting permission.

The Hadi government is in physical control of Aden, the other big harbor in Yemen, but the Aden harbor is highly insecure because of proliferating, undisciplined militias and outright terrorist bands, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Daesh (ISIS). The UN relief organizations cannot



UN Ocha/Charlotte Cans

Abdallah Mohamed Al Qady stands in what had been the entrance of his family home in Bayt Mayad neighbourhood of Sana'a, Yemen. The four-storey house was completely destroyed when a missile landed next door on June 13, 2015.

bring food ashore there, and it remains in the ships or in Djibouti, across the Gulf.

The bombing war is illegal as it perpetrates war crimes against Yemen by systematically attacking (1) civilian targets such as homes, hospitals, schools, markets, and funerals; (2) food procurement, the harbor, roads and bridges, fuel and food storage facilities, food production, and dams; (3) ancient cultural heritage sites, museums, cities, mosques—collectively, a world treasure. The bombing has even made farm fields unusable with cluster bombs that disperse mines.

The U.K. Ministry of Defence has [noted](#) 252 alleged violations of international law by the Saudi-led coalition. This also makes illegal the arms trade to Saudi Arabia from the U.K., United States, and Sweden.

What Must Be Done

Resolution 2216 violates the UN Charter by putting the entire blame on one party to a domestic conflict. This violates the UN policy of reconciliation of parties and noninterference in domestic conflicts. Then it encourages the Saudi-led coalition to enforce the disarmament of the party blamed, the Houthis, with a war on Yemen.

But the implementation of Resolution 2216 also involves grave illegalities: The UN does not allow starvation or other war crimes in the implementation of its policies and resolutions.

To bring in food and end the war, it is most urgently necessary to compel a change in the implementation of Resolution 2216.

Pressure from both international NGOs and governments is absolutely necessary.

On December 6, 2016 Oxfam demanded the lifting of the import restrictions to Yemen for food, fuel, and medicine. Mark Goldring, Oxfam GB Chief Executive,



UN OCHA/Charlotte Card

Adam Abdullah (20 years old, left) and Youssef Harban (24 years old, right) at Jumhuri hospital in Sana'a. Adam was injured when an air strike hit his house in Sa'ada. Youssef was wounded when an air strike hit a market in Sa'ada.

was quoted in a [press release](#): “Yemen is being slowly starved to death. First there were restrictions on imports—including much need food. When this was partially eased the cranes in the ports were bombed, then the warehouses, then the roads and the bridges. This is not by accident—it is systematic. The country’s economy, its institutions, its ability to feed and care for its people are all on the brink of collapse. There is still time to pull it back before we see chronic hunger becoming widespread starvation. The fighting needs to stop and the ports should be fully opened to vital supplies of food, fuel and medicine.”

Earlier, on August 16, twelve international humanitarian NGOs had demanded that the restrictions on civilian air traffic to Yemen be lifted. The twelve were ACF International, ACTED, Care, Danish Refugee Council, Global Communities, Handicap International, International Rescue Committee, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, and Save the Children.

It is urgent to address these illegalities now, to stop the genocide. It is especially urgent at this moment, because the Saudis have just decided to re-enforce their blockade of Houdeida, the only harbor that can reach the majority of the population in Yemen.