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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Alsalam Foundation, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

After five years of continuous war, there are 24.1 million people across Yemen in need of humanitarian aid and the rate of child malnutrition is one of the highest in the world. 75 percent of the population urgently needs healthcare, unemployment is rife, and 12 million children are considered vulnerable. Over two-thirds of Yemenis require support to meet their basic water, sanitation, and hygiene needs, including 12.6 million people who are classified as being in acute need.

14 million people are on the brink of starvation, including 2.3 million children under the age of five, leading this to be one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. The latest data show that more than 2 million children and over 1 million pregnant women and new mothers are severely malnourished.

This year it is projected that:

- 672,000 people will be displaced, comprised of 4 percent women, 53 percent children, and 4 percent elderly people;
- 16.2 million people will starve;
- 2.25 million children aged 0 to 59 months and more than 1 million pregnant and lactating women will experience acute malnutrition;
- The need for humanitarian assistance will reach a total of 20.7 million people, or 66 percent of the population;
- Lack of access to safe water will increase, given that already an estimated 49 percent of Yemenis have no access to safe water, and 15.4 million people are in need of support to access a basic water supply;
- Lack of adequate sanitation will increase: 8.7 million have acute sanitation needs.
- Health will suffer further, given that already only half of the health facilities are functioning, and many that remain operational lack basic equipment like masks and gloves, let alone oxygen and other essential supplies to treat the coronavirus.

Violations of International Humanitarian Law

IHL prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian objects, stipulating specific protection for residential buildings, schools, and hospitals. IHL also calls on parties to the conflict to distinguish them from military objectives. International law protects civilians and civilian infrastructure, but the parties to the conflict in Yemen have not respected it. Children and their families have paid the highest price as conflict rages in Yemen.

The joint-coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has carried out hundreds of airstrikes that have killed and wounded thousands of civilians and hit vital infrastructure, including hospitals and health centers. Between March 2015 and March 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented at least 577 airstrikes impacting civilians or civilian objects. These airstrikes killed at least 3,820 civilians, including 966 women and 405 children, and wounded about 3,000 civilians, including 764 women and 356 children. The airstrikes hit residential neighborhoods, villages, markets, bridges, schools, and service and commercial facilities. In the same time period, Mwatana also documented 418 ground attacks that killed 219 civilians, including 116 children and 39 women, and wounded at least 575 others. It is reported that: Houthi fighters were responsible for 285 ground attacks; Coalition forces and Coalition-backed armed groups were responsible for 76; while Hadi government forces were responsible for 57 of the documented ground attacks.

Mwatana has documented the following counts with regard to weapons found in airstrikes that impacted civilians: United States of America (25 airstrikes), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (5 airstrikes), and Italy (1 airstrike). Some of these airstrikes in Yemen may amount to war crimes. Other exported arms have allegedly contributed to the Coalition's capacity to carry out such airstrikes.

All parties in the conflict have conducted indiscriminate attacks using indirect-fire weapons and have used anti-personnel landmines. All of these acts may amount to war crimes as these acts have resulted in the murder of countless civilians. Hence, the Group of Eminent Experts stated that the Coalition may have failed to take all measures necessary to minimize civilian casualties. On February 15, 2020, an airstrike by the Coalition was launched on a village in Hayjah area, Maslub District, and Jawf Governorate, resulting in approximately 50 civilians killed and injured.

Arbitrary Detentions in Yemen

The Saudi Coalition mistreats Yemeni travelers coming from the northern parts of Yemen by rejecting passports issued from Sana'a, and by issuing restrictions on mobility. Only one land passage, el-Wadeea, and two airports in Aden and Sayun are offered. Ultimately, travelers are forced to brave hundreds of kilometers to reach these destinations; in the end, they are stuck waiting for days at terminals and some are even detained because of their regional and sectarian affiliations. This has been the case of scholar Yahya al-Dailami, who was released after a 13-month arbitrary detention; Dr. Mustafa al-Mutawakkil, who has been detained since April 2017; as well as other journalists, students and merchants.

Moreover, the de facto authorities in Sana'a have been arbitrarily detaining people for more than one year without formal charges, the provision of a lawyer, a family visit or call, or the opportunity to be heard in a fair, speedy trial.

International Responsibility in the Yemen Conflict

Countries like France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom continue to export arms, spare parts of arms, as well as provide maintenance, training, and support to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Based on evidence collected by Mwatana for Human Rights, remnants of the exported arms have been found at sites of airstrikes.

The outside states participating in the Saudi-led coalition are: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the UAE. Other countries also play a supporting role for the Coalition; in particular, the USA and UK, both of whom provide maintenance as well as arms supplies. In April 2021, citing the Abraham Accords, the Biden administration determined that they were obligated to carry out the sale of 50 F-35 combat aircraft to the UAE, as well as to complete Trump-era weapons deals with Saudi Arabia. It is feared that these aircraft and weapons will be used in the Yemen conflict.

In recent years, the UK has been the country with the second most arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and they have not agreed with the international community to stop arm sales to Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen has led to severe suffering as well as grave violations of IHL.

Therefore, Alsalam Foundation urges the Government of Yemen and the international community to:

- Halt all arms sales to any country involved in the conflict;
- Immediately halt any operations that disproportionately affect civilians or civilian objects;
- Cooperate with international bodies investigating war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other grave violations of humanitarian law;
- Call for an end of the use of arbitrary detention by all parties involved in the conflict;

- Institute a nationwide ceasefire and work toward an inclusive political process that ends the conflict.
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