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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, 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.

[11 February 2019]

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



A fragile truce – The civilian population in Yemen needs better protection

We are very concerned about the situation in Yemen with regard to the Stockholm ceasefire agreement. Clearly, this agreement is not being respected. All conflict parties are committing serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law – and the perpetrators are not punished. This is confirmed by numerous reports by the civil society and by human rights organizations.

The facts about Yemen are already known to the international public – and the United Nations are not at all hopeful about the situation in the country. The conflict is referred to as the most serious humanitarian crisis of the present. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (UNOCHA), 22.2 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian aid – more than 85 percent of the total population. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at least 6,600 civilians were killed and at least 10,560 injured in the period between March 2015 and June 2018. Due to the unclear situation, the UN High Commission for Human Rights estimates that the actual figures are significantly higher. According to UNOCHA, 8.4 million people in Yemen are at risk of starvation. 16 million people have no access to clean water or sanitary facilities. The health situation has deteriorated: 16.4 million Yemenis are suffering from insufficient health care. The World Health Organization (WHO) counted more than 1.1 million cholera-infected individuals between April 2017 and July 2018, and more than 2,300 people died.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that the UN concept of responsibility to protect has so far not been applied. Thus, we are demanding the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that the United Nations will do everything in its power to protect the civilian population from further attacks and from impoverishment. All governments must immediately refrain from providing support from any of the warring parties. The main victims in the country are the civilians, and especially the children. Their suffering is unspeakable. The UN Security Council should strongly advocate a nationwide ceasefire and secure vital transport routes to the civilian population under its protective mandate.

So far, neither the National Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Human Rights Violations (established by the Yemeni government in 2015) nor the Joint Investigation Assessment Team (JIAT, established by the Saudi Arabian military alliance) have managed to investigate human rights violations committed by the conflict parties. More recently, the UN General Assembly had used the Triple III mechanism in comparable situations.

Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, was able to arrange for a meeting between the conflict parties in Stockholm – and he managed to convince the Yemeni government (backed by Saudi Arabia) and the Houthi militias (which are able to rely on support by the Islamic Republic of Iran) to agree to a ceasefire in the port city of Hudeida. Now, the two conflict parties must respect the agreement – in compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) calls upon the members of the United Nations Human Rights Council:

- To demand the United Nations to step up its efforts towards and to support the Special Representative for Yemen, Martin Griffiths. The aim should be to oblige the international community to provide aid to Yemen, and to ensure that the conflict parties will meet up for further peace talks.
- To initiate independent investigations into war crimes committed in Yemen, as soon as possible. Further, the United Nations Security Council must ensure that there will be independent investigations against alleged perpetrators. The UN Security Council must commission the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate in Yemen.
- To demand all conflict parties to fully comply with the ceasefire agreement in order to avoid further suffering. The peace talks must be continued.

- To ensure that humanitarian convoys will be granted access to the region. The bombing of hospitals, drinking water systems, and port facilities must be stopped – as well as mine laying.
 - To ensure that representatives of NGOs and civil rights organizations, including women's organizations, will be invited to the next round of negotiations.
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