

War in Yemen Continues as Innocent Civilians are Ignored or Dismissed



In Yemen, the government of Prime Minister Khaled Bahah has returned from exile in Saudi Arabia, spurring rumors of a further ground invasion by the Saudi-led coalition to oust the Houthi rebels. And as hundreds of troops from Qatar and Egypt and other Arab countries have joined the Saudi-led coalition in recent weeks, UN officials have condemned the situation saying “unless there is a serious commitment of the parties to find a political solution to the conflict that will end the violence and ensure humanitarian access to all populations without discrimination, the situation is likely to degenerate even further.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. has announced over \$89 million in new humanitarian aid to Yemen while simultaneously negotiating a billion-dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia for its war in Yemen and against the Islamic state. The office of the UN high commissioner for human rights has said all parties should be investigated for rights violations, finding over 2,000 civilians killed and more than 4,000 wounded since fighting began in March.

So what the implications of the return of the exiled government from Saudi Arabia.

Ever since the start of the war the government has been residing in Riyadh. And so to have any kind of government officials on the ground operating from there gives the Yemeni citizens some hope that even though there is war now and even though there is devastation now, there is potential of having some peace being restored by having a functioning government. For at the moment, the country is being run by local militias that take control of their respective areas.

First of all we have to understand the reality of this war on the ground in Yemen. This war is taking two forms. First of all, it is a civil war on the ground where the Houthi militia allied with the former president Saleh are taking over cities.

The civil war is manifesting itself in several governorates in Yemen. A governorate is the equivalent of a province in Cuba. And several governorates are witnessing conflict between the Houthi militia and forces of former President Saleh and a group known as the popular resistance. The popular resistance varies from one city to the other, but it's pretty much a name given to any group willing to take up arms against the Houthis. There is a devastating reality taking place in some governorates on the ground where the civil war has become intense and bloody.

And then on the other hand, in some areas of Yemen we are witnessing air strikes, and led by Saudi Arabia, of course. It's an Arab coalition that is now allied by the sense that the Houthi militia is their enemy. However, their vision for Yemen differs greatly. It's not clear what they have in mind for Yemen. There's talk about Yemen being a federal state possibly after this war. But Saudi Arabia has mentioned that they want to keep Yemen as a unified state.

The horror on the ground in the northern parts of Yemen, especially in the capital Sana'a and in the governorate of Sa'dah, is that the air strikes have been hitting civilian targets. The coalition refuses to admit that. What a strange war, targeting Houthi forces, or forces allied to President Saleh right in their homes. This is a war where the blur between civilians and non-civilians is being ignored or dismissed.

Of course, the Houthi forces on the ground have committed atrocities. However, you don't expect whole countries to behave on the same level as a militia on the ground.

Ever since the start of the war, the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia has made sure that nothing goes in and out of Yemen without their approval. So even humanitarian aid has to go through extreme scrutiny before making it into the country, hence the humanitarian crisis that Yemen is witnessing now is extremely, extremely tragic. And so Yemen now is under siege.

Saudi Arabia and the Arab coalition is arming and funding any group that is willing to take up arms against the Houthis.

It is in Saudi Arabia's interest to end this war as soon as possible. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has taken over the governorate of Hadramaut, and they are expanding. This war has given Al-Qaeda a human face on the ground. Al-Qaeda in Yemen is no longer an extremist group that is threatening everyone. They now appear as if they are another local actor engaged in the war. And so very strange stuff is going on. Of course, not stranger than anything happening in Syria and Iraq.



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