

Iran, United Nations Calls for Ceasefire in Yemen

Ansurallah leader says the United States is behind the war

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[Agenda](#)

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has outlined a proposal for the cessation of hostilities in Yemen through a letter to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 17.

This plan involves four demands: an immediate ceasefire, the halt to attacks by Saudi-GCC led war planes, the provisions for a safe corridor to provide much-needed humanitarian relief and the resumption of political dialogue. This proposal came just one day after the UN Secretary General called for an immediate ceasefire.

On April 20, Zarif published a letter in the opinion and editorial section of the New York Times stating Iran's willingness to cooperate with other regional states and the international community in solving the crisis of the numerous wars in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East. The foreign minister stressed that Teheran's recent agreement over its nuclear program with the United States and European Union could serve as an impetus for serious multi-lateral talks on other issues.

Zarif noted that although this agreement was a step forward in relations between Washington and Teheran, much more work needed to be done. Absent of a broader framework for resolving ongoing interventions and humanitarian challenges, the current atmosphere of dialogue could easily be lost to open confrontation over Yemen, Iraq, Syria and other countries.

The foreign minister stressed that "to seal the anticipated nuclear deal, more political will is required. The Iranian people have shown their resolve by choosing to engage with dignity. It is time for the United States and its Western allies to make the choice between cooperation and confrontation, between negotiations and grandstanding, and between agreement and coercion." (NYT, April 20)

This same letter goes on to emphasize that "If one were to begin serious discussion of the calamities the region faces, Yemen would be a good place to start. Iran has offered a reasonable and practical approach to address this painful and unnecessary crisis."

Ansurallah Leader Says U.S. at the Root of War in Yemen

Since March 26 Saudi Arabian air forces in alliance with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, without any semblance of a UN or international mandate, have carried out the massive bombardment of Yemen. There has also been a naval blockade denying much needed food and other goods entry into the most underdeveloped territories in the region.

Nonetheless, the UN Security Council passed a resolution on April 14 imposing an arms embargo on the Ansurallah movement demanding that they withdraw from areas in which their fighters have control. The resolution also placed asset freezes and travel bans on key leaders of the Houthis.

The U.S. supplies the Saudis and the GCC with fighter planes, weapons, intelligence support and refueling which is facilitating the bombing of Yemen. The Ansurallah (Houthis) is a Shia-based movement which has taken large swaths of territory in the north, central and south of Yemen.

In a television address aired over Press TV, the Ansurallah leader, Abdel-Malik al-Houthi, blamed the U.S. for the war against his country. He charged the Pentagon with pointing out areas to be attacked in Yemen.

Al-Houthi said "We do not need permission from the UNSC to defend our country, stressing the Yemeni people have the right and legitimacy to defend. Our great people will not surrender, they will stand." (Press TV, April 19)

The Ansurallah leader claimed that the Saudi aggression is destroying valuable resources in Yemen, which are criminal acts absent of any legitimacy. He held the view that the objectives of the Saudi-GCC bombing is to "return Yemen to the Israeli and US identity." Al-Houthi said that anyone who supports the aggression against Yemen is engaging in a war that is being waged by Saudi Arabia.

Bombing Spreads in Yemen

Meanwhile the Saudi-GCC alliance continues its bombing in 18 out of 22 provinces in Yemen displacing 150,000 people, killing an estimated 2,600 people, mostly civilians, and the wounding of 2,900 others. Fighting has escalated in the Hadramaut province around Makalla where a battle is being waged against al-Qaeda fighters who have attempted to seize an airport, government buildings and a refinery.

A further escalation in the bombardments took place on April 20 when homes were destroyed in Sanaa killing at least 15 people. Some reports suggest that the target of the airstrikes was a munitions storage center in the area although other residential neighborhoods have been bombed over the last three weeks.

Oxfam, the London-based humanitarian organization, reported that many civilians have been targets of the attacks. The group said that one of its food storage warehouses was struck where no arms or fighters from the Ansurallah are based.

"The contents of the warehouse had no military value," the group declared. "This is an absolute outrage, particularly when one considers that we have shared detailed information with the coalition on the locations of our offices and storage facilities." (NYT, April 20)

With specific reference to the April 20 bombing in Sanaa, the Reuters press agency said "The blast hit the base on Faj Attan mountain beside the Hadda district, home to the presidential palace and many embassies, and sent a tall mushroom cloud into the air. Resident Adel Mansour said it was the largest explosion in more than three weeks of bombing by the Saudi-led coalition."

Bombing of Yemen Raises Diplomatic Tensions Threatening Broader War

The bombing in Sanaa on April 20 set off another round of diplomatic wrangling where the Iranian foreign ministry summoned the Saudi Arabian ambassador in Teheran to express their displeasure at the current situation. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said in Jakarta that the government was opposed to the bombings which have resulted in the wounding of two of its diplomatic personnel.

A Yemeni television station, al-Yemen al-Youm, was hit by the Saudi-GCC bombs on April 20 leaving three of its staff dead. The area around Faj Attan has been a frequent target of the air campaign over the last few weeks.

Iran in recent statements have expressed its willingness to become more directly involved in the Yemeni situation warning Saudi Arabia and the U.S. that any attack on its territory will be met with fierce retaliation. Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif said on April 20 during a meeting with his Syrian counterpart Faisal al-Miqdad that "We are deeply concerned over the killing of defenseless and innocent people in Yemen and the destruction of the country's infrastructure and we will make our utmost efforts to bring an end to this massacre."

Just one day before the commander of Iranian Army's Ground Forces Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan warned Saudi Arabia of "facing a crushing response from inside Yemen if the ongoing aggression against the Arab country continues." Brigadier General Pourdasatan says "The Saudi Arabian army has no war experience and is very fragile and if it is confronted with a war of attrition, it should await crushing blows and it will suffer heavy defeat." (Press TV, April 19)

Operation Decisive Storm, as it is called by the Saudi-GCC alliance, is a manifestation of the United States imperialist efforts to continue its proxy war against Iran through the control of the political and military situation in Yemen. The expansion of the war in Yemen has implications for developments in Iraq and Syria as both states have spoken out about its strong opposition to the bombing of Yemen and the threat of a possible ground invasion by Egypt and Sunni-led rebel groups which are funded by Riyadh.

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