

Saudi-GCC States Continue Bombardment of Yemen. Washington Triggers Escalation Amid Growing Humanitarian Crisis

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Global Research, April 28, 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

There is no let-up in the United States supported Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) war against Yemen. As the death toll mounts, Riyadh and its allies representing the ousted government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi have rejected efforts aimed at declaring a ceasefire and re-opening political dialogue among the various political forces in the country.

Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh urged the various groups involved in the struggle for political power to accept the United Nations proposals requesting the withdrawal from territories contested in the fighting. Saleh still maintains influence in Yemen through his General People's Congress which was the subject of massive protests during 2011.

Saleh left office in a transitional agreement that was designed to pave the way for a more inclusive government. However, the problems of the country could not be fully resolved with U.S. and Saudi interventions aimed at maintaining western influence in this underdeveloped state.

An alliance between elements within the military who are still loyal to Saleh and the Ansurallah Movement (Houthis) has taken control of large sections of the country. Saudi-GCC airstrikes have destroyed residential areas resulting in anywhere between 1,000-2,800 deaths.

Despite an announcement on April 21 that it was suspending air strikes against Yemen, the Saudi-GCC alliance has continued to bomb indiscriminately across the central and southern regions of the country. Civilians were killed in numerous airstrikes over the last few days even though the Saudi foreign ministry says that it is "winding down its campaign."

Saudi foreign ministry statements indicate that they do not want any enhanced authority for the Ansurallah to come out of negotiations for a new political dispensation in Yemen. Such a position will only intensify the war that threatens to spread further throughout the region.

United Nations Envoy Says Deal Was Near Prior to Bombing

Jamal Benomar who recently resigned as the UN envoy to Yemen, noted in a recent statement that a political agreement was being worked out prior to the Saudi-GCC aerial bombardments. Although the adoption of a broad peace plan would be difficult, there was no need other than purely imperialist aims for Saudi Arabia to begin the bombing of the country on March 26.

Benomar said that “When this campaign started, one thing that was significant but went unnoticed is that the Yemenis were close to a deal that would institute power-sharing with all sides, including the Houthis. A very detailed agreement was being worked out, but there was one important issue on which there was no agreement, and that was what to do with the presidency. We were under no illusion that implementation of this would be easy.” (Wall Street Journal, April 26)

The former envoy was scheduled to meet behind closed doors with the Security Council on April 27. Benomar also revealed that the Houthis were prepared to accept a lesser position than the presidency yet this was still not enough for the Saudis.

Qatar and Morocco were prepared to host a new round of peace talks. However, when both countries joined the coalition backing the Saudi-GCC airstrikes, the Ansurallah withdrew from the proposal, rightly noting that neither state could be objective in such negotiations.

Hadi then proposed that talks be held in Riyadh but of course this was rejected by the Ansurallah movement. There could be no real talks while the Saudis continued to bomb the country and to support Sunni elements that were hostile to the Houthis.

Another issue which created consternation was the framework of the new government in Yemen including 30 percent of the cabinet and parliamentary posts being allocated to women. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies still maintain oppressive conditions for women as a matter of state law.

Nonetheless, the further exposure of Saudi Arabia in blocking UN peace initiatives illustrates clearly that the monarchy, backed by Washington, is committed to maintaining imperialist domination in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Peninsula and the waterways between Africa and western Asia. The bombing since late March has not won the desired results by Riyadh.

Iran, which is supporting the Shiite -based Ansurallah movement is a target of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Tehran’s influence in Yemen is a worrisome development for both the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama as well as the monarchies throughout the GCC region. Reports indicate that Iranian warships have pulled back from potential conflicts with U.S. and allied naval vessels.

On April 25, a new UN envoy to Yemen was appointed from the North African state of Mauritania. This country, like Morocco, maintains close ties with Washington through the so-called Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) coordinated “war on terrorism.”

War Escalates Amid Growing Humanitarian Crisis

The US-supported war has resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Saudis have prevented aid from entering the country. The situation in the hospitals is atrocious.

April 26 was marked by some of the most intense bombing since the war began. Air strikes were carried out in at least five locations around the presidential palace in Sanaa.

In the southern port city of Aden, GCC warships pounded areas inland as fighting intensified between supporters of the Houthi and Saleh loyalist forces against Sunni militias that are supported by Saudi Arabia. Reports say that more people were killed and displaced from their homes in both Sanaa and Aden.

One resident of Sanaa named Jamal said “The explosions were so big they shook the house, waking us and our kids up. Life has really become unbearable in this city.”

In pursuit of what they consider a victory over the resistance forces in Yemen, the Saudi-GCC coalition is continuing the bombing. With the war being largely suppressed over the U.S. news networks, most people in America, including the anti-war, peace and left movements, have been virtually silent on developments in Yemen.

Abu Dhabi’s Crown Prince Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan traveled to the King Fahd airbase in Saudi Arabia’s Taif on April 26 to reiterate the monarchy’s allegiance to the Saudi-led and Pentagon-CIA supported war in Yemen. “Our only choice is victory in the test of Yemen,” the prince told the international press.

Support inside of Yemen for the Houthis and their allies have accelerated where on April 22 there was a huge demonstration in Sanaa opposing the Saudi-GCC air strikes demanding an end to the hostilities. Saudi-allied militias have blocked humanitarian aid convoys in an effort to force the Ansurallah into submission.

In addition to the heavy fighting in Sanaa and Aden, intense battles are also continuing in the strategically important central city of Taiz. There Saudi-allied Sunni forces and other Islamist militias reportedly attacked several districts where the Houthis have dominated over the last several months.

People in Taiz report that battles were raging street-by-street in the city of some three million inhabitants. Both supporters and opponents of the Ansurallah are utilizing tanks and artillery in residential areas.

“The heaviest street fighting is taking place in Taiz. Airstrikes also continued in Aden,” said the International Committee of the Red Cross representative Sitara Jabeen said.

“Our convoys were blocked from going to Aden and Marib over the weekend and we are in discussions with the Houthis to resolve that,” Jabeen told Reuters press agency. The war being waged in Yemen is strikingly similar to the militarism of the U.S. and Israel.

The war has escalated already existing regional tensions pitting Iran against the GCC states. The commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, General Mohammad Ali Jafari, drew an analogy related to Saudi Arabia and Israel. “Saudi Arabia is following in the Zionist regime’s footsteps in the Islamic world,” Jafari told the official IRNA news agency.

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