

The Starving Children of Yemen

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Global Research, July 12, 2018

[The American Conservative](#) 10 July 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#), [Terrorism](#)

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Henrietta Fore of UNICEF [reports](#) on the appalling conditions in Yemen:

Further north, a similar scene is unfolding at the Al Sabeen hospital in Sanaa. Up to 30 new young patients stream in every day to the hospital's malnutrition ward [bold mine-DL]. In the neonatal intensive care unit, newborn babies in incubators struggle for every breath.

Keeping babies alive in a country where nothing works any more is a real challenge: There are not enough respirators and not enough medicine. Health staff diligently report to work even though they have not received their salaries in two years. The malnutrition ward is packed. Parents have no money for health care and by the time they bring their sick babies in, it is often too late.

This is what a collapsing health system in a war zone looks like. It has the face of a mother who looks on, powerless, as her eight-month-old child, who has the weight of a newborn baby, fights for his life. It has the face of a father who has to choose between buying food for the whole family or buying medicine for his sick wife.

As Fore reminds us, a Yemeni child dies from preventable causes every ten minutes. That adds up to almost 50,000 dead children every year in a war that has dragged on for more than three years. These children are perishing because of starvation created by the Saudi coalition blockade and bombing campaign and from outbreaks of preventable disease that the blockade and bombing campaign have made much harder to combat. The blockade impedes delivery of essential food and medicine and makes them prohibitively expensive for most people in a country whose economy has been devastated.

This humanitarian catastrophe was foreseeable and it was foreseen from the very start, but the Saudi coalition has persisted in purposefully strangling the civilian population for three years. It is an entirely man-made disaster, and the Saudi coalition and their Western backers are its chief authors. Millions more Yemeni lives are at risk, and even if things don't get significantly worse many more thousands of Yemeni children will needlessly lose their lives because of the coalition blockade and bombing campaign. If conditions worsen because of the ongoing coalition offensive on Hodeidah, the loss of life will be in the hundreds of thousands and possibly in the millions.

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