The Yemen Tragedy Continues

Global opinion and leaders in many countries have reacted angrily to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’ decision to remove the Saudi Arabian military coalition in Yemen from a list of groups violating children's rights. Antonio Guterres has taken this step only a few years after the coalition was first named and shamed for killing and injuring children in Yemen. Antonio Guterres said the coalition would be removed from the list covering violations of the rules about murder and mutilation “after a steady and significant reduction in the number of murders and mutilations resulting from air strikes” and following the implementation of measures aimed at protecting children. He said the coalition had killed or wounded only (?!?) 222 children in Yemen last year, but that is merely the figure which international observers have been able to officially confirm.

For its part, the Yemeni press notes that the child death toll is at least ten times that figure, not to mention injuries, mutilations and displaced children. The Yemeni press notes that, unfortunately, some member states of the United Nations are trying to absolve Saudi Arabia of its crimes against Yemeni children and women, while, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, one Yemeni child is dying every ten minutes as a result of the war and Saudi coalition-imposed siege. There can be no doubt that this step by the UN and the position of its current Secretary General are evidence of its “selective approach” and “double standards” in relation to human rights.

Jo Becker, Human Rights Watch’s children’s rights advocacy director, indicated that Antonio Guterres “was adding a new item to his list of shame by removing the Saudi-led coalition from the blacklist and ignoring the UN’s own evidence of ongoing grave violations of children’s rights.” Adrianne Lapar, director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, also stated that “the Secretary-General is sending the message that powerful actors can get away with killing children.”

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a US-based nonprofit organization, notes that the war in Yemen has claimed over 100,000 lives in the past five years, while more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including ten million suffering from extreme hunger.

It is well known that Saudi Arabia invaded Yemen in early 2015 on a spurious pretext, creating a coalition that includes Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Jordan, Senegal, Sudan and the United States. The US involvement includes targeted support for Saudi military aircraft, mid-air refueling for Saudi bombers, and US Navy participation in the illegal blockade of Yemen. As an initial step, the UN should have put pressure on these partners in crime to extricate themselves from this unnecessary and shameful collaboration. Saudi Arabia and US-led coalition soldiers have killed a large number of children in the war with Yemen, and there are signs that these two countries’ leaders will continue to do so for the foreseeable future because they refuse to stop their military campaign, which includes attacks on kindergartens, schools, and children’s hospitals. And the UN, as an international organization that safeguards world peace, must take decisive steps as the instigators of the Yemeni war are not going to curtail this unjustifiable conflict.

For its part, the UN can call upon and force Security Council members to discuss the well-known fact that the US and a number of other countries are actively helping the Saudi coalition to continue to perpetrate dirty acts against the Yemeni people. If the UN adopts a corresponding resolution, that will draw more attention to the shameful policies being pursued by Riyadh and its patron, the current administration of D. Trump. For its part, that will be an important step in reaffirming the UN Security Council’s significant role in military matters and in its attempts to put
an end to this vile barbarism.

It is worth remembering that the so-called “Black List of Violations of Children's Rights” is published annually by the UN, and that Saudi Arabia and its coalition have been included in the list for the past few years. Notwithstanding the fact that the process of being removed from the list should only be carried out after thorough investigations, it is nevertheless the case that no serious checks have been undertaken whatsoever.

It is widely recognised that, without American weapons and diplomatic support at the UN, the Saudis would be unable to continue their war crimes in Yemen. The UN could have done much more to alleviate the suffering of Yemeni children if it had monitored the supply of arms, primarily from the US to Saudi Arabia. A number of Western countries, for example Great Britain, are also complicit in Saudi war crimes by virtue of supplying weaponry and intelligence data, as well as providing technical support for the Saudi Arabian Air Force through private British companies. It is necessary that they too be forced to abandon this criminal activity.

Incidentally, there are several other reasons to bring an immediate end to this shameful war: participation in Saudi Arabian-led hostilities is not in the national security interests of and has nothing to do with the fight against the threats facing the US, NATO or their allies. On the contrary, the war has greatly strengthened the position of the “local Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula”, Daesh and other terrorists. It turns out that the current course of action and policies of Saudi Arabia have damaged the West and the interests of global security. The war has destabilized the region and devastated Yemen, while the role of Western governments has made them accomplices to the Saudi war crimes.

There can be no doubt that Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen is an unjustifiable horror that also undermines the UN’s authority, and the world organization should not be a party to it. By keeping the Saudis on its blacklist of those guilty of aggression, member states of the UN Security Council can, by virtue of their prerogatives, put an immediate end to this shame. The world is waiting for decisive action from the UN, and its members should not bow to US-Saudi pressure, but rather should remember that their countries could expect the same fate as Yemen.

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