Saudi Arabia’s determination to lay waste to Yemen has reached new heights over the past few weeks, adding to an already deplorable litany of war crimes. Faced with the possibility of a new war front, in that the Houthis directed their ire directly at the United Arab Emirates after Riyadh called on their help to precipitate the fall of Mareb - the last northern bastion of the internationally-recognised government, which was driven from the capital Sana’a by the Houthis in 2014.

The one battle which could determine the fate of the War on Yemen and very much dictate the terms of the peace all parties will eventually have to abide by should they hope to restore any modicum of regional stability. Sitting just 120 kilometers east of the capital, Sana’a, Marib stands at a crossroads between Yemen’s southern and northern regions, commanding not only a highway to Saudi Arabia, but an economic powerhouse by the riches of its soil. Before Yemen was plunged into the fires of war, Safer oil refinery produced between 10,000 and 20,000 barrels of crude per day.

Saudi Arabia’s fury towards Yemen in the wake of the Houthis’ attacks on both the UAE proper, and Riyadh’s coalition forces in Mareb speaks loudly of the importance of this one region of Yemen and the need for both parties to gain the upper hand.

If governments, and in this particular case, the Kingdom may well harbour cold ambitions, there are rules one must follow, even in war ... Needless to say that Saudi Arabia has seldom felt it needed to abide by the rules of international law! And yet it’s latest stunt might prove one too many for any of its international sponsors to wash away, or better yet ignore.
At least 70 people were killed in an air raid commandeered by Riyadh against a detention facility at the heart of Houthi territory in late January, prompting rights organisations such as Medecins Sans Frontieres and Save the Children to raise the alarm, underlying the dramatic escalation of Saudi Arabia's aggression against its impoverished neighbour.

An MSF spokesperson told the AFP news agency at least 70 people were killed and 138 others were wounded in the attack.

Taha al-Motawakel, health minister in the Houthi government was rather stern in his criticism when he noted:

"We consider this a war crime against humanity. The world should take responsibility at this critical moment in human history."

Right about the time of the raid, the Saudi military carried out a second attack, this time on Hodeidah, a strategic seaport overlooking the Red Sea further south - the target: a communication hub. The attack led to a national internet blackout.

The Norwegian Refugee Council condemned the attack as

"a blatant attack on civilian infrastructure that will also impact our aid delivery."

The last blow of Riyadh's campaign hit Sa'ada, not too far from the Saudi border with Yemen. This time the target were civilians - a move not only unwarranted but quite definitely undefendable.

Gillian Moyes, Save the Children’s country director was rather clear in his comments to the press when he noted that

"The initial casualties report from Saada is horrifying." and, "Migrants seeking better lives for themselves and their families, Yemeni civilians injured by the dozens is a picture we never hoped to wake up to in Yemen."

Before such hostilities not even the United Nations could choose to look the other way. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was forced to remind Saudi Arabia that despite many great efforts over the years to downplay Riyadh's war crimes, such brutal attacks against civilians could not simply go unanswered, let alone unaddressed.

"I remind all parties that attacks directed against civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited by international humanitarian law".

That statement was quickly followed by that of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"The escalation in fighting only exacerbates a dire humanitarian crisis and the suffering of the Yemeni people."

For the past 5 months of so, and due to much political apathy on the part of not only the United Nations but the international community as a whole the Kingdom has made a habit of targeted civilians and civilian facilities, a move destined to inflict maximum pain on a population already exhausted by war, famine and deteriorating living conditions across the board.

As noted by Save the Children, the escalation of the conflict has resulted in a 60 percent increase in civilian casualties in the last three months of 2021, with 2022 already poised to have wider consequences for civilians. If we take into consideration that Yemen's debilitating humanitarian crisis, one of the worst in modern history, has been solely architected by Riyadh to force Yemen to bend a knee to its will, any further escalation could be classified as a crime against humanity.

While many will argue that Saudi Arabia will get away with it, as it has done since late March 2015 when it unilaterally declared war on Yemen, it is evident that the world is running out of patience, and maybe more to the point excuses.
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