

STOP THE WAR: ON SAUDI-LED ATTACK AND 'PRE-FAMINE' CONDITIONS IN YEMEN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Middle East

While Saudi Arabia is struggling to salvage its image in the aftermath of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside its consulate in Istanbul, another human rights crisis triggered by its actions confronts the kingdom. According to the United Nations, [the war on Yemen, waged by a Saudi-led coalition](#) for over three years with American support, has pushed 14 million people, about half of the country's population, into "pre-famine" conditions. So far, Saudi Arabia has had a free run in Yemen. Despite mounting criticism of his handling of the attack on one of the poorest Arab countries, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the main architect of the war, has evaded international pressure to cease hostilities. During the course of the war, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has progressively worsened. Saudi Arabia started the attack in March 2015 after Shia Houthi rebels captured parts of Yemen, including the capital city Sana'a. Riyadh saw the Houthis as Iranian proxies and was worried they would establish stable rule in its backyard. For the sake of legitimacy, the Saudis claimed they were fighting on behalf of the globally recognised government of Yemen, led by President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi who is reported to be residing in Riyadh. But the war has reached a bloody stalemate as the Houthis still remain powerful in northern Yemen and the government controls the southern parts, including Aden.

In war-hit Yemen, mothers skip meals to save their children

The conflict has already killed over 6,000 civilians and injured 10,000 more. Unable to defeat the rebels militarily, the Saudi coalition has imposed a blockade on the country, worsening Yemen's food and medicines scarcity. Half of the country's medical facilities are not functional. And at least 22 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 14 million are extremely dependent on aid for survival. Besides, there was a deadly cholera outbreak in the country that has affected at least 1.1 million people. None of this has deterred Saudi Arabia from continuing to pound Yemen. It hasn't eased the blockade even after the UN warned of a famine. The international community, which has rightfully criticised Riyadh over the Khashoggi case, failed to act while Yemen was being methodically destroyed. This war has to stop. If Saudi Arabia has geopolitical concerns about Iran's growing influence, it should address them directly with Tehran, not by punishing the people of Yemen. It must immediately cease the bombing campaign, lift the blockade and allow food and medicine supplies into Yemen. This will clear the way for talks between the Yemeni government and the rebels. The obvious lesson of the last three years of this disastrous conflict is that there is no military solution to the Yemen crisis. The sooner this is heeded, the better it will be for Yemen's people.

The immediate task is to dial down the tensions over Sabarimala

M.J. Akbar should have resigned. Or else, asked to go

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