

Breaking The Silence on Yemen

By Maxim Nikolenko.

There is a silent genocide being committed under our name. This genocide is ignored by the Anglo-American media, it consumes thousands of innocent lives, and it surges the stock prices of Lockheed Martin and other war-making corporate entities, who arm and rule the vast security apparatus of American Empire.

There is a collusion of American policymakers with a multi-billion-dollar war-for-profit industry, known popularly as 'Deep State.' A product of this government within the government can be found in unprecedented allocation of taxpayer dollars to military expenses. Before leaving office, President Obama signed a budget bill which appropriates \$619 billion to the Pentagon. The new administration under President Trump aims to beat that figure. Furthermore, there are arms deals, often with the most repressive regimes on Earth, that seem to ignore the magnitude of human suffering inflicted.

Over 2 years of war in Yemen have resulted in perhaps the worst humanitarian disaster of our time, a man-made catastrophe, fostered by deliberate ignorance and profiteering.

Today, 17 million Yemenis don't have enough food to eat. An undeclared famine is consuming thousands of lives, the consequence of an ongoing Saudi-led coalition war against the Houthi rebels who control vast territories of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a. The Saudi-led coalition conducted thousands of airstrikes against the group, with many falling on civilian infrastructure such as homes, hospitals, schools, roads, and vital ports for food. The United States is generously providing intelligence assistance to the Saudi-led air campaigns, and the enforcement of a naval blockade against 28 million men, women and children to stop Houthis from receiving Iranian weapons, as we are told. **It is a lie.** A naval blockade did not stop Houthis receiving Iranian weapons, as virtually no ships were found transporting them in the first place.

However, the blockade limits the flow of vital goods such as food, modern equipment, and medicines for hospitals. Before the conflict began, Yemen was vastly dependent on food imports. Riyadh and Washington were certainly aware. Thus, a blockade was extended to limit the flow of air cargo, when Saudi jets bombed the runway of the country's main airport in Sana'a.

Recently, Yemen's health ministry **estimated** that more than 10,000 people have died because the airport in Sana'a was closed, and they could not receive a life-saving medical treatment abroad. This tragedy represents just a small fraction of the impact of blockade on the country.

Famine is consuming more lives.

We don't know about that famine in the West because it is unreported and undeclared; we don't know the names of its victims because they are unmentioned, because they died without a trace of record, or were too young to even have received a name. Yet we did know when President Trump was in Riyadh, meeting with an infamously repressive absolute monarchy, and signing deals - many deals. In fact, over \$380 billion of agreements were signed between the two countries. Indeed, an Art of the Deal in action. The fact that Saudi Arabia is the last country on Earth where women can't drive, or where dissent is repressed with military sieges, is irrelevant. The suffering of Yemenis also fell on deaf ears, as nothing obstructed Washington from including a massive arms deal in the package, the cost of which tops \$109.7 billion.

Such arms contracts are not new. During his two terms in office, President Obama **offered** Saudi Arabia military contracts with a combined sum exceeding \$115 billion. Thus, President Trump passed the test. He has become a suitable guardian of deep state. The war-thirsty generals applauded and on Monday, after the deal was announced, the stocks of Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, and General Dynamics surged to new peaks.

The corporate media outlet CNN Money **celebrated**: "Defense stocks at record highs

on Trump-Saudi deal.”

For CEOs in suits and ties, it was another successful business day. For tens of thousands of Yemenis, that ‘business’ prescribes an imminent death sentence.

The true ramifications of a naval blockade never received proper coverage in the media. For about two years, the periodical reports on humanitarian situation had warned that 6-7 million people are on the brink of famine. Nonetheless, famine itself has not been formally declared. The [article](#) on TIME explains: “The last time famine was formally declared, in Somalia in 2011, most of the 260,000 victims had already died.”

The case of Yemen is no different, though the result is likely to be worse.

A widely used phrase, ‘on the brink of famine’ is euphemism for what the U.S-based [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) (IPC) describes as Humanitarian Emergency. This is a condition where acute malnutrition levels exceed 15% and 1-2 deaths are occurring within the population of 10,000 per day.

The earliest IPC overview I managed to find [was published](#) on June 1, 2015. In the report, 6,071,831 Yemenis are placed under humanitarian emergency (phase 4) category. Another 6,839,011 citizens experienced a food crisis, classified as phase 3, which in practice translates: they don’t have enough food to eat.

No one was placed under the fifth phase, which is famine.

The IPC map displays the worst affected provinces of Yemen. All coastal governorates by the Red Sea experienced a humanitarian emergency, indeed a product of the naval blockade.

Meanwhile, Sa’ada was the worst affected province; it is the birth place of the Houthi movement and a territory where Saudi planes brought entire cities to the ground. The result- a food emergency covering 50% of the population.

The remaining governorates where emergency was declared are in the South, on the front lines of war, and in the territory where coalition forces, the Saudi-fostered militia, and the American troops are stationed.

The head of International Red Cross in 2015 said: “Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years.”

The situation has only deteriorated since 2015.

Another IPC report was published in June 2016. It presented a similar map with the same provinces affected by emergency, though the number of Yemenis who urgently need aid had risen to 7,000,115.

The **latest overview** published on 1 March 2017, presented a lower estimate for the population under food emergency, at 6,778,930. Starvation levels, however, had virtually remained unchanged in the coalition-controlled South and coastal provinces by the Red Sea.

By the time of writing this article, 813 days have passed since June 1, 2015 when the first IPC overview was issued. Assuming one person died daily within the population of 10,000, and somewhere between 6 to 7 million Yemenis live under food emergency, it is somewhat plausible that 528,450 men, women, and children had died in the mentioned period. Of course, no one knows the exact number.

In this war, most people die not from bombs and artillery, but from starvation and preventable illnesses that become untreatable under extreme shortages of medicine.

This ongoing Holocaust of civilian lives is met with indifference in the media, and utter lack of action from the United Nations.

Officially, the death toll from 28 months of war hasn't surpassed 10,000. At the end of summer in 2016, Jamie McGoldrick, a United Nations humanitarian coordinator, was the first to issue a statement, revising the official death toll from 6000 to 10,000.

The estimate did not change 11 months later. The World Health Organization keeps its own record of war casualties and fatalities. The last **time I reported on Yemen** in May, their death toll was estimated at 8010. On July 15, 2017, the World Health Organization **issued a report** stating: "From 19 March 2015 to 15 July 2017, conflict in Yemen has claimed 8389 lives and left 47,741 others injured, according to health facility-based reports."

Yemenis suffered from an acute shortage of doctors and a lack of accessible medical facilities even before the war, while since 2015, hundreds of hospitals have been bombed by coalition air strikes or damaged by fighting on the ground. As Reliefweb reported in December 2016, "recent estimates suggest that more than half of 3,500 assessed health facilities are now closed or only partially functioning."

But these are irrelevant facts to the media, unworthy of mentioning.

Ground reporting is rare, uploaded in short segments, and usually covers the humanitarian crisis from 'functioning' hospitals. One of the latest video reports, **published** on 27 July 2017 by BBC News, was filmed in a functioning hospital and was no more than one minute and thirty-one seconds in length. This is how much the British Broadcasting Corporation cares about the genocide, partially committed with the use of British-made bombs, and silenced under the British diplomatic cover of its client states.

Another media conglomerate, the corporate NBC news, **also visited** Yemen, reporting from a functioning clinic in Al Hudaydah province. The report depicted children in a shocking state, malnourished to nothing but skin and bones, as if they just been rescued from a concentration camp. These are not children under five, but teenagers on the border of life and death after enduring long periods of hunger. The doctor of a clinic tells NBC news: "There is a great shortage of medication", but in the two minutes and thirty-three seconds of the report, absolutely nothing was said about a naval blockade criminally imposed upon the country.

When the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, Adel al-Jubeir, was softly

challenged on the coalition's use of indiscriminate bombing by the co-anchor of CBS, Norah O'Donnell, he replied: "We are very careful in picking targets, we have very precise weapons, we work with our allies, including the United States on these targets."

The precise weapons are those made in the United States and countries of Europe. Of course, Norah O'Donnell did not ask any follow-up questions on the role of U.S in coordinating the targets.

A team from RT Arabic also paid a visit to Yemen's Al Hudaydah, one of the worst effected provinces by naval blockade. However, they visited a remote coastal village with no hospitals and practically no food. The **images captured** on camera resemble horrors of famine. Adults; some too weak to walk, crawled on hot sand, mutilated by hunger and hopelessness beyond their age. One elderly man told the camera crew: "We don't have anything, we're blockaded from the air, land and sea." Earlier, a Press TV correspondent, Mohamed al-Attab, **visited** a fishing community in Al Hudaydah where villagers blamed coalition planes for bombing their boats, as they also seem to have been spotted as military targets by Saudi Arabia and their coalition.

Meanwhile, perhaps the most widely reported tragedy of the unreported crisis is a cholera outbreak. When I last wrote a piece on Yemen, the disease had consumed over 300 lives. **Today**, the death toll tops 2003 and over 542,000 people have been infected, making it one of the worst outbreaks of the still-young 21st century. It is an outbreak of unprecedented proportions for a country of 28 million, and it is spreading out of control.

The Saudi-led coalition and its Western backers are showing no mercy. Subsiding a blockade for humanitarian access is the option, arrogantly declined. In fact, in June, one million cholera vaccination doses were approved for Yemen by the International Coordinating Group, only to be **suspended** with request of the so-called Yemeni government. This government is nothing more than a word on paper, represented by a team of marionettes whose dependence on the Saudi coalition is absolute.

Yet their order held validity, and 500,000 vaccines prepared for shipment to Yemen were **redirected**, with Christian Lindmeier, a spokesman of World Health Organization arguing that they will be re-routed to places where people “might need them more urgently.” Of course, the place of the world’s biggest cholera outbreak is not in urgent need of cholera vaccines.

The criminality of such a decision was forgotten in the media. No one asked the Houthis if they would allow cholera vaccines, though Houthis are in control of the most populated provinces, and seem to maintain a degree of order absent in the territories of the officially recognized government.

The UN’s reaction to the war crimes of Saudi Arabia, United States, United Arab Emirates and other participating parties is expressed in soft condemnations and nothing else. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia was recently elected to the UN women’s rights commission to advocate for the beautiful half of humanity, while refusing driver’s licenses to women at home and starving thousands of mothers and their children to death in neighboring Yemen.

A double standard of the United Nations was vividly demonstrated when all 15 members of the Security Council voted in favor of potentially devastating sanctions on the civilian population of North Korea, to punish Pyongyang for aggression, we are told. The biggest aggressor and arms-exporter in the world, however, enjoys impunity, with its client states retaining diplomatic protection and prestige.

Take the case of the United States’ and United Arab Emirates’ ground actions in Southern Yemen. The two countries have been exposed running a secret network of prisons where an unknown number of detainees experienced **extreme torture**. One of the techniques practiced on them is nicknamed the “grill”, in which the victim is tied to a spit and spun in a circle of fire. The United States immediately stated that its forces are only involved in ‘interrogation’, though that word can be synonymous with many actions.

Just couple weeks ago, thousands of coalition-backed militiamen were **redirected to**

Shabwa province to wage an offensive against Al Qaeda, an Islamist group which maintains control over vast territories amidst a virtual absence of law from the officially recognized Yemeni government. Supporting the offensive are dozens of advisers from U.A.E and the United States. Defeating Al Qaeda, however, is not their main priority. In fact, Al Qaeda had previously stated that its members are fighting alongside the coalition-backed forces.

The real aim of the offensive against Islamists is oil, which Shabwa is abundant with.

Yemen is a modern of symbol of viciousness and greed, exercised by the world's mighty. Silence is perhaps the main force which keeps the Empire and its client states immune from responsibility.

Back home, the society of the American Empire remains deeply polarized. Thousands of people across the country took to the streets, protesting after an ISIS-style car attack by a white nationalist left one person dead in Charlottesville, a tragedy made possible by years of regurgitated identity politics.

The protests condemned racism and hate.

Our government's support for the ongoing genocide of Yemenis, however, is a product of our collective racism and our indifference, perpetuated by our silence.

So far, there have been no protests when Obama signed military contracts with Saudi Arabia. No one has protested when a similar deal was inscribed by President Trump. Virtually no one has protested for civilians killed with our bombs, dropped by our client states. No big marches have been held in New York and other major cities decrying the ongoing blockade, which condemned to famine an entire society with a rich history and cultural identity.

It is time; it is past time to break the silence.

Yemen deserves better.