

Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

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It came to my attention through my nephew working in Qatar that a humanitarian crisis is happening in Yemen in the Middle East. The United Nations warns that Yemen could have the worst famine the world has seen in decades with millions of victims. This is a result of the military strategy of Saudi Arabia and its coalition to blockade much needed food, medicine and critical supplies to Yemen citizens. As an ally, the U.S. is involved in this mass human suffering. Basic facts to know:

- As many as 8.4million people face starvation due to the decision of the Saudi Arabia led coalition to close Yemen's air, land and sea ports.
- US drone strikes and US Special Forces into Yemen have killed civilians as well. The US Air Force is also refueling Saudi fighter jets in mid-air.
- It is predicted that the figures will surpass the Holocaust count of people dying.
- More than 1,000 children are dying each week....143 per day.
- 1.8 million children are malnourished, including 400,000 under the age of 5 who suffer acute malnutrition.
- Three quarters of Yemen's population of 22.2 million people need assistance.
- Armed conflict has taken the lives of 12,000 people but that number is greatly exceeded by the number of people dying from malnutrition and otherwise preventable diseases such as: respiratory infections, measles, cholera and now diphtheria,

For more than two years Saudi/US bombing has targeted civilian infrastructure. This means hospitals, schools, factories, sea ports, electrical power stations and water treatment facilities have all been targeted and destroyed. Education is now extinct in Yemen. The destruction of the infrastructure means the spread of water-borne diseases like cholera. And most recently diphtheria.

According to UNICEF official Manuel Fontaine, "Without access to safe water and sanitation children fall ill and are often unable to be treated as hospitals and health centers either do not function or are overcrowded."

Protests occurred in New York City and other cities on December 11th to "Lift the Blockade" and "Stop US-Saudi War Crimes". The protest in New York City began in Ralph Bunche Park. Mr. Bunche was one of the founders of the United Nations and in 1950, the first black American to received the Nobel Peace Prize. Carved into the stone pavement are these words by Mr. Bunche, "Peace, to have meaning for many who have know only suffering in both peace and war, must be translated into bread or rice, shelter, health and education as well as freedom and human dignity – a steadily better life. If peace is

to be secure, long suffering and long starved forgotten peoples of the world, the underprivileged must begin to realize without delay the promise of a new day and a better life”.

What is particularly disheartening is that the richest country in the Middle East deems it necessary to punish the innocent men, women and children in the poorest country of the Middle East without regard for the dignity of human life.

The crimes being committed are in violation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights as well as many other international treaties.

We as Christians are called to be the light, the hope for those on the fringes. God calls us to be our brother's keeper. There is indeed suffering in many places of the world, for example Syria. Complacency is all too easy with me included. We think these conflicts are happening “over there” and don't really affect us. Certainly Christ calls us to a higher standard of love and compassion.

Here are three suggestions of what you might do to show hope to the world:

1. Call your Senators and Representatives NOW and ask them to support the Yemen people by encouraging Saudi and ALL members of the coalition to lift the blockade and assist the people in rebuilding their war-ravaged country. Also, US money should not be supporting weapons that kill, destroy and leave in ruins a poor country.
2. Support UMCOR by giving to the International Disaster Response Advance. To donate by phone call: 1-888-252-6174. To donate by check (All gifts are tax deductible.) Make your check payable to: Advance GCFA (Advance number on the memo line - #9882450.) Mail to UMCOR PO Box 9068 GPO New York, NY 10087-9068
3. PRAY daily for this situation. A medical doctor, Dr. Abu Dhar, from Yemen has a good model to pray in times like this:
“May God help us. In the name of God, the most gracious, the most Merciful. Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful Ruler on the day of reckoning. You alone do we worship and you alone do we ask for help. Guide us on the straight path, the path of those who have received Your grace.”

Lord, hear our prayers.