

“A Humanitarian Catastrophe”: The Five Countries Enabling Saudi’s War in Yemen

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“This is not the first time that the ports have been closed...And every time they close the ports, the situation gets worse and food prices increase to the point where we can’t provide for our children,” [explained](#) Dr. Sherin Varkey, the Deputy Representative of United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Yemen, to the BBC.

In Saudi’s ongoing military intervention in Yemen, Saudi-led blockades have strained access to basic resources like food, water so much that approximately 70 percent of the country is in serious need of humanitarian assistance.

The conflict in Yemen is largely seen as a proxy war between Saudi and Iran. Saudi leads an international coalition that backs the President, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, whereas Iran backs the Houthi rebel movement.

Saudi Arabia is not alone in its military intervention, the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, and the UAE provide substantial arms and/or logistical support, enabling the oil-rich kingdom to continue its mission, including conducting massive air strikes which [Human Rights Watch](#) flag as war crimes.

In retaliation for a missile fired from rebel-held territory suspected to be modified by Iran, Saudi enforced a total blockade for all air and naval ports, preventing critical medical supplies and food from entering the country for a week.

Activists in the country are now reporting that a widespread famine with the potential to kill millions is a distinct possibility.

According to Perry Cammack, a Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, there is little reason to hope the war in Yemen will end any time soon.

Saudi “lack[s] an exit strategy, which creates a dynamic of steady escalation, at the expense of the Yemeni population.” On top of that, “Yemen is far more important to Saudi Arabia than it is to Iran, so that such escalation has limited utility in pressuring Iran.”

In other words, Saudi is stuck in an expensive war that it doesn’t know how to win, and Yemen, according to Cammack sits on the verge of “becoming a humanitarian catastrophe.”

These are the five biggest contributors to Saudi's war.

The United States

- When President Trump visited Saudi in May, he pledged to give \$350 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia over the next 10 years
- The U.S. notoriously refuels Saudi jets mid air, ensuring its aerial campaign, which has been flagged as source of war crimes, can maintain a near-constant tempo
- Earlier this week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a symbolic bill calling the U.S.' military involvement in Yemen unauthorized

Germany

- Largely seen as the stronghold of European values, Germany approved a \$526 million weapons-export deal to Saudi and Egypt
- The deal marks a 500 percent increase in arms exports since last year
- Germany is within the top five arms exporters in the entire world

The United Kingdom

- The U.K. has sold approximately \$4.7 billion in arms to Saudi since its intervention in Yemen began
- This roughly reflects a 500 percent increase in the arms dealt to Saudi before its involvement in Yemen
- Former Defense Minister Michael Fallon told the U.K. Parliament to refrain from criticizing Saudi Arabia for fear that future arms deals with the kingdom would be jeopardized

France

- France approved around \$18 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia in 2015
- President Macron visited Saudi to address the rising tensions with Iran, Yemen and Lebanon, emphasizing the need to work with Saudi despite its promotion of [regional and internal](#) instability

- At the same visit, Macron reportedly announced a new deal with close Saudi-ally UAE to sell them two warships

The United Arab Emirates

- The UAE is perhaps Saudi's most reliable and active ally, providing logistical support and training for Yemeni forces
- UAE jets have conducted airstrikes, performing "the heaviest air strikes that Sana'a has endured," as [described](#) by one Yemeni official
- The UAE hired ex-Blackwater CEO Erik Prince to raise a mercenary of Colombians to operate in Yemen in order to avoid losing Emirati lives

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