

# Biological Warfare: US & Saudis Use Cholera to Kill Yemenis

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*Chemical/biological warfare is the term used to describe the use of chemical or biological agents as weapons to injure or kill humans, livestock, or plants. Chemical weapons are devices that use chemicals to inflict death or injury; biological weapons use pathogens or organisms that cause disease. Pathogens include bacteria, viruses, fungi, and toxins (poisons produced by animals or plants). – Library of Congress, Science Reference Services*

Since March 2015, the US has [supported Saudi Arabia](#) and its allies in [their criminal war](#) of aggression against Yemen, committing [daily war crimes](#), especially against civilians, who are now suffering [a cholera epidemic](#) with [more than 400,000](#) victims. Cholera is caused by the [bacteria Vibrio cholera](#) and [has been weaponized](#) by the US, Japan (in World War II), South Africa (under apartheid), Iraq (under Saddam), and other states. To be most effective, cholera must be spread through water supplies. That's what's happening in Yemen now. More than two years of bombing has largely destroyed [Yemen's infrastructure](#), water and sewage systems are destroyed, hospitals and clinics are destroyed, and the population of about 25 million has [almost no protection](#) against the [spread of cholera](#). The UN says Yemen's cholera epidemic is "the largest ever recorded in any country in a single year since records began."

This may not be literal biological warfare, but it is certainly biological warfare by other means. This is biological warfare in reality, if not in law. This is biological warfare in one of the world's poorest countries, supported across two American administrations, with no sign of letting up. US slaughter of civilians has been ratcheting up in recent months, not only in Afghanistan but in places like Iraq (Mosul) and Syria (Raqqqa). This is [what empires do](#), especially as their authority begins to wane..

And in Yemen, the US continues to support and participate in this panoply of criminal acts with little objection from Congress, most news media, or the general public. Few seem to care about the deliberate spread of a [toxin that affects](#) mostly children and that "causes a person's intestines to create massive amounts of fluid that then produces thin, grayish brown diarrhea." Where treatment is unavailable or impossible, cholera can be lethal in a matter of days. As a NOVA [program on bioterror](#) put it,

"because cholera is readily treated with proper medical attention, it is less likely to be used as an agent of terror in the United States."

And since rehydration is essential to recovery, cholera is most effectively deployed in a place like Yemen where the water and sewage systems have been bombed into a state of high lethality.

There are laws against all this, not that it matters much..

At present, [124 nations](#) are member states of the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC), established by international treaty ([the Rome Statute](#)) to have jurisdiction over the international crimes of aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The United States is not among the member states, having signed the original treaty and then withdrawn its signature. Sudan, Israel, and Russia also signed the original treaty, then withdrew. Yemen voted in 2007 to ratify the treaty, then [re-voted to retract](#) ratification. There are 41 other countries, including [India](#), Pakistan, Turkey, and [China](#), that have rejected the treaty..

The US did not sign the war crimes treaty until December 31, 2000, when President Clinton was a lame duck who had not asked the Senate to ratify the treaty. On May 6, 2002, John R. Bolton, the Bush administration's Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, communicated the US position to the UN. Here is the full [text of the letter](#) to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan:

This is to inform you, in connection with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted on July 17, 1998, that the United States does not intend to become a party to the treaty. Accordingly, the United States has no legal obligations arising from its signature on December 31, 2000. The United States requests that its intention not to become a party, as expressed in this letter, be reflected in the depositary's status lists relating to this treaty..

There was a time when the US, lacking "legal obligations" not to commit war crimes, might still have felt some moral obligation not to do so (as well as the capacity to overcome it, for example, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Now our national interests, usually undefined, put us in the company of thuggish police states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait in their unprovoked, savagely genocidal assault on a defenseless Yemeni population whose Houthi minority had the effrontery to want to be left alone and was willing to fight for that right..

There was a time, before there was a United States, that this country fought for the same right. We've long since become a country that doesn't want to leave anyone else alone. Now we have a president who demands complete personal loyalty, and who's more than happy to molest anyone who even appears to fall short, which happens to include the majority of Americans. This can't end well.

*William M. Boardman has over 40 years experience in theatre, radio, TV, print journalism, and non-fiction, including 20 years in the Vermont judiciary. He has received honors from Writers Guild of America, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Vermont Life magazine, and an Emmy Award nomination from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.*

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