

# One Year of Bloodshed in Yemen: US and UK are Accomplices in Saudi Coalition War Crimes

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*Almost one year has passed since Operation Decisive Storm was launched. The appalling level of human suffering, combined with a mounting sense of hopelessness, is exacerbating internal divisions and sectarian animosity. Status quo is clearly not sustainable. The resilience of people in Yemen has been stretched beyond human limits. ~ Ms Kate Gilmore, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights*

On the 26th March 2015, one year ago today, the Saudi led coalition launched its 'Operation Decisive Storm' against the Yemeni people. One year on, the intensity of the attacks has not subsided and the wholesale slaughter of civilians and deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure continues unabated. Aided and abetted primarily by the US and the UK, the Saudi regime is destroying Yemen's cultural heritage, bombing masjids, schools, hospitals, market places, wedding parties, fishing boats, telecommunication centres, electrical power plants, factories, agricultural lands and livestock.

The Saudi regime is doing everything in its power to ensure the Yemeni people have no means of survival or sustenance under a crippling blockade that has been in place since the inception of the war of aggression against Yemen. A blockade that is "lamented, decried and condemned" by an international community that hides behind familiar rhetoric while ensuring the flow of arms continues unhindered into Saudi weapons depots.

## US Cluster Munitions



[US supplied Cluster Munitions CBU-105 used in Saudi air-strikes in Yemen](#)

[Use of Cluster Munitions](#) has been recorded 56 times in Yemen by various on-the-ground sources. Cluster Munitions supplied, primarily, by the US. The US is a *non signatory* of the [Cluster Munitions Convention](#) that bans their use, stockpiling and transfer. However the US' own export regulations state unequivocally that the munitions must meet a less than

one percent failure rate [unexploded ordnance] and must not be used against civilian targets.

Both regulations are being flouted by the Saudi-led coalition who are liberally bombing civilian areas, and leaving behind, a greater than 1% trail of deadly unexploded bomblets, that can sever limbs and tear flesh into shreds when detonated in the hands or under the feet of curious children. These bomblets are recognised as presenting an even greater threat than land-mines for decades after a conflict ends.

Cluster munitions themselves are a hideous invention. [According to US Defence Department contracts](#), Saudi Arabia purchased 1,300 CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Cluster Munitions from Textron Defence Systems, shipment to be completed by December 2015. According to HRW reports, the UAE had previously received an unknown number of CBU-105 from Textron in June 2010.

The Sensor Fuzed Weapon is a marvel of military technology, says its maker, Textron Defense Systems. An advanced "cluster bomb," it is designed to spray 40 individual projectiles of molten copper, destroying enemy tanks across a 30-acre swath of battlefield.

Imagine the devastation when these munitions are used in densely populated civilian areas, the effects of this rain of molten metal and shrapnel on the human body, projectiles intended to pierce armour plating will decimate and mutilate human beings over a massive area.

The areas worst hit in Yemen are the Ansarullah strongholds of Saada and Hajjah in the north of the country, signalling intent by the Saudi-led coalition to wipe out all opposition to their corrupt and oppressive neocolonialism in Yemen.

Dr R S Karim of [Mona Relief](#), a Yemen grass roots NGO, told me:

Saada is completely finished, they have bombed it into oblivion. The suffering there is indescribable, the worst we have seen in the whole of Yemen. Access for humanitarian aid is impossible, we are told if we cross the red line we are dead

Brigadier General Ahmed Asiri of the Saudi Coalition has declared all of Saada a military target thus violating all international laws that dictate civilian targets must be differentiated from military ones.

The US, in supplying these Cluster Munitions is an accessory to war crimes and in violation of all human rights laws and conventions. The Saudi-led coalition is using them as a weapon of mass murder, a crime being investigated by none other than the Saudis themselves, since their [appointment](#) to chair of a key human rights panel within the UNHRC. The beneficiaries, as always, are the weapons manufacturers who congratulate themselves on a "[clean battlefield operation](#)".

It really is an extremely sophisticated weapon. Knowing that we are in no way, shape or form contributing to [civilian suffering] is really a very satisfying place to be ~ Mark D. Rafferty, vice president of business development for Textron

Perhaps Mr Rafferty and his White House clients would like to visit Yemen and survey the mangled remains of men, women, children and livestock strewn across the “clean battlefield”. Irrefutable evidence of their cynical involvement in an illegal war of aggression that has been allowed to continue for 365 days, maintained and endorsed by US & UK military industrial complex profiteering.

### UK Weapons Supply



### [Campaign Against Arms Trade](#)

According to a report by [Diane Abbott in The Guardian](#) on 25th March 2016, the Committee on Arms Exports Controls met for the first time in two years on Wednesday 23rd March 2016. This was in response to increasing international condemnation of Britain’s role in the war crimes being committed against the Yemeni people by the Saudi-led coalition.

Their message was clear, unanimous and withering: the UK is [breaking its own laws](#) and fuelling a humanitarian catastrophe by selling arms to Saudi Arabia. British law is also clear: it is illegal to sell arms to a state that is at a “clear risk” of committing international humanitarian crimes. But over the past year alone, Britain has sold around £6bn worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia, whose campaign in Yemen is targeting civilians - [191 such attacks](#) have collectively been reported by the UN, HRW and Amnesty.

The same report accuses Philip Hammond, UK Foreign Minister, of lying in his statement to the Conservative Middle East Council:

We have been clear with the coalition partners from the outset about the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law and I have said in Parliament, and I will say again here: we have looked at every allegation of breach of international humanitarian law, and we have found no evidence of breach of international humanitarian law, and we urge the coalition to go onto the front foot, to investigate when there are allegations and be open about what they find. Things happen in war, mistakes get made and one should be honest about mistakes when they are made. ~ Philip Hammond

Diane Abbott points out that David Mepham, UK Director of Human Rights Watch, said he had personally handed Hammond, a comprehensive report complete with GPS co-ordinates, detailing all Saudi air-strikes on Yemeni schools, hospitals and market places.

[The UK Government] has had that evidence for months, and therefore it is

extraordinary the line can come back that they do not have the evidence, when that evidence has been shared with them for a considerable period of time. ~ David Mephram

Of course the UK Government is lying. The UK represents 36% of Saudi Arabia's overall imports. Prime Minister, David Cameron has been aggressively pushing for trade deals with the totalitarian regime. According to the [Campaign Against the Arms Trade](#), UK arms sales to Saudi totalled £2.95 billion for the first nine months of 2015, and about £7bn since Cameron took office, including a contract for 72 Euro-fighter Typhoon jets.

In January 2016, during Prime Ministers Question Time, Cameron reinforced the double speak:

We have the strictest rules for arms exports of almost any country anywhere in the world. And let me remind him [Jeremy Corbyn] that we are not a member of the Saudi-led coalition, we are not directly involved in the Saudi-led coalition's operations, British personnel are not involved in carrying out strikes.

However, a [report](#) just one week prior to this extraordinary denial from Cameron, stated clearly that British and American officials are present in the Riyadh command and control centre for Saudi air-strikes on Yemen. Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, painstakingly clarified that while the US and UK operatives have full access to the Saudi targets, they allegedly have no role in choosing them.

So does this mean that UK & US officials are privy to pending war crimes, not of their choosing, and regardless, stand by while Yemeni civilians are massacred by the weapons they have supplied, not intended for civilian targets? Where does responsibility begin and end?

The UK, further obfuscates its supply of weapons to Saudi Arabia by detailing the majority of items sold as "[components](#)". Components for military training aircraft, components for combat naval vessels, components for bombs, components for air-to-surface rockets.



Not once, as an example, do they detail the [UK Manufactured PGM 500 Hakim Cruise Missiles](#) that were used to obliterate a Yemeni factory near Sanaa, September 23 2015. Remains of the missiles were identified at the site of the blast. One civilian was murdered in this strike and another essential civilian structure destroyed, but the UK steadfastly denies responsibility on all counts of accessory to war crimes.

### **Arms Embargoes and Economic Sanctions**

During the UNHRC, 31st Session, Jan Fermon, Secretary General of [IADL](#) [International Association of Democratic Lawyers], made a powerful argument calling for divestment from Saudi Arabia. He called for economic sanctions and arms embargoes. He condemned the decision to elect Saudi officials to the key panel on Human Rights, stating that this gave them the power to decide Human Rights standards globally, and would enable them to crush human rights activists under the UNHRC umbrella. He argued that the UNHRC has thus become a weapon in the hands of the Saudis to be turned against the very principles they should be protecting.

He described the despotic Saudi regime as one of the worst human rights violators, consistently violating all rights to peace and development in the region. Their system of “para judicial” killings to silence dissenters rendered them purveyors of terror and was “one step too far”. He described initiatives under way in Belgium to facilitate the taking back of control by Muslim communities, infiltrated for years by Saudi Wahhabi agents.

[In February 2016](#), the EU adopted a non-binding resolution calling for an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia over Yemen.

The European Parliament’s call for an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia is unprecedented and reflects growing frustration at the conduct of war in Yemen by the Saudi Air Force. Saudi Arabia is a top arms client of the UK and France, and there is evidence that these weapons have been used in gross violations of international law in Yemen, where thousands of civilians have been killed since the start of the war in March 2015, ~ Alyn Smith, Greens/EFA foreign affairs spokesperson.

For the US and UK however, it appears that the Military Industrial Complex profits far outweigh the value of human life in Yemen. While the flow of weapons and finance continues to flourish, they will turn a blind eye to the universal humanitarian suffering in Yemen. The over 8000 lives lost, of which more than 2000 are children, the tens of thousands injured and without proper medical care fade into insignificance when the billion dollar arms deal glistens in front of their eyes.

The largest absolute monarchy in the world, committing heinous acts of terror globally, is given precedence over diplomatic mediation and brokering of a peace deal, a peace deal that was on the verge of being finalised just as this illegal war of aggression was launched against the people of Yemen.

Jamal Bennomar, the former UN peace envoy to Yemen, stated very openly that the warring factions were actually reaching an agreement before the first bomb hit.

When this campaign started, one thing that was significant but went unnoticed is that the Yemenis were close to a deal that would institute power-sharing with all sides, including the Houthis,

As Jan Fermon stated categorically at the UNHRC this month.

*"If we fail to take direct action against Saudi Arabia, nothing will change"*

### **"Saudi Arabia is Committing Genocide in Yemen"**

Last night in his [speech to the nation](#), Yemen's Ansarullah movement leader, Sayyed Abdul-Malik-al-Houthi said Saudi Arabia is committing genocide against the Yemeni people as it continues with its deadly aggression against the impoverished nation.

He accused the US & UK of assisting in the destruction of Yemen and the wiping out of an entire generation, including women and children that are deliberately targeted by the Saudi coalition. He implicated the UN, whom he said only draw up charters to serve oppressive and dictatorial regimes and whose silence over human rights abuses in Yemen has contributed to the suffering of the Yemeni people.

In my conversations with Ibrahim al Dalmy, Director of Al Masirah, Yemen TV, he told me

Yemen is wounded, severely wounded, but we will never succumb to the Saudi alliance brutality and oppression. We will resist, we will heal and we will rebuild without the help of the international community who think they can profit from the devastation they have sanctioned"

This point was reiterated by Diane Abbott in her article:

To fund the reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure in Yemen, largely destroyed by the Saudis with our weapons, the United Nations has asked international donors such as DFID for £1.8bn, which approximates to the profits the UK arms industry has made off Saudi's intervention in Yemen. We must escape the cycle of selling arms to dubious regimes to sow destruction and then using the taxes on those arms sales to finance an aid budget to clean up the mess. To stop this cycle the government needs to do nothing more than

obey the law.

US and UK lawlessness is the root cause of the bloodshed in Yemen. When national and international laws are blatantly broken by their own arbiters, the world descends into a quagmire of chaos in which only the innocent drown while the criminals benefit. War crimes and grave violations of Humanitarian law go unpunished because their perpetrators are the judge and jury. The insanity of this dystopian system is felt most keenly by the victims of this brutal abuse whose only weapon is their solidarity and resistance against the powers who would see them eliminated in their quest for economic and geopolitical supremacy.

Yemen is far from perfect but no country in this world is perfect. We did not wage this war, we did not provoke this war. For the first 40 days of the Saudi offensive, Yemen did not fire one bullet towards Saudi Arabia. It is rank hypocrisy from Saudi Arabia to label us the aggressor. It has always been the opposite. Saudi Arabia has always been sending its filthy elements into my country and attempting to spread its disgusting Wahabi ideology. Whether Zaydi or Shafi we will never adopt this distorted, twisted, ugly version of Islam.

I would go so far as to state that Yemen has potential to be a model for true democracy in the Middle East. There are 25 million people who call Yemen home. We simply ask to be left in Peace. Is that too much to ask? ~ [Yemen: A Voice in the Wilderness](#)

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