

YEMEN CONFLICT: WORST HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the ongoing war in Yemen and the plight of its people especially women and children. The Yemen conflict has become the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. This conflict started during the Arab Uprisings of 2011 which led to the resignation of then Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, which eventually led to the civil war between the two rebel groups, namely the Houthis and the Hadis. The war turned into an international proxy war when countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran started supporting these two sects to forward their agendas. This paper also focuses on how little has been done by the international community to stop the war and take notice of the gross violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. The civil war tore the country into two parts and that led to lawlessness, violence, poverty, and human rights violations.

Keywords: Yemen, Women, Children, Conflict, Humanitarian Law, Human Rights

INTRODUCTION

Yemen went from being the heart of ancient Arabia to the poorest country in the Middle East. For the last five years, it's been torn apart by war. Local groups on the ground backed by Iran are fighting each other and the official government of Yemen, while the Saudi-led coalition bombs from above. Due to this, millions of Yemenis are caught in the fighting desperately struggling to survive. A war that is essentially a fight for dominance between arch-rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia has been destroying the Yemenis over the years. All of these factors combined have made Yemen the worst humanitarian crisis the world is facing.

The first spark of the conflict emerged during the Arab Uprisings in 2011 when Yemenis protested the country's long time ruling President Ali Abdullah Saleh criticised for causing widespread unemployment and government corruption. But one of the biggest protests came from the politically motivated Shia rebel group called the Houthis which had been at war with the government led by Saleh for years.

In 2012, Saleh was toppled and forced to hand over his position to Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, his former Vice President, who has since been running the government after things got complicated. In 2013, a United States sponsored national dialogue was established to address the future of the country and a new federal system was agreed on. But tension flared again when a proposal was made to divide Yemen into six federal regions. The Houthis and the southern separatist movement called the Hirank objected to the proposal. They said it was undermining their distinct interests and national vision. The Hadi government which seemed like the best solution at the time was not able to maintain order. So, groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Daesh took advantage of the political instability across the country.

In the meantime, the Houthis were also making territorial gains but lacked military power. Their next move came as a surprise, when they turned to Saleh, their once sworn enemy knowing that he still had military forces loyal to him. While Saleh saw this as an opportunity to regain his title. So, the two sides collaborated. The Houthis took control over the capital city Sanaa and began moving south towards Aden where President Hadi was located. So, he fled to Saudi Arabia after they seized the airport.

The Houthis' advancement was seen as a threat to Riyadh because it says that Iran is backing the rebel group. Moreover, sharing a long border means stronger Iranian influence could seep into the country. So, Saudi Arabia on the pretext of responding to Hadi's pleas formed a coalition. They set up an air and sea blockade. Then they launched an aerial campaign intending to drive the Houthis out and restore the country's internationally recognized government.

Local observers in the Yemen Data Project, 2015 say that almost a third of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes have targeted 'non-military zones' such as marketplaces, schools, hospitals, wedding ceremonies, and even funerals. In the meantime, the United States began carrying out its own campaign in Yemen. Not only was it supplying the Saudi-led coalition with billions of dollars' worth of weapons but also targeted Al Qaeda and Daesh. Since 2002, the US has carried out over two hundred strikes in Yemen. In 2018, a Saudi coalition led an attack in the northern province of Saada in Yemen killed around 43 people, and left 63 wounded. However, the coalition has repeatedly denied any accountability denying they target civilians despite them being responsible for the highest number of civilians being killed, more than any other group fighting in the war. Several human rights groups have accused them of constantly attacking markets, schools, hospitals, and other residential areas. However, they've maintained that their actions are legitimate.ⁱ

By the end of 2017, the tables began to turn, former President Saleh who for months allied with the Houthis offered to put an end to the fight with the Saudi-led coalition. But this move was seen as treacherous by the Houthis. About two days later, Saleh was found dead on the outskirts of Sanaa. The Houthis admitted to killing him. The rebels were now being targeted from all sides. Most of Saleh's supporters became anti-Houthi. Meanwhile, the Hadi government was battling a new enemy, separatist forces in the south backed militarily and financially by the United Arab Emirates. While the United Arab Emirates is still part of the Saudi-led coalition, it is said to be continuing efforts to maintain a strategic foothold in the south, crippling the once united campaign against the Houthis.

But experts warn that it is not just the United Arab Emirates but all members of the coalition are pursuing their own agendas and each side of the conflict is said to have violated humanitarian and international law. Getting an accurate death toll is difficult but in 2019 the United Nation said that at least 17,500 Yemenis were killed and injured due to the war. More

than 20 million Yemeni people are experiencing food insecurity and 10 million of them are at the risk of famine. More than three million people have been displaced and millions of Yemenis trapped in the conflict are at dire risk of starvation and disease.

WOMEN IN YEMEN

As Yemen is reeling with the worst humanitarian crisis the world has witnessed so far, the condition of women in the country has deteriorated the most. The plight of women in the country has increased ever since the war started. Their human rights have been overlooked and have been neglected the most.

The war has resulted in anarchy in the country with no stable government and complete lawlessness. Women in Yemen have little to no rights for their protection and safety. The women in Yemen are denied basic human rights especially since the war started. It's unfortunate that most of the women in the county do not know what their basic rights are. And for their every need they depend on the male members of their family.

Women are not even allowed to travel without a male guardian. If they do so, there is a high possibility that they will get taunted, harassed verbally, and physically by the officials. The condition of women is so dire that even to get a passport, they need permission from their male guardian.

Women cannot walk freely on the road if they are not wearing a burqa. They are looked down upon and verbally harassed by the public. Most women choose to wear a niqab to cover their faces but in recent times some Yemeni women have started to show their faces in public by ditching the niqab and only wearing burqa and hijab to cover their head.

Women have been stripped of their freedom, liberty, and basic rights like their right to education. Yemeni parents feel that it is a lot safer for women to stay at home because of constant airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition which has destroyed a lot of families. Only 55% of Yemeni women can read and write as compared to 85% of Yemeni men. Although there is not any law in place to restrict women from getting basic education, most educational

institutions do not permit women. The condition of education is so poor in the country that most of the rural areas have no schools, and the areas where the schools are built, they do not allow female students. Yemeni women and girls are denied their right to education mostly because of the financial condition of the family and cultural reasons. And, even girls who manage to get admitted into schools are forced to leave their education to run the household or to support their families or to take care of their siblings or their children because of the poverty and loss of earning inflicted on them by the ongoing war.ⁱⁱ

Due to the war and the ongoing COVID - 19 pandemic, the culture of child marriage has rapidly increased in the country. Women and girls are considered a burden to the family, mostly financial burden. So, they are married off early. 32% of Yemeni women are married off before the age of 18. And about 9% of them are married off before the age of 15. The level of child marriage is so high in the country that girls as young as 8 years are forced into a marriage which exposes them to serious physical and emotional harm. They are denied their right to education as well as other opportunities for growth. They are left with no choice but to stay at home and to take care of the household and their husband and children. All these things happen because there are no laws in the country restricting child marriage or to set a minimum age bar for marriage. Girls of any age can be forced into marriage to a man of any age, even as double her age. This leads to women and girls being physically abused at her husband's home mostly by the hands of their husband. There is no legal protection for women and girls who suffer domestic violence at their home. However, married women can report any act of violence committed against her by her husband but to report it, she has to have a physical trace of violence on her body. Emotional abuse is not even taken into consideration.ⁱⁱⁱ

Women in Yemen cannot get married on their own accord. To get married, she needs to get permission from her male guardian. Married women do not have the liberty to choose their health and reproductive rights. Husbands have the complete liberty to choose the number of children she will have, the length of time between births, whether she will give birth to the child at home or the hospital and whether she will visit a hospital or undergo any sort of surgery. In the case of divorce, women do not have equal rights for child custody. Women also do not have an equal right to divorce and that of inheritance. Husbands have the complete right to divorce their wives.

In Yemen, women are considered half a person as compared to men. The importance of a woman's life is half of that of a man. Even in the court of law, a woman's testimony is not taken seriously until it is backed by a man. A woman is considered half a witness as compared to a man who is considered a complete witness.

The condition of Yemeni women and girls has heavily deteriorated because of deep-rooted gender inequality coupled with the chaos and conflict caused by the war. Women, like men, have also faced torture and sexual violence during detention, according to the report by the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts. Women are left vulnerable to inhumane violence, physical and psychological abuse, and exploitation. Victims of sexual violence in Yemen are highly stigmatized, meaning the vast majority of cases unlikely to get reported. According to the United Nations Population Fund, violence against women has increased by 63% since the conflict escalated.^{iv}

The ongoing war has resulted in Yemeni women and girls losing their basic rights to education, healthcare, housing, food security, and employment. Verbal harassment serves to humiliate women and often leads families to prohibit daughters and women from leaving home. The UNFPA has recorded that an estimated 3 million women and girls were at risk of gender-based violence.

Many men leave home to join the war but never come back which has forced many women to become the head of households. The World Bank has estimated that women are sharing an inequitable share of the burden. Due to this situation, only 46.54% of Yemeni women reported having a job. Most of these women do not receive equal pay as compared to their male counterparts. Some of these women do not get paid in cash for their job. They are often looked down upon. These women are subjected to working in harsh and inappropriate working conditions. These women are not protected against incidents of sexual violence and harassment in the workplace. There is no law in the country to protect these women against sexual harassment in the workplace. Often when these women report to sexual misconduct, they are sacked from their jobs and also get stigmatized. Female employees are not considered an equal asset at the workplace as compared to male employees at the workplace.

The outbreak of COVID 19 has worsened the situation of women. Many women run small businesses that were used to feed their family have been forced to shut down. With the added

economic, social, and health stressors the cases of domestic violence against them also increased. “Women in Yemen have long been paying the price of the conflict in the country, and now, they are bearing the burden of COVID-19 too,” said Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative for Iraq and Yemen.^v

CHILDREN OF WAR

The children in Yemen have seen no other life but that of war, they don't know what peace feels like. Necessities like food and water are scarce and medical attention a luxury. The constant bombings and lootings coupled with negligent humanitarian aid in Yemen have resulted in the worst human rights crisis for these children. Children in Yemen suffer from malnutrition, lack of education, disability, abuse, negligent medical care, etc.

Children in Yemen are not just suffering the repercussions of this deadly war but are being involved in it as well. Since 2014, all parties involved in the conflict have been using child soldiers, some even being younger than 15.

Children have been the innocent victims of war ever since it has started. According to the Security General's 2019 annual 'list of shame,' the Saudi led coalition was responsible for the death of 729 children whereas the Houthis and Yemeni government forces were responsible for 398 and 58 child casualties respectively. This report has been criticised severely for leaving out the Saudi-led coalition and other offenders from the list of offenders even though they've constantly been seen conducting unlawful airstrikes on civilians killing a large number of children. According to the Yemen Data Project, Saudi led coalition has conducted over 20,100 airstrikes since the war began and constantly bombed schools, hospitals, markets mosques, farms, bridges, factories, and detention centers. In the fourth year of the conflict in Yemen, 46% of the children killed or injured were hit by bombs dropped from aircraft. According to the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) data, airstrikes regularly killed or injured several children at once as they hit populated areas where the risk of civilian casualties was greater. In April of 2018, an airstrike reportedly hit a civilian family's house in the port city of Hodeidah, killing a man, his wife, and five of their children. In the month of August of the same year, 40 children were among 51 civilians killed when an airstrike hit a school bus in a

local market. On March 10 of this year, more than ten children were reportedly killed when five houses were hit during an air raid. Human Rights Watch has reported at least 5 attacks on Yemeni fishermen boats by the coalition since 2018 killing 47 fishermen and 7 children. Barely a day after the UN report released the Saudi led coalition airstrikes were responsible for killing 13 people in the northern province of Sada which included 4 children.^{vi}

Landmines across Yemen also have been responsible for the deaths of many children with it also making it difficult for aid workers to reach these vulnerable children. Deaths of at least 19 children have been reported since January 2018 in the province of Hodeidah and Taizz. Many more children have been rendered orphans, displaced, or disabled due to these land mines. All parties to the war have been reported to arbitrarily detain people including children and hold them in poor conditions, subject them to torture and even resulting in their death.

Infant mortality in Yemen has increased at an alarming proportion due to famine, lack of medical care, and widespread poverty. Child mortality in Yemen increases in the winter season, especially in, mountainous areas. Malnourishment, malaria, diphtheria, and local flues are the reason for the deaths of tens of thousands of children living in urban areas. Ministry of Health in Sanaa, Saif al Hadri, has revealed that five and a half million children under the age of five are suffering from malnutrition, one child dies every ten minutes in Yemen, 80 % of children in Yemen live in a state of stunting and anemia due to malnutrition and two hundred thousand women of childbearing age or some of them are pregnant or have given birth to malnourished children, which threatens the lives of children. The UN has stated that “more than two million children (in Yemen) are malnourished, with one in two now suffering from stunted growth because of food shortages.”

Yemen is also suffering from a massive Cholera outbreak with it affecting 22 of the 23 governorates and 295 of the 333 districts of Yemen. The cumulative total number of suspected cholera cases from 1 January 2018 to 14 June 2020 is 1,378,052 with 1572 associated deaths (CFR 0.11%). Children under five represent 24% of the total suspected cases during 2020.^{vii}

The sufferings of these children have worsened due to basic amenities and health care not being able to reach them due to Saudi led coalition’s blockade causing worsening of an already dire situation for these children. It has led to delay and diversion of fuel tankers, closing of ports, stopping of goods from entering them. This has led to power outages in hospitals, water

shortage because of a shortage of fuel for generators and water pumps. They've also kept the Sanaa international airport closed since 2016 causing humanitarian workers to not even reach there and providing help in needed areas. Additional problems are faced by these children like starvation due to their food being stolen by rebel forces. The UN has accused Houthis of stealing UN aid food. They are also responsible for blocking aid from coming in areas controlled by them. The residents of Yemen's third-largest city of Taizz have suffered from devastating impacts because of this.

However, the above-mentioned problems have further intensified due to the outbreak of coronavirus. As of May 31, 2020, 314 COVID-19 officially confirmed cases, 78 associated deaths, and 15 recovered cases in Yemen. A 25% case fatality rate (CFR) was reported. The officially confirmed cases were reported in 10 governorates. The high CFR is most likely linked to the fact that only severe cases are being tested, while the true rate of transmission at the community level remains unknown. Serious concerns remain over a possible ongoing "silent" transmission, including in northern Yemen, where only four cases were confirmed since the first cases in April.^{viii}

There is no minimum age of marriage. Child marriage, which was prevalent in Yemen before the conflict has increased furthermore during the pandemic according to UNICEF. We are increasingly seeing young girls some being as young as 8 being married off to older men for amounts as low as a couple of hundreds of dollars. The families are living in extreme poverty hence resorting to such means to survive.

The war has also impacted the children's education greatly. Saudi-led coalition's airstrikes have bombed schools and rebel-controlled conflict areas make it hard for children to attend school without being under constant threat of attack. UNICEF has said, "the damage and closure of schools and hospitals have disrupted access to education and health services, leaving children even more vulnerable and robbing them of their futures."

Children are the future of any country and the key to rebuild it. The children in Yemen are suffering and have little to no access to basic amenities. They're dying, being displaced, orphaned, crippled, etc. The education of children has also been impacted largely. These children in their short life have experienced the unthinkable. UNICEF has said that a child in Yemen will face more injustice in a single day than most people do in a lifetime.

UPLIFTMENT OF YEMENI WOMEN & CHILDREN

After nearly five years of war, 80% of the Yemeni population needs aid. But its women and children being the most vulnerable who have been the hardest hit by the conflict. Some 76% of internally displaced persons are women and children, and nearly 21% of households of internally displaced persons as well as host communities are headed by women below the age of 18.

Yemen has always been one of the toughest places to be female. A deeply embedded patriarchy means many women and girls cannot access their family's finances, make decisions for the household, or even for themselves. They have limited access to education, livelihoods, and women's health services. Ever since 2006 Yemen has ranked last in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, and in 2017 the country was listed as the worst place in the world to be a woman.

The patriarchy will always say that women's issues can be addressed as soon as the latest crisis is resolved but the truth is real stability and prosperity is impossible as long as inequality exists. Yemen's stability depends on women's empowerment and its future generations being taught equal rights that their predecessors didn't practice.

The vital change should happen in the mentality of the Yemeni population towards women and girls. They are considered as the weaker gender. Yemeni men feel the need to protect women in every aspect. Yemeni society as a whole feel that if a woman is left unguarded then they are more prone to harassment and abuse by the people. This can only change with the change in mentality and the increase in women's participation in Yemeni society. This can be brought about by educating the men about gender equality, making women aware of the rights that women in other parts of the world enjoy. To bring about any real change in not just the men but women's mentality will take a significant amount of time however, education and awareness through it can be the first step. An example of this could be how the immigrants in Norway are taught about the western attitude toward women when they immigrate there to make them adjust to their new surroundings, similar approach can be taken on a wider and more culturally appropriate way to change the attitude of Yemeni men towards the women in their country and also teach the women about the basic rights they ought to have.

The change in mindset needs to be accompanied by acknowledging the value of women's life and by considering them as a complete witness in the eyes of law. They need to be treated as equal to men in Yemeni society. They need to be more included in society and should be given more freedom because women are no less than men in any aspect. It is only when Yemeni women enjoy equal legal rights any real improvement in their position in society will take place.

Before the war broke out in the country, women were becoming involved in the country's political processes, securing their recognition as equal citizens and independent individuals. Yemeni women have paid the heaviest price during the war, they have been playing a critical role in peace building within their communities. However, they are still underrepresented in peace talks like the ones held in Sweden in 2018 that resulted in a ceasefire agreement for the vital port city of Hodeidah.

The Yemen conflict has no military solution, only a diplomatic one. They cannot wait: Both sides must lift all restrictions to humanitarian access while world leaders deliver on aid commitments. Acknowledging and taking into account these restrictions and ending the suffering in Yemen should be a priority at the next round of peace talks. The war has caused too much harm to its women and children.

Children are not just being killed by the war at ground and airstrikes but because of malnutrition and preventable diseases as well combined with a lack of medical resources caused by the blockade. UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Geert Cappelaere, has defined the conflict as a "living hell" for children. A UNICEF report has noted that the children suffering from severe acute malnutrition numbers around 368,000. It also states that more than 12 million children need humanitarian assistance. Children are also largely dying of preventable diseases. It needs to be made sure that no kid is left to die in hunger or due to a lack of basic necessities. The blockade of goods needs to be removed so that the basic resources can reach the Yemeni people.

Yemeni women need to be more involved in the political process of Yemen. The Constitution has to not only guarantee the civil and human rights of the women, but it must also include mandatory quotas for women's participation in parliament and in the executive and judicial branches of the government. The voices of the women need to be heard and their ideas to

improve the condition of the country should be respected and taken into consideration. They should be encouraged to get more involved in the election process.

There is a need for restoration of educational opportunities for millions of children who have been kept out of schools because of the war, the societal stigma, and the economic condition of their families. Women and girls should be encouraged to attend schools. Female teachers should be recruited so that women and girls feel more comfortable attending schools. The families of women and girls should be encouraged to send their children to schools. Two million children were out of school at the beginning of the school year in September 2019 including almost half a million who had dropped out since the war began. Special attention should be paid to the education of these children because they're going to be responsible for the future of Yemen and educated youth will be able to rebuild Yemen to prosperity instead of driving it to destruction due to fighting.

Activists have been working for years to raise the minimum legal age of marriage. There should be legislation in place to put an end to the culture of child marriage which increased especially since the war began. This needs to happen immediately to protect young girls from being exploited by their husbands. Women should be given the right to divorce their husbands. They should also have equal say in their household and family planning. Unmarried women and girls should be allowed to file complaints against their families for domestic abuse.

Even though the Yemen war is the worst humanitarian crisis the world has ever seen, it can change. Women's economic empowerment is vital to bring about this much-desired change. Women employees should receive adequate training. They should be paid equally as their male counterpart. If Yemeni women will earn well then they will contribute to alleviating the level of poverty in the Yemeni society, which will also contribute to the economic growth of the country. Yemeni women should be made to work in a comfortable and respected work environment. Complaints of sexual misconduct made by women at the workplace should be taken seriously and should be acted upon. There should be stringent laws in place for the prevention of women from sexual harassment at the workplace.

However, like any other cause, gender equality is a universal cause, and it is a fight that can only be won with international solidarity and support. The whole world must come together to

fight with the worst humanitarian crisis the world has ever witnessed. The United Nation must provide aid and must conduct various programs to help the women and girls of Yemen.

We need to unite as a world and as a nation to help women achieve their rights and yet “Human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights.” -- Hilary Clinton^{ix}

It’s high time that we as an international community start addressing issues faced by women and children in Yemen. There is a need to resolve every issue faced by them which takes away their basic human rights, freedom, and dignity.

LEGISLATIONS INVOLVED

The crisis that Yemen is reeling with is immense and there are no laws in place and even the international laws and conventions have been overlooked, making it the worst humanitarian crisis of the century.

Yemen has been in gross violation of international humanitarian laws and international human rights laws. And international convention like the Geneva Convention and Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment are not being adhered to.

The non-international armed conflict between coalition forces with its Yemeni allies and therefore the Houthi forces and their Yemeni allies is ruled by International Humanitarian Law, stated in treaties and within the rules of the customary law of nations. The foremost necessary pact law is Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to that, all members of the coalition are a party. Common Article 3, as mentioned below, sets forth minimum standards for all parties to a non-international armed conflict. The Republic of Yemen and a few states taking part within the armed conflict are also a party to Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, which provides additional protection for combatants and civilians throughout non-international armed conflicts.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention III, 1949 which is related to the treatment of the Prisoners of War (POW) states that any armed conflict that is not international and has occurred within the territory of a State is guaranteed to apply several provisions:

- to not discriminate and treat humanely any persons who did not take an active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed ' hors de combat ' by illness, wounds, detention, or any other cause,
- to not cause violence to the life of the above-mentioned people which includes murder, cruel treatment, mutilation, and torture.
- to take in hostages,
- to not outrage their dignity and to not treat them in a humiliating or degrading way,
- to pass any sentences or to carry out executions without previous judgment pronounced by a constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.^x

All parties to Yemen's armed conflict—including non-state armed groups—are to be blamed for not obliging with the necessities of international humanitarian law. That is, each party should respect and guarantee respect for the laws of war. This obligation does not depend upon reciprocity. Parties to a conflict should respect the requirements even if the opposing side does not abide by them. In addition to that, it does not depend upon the reason underlying the conflict or why any party has resorted to using force, whether government forces or non-state armed groups. Every party to an armed conflict is held to the same standard, despite any disparity in the harm caused by alleged violations.

International Human Rights Law remains in effect even during armed conflict when the law of war is applied. Yemen and the other countries involved in the armed conflict are all parties to several human rights treaties, which include, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture. All these treaties outline guarantees for fundamental rights and a lot of them correspond to the rights to which combatants and civilians are entitled under international humanitarian law.

While the ICCPR permits certain restrictions on some rights during wartime or during an official public emergency which threatens the life of the nation, any cutback in rights during a public emergency should be of an extraordinary and transitory nature and restricted to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation. Numerous fundamental rights like the right to life and the right to be secure from torture and other ill-treatment, the prohibition on unacknowledged detention, the duty to ensure judicial review of the lawfulness of detention, and rights to a fair trial should always be respected, even during a public emergency.

Human Rights Watch has since 2009 reported on the employment of child soldiers by Houthi forces. The non-state armed groups “should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of eighteen” as stated in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, to which Yemen is a party. In addition to that, the protocol has fixed 18 as the minimum age for any participation in armed conflict by national armed forces. In addition to that, as per the law of war, commanders can be held criminally responsible, for the use or recruitment of children below 15 by parties to a conflict is a war crime.

Certain treaties, like the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and also the Convention against Torture, obligate states parties to extradite or prosecute suspected offenders who are within that country’s territory or otherwise under its jurisdiction. Under customary international law, it is also usually established that countries are permitted to prosecute those accountable for other crimes, such as genocide or crimes against humanity, wherever these crimes took place.^{xi}

All of the above given international legislation is in place so that a nation is not pushed to the brink of destruction as Yemen has been pushed. The present condition of Yemen is such that the question about how useful these international laws are unavoidable. Not just rebel groups violate it but countries like Saudi Arabia have been targeting civilians with little to no concern for the international legislations at the place. It is clear that when it comes to human rights other more powerful countries pick and choose which persons' plight is worth raising their voice for, Saudi Arabia not just faces little to no repercussions for their unjust actions but countries like Canada and the USA continue to sell them weapons. As an international community, it is very important that we not just make laws but execute what they were made for in the first place, save the vulnerable from the destruction that comes from living in a perpetual state of war.

CONCLUSION

We see the international community has turned a blind eye to Saudi Arabia and its complete lack of respect for human rights and accountability not just in general but with regards to the war in Yemen. Lack of accountability by the Saudi-led coalition is a huge issue, they've constantly been seen attacking civilian areas causing the death, disability, and displacement of these vulnerable groups that have nothing to do with the war. After a Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed in Turkey's Saudi consulate, we saw the European Union divided on whether to supply arms to such a regime. Countries like Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, and Austria refused to supply them weapons anymore however the UK, Spain, France, and Italy continued doing so despite criticizing their actions. Other powerful countries like Canada and the US continue to supply them weapons worth billions of dollars as well. Otherwise, a huge human rights proponent and led by a liberal government, Canada nearly doubled the number of weapons sold to Saudi Arabia in 2019.^{xii} The US government has been a constant ally of the Saudis and has been supplying a huge amount of weapons to them despite opposition from its Senate. On the other hand, the US continues to issue blockades and sanctions on Iran which has affected them greatly. However, they have refused to stop supplying weapons to Saudis despite them being used for constant human rights violations in Yemen and destabilizing the middle east. The US president has used the defense that the arms deal with Saudi help the US economy and creates jobs for its people, however, the fact that it is being used to kill innocent Yemeni citizens has been ignored by them.^{xiii}

It wouldn't be wrong to say that the war in Yemen is a proxy war being fought by Saudi and Iran for dominance in the Middle East. Their involvement has escalated Yemen's undeclared civil war into a huge region-wide crisis that has resulted in an unending war and the dire crisis it is in now. Yemen has been allegedly backing the Shia Houthi forces and the Saudis have been backing the Sunni government, however, the war involves way more stakes for them than just the religion. Iran's involvement in the war is far less than that of Saudi Arabia who is directly involved by conducting airstrikes. Saudi sharing its border with Yemen sees the takeover of it by Iran-backed Houthi rebels as a threat to its security whereas Iran sees it as an opportunity to gain an ally in the region. Both of these countries despite being the main propagators of this war are largely left unaffected by the war that has left Yemen in the ruins.^{xiv} The US has issued sanctions on Iran which have affected them greatly however the

international community has largely refused to take any action against Saudi Arabia with strong nations like the UK, US, etc even supplying them large amounts of weapons despite some even acknowledging the grave human rights violation done by them in Yemen. As a civilised world, we should not allow these two nations to make Yemen and its innocent people a pawn in their power games for dominance of the region.

The United Nations and other world organisations should come up with ways to raise awareness among the world population about this ongoing civil war in Yemen. People can only come out to help and support Yemen only if they know about the ongoing crisis.

ENDNOTES

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