



DEFENDERS
FOR MEDICAL IMPARTIALITY



Americans for Democracy



Health
Doctors
is contingent upon respect
for Human Rights

H.R.H. King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud
Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
Royal Court
Riyadh
Saudi Arabia 11111

24 April 2015

Your Majesty,

In March 2015, your country initiated a military operation of ten coalition Arab States in the territory of the Republic of Yemen. Code-named Operation Decisive Storm, which recently concluded, and Operation Restoring Hope, which continues military operations in Yemen, the operation has the potential to last for months, impacting the lives of millions of civilians. In an effort to protect against unnecessary civilian casualties and violations of international law, Defenders for Medical Impartiality, Doctors for Human Rights, Doctors for the World USA, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, and the European Center for Democracy and Human Rights urge you to ensure your forces conduct hostilities in a manner compliant with the coalition's obligations under international humanitarian law, and to refrain from targeting civilian population centers and medical treatment facilities.

We are specifically concerned by reports that coalition forces may have already engaged in serious violations of international law. According to media reports, Saudi-led airstrikes have attacked civilian populations in camps for internally displaced persons,¹ residential areas,² and schools.³ Further, we understand that coalition airstrikes led by the military forces of Saudi Arabia have destroyed at least

¹ Lizzie Dearden. "Saudi Arabia accused of killing 40 including children in air strike on Yemen refugee camp." *The Independent*. Accessed 20 April 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-accused-of-killing-40-including-children-in-air-strike-on-yemen-refugee-camp-10145294.html>.

² "Aid agency Oxfam condemns Saudi air strike in Yemen." *Reuters*. Accessed 20 April 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/20/us-yemen-security-humanitarian-idUSKBN0NB0DX20150420>.

³ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. "Yemen: Zeid calls for investigations into civilian casualties." The United Nations Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 14 April 2015. Accessed 20 April 2015.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15836&LangID=E>.

eight operational hospitals.⁴ Reports also indicate that coalition airstrikes have damaged infrastructure in such a manner as to impede medical access to areas outside of coalition control.⁵

While we commend Your Majesty's decision to temporarily suspend military operations to allow for the International Committee of the Red Cross to re-stock supplies, we are seriously concerned that coalition attacks on civilian and medical centers constitutes a significant violation of international humanitarian law, and could potentially rise to the level of war crimes committed against the civilian and refugee populations in Yemen.

We wish to remind Your Majesty of the coalition's obligations under international humanitarian law. According to the Geneva Conventions, which is part of customary international law, and which all members of your coalition have universally ratified, the coalition is required to conduct hostilities in a manner only targeting legitimate military objectives, without engaging in indiscriminate attacks or the intentional targeting of civilian populations. Additionally, the coalition must pay special respect towards medical practitioners, neither interfering with a health care worker's duty to treat any and all persons associated with the conflict nor targeting a health care worker in retaliation against his or her provision of aid for combatants associated with an opposing party. The coalition must specifically refrain from the targeting of hospitals and ambulances, and allow medical practitioners to fulfill their duties without the threat of attack from the coalition military.

We request that Your Majesty direct the coalition to respect its international commitments towards civilians, medics, and aid workers caught in the conflict, and to cease the targeting of civilian and refugee population centers and medical treatment facilities. We additionally ask Your Majesty to encourage coalition forces to facilitate the safe transit and operation of medical practitioners in the area, and to both allow and expedite their access to areas in which their services are required.

Sincerely,

The Defenders for Medical Impartiality

Doctors for Human Rights

Doctors of the World USA

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain

The European Center for Democracy and Human Rights

⁴ Id.

⁵ Hugh Naylor. "Fighting in Yemen is creating humanitarian crisis." *The Washington Post*. Accessed 20 April 2015. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/fighting-in-yemen-is-creating-a-humanitarian-crisis/2015/04/06/c05b573c-da2b-11e4-bf0b-f648b95a6488_story.html.

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