

Sincere.Global Attestment of Evidence of Children Killed or Injured by Saudi-led Coalition Airstrikes

Report June 21, 2016 – Compiled by Andrew Ferlitsch, Editor in Chief of Sincere.Global



Malak, 9, said that she doesn't want to go to school because she is afraid if she goes they [Saudi aircraft] may bomb it while being inside, "they bombed a school in our village before". (August 27, 2015)

UN Annual Report 2015 Children and Armed Conflict

On June 5, 2016 the UN released its annual report on "Children and Armed Conflict" for 2015 (<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>). In the report, dated April 20, 2016, it added Saudi Arabia to its blacklist of countries that have committed crimes against children in conflict, stemming from Saudi Arabia's air campaign in Yemen. The report cites that Saudi-led Arab Coalition is responsible for 60% of deaths and injuries to children from intentional or misguided

targeting of residential buildings, schools and hospitals. The reported cited verifying a total of 1953 children killed or injured (785 children killed and 1,168 injured) in Yemen in 2015).

On June 6, under pressure from the Saudi Arabian government, UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon removed Saudi Arabia from the blacklist. In response to subsequent outcries from various advocacy groups and international organizations, the UN Secretary said that the removal was prompted by threat to de-fund programs for millions of children, without citing the name of the countries.

On June 9, the UN Secretary stated that the removal was temporary while the facts are re-evaluated.

Sincere.Global Journalists Interviews and Photographic Surveys

Sincere.Global is an independent media organization reporting on humanitarian conditions in a non-political manner. The media organization has local professional correspondents in major cities in Yemen with are either under occupation, siege or otherwise in armed conflict. All of our correspondents had worked previously to the conflict as Yemeni correspondents in print, television and radio, either at the national and local levels. They are experienced at interviewing, fact finding and evidence gathering and operate at the highest level of integrity.

These correspondents are living under the same conditions as civilians, enduring lack of fuel, electricity, and food shortages. In their residences they are exposed to air strikes and shelling as other civilians.

Their fact-finding efforts involve street and roof top surveys of residential neighborhoods damaged by air strikes, shelling or urban street combat. They survey damage done to schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure. They encounter situations of snipers, move through checkpoints, which may alternate between belligerents, at times negotiate with local militia leaders to gain access to areas, and other times hide in plain sight. They enter and document damage inside of residential buildings, interview locals and photograph remnants of armaments.

Saudia Arabia alleges that their coalition air strikes are not responsible for the deaths of children in Yemen. This is our response.

The Forgotten – Children of Yemen

Taiz Black Day, Al-Duha Neighborhood – May 11, 2015 (Interviews and Photographics Surveys June 2016)

On May 11, 2015, after two months of Yemen's war outbreak, the Saudi-led coalition aircraft bombed a building where Al-Houthi militia were stationed in west of Taiz at six in the morning. Some of rockets missed their target and fell on civilian houses on that black day as western Taizian families call it. On the black day 13 civilians were killed, including eight children and three women, and injured six others, including three children and three women. The Traffic Police Department headquarters, along Al Morur Steet/60th Street, is the nearest location where Al-Houthi militia had occupied and controlled. It is far about 500-700 meters from the civilian house which was destroyed and most of the occupants killed.



Ariel view of Traffic Department and surrounding residential houses (Google View)

According to witnesses, there was a proliferation of Al-Houthi militia's fighters in the Wadi Al-Duha neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods. A witness said, "Coalition fighter bombed several sites in which the Al-Houthi militia where in the morning of black day before pounding Abdulqawi Al-Gabri home by mistake, which has killed 10 members of his family and three people from neighboring houses."

Yassin Abdulqawi Al-Gabri , 24 years old young man, was sleeping in a room above his father's room with a colleague from his university, a two-story home, when the bomb hit the home. Yassin survived from death but 10 of his relatives died. Yassin said, "When the explosion occurred, my brother died directly, and pushed my sister 50-100 meters outside the house which resulted to exposing her to more injuries and suffered from a coma. My colleague and I did not know at first what happen around us. We waited in a state of shock for more than an hour and we almost suffocated because of choke from smoke. Ten of my family died that day

(my father, mother, brothers and sisters). They were not spared, just me and my severely injured and comatose sister. Also, my neighbor whose house is located just 20 meters from our house died, a young child. A large stone had fallen over a teacher's head in neighborhood because of force of the blast and died. The force of the blast caused devastation to five or six nearby houses to our house. I saw the victims' bodies and body parts. The process of searching about people took three days because of a lack of fuel and adopting of parents of using simple tools in the rescue operation". He added, "civilians are victims of the war, unlike the fighters who know how to prepare and protect themselves during war."



Al-Gabri's building after having been "mistakenly" targeted by the Saudi-led coalition



Another house next to Al-Gabri's home destroyed by the Saudi-led coalition airstrike



Another view of the destroyed house next to Al-Gabri's home



An interior view of a damaged room in house next to Al-Gabri's home

Ammar, 21 years old, is another witness to the air strike that day. His father was killed in the blast. He spoke to us about the conditions of the incident, "shrapnel littered everywhere in the neighborhood. My father was walking in neighborhood to come back to our home and was carrying in his hands a breakfast for me and my brothers and sisters. When the blast happened I fled into the street with that I was injured by shrapnel, and I found my father with his right hand separated from his body and bleeding severely. He was still alive. Then a large stone fell on his head in the second blast. When the residents of the neighborhood came to take the wounded to hospital, another 3rd bomb fell in the neighborhood adjacent to our neighborhood so people fled and left us. I took my dad by my car but I did not find any hospitals to receive him. Hospitals were still closed so I take him to a small health center in a place much further away. It was a clinic for the care of pregnant women. My father died in my arms that day with me. After the death of my father, we were left without a breadwinner. My father had a large family of nine members and I do not work yet. My family fled to the safe area after destroying a large part of our house, and now we live in a relative's home".

Jihad, 20 years old, is another resident of the neighborhood who spoke to us. He works as a driver of a minibus, he said that, "a violent explosion at six in the morning awakened me from

my sleep. I rushed to the scene before the second bomb fall next to the Al-Sunah mosque.” He continued, “I saw our water truck was turned into metal parts due to the explosion, and I saw a woman who has her head separated from her body, and her three children were in pieces.”



Al-Sunah Mosque in Wadi Al-Duha

Saudi-led Coalition Airstrikes in Al-Gail District, Taiz (Interviews and Photographic Survey May 2016)

“I buried my father, mother, all my 5 brothers, and my one-year-old son and I moved to Sana’a unconsciously, Ebrahim Abdullah Sultan spoke to us trying to hid the tears in his eyes.

Ebrahim, a 32 year old originally from Taiz who now lives with the remaining survivors of his family in Sana’a. He has a secondary school degree and worked in construction on daily payment. He had gone with his wife and son to the hospital in Taiz when they went back home they didn’t find the house and all what they found was rubble instead. Within and under the rubble they found 8 dead bodies that were of his family members. That is the image that he will remember as long as he lives.



Remnants of building destroyed by air strike in Al-Gail district

Zainab Ibrahim Mohammed, an official in Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) origination spoke to us about Ebrahim, “Ebrahim Sultan came two weeks ago and in each day he stayed on the chair not saying a word and all what he did was trying to help so he managed for me the registration of the newly displaced people”. She added, “I have been asking myself what is this man’s problem until I finally knew about his story.” She said that Ebrahim is that kind of a person who feels it is hard to ask for a help without giving anything in return.

“Everything in Al-Gail district, al-Jawf governorate is totally damaged by Saudi-led coalition air strikes such as the water project, public facilities, and even mosques. Therefore, all our transactions and documents are stalled”, said Zaid Alawy al-Shareef, a 36 year old soldier who spoke with us. He has a high school degree and was working as a soldier in the army. Al-Shareef quit working after he moved out from al-Jawf to Sana’a with his family. He has 15 mouths to feed, an elderly mother, a divorced sister with her three kids, and his eight children.



Image taken by Zaid of homes full destroyed by air strikes in Al-Gail



Personal belongings scattered around home completely destroyed in Al-Gail

Al-Haseb Neighborhood, Taiz (Interviews and Photographic Survey April, 2016)

Sarhan is owner of an Internet cafe in Al-Haseb neighborhood. He talked to us about the neighborhood being bombed, "About 2:30am in the morning [August 15, 2015], the [Saudi-led] coalition aircraft bombed a building where Al-Houthi militia were stationed. It was the first time we heard bombing. It was scary and so frightening. Our homes were vibrating from the intensity of the blasts and door of my cafe broke opened from the severity of blasts and later the contents were looted."

Sarhan added, "one of the missiles from the plane missed the target that night and fell on a house where two whole families who lived in it perished. We searched through the rubble until midnight of the second day for the people, without finding anyone alive. The war was not satisfied with all the suffering that was caused to us."

He continued, "I cannot forget, when I was looking for bodies in the rubble of homes and found only parts either one leg or one hand of a person. We were looking for bodies a long time and in the end we have to bury the parts which we found."



Interior view of home of Ali Nouman Al-Qadsi family destroyed in coalition air strike in Al-Haseb neighborhood in August, 2015



Another view of the damage to the family home of Al-Qadsi family



Exterior view of damaged residential building containing the Al-Qadsi family home



Abdullah Qaeid Al-Sharabeei family home in residential building in Al-Haseb neighborhood destroyed by coalition air strike

Sana'a(Interviews and Photographic Survey October, 2015)

The building Al-Badwi lives in is one of the residential buildings struck by misaimed strikes by the Saudi-led coalition. It is a four-floor building; all the families, lived in that building, were psychologically wounded but two families were physically injured and some killed (Al-Badwi's and Al-Hakeem family (a Syrian family)).



Al-Badwi's building after having been "mistakenly" targeted by the coalition. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)

Al-Badwi's daughter Sana, a girl who just lived waiting to graduate from the elementary school, was killed in the strike. Her parents had a hope that their girl would be someday a physician. Her teachers and the people around her have always praised her.

A friend of the girl Sana shared with us a post presenting the fact that Sana was filled with anxiety on that particular night; she felt that something bad would happen. The post is a WhatsApp chat between them two, prior to their building being struck.

Sana says "I dreamt that I'm fighting ... I might die".

Her friend replies "don't say so, please".

Sana continues, "please, I beg you, forgive me if I die and tell everybody to forgive me."

Her friend, "forgive you! For what ... you've never been mean to me or to anybody, please stop it! and be yourself".

Sana went on saying “we live near to The Central Security Forces in the middle of the street, and I heard that our house is in danger since it might be targeted. My parents didn’t want to leave the house ... I swear to God I’m going to die.”

Those are the last words known to be spoken by Sana.



Al-Hakeem’s family was in the fourth floor and Al-Badwi’s was in the third. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)

Ahmed Jumaa lived in the same damaged building. He and his friends were fortunate to live in the second floor in the backside of the building, which was only slightly affected. "At 1:00 am", Ahmed said, "The Central Security Forces was targeted with three missiles one after the other before the fourth [missile] changed its mind and decided to hit our dwelling." He said, “that the third was very horrifying; they have never felt so terrified and worried that they opened all windows and doors and gathered in a hall in the middle of their department.”



The backside of the building. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)

"We could not believe that a missile hit the front of our building until we heard shouts and screams coming down the stairs and someone saying 'Help! Our mother and brother are dying'", Ahmed continued. He described that they went upstairs. They could not believe what they saw. The place was filled with dust. There were rooms that happened to be not there now; rooms with huge holes inside. Everything was destroyed. Their memories have vanished. The room, in which Sana was killed, in the third floor, looked like as if it was bitten by a giant creature, and there were papers and books scattered about.



One of the rooms upstairs. (Photo Danya Al-Hakeem the daughter)

Ahmed continued, "From which we heard the shouts on the fourth floor, where lived a Syrian family, parents, two young daughters and a very young son. Once we were there, we saw what could not be more vicious. One could not imagine how tragic that was. The mother and the five-year old son were stuck under a pile of concrete and furniture. We thought that they were both dead. We started digging gently. Unfortunately, the mother died shielding her son with her fragile body, and he miraculously survived."



The room in which the son and his mother were found buried under a pile of concrete. (Photo: Danya Al-Hakeem the daughter)



Cell phone image of digging by hand through the concrete pile. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)



The Syrian mother and her son Yazen. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)

As if she knows, something terrible would occur at that night. The son is in the intensive care room, and thankfully, he is gradually recovering. Then they left to live somewhere else so they avoid being exposed to harm and danger, just like many other people have done.



Yazen, the son in the intensive care room. (Photo: Ahmed Jumaa)

Sana'a(Interviews October, 2015)

Ali's family decided to leave the city of Sana'a after their neighbor's house was bombed on the 19th of September. The family was extremely horrified.

"It was 2 am when we started to hear the war plane roaming on the city as usual. We did not feel afraid as we become accustomed to this situation. It wasn't until we heard a huge explosion that we have never heard before. Our house was strongly shaken. We decided to leave the house and travel to Aden to stay with my brother there", said Muna Ali, a 23 year old lady.

Sada'a(Interviews and Photographic Survey September, 2015)

Fatima and her six children were displaced from Sada'a due to the bombing, which seemed indiscriminate to them. Fatima said, "I remember the first day of bombing, the aircrafts bombed thirty raids in one day. They madly bombed us, they even bombed cars, animals and stones," said Fatima.

They left their home and hid inside the mountains' caves, but the bombing was so heavy, "I couldn't stay anymore in Razeh. My children couldn't sleep and all the night they put their hands in their ears to avoid hearing the aircrafts sounds. My husband had suffered a heart attack [stroke], I was afraid that his condition may deteriorate because of fear."

Every day they woke up thinking that there is nothing alive, everything was burning and thanked Allah they are still alive. She was afraid that her husband, the heart patient, could suffer another TGI (transient cerebral ischemia) clot from his fear.

Safia's family left her home after bombing destroyed a large part of her house and even if the war stopped, they have no home to go back to. "War destroyed our homes, killed our men and this classroom has become my home and its four walls is a shelter for my young children," she added.

Also children bear the brunt of the crisis in Yemen. Rahiq is a child of 11. She escaped the rockets from Sada'a with her family. School was her only concern, "I wish the war [would] end and I could be back to my school, having exams and meet my friends and teachers."



Rahiq escaped the rockets. School was her only concern, she wish the war end and could be back to her school, having exams and meet her friends and teachers.

Sana'a(Interviews and Photographic Survey September, 2015)

A high ranking health official in one of the major NGOs working in Yemen described the severity of the situation and in their own words, "The lack of electricity has caused damage to many departments in hospitals, the unavailability of fuel doesn't help either, operation theaters work under difficult circumstances and have almost stopped performing major surgeries as there are no specialists and enough staff, injuries have increased and the lack of staff have made it hard to cope with. Performing simple tests such as blood work and other diagnostic measures like EKGs and ultrasounds are getting harder by the day. Nurseries are facing difficulties in incubating premature babies. Renal dialysis patients face the grave danger of death because of the lack of electricity and medication." The lack of electricity is causing the most damage to the health care system in Yemen. Recently, neighboring countries have expressed concerns on the efforts to prevent the outbreak of polio in Yemen, as it is necessary to provide immunization to millions of children but the absence of electricity has caused the vaccines to go out of use as they need to be kept cool at all hours of the day, thus increasing the chances of an outbreak. The official added, "Usually in war torn areas a safe zone is isolated for the international and national NGOs to provide basic health care and drop off necessary medication and help. During the war in [city of] Aden no such zone was provided and we couldn't reach out to the people to help as no one felt safe enough to go and no staff could be brought to work in such an area. All this accompanied with the lack of water caused outbreaks of Dengue fever and hygiene related diseases."



Staff lacking for checkin at Hospital (Photographer: Ahmed Yahya)

We visited some hospitals in Sana'a city and to our dismay most of the hospitals were almost empty of staff and patients except for a few nurses, and everyone seemed alarmed and cautious on seeing someone asking questions and they all had one similar request which was not to mention the name of the facility and the person answering to us. One of the nurses in one of the hospitals said, "We fear media coverage because hospitals are being targeted and we do not want to bring focus to ourselves and cause harm to the patients." She added, "we come here every day knowing that there is a possibility we might not make it through the day but we are dedicated to provide as much help as we can to those poor people, at least those of them who find it in their hearts to leave their houses and come here for medical care."

Last week's airstrikes targeted weapon storage units in the mountainous areas around the city and between Seventy and Haddah streets where the "Seventy Mother and Infant Care" hospital causing casualties and damage among the staff and patients. The new born babies and their mothers along with prematurely born infants had to be carried by the staff to other hospitals just to keep them safe. The air strikes along with the almost collapsed healthcare system have caused an alarming increase in the mother infant mortality rates as the non-medical experienced assisted home births have increased and neonatal care has virtually collapsed. Mothers have died due to miscarriages caused by sudden fright or sustained injuries, while hundreds have been buried alive under the rubles of their own homes as a result of the conflict.

Hazeiz Neighborhood, Sana'a(Interviews and Photographic Survey August, 2015)

Another story that has not seen the light is the story of a big family from Ibb who were forced to leave their home in Sana'a in a single night forcible decision. When leaflets were anonymously distributed to residents of Hazeiz neighborhood at the south of Sana'a calling the citizens to evacuate the neighborhood in a period of 8 hours, as it was said it will be targeted for air strikes by the Saudi-led.

On the 17th of May 2015, 19 women and 27 children were forced to leave Sana'a to Ibb after they received a warning which commanded them to leave the place cause it was said to be targeted by the Saudi-led coalition air strikes in Yemen.

"That night was the worst night in my life. Everyone in the house was crying and children were screaming. The scene is hard to describe. For a moment, I thought it to be the day of judgment. I looked out at the scene around me and started asking the questions that naturally comes up at such point which are usually full with total despair, What shall we do? Where to go? Is this the last night?", said Fatima a 17 year old girl and a member of Taher family, with tears filling her eyes.

The men of the family hurried to the streets to look for cars to drive them to the village before the area would be bombarded.

It took them hours till they found a bus because of the crisis of oil deprivation in the country. It was hard moments for the Taher family. Where to go is the question that all ask.

The family's women and children left the place at 1:30 am while the men decided to stay in Sana'a. Until here the story of Taher family has not started yet. On their way to the village, the bus broke down. The women did not know what to do. They stayed for four hours waiting for someone to drive them to the village. They asked many for help. All their tries went in vain for nobody in the village had petrol to fill a car and come to drive them. Then they were left with

no solution other than walking by foot to the village, which was still miles away, carrying all the heavy luggage and the young children.

Faj-Attan, Sana'a(Interviews and Photographic Survey July, 2015)

“I [Tawfiq] am thirteen years old. I work in the sale of corn Sham. I work in this business for six years. I have a large family living in the village, and I work in the city. In order to provide my family with what they need for their life ,I go to my work in the early of the morning until the latest hours of the night. Tthe work was profitable, but now the profit became very little. I am a child and the rockets and bombs explosions make me frightened . I fear for seeing blood.

I remember when Attan Mount was bombed by chemical bomb, which has killed hundreds of people and wounded , I was close to the target bombing place.

Suddenly , I feel the ground shaking under me after that I heard the huge explosion. I run quickly to hide under a vector to protect my life from death.

The explosion resulted in broken buildings windows which fall down above people. Serious injury due to flying glass in the place happens among the people where I was. Then I saw a father embrace his son and takes him to the car and drive away. In this moment I remembered my father and I asked myself why I'm not at home ? why this war ? we want to live in peace.”



Tawfiq

In the morning of the 20th of April 2015, the whole city shook like an earthquake hit it, and after a few seconds it witnessed the strongest explosion since the start of the attacks. The sky was filled with black smoke and mushroom clouds. The Scud missile storage units started spitting out exploding armaments which sparked a series of explosions, houses in the district were destroyed, windows of buildings miles away shattered, cars burned, pedestrians on the streets were injured and killed by the flying debris and others thrown back by the pressure and intensity of the explosion - 46 innocent lives were lost, and 300 more were wounded. Almost two months after the incident and Faj-Attan is still taking airstrikes.



One of the many damaged houses in Faj-Attan

I managed to find one particular young man by the name Fares Mohammed. His house has been destroyed and almost reduced to ruins after the attack on the Scud missile storage unit.

As Fares explained, life was not as simple even before the conflict, it only took a turn to the worse. In Fares' words, "but now we don't even have the little hope we had a few months ago. Universities and schools have closed down till further notice, students lost a whole academic semester, year 12 examinations have been put off, many companies closed down and thousands of jobs were lost leaving a lot of families without a source of income...and due to the absence of running water, our kids are being used to fetch water from local mosques every day. More than half of the neighborhood houses and buildings have been destroyed; there is no way anyone can afford to rebuild what was destroyed. The building I live in has taken a pretty bad hit too, after the big explosion three rockets exploded out of the storage unit and hit the building, the apartment above ours has been destroyed completely, my neighbor and his wife were still in it, they were no casualties, but his wife got a miscarriage from the scare. The

building on the other side of the street was cut in half by the explosion, a whole family died leaving behind a 12 year old orphan girl. Pedestrians lay dead on the streets and cars were burning, despite this I still live here and we still get raided every now and then but I can't move away to a safer area because of the absence of jobs and a stable income. I hope this gets resolved fast so we can start rebuilding our lives again".