Humanitarian Crisis Deepens

Saudi Arabia has been carrying on its inhuman and criminal war and blockade on Yemen with the full backing of the United States government and their imperialist allies. Since day one of the bombing campaign, the US has provided logistical, political and financial support to the Saudi-led coalition. According to Military.com:

“Since April 2015, the Air Force has logged 1,778 tanker sorties for the operation, US Air Forces Central Command spokesman Capt. Kathleen Atanasoff told Military.com on Tuesday. That includes 1,069 over the past year, an increase of 360, or 50 percent, from the 709 in the previous period. ‘These operations are ongoing, with aircraft refueling occurring daily,’ Atanasoff said in an email.”

The Trump administration is continuing and escalating US involvement and support in Saudi crimes in Yemen. Trump approved the resumption of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and welcomed to the White House a Saudi delegation led by the Deputy Crown Prince, the son of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Allahdine.

April 25, 2017: The United Nations (UN) held a daylong Yemen aid conference with the aim to collect pledges to fund its humanitarian efforts in Yemen. The conference raised about half of the $2.1 billion sought by the UN to be able to provide some relief to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. On average, a child under the age of five dies of preventable causes in Yemen every ten minutes. And this means fifty children in Yemen will die during today’s conference.

This humanitarian crisis in Yemen is worsening daily as the Saudi-led bombing campaign continues against the country. Backed by the US, the Saudi-led coalition began its military campaign in Yemen in March 2015 under the pretense of bringing stability and legitimate government to Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition includes United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan.

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By Azza Rojbi

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March 25, 2017, marked two years since the beginning of the US-led and Saudi-led bombing campaign against Yemen. The brutal, devastating and ongoing war against the people of Yemen claimed more than 10,000 lives and destroyed schools, hospitals, homes, mosques and other infrastructure. Despite all this death and destruction, the Yemeni people continue to show their strength and resistance to the Saudi-led military aggression on their country. On March 26, 2017, hundreds of thousands of people rallied in Yemen's capital of Sana'a braving the Saudi fighter jets for a massive demonstration celebrating two years of Saudi-led bombing on their country. Along with the huge mass rally in Yemen, 15 other actions took place in major cities around the world as part of an International Day of Action for Yemen.

This Global Day of Action resulted from relationships built through the International Conference on Solidarity of the Yemeni People that took place in London, England in August 2016. The conference brought together hundreds of antirwar and human rights activists, journalists, lawyers, academics, politicians and community leaders from over 20 countries including representatives from Vancouver's antiracist coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). The organizing committee was a great opportunity to establish global connections between groups and individuals organizing against the war on Yemen and has helped to make organizing against the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen more united and effective. It is with this spirit of unity, that people in Sana'a, London, New York, Vancouver, Rome, Paris, Geneva and several other cities around the world took to the streets to condemn two year of this cruel war against the people of Yemen by Syria and Saudi Arabia and their allies. Along with the actions on the ground, people from around the world participated in a social media and twitter campaign sharing videos and photos exposing the crimes of the Saudi-led coalition and showing the resistance of the Yemeni people. In Vancouver, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), and the Yemeni community activists organized a vigil for Yemen. In front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, antiracist members of the Yemeni community and peace-loving people came together in support of Yemen waving Yemeni flags and holding signs and banners denouncing the atrocities of the Saudi crimes against the people of Yemen. Participants also held candles in honor of the people that lost their lives as consequence of the war on Yemen.

Inspiring photos from the heroic opposition of the Yemeni people to the Saudi aggression to their country, and photos from actions around the world in support of Yemen that took place earlier in the day, were projected on a big screen set up on the stairs of the Vancouver Art Gallery. People passing by stopped to see these images which were not permitted by the mainstream media. An outreach tent was also set up for passersby to get more information and learn about the situation in Yemen and the destruction and atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia and their military coalition.

Azza Rojbi, MAWO Executive Committee member, welcomed participants to the vigil and spoke about the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen caused by the Saudi led military aggression on the country. She also invited people to sign MAWO’s petition calling on the Canadian government to cancel its $15 billion arms deal to supply Saudi Arabia with armored military vehicles. She was followed by a speech from Asaad Aljaboubi, leading Yemeni community organizer with MAWO. Asaad presented a report on the degree of killing and destruction caused by the Saudi-led coalition bombing campaign and the extent of damages especially to the health care sector due to the air, land and sea blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia on Yemen. He demanded an immediate lift of the blockade on Yemen and an end to the war on the Yemeni people.

Participants also heard from another member of the Yemeni community in Vancouver, Khaled Al-Sarraj who highlighted the civilian casualties caused by the war on Yemen and the lack of access to food, medicine and basic necessities. Then, Thomas Davies, spoke on behalf of Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice and condemned the role of the US and their imperialist allies in backing and supporting Saudi Arabia’s crimes against the people of Yemen. He called on people to stand together in support of the people of Yemen in their fight for justice and self-determination.

To close off this important action for Yemen, people heard a recorded voice message from Kim Shurt, a prominent lawyer and the director of Human Rights for Yemen, also one of the main organizers of the protest for Yemen in London, England. Kim gave a solidarity greeting and thanked MAWO and all participants for their continuous support to the people of Yemen.

As the vigil wrapped up participants chanted energetically “Hands Off Yemen” “End the War Now” “End the Siege Now” and vowed to continue supporting the Yemeni people in their fight for their right to life, freedom, sovereignty and self-determination.