

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

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Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the situation in Yemen
Date: 25-26 September 2018
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Mr. President,

The Secretary General warned in April that Yemen is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world with more than 22.2 million in need of humanitarian assistance.¹ The Group of Independent Eminent Experts² (Group of Experts) reported at least 6,475 civilians killed and 10,231 injured between March 2015 and June 2018.³

The Group of Experts concludes that all parties to the conflict are perpetrating violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The majority of civilian casualties since September 2014 have been caused by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition air strikes on residential areas, markets, funerals, weddings, detention and hospital facilities, and civilian boats.⁴ The Group of Experts states “[t]hese may... amount to war crimes by individuals at all levels in the member States of the coalition...”⁵ Refusal by the coalition to suspend naval and air restrictions has caused “extreme suffering of millions of people,”⁶ and —as of April—left 17.8 million food insecure and 8.4 million on the brink of famine.⁷ The Group of Experts warns that rape, torture and degrading and cruel

¹ Secretary-General's remarks to the Pledging Conference on Yemen [as delivered], 3 April 2018, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-04-03/secretary-generals-remarks-pledging-conference-yemen-delivered>.

² The Group of Independent Eminent International and Regional Experts was established 4 December 2017 by the Human Rights Council in resolution 36/31 to examine international law abuses by all parties to the conflict since 1 September 2014 and to identify those responsible.

³ UN Human Rights Council, *The situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014*, A/HRC/39/43, 17 August, 2018 at paras. 27.

⁴ UN Human Rights Council, *The situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014*, A/HRC/39/43, 17 August, 2018 at paras. 28-36.

⁵ *Supra*, para. 38

⁶ *Supra*, para. 55.

⁷ *Supra*, para. 53

treatment by Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates may be war crimes. Council must act to stop and remedy these atrocities.

Technical assistance to the National Commission of Inquiry cannot, on its own, deliver critical remedies of accountability and prevention owed to victims. The National Commission is not an independent body and has had insufficient cooperation from de facto authorities to conduct its work.

LRWC urges Council to renew the mandate of the independent Group of Experts, including its mandate to investigate and identify all those responsible for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Yemen.

LRWC joins the Group of Experts in urging all States⁸ to refrain from providing arms that could be used in the conflict in Yemen.

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁸ The UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, S/2018/68, January 2018, reported evidence that arms of **Iran** origin were being used by Houthi forces. The Saudi-Arabia-led coalition, as of February 2018, was being armed by the **USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Russia, China** and others. Samuel Perlo-Freeman, Who is arming the Yemen war? (And is anyone planning to stop?). Tufts University, 28 February 2018, <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2018/02/28/who-is-arming-the-yemen-war-and-is-anyone-planning-to-stop/>.