March 26th, 2019
The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, PC MP,
Prime Minister of Canada,
24 Sussex Drive,
Ottawa, ON., K1M 1M4

Re: Letter to Prime Minister on Saudi Arms Deal

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

We, the Canadian Defenders for Human Rights (CD4HR), and our allies and supporters in the Canadian civil society are writing to urgently bring to your attention the 4th anniversary of the Saudi-led coalition's war on Yemen; a country undergoing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world according to a 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview report, prepared by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. That stark UN report provides the following grim overview:

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. Nearly four years of conflict and severe economic decline are driving the country to the brink of famine and exacerbating needs in all sectors. An estimated 80 per cent of the population – 24 million people – require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, including 14.3 million who are in acute need. Severity of needs is deepening, with the number of people in acute need a staggering 27 per cent higher than last year. Two-thirds of all districts in the country are already pre-famine, and one-third face a convergence of multiple acute vulnerabilities. The escalation of the conflict since March 2015 has dramatically aggravated the protection crisis in which millions face risks to their safety and basic rights.

Beginning on March 26th, 2015, the Saudi-led coalition has perpetrated numerous military attacks & extensive war crimes in Yemen, causing countless casualties & immense suffering. The Saudi military targets schools, factories, hospitals (including Doctors without Borders mobile clinics) and even funeral processions. In August 2018, Saudi authorities admitted that mistakes had been made, leading to the bombing of a school bus that killed 40 children between the ages of 6 -- 11 years old, as well as 11 adults. In the same month, the Saudi-led coalition bombed a fish market and hospital, killing 55 civilians and injuring over 170. According to Save the Children, at least 85,000 children may have starved to death because of the conflict and many of those deaths are a direct result of the Saudi blockade of Yemen. UN human rights experts, and international human rights and humanitarian organizations have all decried the fact that it is evident that Saudi-coalition forces fail to draw the distinction between military and civilian targets in their attacks.

All of this occurs against a backdrop of impunity and a failure of accountability. The Saudi-led coalition continues to bomb and blockade Yemen without consequences, meaning that the famine, cholera outbreak and other humanitarian concerns only worsen. We cannot forget that these are the same authorities who pushed former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to drop Saudi Arabia from the "list of shame" in his 2016 report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict; a decision he described as, "one of the most painful and difficult" he had to make.

You are of course aware, Prime Minister, of Saudi Arabia's long history of extensive human rights violations. These violations are not limited to the war in Yemen. Recent concerns have included the torture, unjust imprisonment and unfair trials of women's rights activists in the country, as well as clear Saudi responsibility for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, These grave human rights violations have in turn propelled growing numbers of Saudi citizens to flee their country, seeking asylum in many countries including Canada.

Prime Minister, Canada has positioned itself globally as a country that advocates for human rights, under all circumstances. Canadians take pride in this commitment to peace, rights and justice. That is why there is such disbelief and deep concern about the fact that Canada continues to sell arms to the Saudi regime and that your government has failed in particular to halt the sale of $15 billion worth of Canadian-manufactured light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia. Our organizations have called on all governments to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia and all countries involved in the fighting in Yemen. Some have now taken that step. It is time for Canada to follow suit.

Mr. Prime Minister, this is our second letter to you making this urgent plea. We wrote a similar letter to you one year ago, on March 26, 2018, endorsed by 24 Canadian organizations. Beyond a confirmation of receipt, we did not receive any substantive response to that letter. We hope that you will engage with us this time and we hope that we can schedule a meeting with you or your officials to discuss this important matter. We have included articles of proof and endorsements as well. We thank you in advance for your consideration of our requests.

Firas Al Najim,
Manager of CD4HR,
Email: CD4HR21@gmail.com,
+1 416-723-5324

This letter has been endorsed by the following organizations/Individuals:

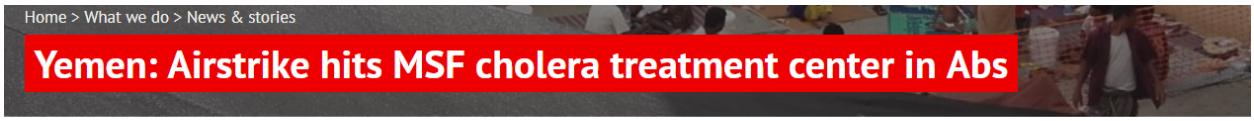
	Names of Organization	Contact Person	Position/Title
1	Amnesty International Canada	Alex Neve	Secretary General
2	Artists for Peace (Les Artistes pour la paix)	Pierre Jasmin	Professor at Universite du Quebec a Montreal
3	Baqir Academy	Dr. Usama Al-Atar	Principal, Former Saudi prisoner and torture victim
4	Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East	Thomas Woodley	President
5	Ed Corrigan Law	Edward Corrigan	Founder
6	Group of 78	Roy Culpepe	Chair: Group of 78
7	Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Toronto,	Shafiq Ebrahim	Vice President
8	Islamic Humanitarian Service	Shafiq Hudda	Manager
9	Justice without Borders	Kamel El-Cheikh	Vice President
10	Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada -	Gail Davidson	Member of the Board of Directors

	LRWC		
11	Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)	Alison Bodine	Chair
12	Mosque and School of Ahlul Bayt	Hussein Dabaja	President
13	Muslim Society of Ottawa	Jaffar Hashmi	President
14	New Democratic Party (NDP)	Jagmeet Singh	Leader of (NDP) party, Member of Parliament
15	Rideau Institute on International Affairs	Peggy Mason	President, Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the UN
16	Thaqalayn Muslim Association (Ryerson University)	Samanah Ali	President
17	Yemeni Community in Canada	Hamza Shaiban	President

To endorse this letter please send an email to: CD4HR21@gmail.com
Please include the following:

- Name of the Organization/Individual endorsing the letter
- Name of a Contact person and email address
- A sentence that state your endorsement

Source: Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
Description: A newly constructed cholera treatment center run by the international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Abs, Yemen, was hit by an airstrike
Link: https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/story/yemen-airstrike-hits-msf-cholera-treatment-center-abs
Date Published: 2018/June/11



View

JUN 12, 2018

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June 11, 2018

A newly constructed cholera treatment center run by the international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Abs, Yemen, was hit by an airstrike Monday at approximately 5:40 am.

No staff or patients were killed or injured. The facility had not yet received any cholera patients and was empty. The CTC is located about one kilometer from the MSF-supported Abs Rural Hospital, a 147-bed hospital that serves a population of more than one million people. Markings on the roof of the compound clearly identified the CTC as a healthcare facility. The airstrike has now rendered the CTC non-functional. In keeping with security protocol, MSF has temporarily frozen its activities in Abs until the safety of its staff and patients is guaranteed.

Source: Red Cross/ Guardian Magazine
Title: Dozens dead in Yemen as bus carrying children hit by airstrike
Link: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/09/dozens-dead-in-yemen-as-bus-carrying-children-hit-by-airstrike-icrc
Date Published: 2018/Aug/09

Dozens dead in Yemen as bus carrying children hit by airstrike

Red Cross says strike hit bus at market in Dahyan, in rebel-held north of country

▲ Injured Yemeni children receive medical treatment - video

Source: Washington Post
Title: Oxfam's response to today's horrific bombing of the fish market and hospital in the city of Hudaydah
Link: https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/where-we-work/greater-middle-east-eurasia/yemen
Date Published: 2018/Nov/21

WorldViews

85,000 children have starved to death during the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, says new report

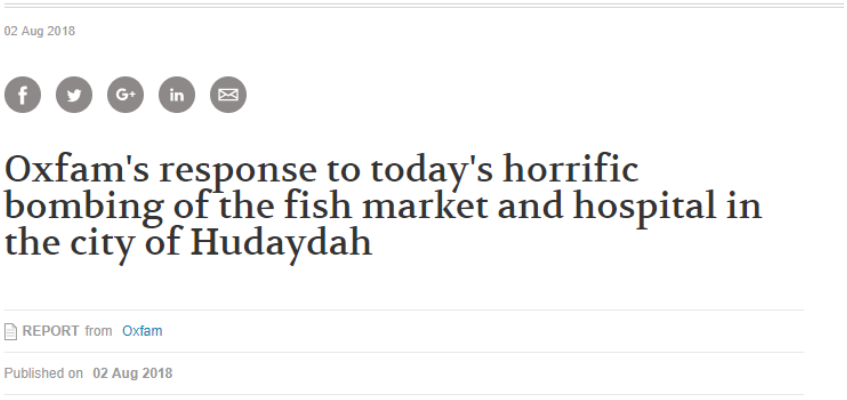
Source: The Guardian Magazine
Title: Jamal Khashoggi's body was 'dissolved', says Erdoğan adviser
Link: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/02/jamal-khashoggi-body-dissolved-acid-erdogan-adviser
Date Published: 2018/Nov/02

Jamal Khashoggi's body was 'dissolved', says Erdoğan adviser

Yasin Aktay says journalist's alleged Saudi killers 'got rid of the body by dissolving it'

▲ The Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul. Investigators have been trying to determine whether Khashoggi's remains could have been dissolved in acid. Photograph: Ozan Köse/AFP/Getty Images

Source: Oxfam
Title: Oxfam's response to today's horrific bombing of the fish market and hospital in the city of Hudaydah
Link: https://www.oxfamireland.org/blog/oxfam-condemns-yemen-attacks
Date Published: 2018/Aug/03



02 Aug 2018

Oxfam's response to today's horrific bombing of the fish market and hospital in the city of Hudaydah

REPORT from Oxfam

Published on 02 Aug 2018

Source: CTV News
Title: 'Yemen after 5 months looks like Syria after 5 years': Red Cross President
Link: https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/yemen-after-5-months-looks-like-syria-after-5-years-red-cross-president-1.2523456
Date Published: 2015/Aug/19

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'Yemen after 5 months looks like Syria after 5 years': Red Cross president

Source: The Globe and Mail
Title: Saudis appear to be using Canadian-made combat vehicles against Yemeni Rebels
Link: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/saudi-arms-used-against-yemeni-rebels-seem-to-match-canadian-lavs/article28846678/
Date Published: 2016/Feb/22

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Saudis appear to be using Canadian-made combat vehicles against Yemeni rebels

The Saudi Arabian National Guard, a buyer of Canadian-made light armoured vehicles, posted this photo on Twitter in November, 2015. It shows combat vehicles being moved to Najran, a Saudi town near the border with Yemen.

Source: UN Web TV
Title: United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, highlights three challenges that affect the wide sweep of the United Nations work today.
Link: http://webtv.un.org/watch/ban-ki-moon-secretary-general-security-council-media-stakeout/4933014141001
Date Published: 2016/June/09

Source: Relief web
Title: Yemen: 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview [EN/AR]
Link: https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-2019-humanitarian-needs-overview-enar
Date Published: 2016/June/09

14 Feb 2019

Yemen: 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview [EN/AR]

REPORT from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN Country Team in Yemen

Published on 14 Feb 2019

NEEDS AND KEY FIGURES

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. Nearly four years of conflict and severe economic decline are driving the country to the brink of famine and exacerbating needs in all sectors. An estimated 80 per cent of the population – 24 million people – require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, including 14.3 million who are in acute need. Severity of needs is deepening, with the number of people in acute need a staggering 27 per cent higher than last year. Two-thirds of all districts in the country are already pre-famine, and one-third face a convergence of multiple acute vulnerabilities. The escalation of the conflict since March 2015 has dramatically aggravated the protection crisis in which millions face risks to their safety and basic rights.

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KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

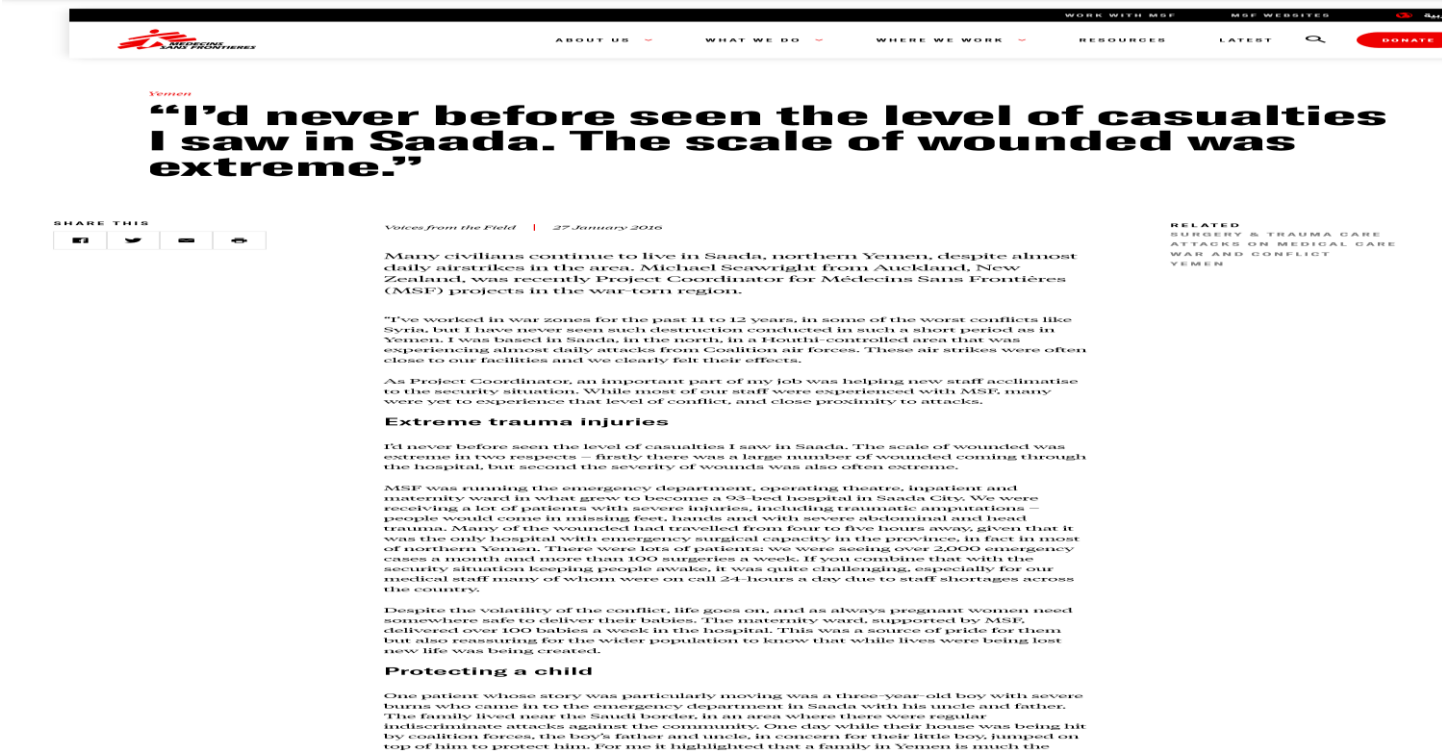
1. Basic survival needs

More than 20 million people across the country are food insecure, including nearly 10 million who are suffering from extreme levels of hunger. For the first time, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has confirmed pockets of catastrophic hunger in some locations, with 238,000 people affected. An estimated 7.4 million people require services to treat or prevent malnutrition, including 3.2 million people who require treatment for acute malnutrition – 2 million children under 5 and more than one million pregnant and lactating women (PLW). A total of 17.8 million people lack access to safe water and sanitation, and 19.7 million people lack access to adequate healthcare. Poor sanitation and waterborne diseases, including cholera, left hundreds of thousands of people ill last year. In sum, needs have intensified across all sectors. Millions of Yemenis are hungrier, sicker and more vulnerable than a year ago, pushing an ever-greater number of people into reliance on humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian response is increasingly becoming the only lifeline for millions of Yemenis.

2. Protection of Civilians

Yemen is facing a severe protection crisis, and civilians face serious risks to their safety, well-being and basic rights. Tens of thousands of people have been killed or injured since 2015, and among them at least 17,700 civilians as verified by the UN. An estimated 3.3 million people remain displaced, up from 2.2 million last year. This includes 685,000 people who fled fighting in Al Hudaydah and on the west coast from June onwards. Escalating conflict is causing extensive damage to public and civilian infrastructure. Intensity of conflict is directly related to severity of needs. Humanitarian needs are most acute in governorates that have been most affected by conflict, including Taizz, Al Hudaydah and Sa'ada governorates. More than 60 per cent of people in these governorates are in acute need of humanitarian assistance.

Source: MSF
Title: Yemen: “I’d never before seen the level of casualties I saw in Saada. The scale of wounded was extreme.”
Link: https://www.msf.org/yemen-id-never-seen-level-casualties-i-saw-saada-scale-wounded-was-extreme
Date Published: 2016/Jan/27



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Yemen

“I’d never before seen the level of casualties I saw in Saada. The scale of wounded was extreme.”

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Many civilians continue to live in Saada, northern Yemen, despite almost daily airstrikes in the area. Michael Seawright from Auckland, New Zealand, was recently Project Coordinator for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) projects in the war-torn region.

“I’ve worked in war zones for the past 11 to 12 years, in some of the worst conflicts like Syria, but I have never seen such destruction conducted in such a short period as in Yemen. I was based in Saada, in the north, in a Houthi-controlled area that was experiencing almost daily attacks from Coalition air forces. These air strikes were often close to our facilities and we clearly felt their effects.

As Project Coordinator, an important part of my job was helping new staff acclimatise to the security situation. While most of our staff were experienced with MSF, many were yet to experience that level of conflict, and close proximity to attacks.

Extreme trauma injuries

I’d never before seen the level of casualties I saw in Saada. The scale of wounded was extreme in two respects – firstly there was a large number of wounded coming through the hospital, but second the severity of wounds was also often extreme.

MSF was running the emergency department, operating theatre, inpatient and maternity ward in what grew to become a 93-bed hospital in Saada City. We were receiving a lot of patients with severe injuries, including traumatic amputations – people would come in missing feet, hands and with severe abdominal and head trauma. Many of the wounded had travelled from four to five hours away, given that it was the only hospital with emergency surgical capacity in the province, in fact in most of northern Yemen. There were lots of patients: we were seeing over 2,000 emergency cases a month and more than 100 surgeries a week. If you combine that with the security situation keeping people awake, it was quite challenging, especially for our medical staff many of whom were on call 24-hours a day due to staff shortages across the country.

Despite the volatility of the conflict, life goes on, and as always pregnant women need somewhere safe to deliver their babies. The maternity ward, supported by MSF, delivered over 100 babies a week in the hospital. This was a source of pride for them but also reassuring for the wider population to know that while lives were being lost new life was being created.

Protecting a child

One patient whose story was particularly moving was a three-year-old boy with severe burns who came in to the emergency department in Saada with his uncle and father. The family lived near the Saudi border, in an area where there were regular indiscriminate attacks against the community. One day while their house was being hit by coalition forces, the boy’s father and uncle, in concern for their little boy, hunkered on top of him to protect him. For me it highlighted that a family in Yemen is much the