

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 2: Oral Update of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen
Date: 25 February 2021
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in Special Consultative Status

Mme President;

The ravages of the war in Yemen continue to worsen with hundreds of thousands dead, millions displaced, and 80% in need of humanitarian aid. The Group of Experts have declared a “pandemic of impunity” and called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court and to expand the list of people subject to Security Council sanctions.¹

The Experts report reasonable grounds to believe the parties to the conflict have committed violations of international humanitarian law² through air strikes, shellings, and indiscriminate attacks;³ interference with humanitarian aid and access to food;⁴ murder;⁵ arbitrary detentions;⁶ and targeting of journalists, defenders and jurists.⁷

By October 2020 there were an estimated 233,000 war-caused deaths, including thousands of children,⁸ millions facing lack of food and other necessities, and humanitarian workers detained, harassed and threatened.⁹ UNICEF predicts that, without an end to the war, half the population will suffer from crisis food insecurity by mid-2021.¹⁰ States, including Canada, France, Iran, and the UK have failed to heed the Experts' pleas to halt arms sales to Saudi Arabia or other parties to the conflict.

LRWC calls on the Council to:

- Seek the referral to the International Criminal Court requested by the Experts, and
- Adopt a resolution calling all states to immediately halt arms transfers to all parties to the conflict.

Thank you Mme. President.

¹ UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen Briefs the UN Security Council Urging an end to impunity, an expansion of sanctions, and the referral by the UN Security Council of the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court, 3 December 2020, Press Release, available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/SP/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=26563&LangID=S>.

² Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014. Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, A/HRC/45/6, 28 September 2020, para. 105.

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/2020-09-09-report.pdf>; Detailed findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, A/HRC/45/CRP.7, 29 September 2020, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A-HRC-45-CRP.7-en.pdf>.

³ Ibid, para. 35.

⁴ Ibid, para. 59.

⁵ Ibid, paras 45, 105 (b).

⁶ Ibid, para. 62.

⁷ Ibid, paras, 80, 82, 93.

⁸ UN News, “UN humanitarian office puts Yemen war dead at 233,000, mostly from ‘indirect causes’”, 1 December 2020, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1078972>.

⁹ OCHA, “Global Humanitarian Overview 2021,” available at <https://gho.unocha.org/yemen>

¹⁰ UNICEF, “Window to prevent famine in Yemen is narrowing warn UN agencies warn,” 3 December 2020, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/window-prevent-famine-yemen-narrowing-un-agencies-warn>.