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Plenary sitting

<NoDocSe>B8‑0450/2018</NoDocSe>

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<TitreType>MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION</TitreType>

<TitreSuite>to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy</TitreSuite>

<TitreRecueil>pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure</TitreRecueil>

<Titre>on the situation in Yemen</Titre>

<DocRef>(2018/2853(RSP))</DocRef>

<RepeatBlock-By><Depute>Ángela Vallina, João Pimenta Lopes, Eleonora Forenza, Nikolaos Chountis, Merja Kyllönen, Paloma López Bermejo, Marie‑Christine Vergiat, Marie‑Pierre Vieu, Patrick Le Hyaric, Martina Anderson, Lynn Boylan, Matt Carthy, Liadh Ní Riada, Younous Omarjee, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Kostadinka Kuneva, Stelios Kouloglou, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Tania González Peñas, Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Malin Björk, Kateřina Konečná, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez</Depute>

<Commission>{GUE/NGL}on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group</Commission>

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B8‑0450/2018

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Yemen

(2018/2853(RSP))

*The European Parliament*,

– having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen,

– having regard to the statement by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen of 6 September 2018,

– having regard to the report by the Chair of the UN Group of Eminent Regional and International Experts on Yemen, Kamel Jendoubi, to the UN Human Rights Council of 28 August 2018 on the situation of human rights in Yemen,

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 25 June 2018 on Yemen,

– having regard to the joint statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, of 4 August 2018 on the airstrikes in Hodeidah,

– having regard to the statement by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme of 19 September 2018,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Yemen, in particular those of 9 July 2015[[1]](#footnote-2), of 25 February 2016[[2]](#footnote-3), of 15 June 2017[[3]](#footnote-4) and of 30 November 2017[[4]](#footnote-5),

– having regard to its resolution of 27 February 2014 on the use of armed drones[[5]](#footnote-6),

– having regard to the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of international humanitarian law,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the long-standing confrontation between the Houthi rebels and the Yemeni Government has entered its fourth year, which is leading the country towards a major humanitarian crisis and risks plunging it into an endless war;

B. whereas since March 2017, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has considered Yemen to be at the centre of the world’s largest humanitarian crisis; whereas of a population of 29.3 million, 22.2 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 11.3 million in acute need, across all sectors, including healthcare, food, sanitation and water, housing and protection;

C. whereas from March 2015 to June 2018, the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen reported at least 16 706 civilian casualties, with 6 475 killed and 10 231 injured in the conflict; whereas the real figure is likely to be significantly higher – more than 55 000 according to UN estimates;

D. whereas the Saudi Arabia-led coalition – backed by the US, the UK and France and comprising the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Kuwait, Senegal, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan – has been the main cause of death of Yemeni civilians since the start of the airstrike campaign of 26 March 2015, which aimed at restoring President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi to power; whereas this coalition has committed grave violations of international humanitarian law that amount to war crimes, including strikes on residential areas, markets, hospitals and schools, which have resulted in many thousands of civilian deaths, mostly of women and children;

E. whereas on 13 June 2018, Saudi Arabia and the UAE launched Operation Golden Victory with the aim of seizing the Yemeni Red Sea port of Hodeidah, which has been occupied by Houthi forces since 2014; whereas Hodeidah is Yemen’s most important port and is the transit point for as much as 70 % of the country’s critical food and humanitarian aid; whereas, according to the UN, nearly 470 000 people have fled Hodeidah Governorate since early June;

F. whereas on 9 August 2018, an air strike perpetrated by the Saudi-led coalition hit a school bus in a market, in the northern province of Saada, killing scores of people including at least 40 children, most of them under the age of 10; whereas this attack was followed two weeks later, on 24 August 2018, by a new Saudi-led coalition strike killing 27 civilians, most of them children, who were fleeing the violence in the besieged southern city of Hodeidah;

G. whereas the coalition has been imposing severe naval and air restrictions in Yemen, to varying degrees, since March 2015; whereas prior to the conflict, Yemen imported nearly 90 % of its food, medical supplies and fuel; whereas these de facto blockades have had widespread and devastating effects on the civilian population; whereas despite their significant impact on civilians, these restrictions are unlikely to be effective in achieving their stated military objectives due to the absence of a clear and published list of prohibited items; whereas in the three years that the naval restrictions have been in place, no searches by either the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism or coalition forces have discovered weapons;

H. whereas more than 2 million people have been internally displaced; whereas Yemen is now at the centre of the world’s largest food security crisis; whereas more than 17.8 million people are food insecure and 8.4 million are on the brink of famine; whereas healthcare facilities are not functioning, clean water is less accessible and Yemen is still suffering from the largest outbreak of cholera in recent history;

I. whereas the UN Special Envoy for Yemen visited Sana’a on 16 September 2018, with a view to resuming peace talks and confidence-building measures, such as the complete reopening of Sana’a airport to passenger and commercial flights and the payment by the government of the salaries of civil servants in all areas of Yemen; whereas UN-sponsored talks have failed so far and a political solution to the conflict seems far from being achieved;

J. whereas extensive violations by the Houthi rebels, including the use of landmines, have been reported; whereas there have also been instances of extrajudicial executions by the pro-government forces, allied parties and armed groups; whereas Yemeni parties to the conflict are responsible for the indiscriminate shelling of civilians and civilian facilities, the denial of humanitarian access, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and torture;

K. whereas the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen has received substantial information indicating that the government, the coalition-backed forces and the Houthi-Saleh forces have all conscripted or enlisted children into armed forces or groups and used them to participate actively in hostilities; whereas at least 1.8 million children have had to drop out of school, in addition to the 1.6 million who were not in school before the conflict began;

L. whereas women in Yemen have traditionally been highly vulnerable to abuses such as child marriage and violence, as there is no legal minimum age of consent in the country; whereas women have less access than men to medical care, property ownership, education and training; whereas their situation has been worsened by the conflict and an estimated 2.6 million women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence; whereas the number of child marriages has increased significantly in the past two years; whereas around 30 % of displaced households are headed by women; whereas medicines for many chronic diseases are no longer available, and whereas Yemen has one of the highest maternal death rates; whereas malnourished, pregnant and lactating women are more likely to contract cholera and have a higher risk of bleeding, adding considerably to the risk of complications and death during childbirth;

M. whereas around 280 000 refugees, mainly from Somalia, are in Yemen, the only country in the Arab Peninsula that is a signatory to the UN Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees; whereas these refugees are also in need of protection as a result of the worsening of the conflict; whereas some 30 600 Somalis have reportedly already returned to Somalia, and the UNHCR has established Return Help Desks;

N. whereas the conflict and the security vacuum it has caused have led to the dangerous expansion of extremist groups in the country; whereas Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has consolidated its presence and Da’esh has continued its campaign of attacks and assassinations;

O. whereas Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world; whereas before the start of the war, half the Yemeni population already lived below the poverty line, two thirds of young people were unemployed and basic social services were on the verge of collapse;

P. whereas the conflict has been depicted as one between Shias and Sunnis in an attempt to obscure the real geopolitical reasons behind it; whereas Saudi Arabia is accusing the Houthi rebels of being backed by Iran and regards them as a threat to Saudi security; whereas the complexity of the conflict in Yemen has some of the elements of a proxy war; whereas the conflict has fostered the expansion of Da’esh-affiliated groups in the country;

Q. whereas the EU and the UN have imposed an arms embargo on Yemen and the EU has imposed targeted sanctions against Houthi leaders; whereas in the past year, some European countries, including Belgium, Germany, Norway and Greece, have responded to public pressure by partly or totally suspending arms transfers to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but many Member States, in particular the UK, France and Spain, have increased their arms transfer in breach of the Arms Trade Treaty and Council Common Position 2008/944/CSP of 8 December 2008;

R. whereas the US holds the al-Annad military air base in Yemen, near the southern city of al-Houta; whereas the number of lethal drone operations and extrajudicial killings carried out by the US in Yemen since 2002 has dramatically increased since the Trump administration took office; whereas there is evidence that Member States such as the UK, Italy and Germany are providing both direct and indirect support for such lethal operations by providing intelligence and other operational support;

S. whereas the geographical location of Yemen at the mouth of the Red Sea, which leads to the Suez Canal and opens onto the Gulf of Aden, has strategic importance linked to significant maritime routes and energy resources;

1. Condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing violence in Yemen and all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure; is deeply concerned at the escalation of the conflict in Yemen, which has led to the current humanitarian crisis, the situation having been exacerbated even further by the continuation of the de facto blockade by Saudi Arabia and the battle for the port of Hodeidah;

2. Condemns the use of violence against civilians by any party to the conflict or by terrorists or other armed groups, as such acts have led the country into a severe humanitarian crisis, and resulted in thousands of civilians being wounded and killed and in more than two million displaced persons; expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims;

3. Condemns the military attacks and indiscriminate aerial strikes against civilians carried out by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and its de facto blockade, which continue to be the leading cause of civilian deaths; condemns, furthermore, the blockade re-imposed by Saudi Arabia on Yemen and urges that it be completely lifted; calls on Saudi Arabia and its coalition to ensure that all ports and land routes remain open in order to allow urgent humanitarian relief for the Yemeni population into the country;

4. Warns of the consequences of the renewed military offensive on the Hodeidah Port, which must remain open; expresses concern that further disruption would favour starvation and displacement of a large number of civilians, including children;

5. Regrets the hypocrisy of the EU and the US and demands peace, justice and an end to the major crime being committed against the Yemeni people; is convinced that a political solution is the only way to end the conflict in Yemen;

6. Reminds all parties, especially Saudi Arabia and its coalition, of their responsibility to ensure compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, which means protecting civilians, refraining from targeting civilian infrastructure, and giving humanitarian organisations safe and unimpeded access to the country;

7. Deplores the failure of the first round of consultations in Geneva of 6-9 September 2018; expresses its full support for the efforts of the UN and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; calls strongly, therefore, on all parties involved in the situation in Yemen to resume peace talks and confidence-building measures and to agree as a matter of urgency to a cessation of hostilities, to be monitored by the UN, as a first step towards Yemeni-led inclusive political negotiations, with a view to restoring peace in the country;

8. Takes positive note of the renewal of the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, and calls on all Member States to provide cohesive, prompt and effective support to this mechanism across all relevant UN bodies, and in the Human Rights Council in particular;

9. Calls on the parties to the conflict to take all necessary steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against the civilian population, including sexual and gender-based violence; strongly condemns the violations of children’s rights; expresses grave concern at reports of the use of child soldiers by Houthi and pro-government forces, and at children’s limited access to basic healthcare and education; calls for those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights law, or violations of international humanitarian law, to be held accountable for their actions;

10. Calls on all parties to the conflict to end the recruitment or use of children as soldiers and other grave violations committed against them in violation of applicable international law and standards; calls on all parties to release children who have already been recruited and to cooperate with the UN in their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities;

11. Strongly condemns the intensive arms trade of Member States with various countries in the region, as in the cases of the UK, Spain, France, Germany and Sweden; calls for an immediate suspension of arms transfers and military support to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners; reiterates its call for the Council to impose an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, given the serious allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, which would mean that the continued licensing of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia is in breach of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP;

12. Calls on the international community, and in particular on Member States such as the UK, France, Spain, Germany and Sweden, to end arms transfers to all warring parties in the country and, therefore, to take the necessary measures to prevent their direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to, or for the benefit of, designated individuals and entities and those acting on their behalf or at their direction in Yemen, in line with the UN arms embargo on Yemen and as set out in paragraph 14 of UN Security Council resolution 2216 (2015);

13. Expresses concern at the fact that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Da’esh may benefit from the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen; recalls that all acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, and regardless of when, where and by whom they are committed;

14. Is convinced that Saudi intervention is aimed at reinforcing its control in the region, and that this will only bring more suffering to the Yemeni people and deeper divisions between the peoples in the Middle East;

15. Is convinced that any long-term solution should address the underlying causes of poverty and instability in the country and also fulfil the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people; reaffirms its support for any peaceful political effort to protect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen;

16. Deeply regrets the lack of attention paid by the international community in the past four years to the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen; denounces the silence of the media on the various war crimes being committed in Yemen, which shows a clear effort to hide the tragic consequences of a war backed by the US, France and the UK;

17. Opposes any foreign military intervention in the country, be it Saudi or Iranian, Arab or Western; is very concerned at the escalation of tensions in the region; underlines that the war in Yemen is not simply a conflict between Shias and Sunnis; denounces the instrumentalisation of religious differences in order to instigate political crises and sectarian wars;

18. Condemns the EU’s connivance and complicity with dictatorships in the region; is highly critical of the role played by the various Western interventions of recent years in exacerbating conflicts in the area; states that there can be no military solution to the conflicts in the region; rejects the use of the notion of ‘responsibility to protect’, also used as a pretext by different parties to the conflict in Yemen, as it violates international law and does not offer an adequate legal basis for justifying the unilateral use of force;

19. Condemns the increased use of drones for extraterritorial operations by the US under the Obama administration and the dramatic increase under the Trump administration; firmly opposes the use of drones in extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings; demands a ban on the use of drones for this purpose pursuant to its abovementioned resolution of 27 February 2014 on the use of armed drones, paragraph 2(a) and (b) of which call on the VP/HR, the Member States and the Council to ‘oppose and ban the practice of extrajudicial targeted killings’ and ‘ensure that the Member States, in conformity with their legal obligations, do not perpetrate unlawful targeted killings or facilitate such killings by other states’ respectively;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government of Yemen, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the UN Group of Independent Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen.

1. OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. OJ C 35, 31.1.2018, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0273. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0473. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. OJ C 285, 29.8.2017, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)