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## The War on Yemen and Trump's Foreign Trip

By Daniel Larison  
May 16, 2017

Describing Trump's agenda for his first foreign trip, his National Security Advisor recently said <sup>[1]</sup> this:

“He [Trump] will encourage our Arab and Muslim partners to take bold, new steps to promote peace and to confront those, from ISIS to al-Qaida to Iran to the Assad regime, who perpetuate chaos and violence that has inflicted so much suffering throughout the Muslim world and beyond,” McMaster said.

McMaster's description is hard to take seriously for a few reasons. First, the Saudis and their allies are busily perpetuating chaos and violence in Yemen, and some of them have been responsible for doing the same in Syria for years. These states have no problem perpetuating chaos and violence, and our government has not had much of a problem in aiding them as long as it can be dressed up as opposition to Iran. Far from confronting ISIS and Al Qaeda, these clients have escalated and stoked conflicts in Yemen and Syria that have allowed jihadist groups to become stronger, and at the same time they have neglected efforts to combat jihadists so that they could concentrate their resources on pummeling and starving Yemen. Everything the Trump administration has done so far has been to reward these governments for their recklessness and unreliability by promising to provide them with even more weapons and support than they were already receiving.

As I have said before, making Riyadh Trump's first visit of his presidency is an unmistakable stamp of approval on the Saudi-led coalition's destructive, illegal behavior in Yemen. The coalition bears significant responsibility for creating the world's worst humanitarian disaster there and has committed numerous war crimes against the civilian population. Meanwhile, Trump is fully embracing the coalition's members. If Trump's visit drew more attention to Yemen's plight, that would be a very thin silver lining, but it is more likely that the enormous suffering of Yemen's people and the destruction wrought by the coalition with U.S. backing will continue to go mostly unnoticed.

Of all the countries Trump could have chosen for his first visit, he chose to visit the country whose government is largely responsible for causing a major man-made famine in one of the world's poorest countries and has implicated the U.S. in numerous war crimes because of our government's assistance with their war effort. While Trump will be schmoozing with despots in Riyadh, millions of Yemenis will continue to be starved as a result of deliberate policy choices supported by Washington. That ought to appear prominently in every report on Trump's trip abroad, but it will very likely be left out of almost all of them.