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US airstrike massacres 68 people in migrant detention camp in Yemen



Residential buildings lie in ruins after overnight strikes on Yemen's capital Sanaa, attributed to the United States. April 28, 2025 [Photo: @AFP]

A US airstrike killed 68 people at a migrant detention facility Monday in Yemen's Sa'ada province, in one of the greatest massacres of civilians to date in the Trump administration's war on Yemen.

In coordination with the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, the United States has carried out almost daily bombings of Yemen, as part of a drive to reorganize the Middle East under imperialist domination.

In March, US President Donald Trump pledged to "completely annihilate" the Houthis in Yemen, declaring, "It's not even a fair fight and never will be. They will be completely annihilated."

The US bombardment of Yemen was triggered by statements by the Houthi movement that it would block the passage of Israeli ships through the Red Sea, a waterway critical for US control of the region, in response to Israel's deliberate mass starvation of the population of Gaza.

Yemen's Houthi government condemned the latest attack, calling it a "heinous crime committed by US aggression."

Reuters reported the scene was strewn with "bodies covered in dust amid blood-stained rubble. Rescue workers carried a man who was moving slightly on a stretcher. A survivor could be heard calling 'My mother' in Amharic, the main language of Ethiopia."

Christine Cipolla, a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said:

It is unthinkable that while people are detained and have nowhere to escape, they can also be caught in the line of fire.

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said:

We are saddened by the tragic loss of life where many of these migrants are believed to have been killed and injured. ... We continue to call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.

The detention center housed refugees fleeing Northern Africa for the relatively prosperous Saudi Arabia. More than 500 people drowned last year in the Red Sea while trying to reach Saudi Arabia through Yemen, according to the International Organization for Migration. Saudi Arabia is home to approximately 750,000 Ethiopians.

Refugees are routinely met with brutal treatment by Saudi border guards, including an incident in 2023 when Saudi border guards massacred hundreds of Ethiopian migrants, including women and children.

In 2022, the same detention facility was attacked by Saudi Arabia, killing 66 and wounding 113. "The coalition should have avoided any attack on that facility," the UN subsequently said in a statement.

Before Monday's attack, the US air campaign against Yemen since March 15 had killed over 158 civilians and injured 342, according to the Yemen Data Project.

On April 18, a US attack on a fuel storage facility in Hodeidah killed 80 people and injured 150.

Between 2015 and 2022, Yemen was subjected to a Saudi-US campaign of bombardment and deliberate starvation that led to the deaths of as many as 400,000 people. As part of a ceasefire agreement, the US had provided humanitarian aid to Yemen, but that funding has been slashed under the Trump administration.

In a statement earlier this month, Diala Haidar, a researcher at Amnesty International, said:
The military escalation in Yemen, along with the US aid cuts, will compound the humanitarian disaster already facing a population still reeling from the longstanding conflict.
In a statement Sunday, US Central Command claimed that the US military had bombed 800 targets and killed hundreds of members of the Houthi movement since March 15.

The statement said:

We will continue to ratchet up the pressure until the objective is met, which remains the restoration of freedom of navigation and American deterrence in the region.

The bloody US onslaught in Yemen accompanies the continued mass killing and starvation of the Palestinians in Gaza by Israel, with the support of the United States.

In figures released early Monday, Gaza's Health Ministry said that it had reported 71 people killed by Israeli forces in Gaza over the past 24 hours. Since the start of the genocide in October 2023, Israeli troops have killed 52,314 Palestinians. Since Israel resumed its onslaught after a brief "ceasefire" on March 18, it has killed 2,222 people.

In a statement Monday, Gaza's government media office reported that it has logged 65,000 total cases of acute malnutrition among the 1.1 million children in Gaza. It said Israel's total blockade of food, water and medical supplies into Gaza had caused a "catastrophic deterioration in health conditions, and the prevalence of cases of acute malnutrition, especially among children and infants."

In a statement before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Egypt's Assistant Foreign Minister Hatem Kamaleldin Abdelkader accused Israel of the "systematic weaponization of humanitarian assistance."

He added:

There is no doubt that these practices are part of a widespread, systematic and comprehensive state policy to depopulate the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territory] and effect its de-facto annexation.

In a statement before the court, Malaysian Envoy Azalina Othman Said added:

In the last few weeks, we have witnessed not only a renewed war against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, but also statements by senior Israeli officials that leave no doubt that Israel's intention is to bring about the ultimate denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination to their eventual displacement and elimination.

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