



OCTOBER 27, 2015

Yemen: Coalition Airstrikes Hit Hospital

Credible, Impartial Inquiry Needed into Attack

(Sanaa) – The airstrikes by a -led coalition on a hospital in northern supported by Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontiers, MSF) on October 26, 2015, was in apparent violation of the laws of war. The attack with a half-dozen bombs destroyed Haydan Hospital, the only medical facility in the town of Haydan in the northern governorate of Saada, about 30 kilometers from the Saudi border. Two patients were injured during the evacuation of the hospital.

The MSF Yemen country director, *Hassan Boucenine*, told Human Rights Watch that the first strike hit the left wing of the building at about 10:30 p.m. After the first explosion, all of the patients and staff members in the hospital – there were at least 12 at the time – fled the building. Aircraft then dropped about five more bombs on the hospital, including two that did not explode and are still in the building.

“The bombing of a hospital is shocking amid increasing reports in Yemen of civilian deaths from coalition airstrikes,” said , deputy Middle East director. “Bombing a hospital sends a message that all medical facilities, health workers, and patients are at grave risk.”

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Joe Stork

Deputy Middle East Director

Boucenine said that, as is standard practice to avoid becoming a target, MSF had first supplied the health center’s coordinates to the coalition about six months ago and reconfirmed them at least once a month since then. The hospital had the MSF logo and name painted on its roof.

Haydan Hospital receives support, including funding to cover staff salaries and medical supplies, from MSF, *Boucenine said*. It is the only medical facility within an 80-kilometer radius, and usually receives about 150 emergency cases a week. Since May 2015 the facility has treated about 3,400 wounded. The facility is now closed.

A Yemeni Health Ministry official told MSF that the attack completely destroyed the emergency room, outpatient and inpatient departments, lab, and maternity ward, and severely damaged the windows and walls of the building. The only departments that were undamaged were the x-ray department and the medical staff room.

Brig. Gen. Ahmed al-Assiri, the coalition military spokesman, _____ that “coalition jets had been in action over Saada governorate” but had not hit the hospital.

Since the beginning of the Saudi-led coalition air campaign on March 26, Human Rights Watch has documented more than two dozen airstrikes that appeared to be in violation of the laws of war. Human Rights Watch has not been able to ascertain that _____ or other coalition members are investigating a single airstrike. In some instances the coalition has denied that the attacks Human Rights Watch documented were unlawful, but has not provided information to support those claims. The coalition should open an impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation into the bombing of Haydan Hospital to establish the circumstances of the attack, and make its results public. Anyone responsible for committing a war crime should be fairly prosecuted.

The Houthis and other forces have also been responsible for indiscriminate attacks and other laws-of-war violations, Human Rights Watch said. Houthi and [redacted] and opposition militias have engaged in military operations around [redacted], [redacted], and other areas that have repeatedly put civilians and civilian structures such as [redacted] at unnecessary risk.

“Again and again, we see coalition airstrikes that smack of violations of the laws of war, but we see no investigation into possible violations,” Stork said.

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