

# Saudis Hold a Virtual Donors' Conference for Yemen; Let's Not Take Part

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The story is at [Al Jazeera](#):

*Saudi Arabia has confirmed it will host a virtual donors' conference next week for Yemen together with the United Nations, which has said the conflict-riven nation risks being overwhelmed by the coronavirus.*

*The state-run Saudi Press Agency on Friday cited a directive from King Salman confirming Tuesday's donor conference with which the UN aims to raise \$2.4bn in one of the biggest aid operations so far.*

*"If we don't get the funding we need and if more isn't done to suppress the virus, COVID-19 could engulf Yemen," Lise Grande, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, said in a*

statement.

Millions of people need aid in Yemen, whose government was removed from the capital, Sanaa, by Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in 2014. The next year, a Saudi-led military coalition intervened to restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power.

Yemen has reported nearly 300 infections and 55 deaths so far, amounting to a fatality rate of 20 percent, compared with a global average estimated by the UN at seven percent.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), last week said aid workers in Yemen were forced to turn people away because of a lack of medical oxygen or sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Meanwhile, questions have been raised over Saudi Arabia's involvement in the donor conference, given that it has been accused of war crimes in Yemen.

Laerke said the UN had voiced concerns "forcefully and vocally" over alleged abuses committed by all the sides in the five-year war.

He, however, added that Saudi Arabia was also the largest humanitarian donor to Yemen in recent years.

"They gave very large amounts of money. They gave it unconditionally, no strings attached," he said, adding that the billions in Saudi donations had helped fight cholera outbreaks and looming famines....

It is maddening that this Donor's Conference is being held under U.N. auspices. For the Western nations, while suffering their own economic distress as a result of the pandemic, will – as they always do – send representatives, and yet again, pledge much of the money to rescue Muslims from the

consequences of their own violence. Why should the U.S., the U.K., or France, or Italy, contribute to help the Muslim Yemenis who, encouraged by Muslim Iran and Muslim Saudi Arabia, are the authors of their own misfortune?

Let's remember how the continuing civil war in Yemen began. The conflict started with an Arab Spring uprising against Yemen's authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, in 2011. As president, Hadi had to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by jihadists, a separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of security personnel to Saleh, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity.

While Hadi struggled, the Shi'a Houthis, who had engaged in small-scale rebellions against his predecessor, Ali Abdullah Saleh, during the previous decade, took advantage of the new president's weakness, and seized control of their northern heartland of Saada province. By early in 2015, the Houthis took over the capital, Sanaa, and then tried to take control of the entire country. Hadi had to flee abroad.

At that point the Saudis, alarmed at a possible Shi'a takeover – backed by Iran – of Yemen, organized a coalition of nine Sunni Arab states to defeat the Houthis. Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain contributed a symbolic handful of planes to an air campaign, but it was Saudi Arabia, and to a much lesser extent the UAE, that provided almost all the military assistance – especially bombing of Houthi fighters and civilians alike – to the Sunni government.

At the start of the war, Saudi officials forecast that it would last only a few weeks. They were wrong. There have been five years of fighting in Yemen, resulting only in a military stalemate. In 2019, the U.A.E. pulled its forces out; the Saudis have continued to fight but have signaled their desire

to leave. They announced a unilateral ceasefire earlier this year, hoping the Houthis might join, but instead the Houthis have continued to attack, forcing the Saudis to respond.

There are only two parties that are responsible for the continuing civil war that has resulted in the massive destruction in Yemen, the consequent collapse of Yemen's health system, and widespread famine. These are Iran and Saudi Arabia. In early May, the American government sent \$225 million in emergency food aid to Yemen, where 80% of the population, or 24 million people, rely on aid, and 10 million are facing famine.

Will the Americans be at the Donor's Conference, ready to shell out still more hundreds of millions of dollars in aid for Yemen? Or could Secretary Pompeo announce that the United States had already done its part, by having sent \$225 million in food aid at the beginning of May? That would be a salutary rebuff to Muslim states' expectations.

And why do the European nations think they should pledge large sums to aid a Muslim state? They are themselves suffering from the economic consequences of the pandemic. They are also suffering the economic consequences of large Muslim populations who now live in their midst, and upon whom every conceivable benefit is lavished: free or highly subsidized housing, free education, free medical care, family allowances.

It is not as if Yemen had suffered a natural disaster – an earthquake, a hurricane, a tsunami. Yemen's problems are man-made, the result of decisions to wage war both by the Yemenis themselves, and by Saudi Arabia and Iran, who chose to take part, supporting opposite sides. These – Saudi Arabia, Iran – are the two parties that are responsible for the continuing civil war that has resulted in the massive destruction of infrastructure in Yemen, the collapse of Yemen's health system, and widespread famine.

Saudi Arabia and Iran, as the main parties who have engaged, either directly (the Saudi bombing campaign) or indirectly (as Iran's military and financial help to its Houthi proxies), in the five-year civil war, should be expected to supply all of the \$2.4 billion that is being sought, save for a small portion that might be provided by the UAE, in recognition of its military role alongside the Saudis. No virtual donor's conference is necessary. Even with the decrease in oil revenues, the Saudis still have \$500 billion in their foreign reserves; they would hardly miss a billion dollars, or even two, given to the Yemenis whose suffering they have prolonged.

Iran has the funds available for Yemeni aid as well. Its recent economic reversals have caused it to decrease, but not to end, the aid it lavishes on proxies and allies around the Middle East. The Islamic Republic has chosen to spend billions on military and financial aid for the Houthis in Yemen, for the Kataib Hezbollah militias in Iraq, for Hezbollah in Lebanon, and for Bashar Assad's forces in Syria. Iran could easily transfer one or two billion dollars from the \$15 billion it has been spending annually in Syria, especially since that war is almost over, annually, and send it instead to aid impoverished civilians in Yemen, where the civil war was begun, after all, by Iran's proxy, the Houthis.

The world's non-Muslim states do not expect, and do not ever receive, humanitarian aid from Muslim states. They should emulate their enemies, by limiting their aid money to other non-Muslim states. Muslim states are plagued by corruption, mismanagement and, often, violence. Attempts by Infidels to bring good government to Muslim states have failed, sometimes spectacularly so. In recent decades, the American government spent \$2 trillion in Afghanistan, and another \$2 trillion in Iraq, in a vain attempt, once the despot Saddam Hussein had been overturned, and the Taliban (temporarily) defeated, to create democracies that would protect human rights, and that would serve as lights-unto-the-Muslim nations. The experiments

failed. American intentions were good, but there was no understanding that in Islamic societies, very different rules apply. In Western democratic states, a government's legitimacy depends on how well it follows the will of the people, as expressed through elections. In Muslim states, a government's legitimacy depends on how well the ruler follows the will of Allah, as expressed in the Qur'an. A ruler may be a despot, but he must be a good Muslim.

Yemen has many problems, but those problems are the result of decisions taken in Sanaa and Riyadh and Tehran, not in New York, London, or Paris. Let's do as the Muslims do, dividing the world uncompromisingly into two camps, Dar al-Islam, where Islam dominates and Muslims rule, and Dar al-Harb, the Domain of War, where Infidels still rule. To allow ourselves to be inveigled into forever rescuing, through large injections of cash, those peoples of Dar al-Islam, so many of whom live in mismanaged, corrupt, and violent states, will deplete our resources, for in the Muslim world somewhere there will always be calamitous impoverishment demanding our attention, and our money.

After Yemen, it could be Egypt, because of its skyrocketing population, and diminishing resources, asking for Western – as well as Muslim – aid. In 1950, Egypt had twenty million people; now it has 100 million. This failure by the government to institute policies to lower fertility rates has led to an enormous strain on Egypt's supplies of food and water. Meanwhile, because of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being completed by Ethiopia, Egypt's water supply, if the dam is filled at the rate Ethiopia intends, will decrease by 50 percent, and there will be a 67 percent reduction in its agriculture area. Similar tales of impending future disaster, based on unchecked population growth, come from many parts of the Muslim world. In 1960, the Arab population of Algeria was nine million. Today it has more than quadrupled, to 44 million, and it is expected to rise to 72 million by 2050.

Compare Algeria's 450% increase between 1960 and 2020, with France, where the population during the same period increased from 47 million to 68 million, or about 45%. Like Algeria and Egypt, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are suffering from "food insecurity" that can morph into famine. It's their own fault. Why have these countries done so little to decrease fertility rates? One reason may be that many Muslims see their ballooning populations not as a source of weakness, but of strength. Overpopulation, and wretched lives, in their own countries leads many of those Muslims to migrate to the advanced lands of the Infidel West, where instead of integrating harmoniously into the larger society, these migrants so often remain hostile and aloof, even seeing themselves as instruments of Jihad. At the U.N. in 1968, the Algerian leader Houari Boumedienne famously predicted that "one day, millions of men will leave the Southern Hemisphere to go to the Northern Hemisphere. And they will not go there as friends. Because they will go there to conquer it. And they will conquer it with their sons. The wombs of our women will give us victory."

Just as the Western world needs to close its borders to Muslim migrants, it needs to hold tight to its money when implored to help Muslim states in distress. There are a great many impoverished Infidels – more than a billion in Latin America, and in sub-Saharan Africa – who do not see us as their enemies, and are not out to dominate us or to conquer the world. These are the people we should help. To govern is to choose – let's choose to help only those who are not, by their fanatical faith, against us.

Don't worry about poorer Muslim states. Nine of the twenty-five richest countries (according to the GNI per capita) in the world are oil-rich Muslim states. They have more than enough to help impoverished peoples who are fellow members of the Umma. Those rich Muslims countries – save for Brunei, all are Gulf Arab states – can also pay for massive programs to

decrease fertility rates among poor Muslims; these programs will in the long run lower the amounts of aid that they will need to deliver. If such programs were sponsored by Infidels, they would be met with deep distrust as attempts to “eliminate Muslims from the world”; if they are funded entirely by Muslims, they have some chance of success.

Soon the Syrian civil war will be at its end, and there will be all sorts of international meetings devoted to how to pay for the reconstruction of Syria. Early estimates suggest that the total cost will be at least \$350 billion. The U.N. will officiously step forward, for an “International Donors Conference.” Pope Francis will make his plea for the rich West to help its poor Muslim brothers. The Western world should resist the insensate temptation to spend its taxpayers’ money on a Muslim state. Where should that money come from? Not from the U.S. and not from Europe. That war began as an internal struggle, with Muslim Syrians fighting against other Muslim Syrians. Then other Muslims became involved in the Syrian civil war, either by fighting themselves, or sending military or financial support to one side or the other. These included Iranians, Turks, Saudis, Emiratis, and Palestinians.

Syria is a Muslim problem. Its reconstruction is none of our business. Let the Muslims come up with \$350 billion in reconstruction aid. Or – and this would be my preference – not.

First published in