

Saudis Using Petrodollars to Buy Support at UN: Int'l Lawyer

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TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A senior Canadian human rights attorney slammed continued atrocities committed by the Saudi regime in Yemen and said the election of the oil-rich kingdom to head the United Nations Human Rights Committee is nothing but “a sick joke”.

“The Saudis also use their money to buy allies and support in the United Nations. An example of this bribery was the election of Saudi Arabia to head the United Nations Human Rights Committee,” Edward Corrigan from Ontario said in an exclusive interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

“This election is a sick joke because Saudi Arabia has one of the worst human rights records of all of the countries on the planet,” he added.

Following is the full text of the interview:

Tasnim: As you know, the Saudi blockades on Yemen's ports and airspace has caused a human tragedy. The World Health Organization has recently reported that some 700,000 suspected cases of cholera have hit Yemen, with the outbreak showing no signs of rescinding. The Red Cross has also warned that the cholera epidemic could impact 850,000 Yemeni people by the end of the year. The outbreak "has reached colossal proportions," said Robert Mardini, the International Committee of the Red Cross's Near and Middle East director. As an international lawyer, what do you think about the human tragedy? Why have the international organizations, particularly the UN, remained passive in the face of the ongoing Saudi atrocities?

Corrigan: The situation in Yemen is one of the worst humanitarian crisis in the World today. Humanitarian agencies are raising their voices and now the politicians are condemning Saudi Arabia for its embargo on Yemen. The pressure to intervene in Yemen is starting to build but has not yet hit the threshold for concrete action. Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia spends a great deal of money buying arms from the United States and Britain. As a result, the US and British governments protect Saudi Arabia from serious criticism and any meaningful action by the United Nations and especially the Security Council. The Saudis also use their money to buy allies and support in the United Nations. An example of this bribery was the election of Saudi Arabia to head the United Nations Human Rights Committee. This election is a sick joke because Saudi Arabia has one of the worst human rights records of all of the countries on the planet.

Tasnim: Recent airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition have killed dozens of civilians, including a large number of women and children, near Yemen's capital and the central province of Ma'rib. A recent report authored by several international aid agencies said Yemen suffered more airstrikes in the first half of this year than in the whole of 2016, increasing the number of civilian deaths and forcing more people to flee their homes. In your opinion, why has the Saudi regime decided to increase the airstrikes, hitting civilian targets?

Corrigan: Saudi Arabia and their allies in the Persian Gulf Co-operation Council are unable to defeat the Houthis and the supporters of former Yemen President Saleh on the ground. They have a huge military advantage in air power and are using it to attack their enemies in Yemen and to punish the civilian population in Yemen in the hope that they put pressure on the opponents of former Yemen President Hadi and the opponents of Saudi domination of Yemen.

Tasnim: Newly-leaked emails written by two former top US officials have shown that Saudi Arabia's crown prince and defense minister Mohammed bin Salman "wants out" of the war he

started in Yemen. The Saudi regime has reached none of its objectives in Yemen. In 2015, the kingdom had a record budget deficit of almost \$100 billion, prompting it to rein in public spending in a bid to save money. Why is the regime continuing its attacks on the Arabian Peninsula country despite its failures and cash-strapped economy? What do you think about the future of the war?

Corrigan: Saudi Arabia has been unable to defeat the Houthis. In effect, there is a draw and neither side is able to defeat the other. The Saudis have an advantage in terms of air power and maritime power and have been able to enforce a blockade on Yemen, which punishes the civil population by denying them food and medicine which has threatened much of the population of Yemen with starvation and cholera and other treatable diseases. Yet despite these military advantages they have been unable to defeat the Houthis and their allies. This failure demonstrates the weakness of air power and the weakness of Saudi Arabia and their allies. The Saudi Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman want to cut his losses and end the financial drain this war has caused the Saudis and come up with a face-saving measure that will allow the Saudis to withdraw from the quagmire in Yemen.

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