

Report says U.S. drone strikes killing more civilians in Yemen



Sanaa, November 16 (RHC)-- Civilian casualties from the years-long U.S. drone strikes in Yemen are on the rise, a new report has warned, pointing to yet another major threat facing the Yemeni people amid a devastating war by Saudi Arabia.

U.S. President Donald Trump has dramatically ramped-up drone attacks in the impoverished country, carrying out 176 attacks in more than two years, far more than the 154 attacks that former President Barack Obama authorized in his entire eight years in office, according to the Associated Press.

Overall, drone attacks carried out under Donald Trump have killed more than 300 people in 2017 and 2018, the AP found, based on accounts from family members and witnesses. Of those, at least 30 civilians were killed in 2018 according to accounts from family members and witnesses, the report added.

Washington has on few occasions acknowledged civilian casualties while claiming that most of the attacks successfully take out the targets, which it insists are positions of the al-Qaeda in Yemen, one of the most notorious branches of the terror network.

While the U.S. military says it won't release details or death tolls in drone strikes, some Yemeni families argue that they have lost loved ones in these attacks.

The Pentagon confirmed earlier this year that it had carried out a strike in Yemen's Shabwa province on January 26, saying it was strictly targeting al-Qaeda members.

Ever since the attack, however, many families living in the targeted areas have tried to prove their slain loved ones were not militants. They have gathered letters from police officers, district officials, tribal leaders, school principals and many other people to certify that their relatives had nothing to do with al-Qaeda.

They have also spoken to human rights groups and the International Committee of the Red Cross, asking them to launch an investigation. Many people have staged demonstrations attended by over 200 people, demanding the U.S. acknowledge the civilian deaths and compensate the victims' families.

The push has failed to prompt a response from Washington as the U.S. has no embassy in Yemen and therefore families can't request compensation for relatives killed in drone strikes, unlike Iraq and Pakistan where a few families have succeeded in doing so.

The current situation with U.S. drone strikes makes life harder for the people of Yemen, who have been under attack from Saudi Arabia and its regional allies for more than three years now.

The war, which is supported by the United States and many other Western countries, has killed thousands of Yemenis and put the country on the verge of a humanitarian crisis.

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