

Death in Yemen: made by Rheinmetall?

- **Criminal complaint against manager of Italian subsidiary for sales to Saudi Arabia**
- **Rheinmetall exports indirectly to crisis regions**
- **New research points to German responsibility**

Berlin, 7.5.2018 On the eve of the shareholders' meeting of Germany's biggest arms producer, human rights groups presented their research on the company's involvement in crises and wars. Rheinmetall AG is now also facing legal pressure to justify its actions following the filing of a criminal complaint against its subsidiary RWM Italia.

In Berlin, Yemeni human rights activist Bonyan Gamal reported on the research carried out by the NGO Mwatana Organization for Human Rights: According to their research, an airstrike believed to be by the Saudi-led military coalition struck the village of Deir Al-Hajari in Northwest Yemen on 8 October 2016. The airstrike killed a family of six. At the scene of the crime, a suspension lug produced by RWM Italia was found and additional weapon remnants at the site suggest that a guided bomb was used in the raid. **"The day after the attack, a member of our organization fully documented the scene and found arms remnants of which at least one was made by RWM Italia. Through such research we want to identify the arms suppliers who would otherwise remain anonymous. Their weapons are feeding the war that is devastating my country and sacrificing many uninvolved people,"** says Bonyan Gamal.

Together with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) and Italy-based organization Rete Disarmo, Mwatana filed criminal charges with the Public Prosecutor's Office in Rome. The action aims to clarify the responsibilities of the managing directors of RWM Italia and the responsibility of the Italian authority. **"Despite numerous warnings that the bombardments of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen lead to the death of countless civilians and repeatedly violate international humanitarian law, companies like RWM Italia continue to deliver bombs to participating states,"** criticizes Christian Schliemann of ECCHR.

Otfried Nassauer from the Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security was able to rely on current research to conclude that the deliveries of weapons used in Yemen are part of a wider problem. **"These deliveries seem to show a strategy on the part of Rheinmetall to outsource its responsibility to subsidiaries and joint ventures abroad, and to make profit from the war in Yemen. The company exports whole arms factories to states that are involved in this war."** Since 2013 Saudi Arabia directly and indirectly received arms from RWM Italia worth more than 500 million euro. RDM, a South African joint venture of Rheinmetall, is preparing exports to the United Arab Emirates of tens of thousands of mortar shells, thousands of artillery shells and over 12,000 bombs.

Barbara Happe from the NGO urgewald adds: **"The German government also risks bearing part of the responsibility if it fails to finally tighten up its purported ban on German arms exports to states involved in the conflict in Yemen. It also has to ban exports by subsidiaries abroad."**

New research by Happe examines German investors and banks involved in the financing of Rheinmetall. The result: **German financial institutions like Deutsche Bank or**

Commerzbank still provide loans and other services to the arms manufacturer. Furthermore, all German fund managers invest in Rheinmetall.

Over the last year Deutsche Bank subsidiary DWS and Sparkassen investment firm Deka reduced their Rheinmetall shareholdings to 30-40 million euro each due to increasing public pressure. They are thus no longer among the top 10 investors of Rheinmetall. Allianz Global Investors on the other hand still owns shares worth 90 million euro. **“There are still no effective guidelines prohibiting German investors and banks from supporting companies that export to warzones or crisis regions or build arms factories in the affected countries.”**

More information:

Description of the case of weapons remnants found in Yemen:

<https://www.ecchr.eu/en/case/european-responsibility-for-war-crimes-in-yemen/>

Briefing: “Business with Death – Germany’s Role in Yemen War” (urgewald 2018):

https://urgewald.org/sites/default/files/Briefing_Jemen_WEB.pdf

Study: “Unrestrained in all Parts of the World – Arms Exports by Rheinmetall AG” (BITS, 2016): <http://www.bits.de/public/pdf/rr16-01.pdf>

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