



Security Council

Topic 3: The situation in Yemen

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1. Definition of key terms:

Sunni: one of the two main branches of Islam, differing from Shia in its understanding of the Sunna and in its acceptance of the first three caliphs. **Shia:** one of the two main branches of Islam, followed by about a tenth of Muslims, especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad's first true successor **Houthi movement:** is an Islamic religious-political-armed movement that emerged from northern Yemen in the 1990s. **AQAP:** Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Islamist group).

2. Background information:

War in Yemen

The first spark of the conflict emerged during the Arab uprisings in 2011. At the beginning of 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa, there had been some pro-democracy protests that overthrew the leaders in Tunisia and Egypt and led to political instability in other countries, such as Libya, Bahrain and Syria. In Yemen, activists protested and challenged the rule of President ‘Alī ‘Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ, who had been ruling the country for 33 years. He was criticised for causing widespread unemployment and corruption.

One of the biggest protests came from politically motivated Shia rebel group, called “the Houthis”. They had been at war with the Saleh government for years and forced the president to end his rule. He refused to resign but gave some economic concessions. In March in the capital city Sana'a approximately 2000 protesters died at the hands of the military; a commander backed the opposition and caused deadly clashes between government troops



and tribal militias. This came to be known as “the Yemeni Revolution”, and it lasted for 13 months.

Thanks to an international deal, in November the power was given to 'Abd Rabbih Mansur Hadi, the former vice-president. He later won the election (in 2012, the first election by universal suffrage in the history of Yemen). Hadi's attempts in reforming some constitutional and budgetary aspects of the country led to some other protests by Houthis in the north.

In 2013, a UN-sponsored national dialogue was established to address the future of the country and a new federal system was agreed on. But tensions flared again when a proposal was made to divide Yemen into 6 federal regions: the Houthis and a southern separatist movement (called 'The Hirank') objected to the proposal saying it was undermining their distinct interests and national vision.

The Hadi government, which seemed like the best option at the time, was not able to maintain order. This resulted in groups such as Al-Qaeda, in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and Daesh taking advantage of the political instability in the country. This also allowed the Houthis to begin making some territorial gains.

The Houthis lacked military power and so, unexpectedly, turned to Saleh for support, aware that he still had military factions loyal to him. Saleh saw this as an opportunity to regain his title. So the two sides collaborated.

Over the course of September 2014, Houthis took the capital city of Sana'a forcing Hadi to move the government's seat to the southern port of Aden. The Houthis advancement was seen as a threat to Riyadh because it was a Shia group and was likely backed by Iran, a rival of the Saudis. Moreover, sharing a long border implicates a stronger Iranian influence.

So Saudi Arabia responded to Hadi's pleas and formed a coalition: they set up an air and sea blockade, launched an aerial campaign to drive the Houthis out and restore the country's internationally-recognized government. Local observers in the Yemen Data Project say almost a third of the Saudi-led coalition air-strikes have targeted 'non-military zones', such as schools, hospitals and other dwellings.

In the meantime, the USA began carrying out its own campaign in Yemen. Not only it was supplying the Saudi-led coalition with billions of dollars worth of weapons, but also targeting Al-Qaeda and Daesh.

By the end of 2017, the situation began reaching a turning point. The former president Saleh, who for months allied with the Houthis, offered to put an end to the fight with the Saudi-led coalition (part of his speech: “I call on our brothers in neighbouring countries to stop their aggression and lift the blockade... and we will turn the page”).

The Houthis saw this move as treacherous and about 48 hours later Saleh was found dead outside of Sana'a; the Houthis admitted killing him.

The rebels were now being targeted from all sides and most of Saleh's supporters became anti-Houthis. Meanwhile, the Hadi government was battling a new enemy, separatist forces



in the south backed militarily and financially by the United Arab Emirates. While the UAE is still part of the Saudi-led coalition, it is said to be continuing efforts to maintain a strategic foothold in the south, crippling the once united campaign against the Houthis. Experts affirmed that aside from the UAE other members of the coalition were pursuing their own agendas and each side of the conflict is said to have violated humanitarian and international law.

Now president Hadi is based in Saudi Arabia, but his government still operates out of Aden and the conflict between the separatists, Houthis and the forces loyal to Saleh are still ongoing. Everyone is still pursuing their own agenda.

EFFECTS OF WAR:

The crisis in Yemen has been ongoing for almost 8 years and the civil war for 3 years. Yemen currently faces a host of humanitarian issues ranging from widespread communicable diseases, lack of medicine and lack of safe drinking water and food. All of this has created a famine in Yemen, the cause of which can be recognised as the Saudi led coalition's blockade. By restricting the flow of humanitarian aid from the UN via any means on the grounds that the aid would support the rebels, the coalition has made the problem even worse, and conditions in Yemen have been steadily declining.

Without access to clean drinking water, an outbreak of Cholera has been recorded in the region. Cholera is a highly contagious disease that is spread mainly through the contamination of water sources. Though Cholera is treatable by medical professionals and usually resolves within days, it can also be potentially fatal if not treated swiftly. According to WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic, the number of new recorded cases of Cholera per week is 11,500 cases, with at least 2515 deaths so far. Children are especially vulnerable to the outbreak with at least 1.2 million children malnourished in Yemen.

The famine has also led to acute starvation among at least 3.3 million people in Yemen. Save the Children, an NGO active in Yemen estimates that in 2017 approximately 85,000 children had died of starvation as of November 2018, with the number only rising.

The problem is worsened by the intense fighting that often occurs near hospitals as well as the specific targetting on any such medical institutions. According to the WHO, at least 274 medical facilities have been damaged or destroyed, with approximately 50% of the population unable to attain access to healthcare services. Making the already dire situation even worse.

The impact on infrastructure cannot be understated either. Prior to the civil war, only 10% of Yemen's roads had been paved, and that number has been on a steady decline with many paved roads being blocked or destroyed, limiting the impact of aid and making it difficult for any resources to reach the Yemeni countryside. The impact can also be felt in major cities where airstrikes have limited the mobility of any emergency relief services or aid.

The situation in Yemen is dependent on the control of two major cities. Al Hudaydah, and Aden, both of which are major port cities critical to the inflow of aid. Al Hudaydah recently changed hands when the Hadi government took control of the port but the area is still heavily contested by the Houthis. The port of Aden, on the other hand, is in a similar situation.



Currently controlled by the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a secessionist group fighting for the freedom of South Yemen, it is a heavily fought over port. Both these areas being hotspots for fighting and of strategic importance to all involved parties providing aid through these ports is near impossible.

The UN has proposed that the port of Al Hudaydah be placed in the hands of a neutral party so as to ensure that the much-needed aid can at least reach Yemen. This has led to the first direct talks between the Yemeni government and the Houthis since 2016. The conference is being held in Sweden and has already resulted in a deal for prisoner swapping. The talks are now focused on the control of the city of Al Hudaydah and Taiz, Yemen's third largest city, and it remains to be seen what the outcome of these talks will be.

With no end to the conflict in sight, it is pertinent that the committee creates solutions that address the issues created by the war, keeping in mind that innocent, uninvolved civilians are constantly on the brink of life and death, with the famine putting close to 17 million people at risk of starvation.

3. Major Countries Involved:

Major countries involved are the ones that both directly or indirectly had taken part in Yemen's war: Bahrein, Egypt, France, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, UAE, USA.

4. UN Involvement:

During various UNHRC committees, several resolutions on Yemen have passed.

They usually address not only Yemen but also the other major countries involved and call upon the government to implement safety measures for civilians, without actually expressing and specifying any such measures themselves.

Seven resolutions concerning the crisis, Resolution 2014, 2051, 2140, 2201, 2216, 2266 and 2342 were debated during UNSC sessions, demanding ceasefire during the war.

Resolution 2201 condemned actions of Houthi rebels and called for a stop of violence from them.

Last resolutions call for the implementation of the political transition process

At the end of this study guide, you will find resolutions approved by UN.

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6. USEFUL LINKS:

<https://news.un.org/en/focus/yemen>

<http://ye.one.un.org/content/unct/yemen/en/home.html>

<https://www.unocha.org/yemen>

<https://osesgy.unmissions.org/un-yemen>

<https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/resolutions>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Civil_War_\(2015%E2%80%93present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Civil_War_(2015%E2%80%93present))

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>

<https://borgenproject.org/infrastructure-in-yemen-2/>

<https://www.rappler.com/world/regions/middle-east/169885-yemen-state-emergency-cholera-outbreak/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/08/yemen-conflict-controls-160814132104300.html>

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/malnutrition-amongst-children-yemen-all-time-high-warns-unicef/>

<https://www.france24.com/en/20181211-yemen-warring-factions-houthi-direct-talks-sweden/>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/mepo.12295/>

<https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/resolution/>