**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** Addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen

**Student Officer:** Rishan Alex Suresh

**Position:** Deputy Chair



**Introduction**

Yemen’s ongoing humanitarian crisis remains one of the most severe and complex issues of today. The civil war, which began in 2014 with the Houthi rebels’ takeover of Yemen’s capital, San’a. The situation is further complicated by external military interventions such as Saudi, Iran, and other local factions, blockades, and political instability. The conflict has devastated Yemen’s infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and water sanitation facilities.

As of 2024, more than 24 million people (roughly 80% of Yemen’s population) require humanitarian aid, including over 12 million children. They face malnutrition, exploitation, and violence, with women and children facing a heightened risk of it. Millions have been forced to flee, making them displaced persons. While international organisations and governments have attempted to broker peace agreements and provide humanitarian aid, these efforts have often failed to solve the root causes for the long term. Additionally, the humanitarian response has also been hampered by insufficient funding, logistical challenges, and difficulty accessing conflict zones. As the Security Council, we must consider not only the immediate humanitarian need, but also long-term strategies for peacebuilding and reconstruction.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Sectarian Conflict**

A conflict that stems from an excessive attachment or loyalty to a certain sect, political party, or religious belief.

**Sunnis**

Sunnism is a sect of Islam. After Prophet Mohammed passed away, there was a divide over who the rightful heir after him should be. Sunnis believe that Abu Bakr, a close friend of the Prophet, is the rightful heir to the political and religious office.

**Shiites**

Otherwise known as ‘Shias’, they are the other main sect of Islam. They believe that Prophet Mohammed’s son-in-law, Ali, was his legitimate successor as political and religious leader.

**Proxy War**

A conflict where external powers support and influence decisions on how the opposing sides function

**Humanitarian Crisis**

A humanitarian crisis is defined as any circumstance where humanitarian needs are sufficiently large and complex to require significant external assistance and resources, and where a multi-sectoral response is needed, with the engagement of a wide range of international humanitarian actors (IASC).

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)**

A person or group of persons who have been forced to flee or leave their place of residence in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

**Coalition**

An alliance that is comprised of multiple states and entities, usually to take military action against other states, parties, or entities.

**Background Information**

 Yemen’s humanitarian crisis has dramatically worsened for the last decade. Cholera outbreaks and starvation rates have hindered aid to the Yemeni people. Alongside it, the conflict aids in making aid to the Yemeni people more difficult

**History**

 The history of the conflict is incredibly complex, stemming as early as the 1970s. The tensions began in 1978, with President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s rise to power until 1990 for North Yemen, and until 2011 for unified Yemen. His different ideology, economic management, and power-sharing created friction within Yemen.

***1994 Civil War***

An initial civil war in 1994 broke out, separating the North and South. Southern Yemeni leaders felt they were being marginalized under the North-dominant President Saleh. Compounded with a fragile economy and a drop in oil prices, the South, led by Ali Salim al-Beidh, formed the Democratic Republic of Yemen. In response, President Saleh attempted to suppress the secessionists, which led to a two month civil war.

Due to internalized division within the South, the North defeated the South and recaptured the port city of Aden in July 1994. Unification was firmly placed under President Saleh’s leadership, and the centralization of power was further reinforced in the North.

***Rise of the Houthi Rebels (2000s)***

The Houthi rebels began to rise up in the early 2000s. Historically, they were affiliated with the Zaydi Imamate (Shias), who had initially governed Yemen for 1000 years until they were defeated in 1970 by royalist forces.

President Saleh had a Sunni-backed government, which passed secular policies that attempted to suppress religious practices, had dissatisfied the Houthis. Additionally, the government’s alignment with Saudi Arabia had alienated the Houthis. Ultimately, it led to the initial conflict between the Houthis and the government in 2004, which is still ongoing today.

***Arab Spring Protests (2011)***

In 2011, mass protests erupted across the Arab world. Calling for reforms in unemployment, corruption, and economic stagnation, it began in Tunisia and spread to many countries, including Yemen.

The Yemeni people called for President Saleh’s resignation, due to his failure in addressing economic problems and widespread political repression. President Saleh responded by deploying the military to suppress protesters, which was not fully effective in stopping the protests. Additionally, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), backed by the UN, pushed for a political solution, fearing the ongoing protests will lead to civil war. Ultimately, President Saleh resigned under the GCC-brokered deal, which gave him immunity to prosecution. His vice president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi took over as President in 2012 to usher a peaceful political transition.

***Government failure and the Houthi Uprising (2014-now)***

Hadi faced many challenges such as the high rates of corruption, political fracture, and a worsening economy. His government was unable to address the high rates of unemployment, food insecurity, and lack of infrastructure, which sparked outcries from the Houthis. They seized control of Sana’a, Yemen’s capital, after years of intermittent conflict with the central government. President Hadi was forced to flee to Aden. The Houthis begin pushing their forces South, worsening the situation.

**Health**

 ***Cholera Outbreak***

The WHO has identified the conflict as the main cause of the outbreak, alongside seasonal rains. Bombings and blockades have blocked or destroyed water purification systems and medical supply lines. The conflict has left roughly 15 million Yemenis without access to clean drinking water. UNICEF have attempted to provide aid such as oral rehydration to treat the loss of water caused by cholera, but large-scale violence has hindered it. Additionally, approximately 30,000 healthcare workers have not been paid for extended periods, delaying cholera treatment.

 ***Food Crisis***

The United Nations have warned that Yemen’s ongoing food crisis can lead to a famine occuring in the long run. As of 2024, approximately 17.4 million are in critical need for food assistance, with 610,000 children expecting acute malnutrition, a 34% increase from 2023. Torrential rains have caused disruptions in agriculture. The World Food Programme has also attributed some of the causes to increasing global food and fuel prices, which has made it more difficult for families to buy basic necessities.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**The Houthis**

 The Houthis, composed of a large population of Shias, have become a predominant military group in Yemen. Their territory encapsulates Sana’a, stretching north to Saada. The Houthis are currently backed by Iran, a Shia-led nation, and oppose Saudi Arabia, who has been aiding the government.

**Iran**

 A Shiite dominant nation, Iran has played a major role in the escalation of the Yemeni humanitarian crisis, by causing the conflict to be a proxy war. They have supported the Houthis, and aided in their efforts in countering Saudi Arabia as well. They have continually sent advanced military aid via the port city of Aden,

**Saudi Arabia**

 Saudi Arabia has been backing the government, with their primary goal being to reinstate Hadi into a secure presidency. Saudi Arabia has escalated the humanitarian crisis, by providing military aid to the government and intercepting and disrupting Iranian supplies. They have expressed interest in withdrawing its forces from Yemen.

**The United States of America**

Although not directly involved in the conflict, the US has provided support to Saudi Arabia’s coalition via military aid. From March of 2016, Saudi Arabia has spent approximately $22 billion on US weapons, alongside training on the use and manufacture of US planes and tanks They have also provided air support via midair refueling, using their air base from Turkey to refuel Saudi planes.

**Timeline of Events**

| **Date** | **Description of Event** |
| --- | --- |
| January 2011 | Protests inspired by the Arab Springs began in Yemen, with citizens demanding democratic reforms and Saleh’s resignation |
| June 2011 | President Saleh was injured in an assassination attempt and left Yemen for treatment |
| November 2011 | President Saleh agrees to hand over his presidency to Mr Hadi under the GCC Initiative after months of political protest.  |
| February 2012 | Mr Hadi was officially instituted as President of Yemen. |
| August 2014 | The Houthi movement organized large scale protests against President Hadi |
| September 2014 | The Houthis seized control of Sana’a, the capital city, and forced President Hadi to flee to Aden |
| March 2015 | A Saudi-led coalition was launched to restore Hadi’s government  |
| September 2015 | President Hadi returns to Yemen, after he fled to Riyadh, after Saudi recaptures Aden and continues their advance to the North. |
| August 2016 | Peace talks (since April 2016) between the Houthis and Mr Hadi’s government party, the General People’s Congress, broke down, intensifying conflict.  |
| July 2017 | The World Health Organisation announces that 1500 people have died from Cholera following the conflict in Yemen. |
| December 2018 | The Stockholm Agreement was signed, establishing a ceasefire in Hodeidah and giving humanitarian aid. |
| April 2022 | A two month truce was brokered by the UN, the first since 2015. |
| October 2022 | The ceasefire from the Stockholm Agreement expired, and led to clashes resuming between the Houthis and the Saudi coalition.  |
| March 2024 | Yemen saw a rise in cholera cases as seasonal rain occurred and with deteriorating infrastructure  |
| July 2024  | 62% of Yemeni households report inadequate food consumption |
| December 2024 | 24 million are still requiring humanitarian aid. |
|  |  |

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

* Stockholm Agreement, 2018
* UN Appeal for Yemen, 2023
* IOM Yemen Crisis Response Plan 2024
* UNSC Resolution 2216, 2015

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

 There have been attempts to de-escalate the situation in Yemen. However, many have stagnated over the ten year period. Peace talks and ceasefires have been instigated by the UN, however, they have not become permanent due to the immediate violations of said peace talks by both sides involved in the conflict.

The World Bank and WHO have attempted to intervene in Yemen to address the multiple humanitarian needs. The World Bank granted $450 million for emergency health and nutrition coverage, and to enhance the Emergency Crisis Response Project. The WHO has also set up centres for cholera treatment, but it is currently meeting an increasingly high number of cholera cases and displaced people.

**Possible Solutions**

 One solution is to reignite negotiations, including all parties such as the Houthis and the government, as well as external parties such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Even though they have been unsuccessful, it is the first step towards trying to solve the conflict.

 Another solution is the introduction of smaller, local councils. If Yemen can divide parts of itself into ethnic, sectarian, or regional councils, they can all respond to the central government. This can allow all groups within Yemen to be involved in policy-making. Additionally, this can remove excess workload on the central government, especially in specific regional affairs, which allows the government to focus on other matters. All of this can reduce inter-sectarian tensions.

 Another solution is to limit the involvement of other nations. The UNSC should focus on limiting military operations by Saudi and Iran. Another addition can be the establishment of permanent no-fly zones and the limiting of certain technologies such as drones.

 Another solution that would further de-escalate tensions and would lead to many other solutions would be to incorporate Yemen in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Through the GCC nations will be able to significantly help people in Yemen and move forward peace processes regarding other nations. Furthermore, since Saudi Arabia and Iran are both in the GCC, this will drastically reduce tensions between the nations.

Yemen also needs humanitarian aid for its citizens. While the World Bank and the WHO continue to provide hunger relief, this initiative requires more support from foreign nations especially from more economically developed countries.

**Guiding Questions**

1. How can we prevent the re-ignition of the conflict again?
2. How can local communities involve themselves to start small-scale food production and clean water management?
3. What metrics should be used to determine accountability of all parties involved in this conflict?
4. How can international organisations ensure delivery of medical aid is possible for all Yemenis, without risking the safety of the workers involved?
5. What can neutral countries do to mediate peace and foster cooperation within Yemen?

**Bibliography**

1. **Dehghan, Saeed Kamali.** "Yemen's Food Crisis: 'We Are Broken, We Die Either from Bombing or Hunger'." *The Guardian*, 8 Feb. 2017,<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/08/yemen-food-crisis-we-are-broken-bombing-hunger>.
2. **Hincks, Joseph.** "Yemen Crisis: How Did We Get Here?" *Time*, 3 Nov. 2016,<http://time.com/4552712/yemen-war-humanitarian-crisis-famine/>.
3. **Hofman, Helene.** "Yemen: President Ali Abdullah Saleh Hands over Power amid Protests Calling for His Prosecution." *Public Radio International*, 27 Feb. 2012, https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-02-27/yemen-president-ali-abdullah-saleh-hands-over-power-amid-protests-calling-his.
4. **Riedel, Bruce.** "Iran Outflanking Saudi Arabia in Yemen." *Al-Monitor*, 1 Aug. 2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/08/iran-saudi-arabia-war-yemen-houthis-outflanking.html.
5. **Special Reports.** "Saudi De Facto Blockade Starves Yemen of Food and Medicine." *Reuters*, 11 Oct. 2017, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/yemen-saudi-blockade.
6. **Saul, Jonathan, Parisa Hafezi, and Michael Georgy.** "Exclusive: Iran Steps up Support for Houthis in Yemen's War - Sources." *Reuters*, 22 Mar. 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-iran-houthis-idUSKBN16S22R.
7. **"Weekly Update - Cholera in Yemen, 27 July 2017."** *World Health Organization*, 27 July 2017,<http://www.emro.who.int/surveillance-forecasting-response/outbreaks/weekly-update-cholera-in-yemen-27-july-2017.html>.
8. **"Yemen's War Explained in 4 Key Points."** *Deutsche Welle*, 11 Aug. 2017,<http://www.dw.com/en/yemens-war-explained-in-4-key-points/a-40056866>.
9. **"What Is the Difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims?"** *The Economist*, 28 May 2013, https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/05/economist-explains-19.
10. **"Yemen Crisis: Who Is Fighting Whom?"** *BBC News*, 28 Mar. 2017,<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>.
11. **"Yemen Crisis."** *World Health Organization*,<http://www.who.int/emergencies/yemen/en/>.
12. **"Yemen: Food Crisis Could Become Famine This Year, UN Warns."** *BBC News*, 27 Jan. 2017,<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38767874>.
13. **"Yemen Profile - Timeline."** *BBC News*, 6 July 2017,<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>.
14. **"Yemen Situation Report."** *Critical Threats*, 21 Sept. 2017,<https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-situation-report>.
15. **Stockholm Agreement, 2018**:
"Stockholm Agreement." *United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement*, 13 Dec. 2018,<https://unmha.unmissions.org/stockholm-agreement>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
16. **UN Appeal for Yemen, 2023**:
"Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2023." *Financial Tracking Service*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,<https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1116/summary>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
17. **IOM Yemen Crisis Response Plan 2024**:
*IOM Yemen Appeal: January – December 2023*. International Organization for Migration,<https://www.iom.int/resources/iom-yemen-appeal-january-december-2023>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
*Note*: As of now, the 2024 response plan is not available. The 2023 appeal is the most recent document.
18. **UNSC Resolution 2216, 2015**:
"Resolution 2216 (2015)." *United Nations Security Council*, 14 Apr. 2015,<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/2216-%282015%29>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
19. **"Yemenis Oust Saleh Regime, Yemen Revolution, 2011-2012."** *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, Swarthmore College,<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/yemenis-oust-saleh-regime-yemen-revolution-2011-2012>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
20. **"Yemen - Resources and Information."** *Library Guides*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,<https://guides.library.illinois.edu/c.php?g=348276&p=2346879>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.
21. **"Mapping the Yemen Conflict: Drivers of Localised Violence."** *Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies*,<https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/10205>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2025.

**Appendix or Appendices**

1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/wfp-yemen-food-security-update-august-2024?utm_source=chatgpt.com> (Yemen’s Food Security Update)

*This will help you get an idea into humanitarian efforts, including food distribution programs, which are vital for understanding the scope of international aid. It will be useful to talk about in the resolutions*

II.[https://guides.library.cornell.edu/arab\_spring/Yemen?utm\_sourc](https://guides.library.cornell.edu/arab_spring/Yemen?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (Arab Spring Protest by Cornell)

 *This offers a comprehensive overview of the country's socio-political landscape during and after the Arab Spring, including the factors that fueled unrest and subsequent humanitarian challenges.*