

Forum: The Security Council

Topic: Question of Addressing the Civil War and Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

President/Chair

Introduction

The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen is widely recognised as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, claiming the lives of over 350,000 people since its start in 2014 (Campaign Against Arms Trade), over 150,000 of these deaths being the direct result of armed conflict. Furthermore, the war has led to UNICEF repeatedly calling for aid, seeking to help the 11 million children and 20 million total people in need of humanitarian aid (UNICEF). The civil war has also left 4.5 million people internally displaced.

Yemen's political instability stems from the failed unification attempt in 1990 between North Yemen and South Yemen. Both halves of the nation acted as opposites, with North Yemen being culturally dominated by the majority party of Shia Muslims. South Yemen was the only Arab state officially proclaiming itself as Marxist and culturally dominated by the majority party of Sunni Muslims. The Soviet-backed state lost all its financial backing with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. This caused the South to rush towards unification with the North, which left unresolved issues even after the signing of the unification. First of all, instead of electing one leader, Yemen set up a "presidential council", where both halves of the nation still had their own respective leaders; however, in terms of governing the nation, North Yemen's leader, Ali Abdullah Saleh, acted as president, and South Yemen's leader, Ali Salem al-Bidh, became vice president. The further neglect of merging militaries left two heavily armed groups still loyal to their respective leaders. This eventually led to the fallout of the unification agreement and a short, two-month war starting in May and ending in July of 1994, with the North of Yemen winning the conflict after completely overrunning the capital of South Yemen, Aden. The victory led to mass looting of southern state factories, farms, and businesses. The newly discovered oil reserves in the south of Yemen were being extracted, and tens of thousands of southern Yemeni military officers, officials, and civil servants were stripped of their jobs and pensions.

The situation remained mostly unchanged until 2014, when Houthi rebels with links to Iran swept southwards and took control of Yemen's largest city and capital, Sanaa. They demanded lower fuel prices and that the current government step down. As negotiations failed, they seized the presidential palace in January of 2015, forcing the president and his government

to resign and flee. After the president's flight, he went to Saudi Arabia for support. In March 2015, a coalition of Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia launched a campaign of economic isolation and air strikes against the Houthi rebels, relying on US intelligence and support to conduct the operation. In April of 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 2216, demanding that the Houthis cease all military operations, withdraw from seized territories, and impose a targeted arms embargo. This resolution, however, was not effective, as the arms embargo was inconsistent, with no enforcement mechanism to guarantee compliance, and vessels regularly bypassed inspections and delivered cargo and weapons to Houthi-controlled ports. In April 2022, the UNSC brokered a two-month ceasefire between both sides of the nation. The truce was effective, and both sides respected the terms mutually agreed upon. The truce expired in October of 2022 after two successful renewals, giving the ceasefire 6 months of effectiveness.

Since October 2022, the front lines have remained mainly frozen, and with the situation in the Middle East growing more complex, the Houthis launched attacks and strikes on shipping boats in the Red Sea in solidarity with Gaza. In November 2023, Houthi forces hijacked a commercial ship in the Red Sea and attacked at least 30 others (Center for Preventive Action). These attacks triggered US and UK military airstrikes, which only served to internationalise the conflict further. When the US brokered a ceasefire in Gaza in October 2025, the Houthis paused their attacks on Red Sea shipping vessels. In December 2025, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), along with the Southern Transitional Council (STC), launched an offensive, seizing control of Hadhramaut. The PLC responded by announcing that all STC militias must withdraw, and in January 2026, the STC complied and withdrew all troops from inside Yemen. All in all, the civil war in Yemen proves to be a continued threat to global peace and security. The conflict also exhibits multiple humanitarian violations, all of which lead to the conclusion that a solution must be found immediately.

Definition of Key Terms:

Military Coalition

A temporary alliance formed by multiple countries or armed forces to achieve a specific, immediate objective.

Arms Embargo

An official government or international restriction that prohibits the trade, sale, or transfer of weapons, ammunition, and military equipment to a specific country, region, or non-state group.

Proxy Conflict

An armed conflict where opposing powers support local combatants or surrogate forces instead of directly fighting each other to limit the potential catastrophic consequences of direct conflict.

General Overview

Early Events & Spark

The main cause of the political instability in Yemen was the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, leaving many cultural, ethnic, and political tensions that were unresolved, which heavily contributed to the fragile political stability of the unified Yemen. The failure of the unification can also be attributed to the varying political systems of the unifying North and South Yemen, with the North being more tribally dominated, whilst the South was a Soviet-aligned state party system. As the two tried to unite, the governments opted for a dual power system, with each side having its own military. Another factor attributed to the failure was economic marginalisation and resource competition between the North and South. Various natural resources were in the south, such as oil; however, much of the revenue was seen moving to the north and being used in the capital of Sana'a, further antagonising the South. All these issues came to the surface during the first parliamentary election of 1993.

The 1993 election resulted in the election of a Northern-backed government, which, with all tensions previously built up from the economic marginalisation and the unequal power distribution, led to an attempted secession by the Southern leaders in May of 1994 through military force, starting the first civil war. Despite their efforts, the Northern military under Yemen's President Salah defeated the Southern military and ended the civil war soon after. Although seemingly more stable, the tensions between the two groups remained high.

The spark of the larger conflict began in 2014 when the Houthi movement, a rebel group from the north of Yemen and backed by Iran, swept southward, where they eventually captured the country's capital, Sana'a, and caused the internationally recognised government representatives of Yemen to flee the country for their safety, including President Abd-Rabbuh.

Combat History

After fleeing, the Yemeni president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, requested the intervention of Saudi Arabia in March 2015. As a result, a Saudi Arabian-led Military Coalition stepped in to help combat the Houthis, launching many naval and air campaigns against the Houthi forces in an attempt to restore the former government through force. However, this ended up pushing the country into much deeper conflict, turning it into a full-fledged proxy civil war between the former Saudi Arabian-backed government and the Iranian-backed Houthi forces. It is also recognised as a conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims, as Saudi Arabia recognises Sunni law as the official law and religion in the nation, while Iran recognises Shia. Most of the conflict was not in direct armed combat, but rather through various strikes on important infrastructure, with the Houthis opting to use Iranian-supplied missiles and drones, while the Saudi Arabian forces opted to use simpler air strikes with Jets. However, there is still a high presence of armed combat in the country, causing continuous damage to the country and its people.

The United Nations Security Council has been engaged on the matter since 2015, passing S/RES/2216, which imposed sanctions and a weapons embargo on Houthi forces. However, enforcement of the resolution has been limited, contributing to the continuation of the conflict to this day. The major failures of the resolution can be attributed to the lack of actual authority that the monitoring bodies had. Ships entering the country were allowed to opt out of the inspections,

allowing them to bring in as many weapon shipments as they pleased. Another limitation of the resolution was its recognition of the Houthis as the sole aggressor, somewhat neglecting the other parties' weapon movements and mostly focusing on the Houthis instead. On December 13th of 2018, the Stockholm Agreement was created, which called for the removal and redeployment of all military forces in the city and ports of Hudaydah and a mandatory ceasefire in the city of Hodeida to help limit and negate the growing humanitarian crisis in the city. The agreement allowed for a higher UN presence in the city, along with the demining of the seas in the area. Since then, the United Nations successfully mediated a 6-month truce between the two parties. This marked the first major diplomatic development in the conflict since the Stockholm agreement. However, the truce expired in October 2022 without renewal, after being signed in April of that same year, and the conflict resumed. The frontlines had remained relatively frozen after the truce, but escalating tensions in the Middle East rekindled the conflict with even greater

Further Escalation & International Involvement

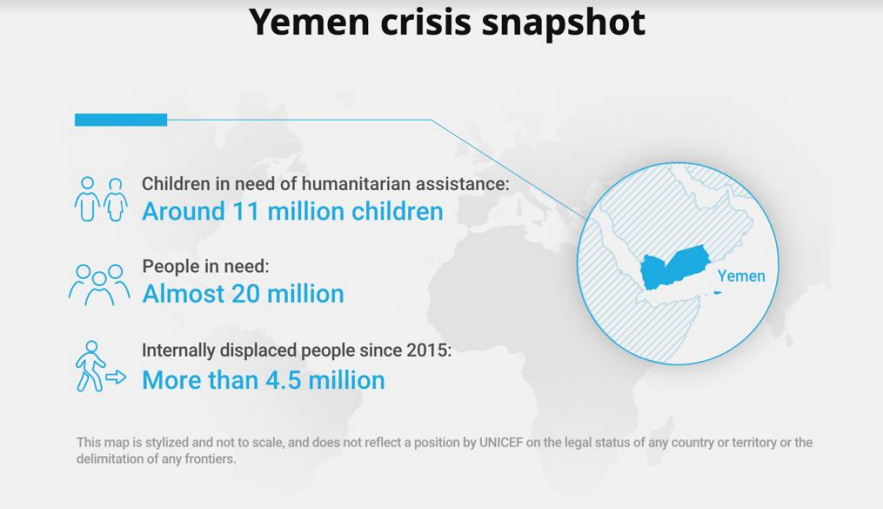
The Main International involvement in the topic stems from two Arab nations, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran is backing the Houthis through funding and military support, and Saudi Arabia is backing the official Government of Yemen with the military coalition and supplies, with Saudi Arabia spending $12.6 billion in economic assistance to the official government of Yemen (Saudi Press Agency). As for Iran, they have provided an estimated total of around 100-300 million dollars in financial support to the Houthis. (United States Institute of Peace)

After the increased tensions in the Middle East, the conflict internationalised, and more parties began to get involved. In solidarity with Gaza, Yemeni forces sent missile strikes at passing shipping boats, which eventually triggered strikes from the United States of America and the United Kingdom in 2024-2025. Furthermore, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), backed by the UAE, utilised the heavy political instability of Yemen to swarm and seize a large southern section of the country, including multiple ports, in December 2025 before eventually being forced out in January 2026 by the Saudi Arabian military coalition forces. On March 15, 2025, President Donald Trump enacted Operation "Rough Rider", a heavy bombing campaign over Yemen, carrying out over 1,000 air strikes in 53 days (Johensen). Previously, a co-operative

strike campaign was initiated with the UK from 12 January 2024 until the Gaza ceasefire came into effect on 19 January 2025. The heavy bombing and large-scale destruction did major damage to Houthi infrastructure, but also to civilian infrastructure, complicating the humanitarian crisis even further. Operation Rough Rider claimed the lives of 224 Yemeni civilians (Yemeni Data Project). The war in Gaza has had a direct impact on increasing the scale and damage caused by the civil war by effectively internationalising the conflict and adding more parties to the conflict. The Houthi strikes made in solidarity with Gaza on passing transport ships caused the U.S and UK to involve themselves through multiple air strikes, which decimated Houthi military and civilian infrastructure, leading to more damage and death due to the war.

Humanitarian Crisis & Impact

After ten years of constant combat and conflict, an estimated 4.5 million people have been internally displaced. Nevertheless, Yemen has accepted around 61,000 refugees from neighbouring African countries such as Somalia and Ethiopia, which further complicates its current situation (Yemen Crisis Explained). In total, there have been approximately 377,000 deaths from 2015-2021, and over 150,000 were caused by direct armed conflict, while the rest were from indirect causes such as disease and famine. 15,000 deaths were direct causes of strikes on civilian gathering centres, and 9000 of them (CAAT- The War on Yemens Civilians) were directly from Saudi Arabian air strikes. An estimated 18.1 million Yemeni citizens are in urgent need of humanitarian aid, and over 80% of the population lives below the poverty line (Yemen Crisis Explained).



(UNICEF)

One of the key factors that complicates the distribution of effective aid to people across the country is the high rural population percentage, hovering around 60% (HI). Almost all of the public services of the country are concentrated around more urban areas, and most have already been obliterated due to the use of explosive munitions in densely populated areas, including public services such as hospitals and public transportation. Furthermore, approximately 81% of disabled citizens are incapable of reaching aid due to dangers and travel costs limiting their travelling capabilities.

Almost half of Yemen's health facilities have been destroyed since the beginning of the conflict in 2015, limiting the country's ability to aid its people properly. The 4.5 million internally displaced people are forced to live in informal tent camps and abandoned buildings that lack safe conditions and basic services. All of these conditions require international aid to help solve them, and yet the distribution of aid is limited and hindered due to the conditions of the country. The humanitarian aid entering the country has been limited and has suffered complicated issues due to the interference of warring parties, particularly the Houthis, who have prevented aid from entering the country. Additionally, on the 17th of July 2024, the Houthi Supreme Council for Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA) sent a letter (Sana'a Center) to international and regional aid agencies demanding that they share their

staff list and instructing them to receive the pre-approval of the SCMCHA before hiring any local or international staff, limiting the amount of aid that can enter the country by forcing these aid agencies to pass through complex bureaucratic boundaries and limiting their aid capabilities.

Present Day Situation

There are still many active front lines in the civil war, with 50 Houthis being killed on July 5th 2026, in renewed clashes. The country still lacks major political stability due to the fragile government structure and the constant fighting within the country. While aid has been able to enter the country, the complex bureaucratic complications and constant warzone interference limit the true capabilities of the aid agencies and NGO's have of making real change in the country.

Major Parties Involved

The Houthi movement

After taking control of the historical capital of Sana'a, the Houthi movement has taken de facto ruling across northern and western Yemen and governs the majority of the population, using strict religious control and rules such as banning women from travel (Jafarnia), deploying "morality police" to enforce Islamic dress codes, and adopting gender segregation in universities, restaurants, and public spaces (Miller).

Islamic Republic of Iran (IRF)

The IRF serves as the main patron for the Houthi Movement, providing financial aid, intelligence systems, ballistic missiles, and military assistance. Iran's backing of the Houthi movement enables them to sustain the war even against wealthier, more advanced nations in the region and worldwide

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Saudi Arabia acts as the main backer of the official government of Yemen. After entering the war at the request of the ex-president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, the KSA entered the war to help push back the Houthi forces. Since the beginning of the war, Saudi Arabia has spent $12.6 billion in economic assistance to the official government of Yemen (Saudi Press Agency),

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

After backing the STC and local militias for years, the UAE has stopped financing any side in the war. Originally aiming to secure ports across the Gulf of Aden, the UAE complied with the ultimatum imposed by KSA and withdrew all forces from Yemen.

The Southern Transitional Council (STC)

The STC is a UAE-backed military force that fights alongside the official government of Yemen to fight against the Houthis; however, they demand the complete independence of South Yemen, creating a severe fracture in the anti-Houthi coalition

The United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK)

Not operating directly inside the ground conflict, the US and the UK deploy naval ships to intercept Houthi Missiles, protect international commercial shipping, and conduct air strikes on Houthi infrastructure, overall backing the official government

Republic of Yemen (Yemen)

The internationally recognised, official government of Yemen. After the Houthi capture of the capital of Sana'a, the official government moved its operating capital to Aden. They are recognised by the UN and are also heavily backed by KSA, both financially and in combat.

Timeline of Events

Date	Events
1990/ May / 22	Unification of North and South Yemen that eventually led to the outbreak of the Yemeni civil war and proxy conflict

1993/ April / 27	The first parliamentary election of Yemen, where a Northern Parliament is elected, leading to increased tensions between the north and the south.
1994 / May	Southern Yemeni Leaders attempt a secession by force but fail at the hands of President Salah's superior military forces.
2014 / September / 21	Houthi Forces sweep southward and take control of the capital, which marks the official start of the Yemen Civil War.
2015 / April / 14	The UNSC passes Resolution 2216, which calls for sanctions and a weapons embargo to be placed on Houthi forces.
2017 / May / 11	The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) is officially formed.
2022 / April / 2	A temporary truce is agreed upon until June 2nd; however, it is extended until October 2nd, 2022.
2022 / October / 2	The ceasefire ends, and combat between parties resumes, but at a smaller scale.
2024 / January / 12	U.S and the U.K. begin collaborative strikes against Houthi infrastructure in Yemen until the truce later on.
2024 / July / 17	The Houthi government sends a letter to all international and regional aid agencies and forces them to bypass complex bureaucratic limitations, complicating aid delivery.

2025 / March / 15	Donald Trump begins Operation Rough Rider, a bombing campaign that decimates Houthi military infrastructure and large amounts of civilian infrastructure.
2025 / May / 6	A temporary ceasefire between the Houthis and the U.S. is reached; Operation Rough Rider ceases.
2026 / January / 9	The STC are forced out of Yemen by the Saudi Arabian coalition, and the organisation was dissolved.

Attempts to solve the Issue

The UN Framework (Resolution 2216) - 2015

A resolution passed by the UNSC in 2015 was an attempt to bring an end to the civil war. The resolution demanded a Houthi withdrawal from the capital city, Sana'a, as well as an arms embargo against them. However, the Houthis rejected it, as it called for the unconditional withdrawal of the Houthis.

The UN-brokered Truce - 2022

After many attempts to solve the issue, the peace negotiations were halted. The UN brokered a two-month truce between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis. This truce was renewed twice, giving it a 6-month active time period before expiring in October 2022 without renewal.

Possible Solutions

1. Establishment of Protected Humanitarian Aid Corridors

Establish safe humanitarian aid passages and corridors with an emphasis on aid protection and equal dispersal to ensure more effective aid distribution. This will allow more aid to enter the country and ensure that it is more accessible to people all across the country. Correcting the past mistakes of aid abuse and limited dispersion capabilities, as this will ensure that as many people are affected by the aid and the humanitarian crisis is put to rest, or at the very least, more limited in damage to people across the country. To ensure the effectiveness of this solution, measures will be taken to promote aid distribution supervision and create a bureaucratic system alongside the SMCHA that ensures compliance beforehand. To ensure the aid reaches the 60% of the population that lives in rural areas, send out teams with armed supervision to as many villages and rural homes as possible to effectively distribute to as many people as possible.

2. Address the crippling food insecurity present in Yemen

To help support the people while simultaneously restoring the farming economy to an extent, allow the UN or other NGO bodies to supply farmers with seeds, mills, tractors, and other farming equipment to help them rebuild the agricultural system of the country without keeping the citizens reliant on international support and instead allowing them to redevelop their damaged internal systems caused due to the consequences of the current civil war.

3. Encourage further diplomatic negotiations between warring parties

Call for further and more decisive diplomatic discussions between the parties with a focus on the rebuilding of public services, demilitarisation of urban areas, and allowance of a higher UN concentration across the country to ensure improved welfare, with a final focus on a permanent ceasefire. Hold dialogue in controlled and unbiased environments with a strict adherence clause ensuring future cooperation and adherence to the eventually agreed-upon terms. Mediation and venue should both be held in neutral countries to remove any potential bias on the matter at hand.

Guiding Questions

1. What legal frameworks can protect aid workers from arbitrary detention and operational harassment?
2. What specific upgrades or neutral international monitoring systems are needed to accelerate food and medical imports safely
3. Which civilian populations are most impacted by localised aid blockades, and how are their rights to basic survival being violated?
4. What are the challenges of enforcing strict international limits on commercial cargo inspections at the Red Sea ports?
5. What are the primary structural deadlocks preventing the finalisation and signing of the UN-led Yemen Peace Roadmap?
6. What specific mechanisms or diplomatic penalties should be applied if a faction violates international law?
7. How can the implementation of localised, cross-line Humanitarian Buffer Zones de-escalate military standoffs and secure critical supply corridors?
8. Which neutral international bodies are best positioned to manage and enforce compliance with cross-line economic truces?
9. What specific diplomatic mechanisms or funding penalties should be applied if a de facto authority violates international humanitarian law?
10. What international legal frameworks can be established to regulate civil aviation and international cargo flights into disputed airports

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Appendix

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