

Committee: Social Cultural and Humanitarian Committee

Issue: The humanitarian crisis in Yemen

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Yemen is located in Western Asia, at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula and the capital of the country is Sana'a. Although the upheavals date back to the 2011 protests, the clashes took a decisive turn in March 2015, when a renewed political crisis drew the people of Yemen to establish two factions, both claiming to represent the Yemeni government. The one faction stands loyal to the current representative of their government, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, whilst the other faction supports the country's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Both fractions have allied with forces that have similar objectives and desires. Since then, an ongoing civil war has begun which has led to devastating consequences, such as monetary deficit, nutritional inadequacy, serious lack of housing, human trafficking, the world's worst outbreak of cholera and numeral deaths of the armed and the unarmed population of Yemen.



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Civil War

A civil war is a war between organized groups within the same state or country . The aim of one side may be to take control of the country or a region, to achieve independence for a region or to change government policies.

Faction

A group formed to seek some goal within a political party or a government.

Cholera

Cholera is a disease caused by an infection of the small intestine by some strains of the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. Its symptoms can be so severe that can directly lead to dehydration and electrolyte imbalance of the infected person. The risk of death among those affected is usually less than 5% but may be as high as 50%.

The Houthi movement

The Houthi movement was formed by Islamic members (religious, political and armed) from northern Yemen in the 1990s. Its members are commonly called “Houthis” but their official designation is Ansar Allah (supporters of God). During the ongoing civil war (March 2015 till present) they represent the people of Yemen loyal to the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a multinational militant organisation with extremist causes that operates in a large part of Western Asia, including Yemen. Its foundation dates back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Arab League

Arab League is a regional organisation of Arab states, was founded in Cairo in 1945, has currently 22 members and the main incentive behind its inception was to draw closer the relations between member States and coordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.

Arab Spring

Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave of both violent and non-violent demonstrations, protests, riots, coups, foreign interventions, and civil wars in North Africa and the Middle East that began on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution.

Revolutionary Committee

The Supreme Revolutionary Committee is an interim body in Yemen politics that was constituted in 2015 with the task of forming a new parliament. The failed

negotiations between the Houthis and its rivals earlier that year led to Hadi, former vice-president and current leader of this committee to take action so as to insure political stability in the country.

National Dialogue Conference

The Conference was a transitional dialogue process as part of the Yemen reconciliation efforts. It was a key factor in the agreement, by which the long-running president Saleh handed power over to his vice president Hadi.

Alliance of Yemeni tribes

This alliance was an alliance of tribes in Yemen opposed to the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, that played a significant role in his resignation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The contemporary humanitarian crisis in Yemen is characterized by many as one of the most devastating crises that mankind has ever faced. Although its roots stem from the general revolutionary spirit of the Arab Spring movements back in 2011, tension escalated in March 2015 between forces loyal to the current president of Yemen Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those supporting the Houthi rebel movement. However, the people of Yemen have been continuously abused for years with the climax of this maltreatment being the existing civil war.

The outbreak of clashes(2011-2012)

In 1978 Ali Abdullah Saleh was announced President of Northern Yemen, whilst in May of 1990 the two Yemens united and were renamed as the Republic of Yemen. From 1990 up to the early 2010s the region experienced multiple insurgencies either led by the splitting

tendencies of the more marginalised south part, caused by the Al Qaeda involvement or driven by the Houthi rebels as an opposition to the Saleh regime.

During the first days of 2011 thousands of people took the streets to protest, complaining at first about unemployment, financial breakdown and most of all, state corruption, which later shaped into their main demand, the resignation and ousting of the President. Although promises were made, the government resulted in civilian crackdown to deal with the perpetual unrest. At the time key political factions and tribes with influence in Yemen had started to align with the goals of the opposition movements. So, Saleh was forced to flee in Saudi Arabia.

On 23 November 2011, Saleh signed a power-transfer agreement, according to which he would transfer the presidential duties to his vice-president and leave the country in exchange for immunity for prosecution. A new election was taken place, in which the former Vice President ran unopposed, nevertheless questions of vote tampering were raised.

Since then, pledges to combat nepotism practices in the political sphere were made, as well as vows to transit into a state based on democratic proceedings, however very little has changed.

The ongoing civil war(2015-)

In the start of 2014, the National Dialogue Conference agrees to a document on which the new constitution will be based ,after months of deliberation. The Houthis, a revolutionary group with history of fighting against the Yemen government as early as 2004, were dissatisfied with the Hadi government and his plant to create a federal constitution, with Hadi being the vice president during the reign of former ruler Saleh. Therefore in January 2015 they seized the presidential compound in the capital and formed a Revolutionary Committee to rule the country.

Up to the middle of 2015 multiple battles and advances of the leading Houthi rebels take place, in which they demonstrate their power and the influence they have exerted over the years. Meanwhile the so-called Islamic State claims responsibility for numerous attacks, including two suicide bombings, which took the lives of 137 people. Simultaneously, it should be noted that Saudi-led assaults against the Houthi government have been reported, often being assisted by the USA. The Houthi government have responded accordingly, attacking sites of strategic importance in Saudi Arabia, involving, by this way, other countries in what had initiated as a civil war. At the end of 2017 Saleh was killed by Houthi forces in his attempt to switch political sides and ally with the Houthis. The naval and air blockade, which has been taking place at the expense of the revolutionary government for the last couple of years, has exhausted the civil population , triggering the breakout of cholera in 2017. Allegedly, Iran has been assisting illegally the Houthis, by providing weaponry, ammunition and food supplies to the populace. Although UN-led peace treaties between the two rival factions have taken place, they all seem to have failed, because one side or the other has broken the terms by attacking the other, bringing the negotiations in stalemate.



Risk of famine

The civil war in Yemen is rightly referred to as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. A factor that undoubtedly contributes to that matter is the fact that more than one third of Yemen's population is at risk of famine. Every day thousands of civilians die due to unbearable hunger and severely polluted water. This evolving phenomenon is the result of the Saudi Arabian sea, land and air blockade on Yemen.



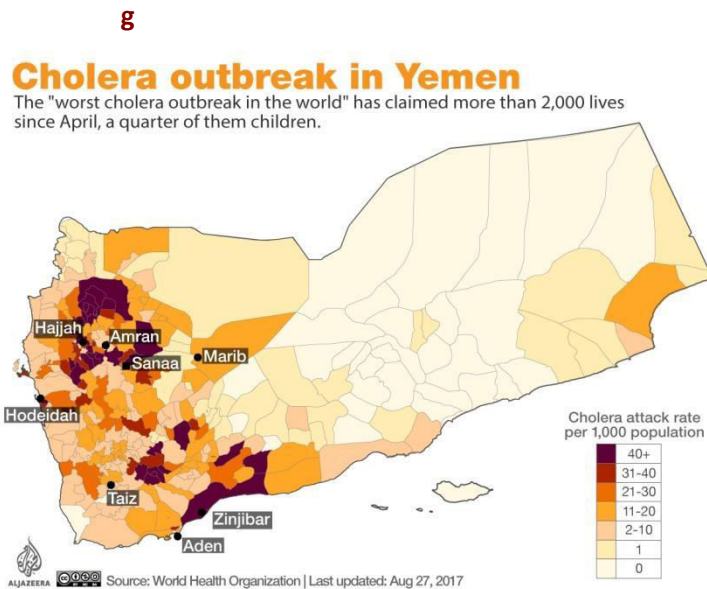
Cholera Outbreak

The dreadful infrastructure, concerning the health, water and sanitation systems in Yemen combined with Saudi Arabia's air strikes, were the key elements of a wide spread of cholera in most of the country's regions, during the conflict in 2016. Considering that more than 14.5 million people are deprived of the right to a healthy environment and basic nutrition, the ability of the disease to spread grows stronger by the second. Despite some of the attempts

to prevent further spread of cholera in 2017 from the World Health Organization (WHO), throughout the past two years of the ongoing civil war, the Yemenis have continued to suffer severely from this specific disease. With over 1 million suspected cases and nearly 3.000 deaths, this cholera outbreak has been utterly destructive for the population of Yemen.

Water and agriculture deprivation

Water availability in Yemen has decreased as a result of the damaged water infrastructure and the limited capital so as to provide citizens with clean water. The price of water has been significantly risen in the last couple of years, as a result of the general inflation that has been going on in the country and to the destruction of the most water supplies by air strikes. As far as food and vegetation is concerned, it is strongly suggested that the agricultural sector is being deliberately destroyed by warring factions, exacerbating the food shortage and leaving the country dependent solely on imports to meet the food requirements of its citizens. Added to this is the fact that Yemen is a country which has approximately 90% of their food supplies imported, so the blockade that it has been imposed leaves it in a very difficult situation.



Children and women

Yemeni refugee female and children are extremely susceptible to smuggling and human trafficking. NGOs report that vulnerable populations in Yemen were at

increased risk for human trafficking in 2015 because of ongoing armed conflict, civil unrest, and lawlessness. Prostitution on women and child sex workers is social issue in Yemen. Citizens of other gulf states are beginning to be drawn into the sex tourism industry. Children are recruited between the ages of 13 and 17, and as young as 10 years old into armed forces despite a law against it. While these issues are worsening, the plight of children and women has been ignored by the government.

Internal Displacement and refugees

Due to the ongoing war, families all over Yemen are forced to flee their homes after constant life threatening bombings and air-strikes, in hope that they will find a safer residence where the unarmed population can be protected. Displaced people suffer daily from the shortage of their vital needs and are vulnerable to any diseases that may arise. Many countries of the region have already accepted hundreds of Yemen refugees, who seek asylum to escape from the inhumane conditions in their homeland.



Educational crisis

Since March 2015, when the conflict began, numerous schools have shut down, whilst many others have been damaged leaving close to 1.8 million children in Yemen without an educational program, in addition to the 1.6 million children that abstained from education before the civil war. Constant warfare has damaged many school buildings, which have been in part reconstructed so as to serve other purposes, whereas limited manpower as well inadequate financial sources make it impossible for schools to provide even basic education. Efforts by UNICEF to raise money so as to alleviate this state of affairs have started to give some tangible results.



MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Countries

Yemen, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Senegal, Sudan, Morocco, Qatar, United States of America, France, United Kingdom, Egypt.

Organizations

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), War Child, World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program, UNICEF, Yemen Aid, Yemen Our Home, Yemen Peace Project, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), Oxfam, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Mwatana Organization for Human Rights.

BRIEF TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1990	Mr. Ali Abdullah Saleh was announced President of the United Republic of Yemen.
2012	Mr. Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi takes over the presidency of Yemen.
2015	The civil war begins among the Houthis and the loyal to the Hadi government population. Hundreds of Yemenis are forced

	to abandon their homes.
2015	Saudi Arabia’s blockade on Yemen begins along with Yemen’s lack of nutritional goods.
2015-2018	Thousands of killings as a result of the ongoing war.
2016-2018	Cholera outbreak kills hundreds of Yemenis.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Since the Saudi military forces have conducted more than 145,000 missions in Yemen over the past three years, with their main supporter being the US, the lawmakers Sens. Bernie Sanders, Mike Lee, and Chris Murphy proposed a resolution that aimed to end the support that the US provided to the Saudi war in Yemen. This resolution was rejected due to corresponding interests.

The WHO has contributed in the attempt of combating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen by sending life-saving medicines and medical supplies, and also emergency equipment to the population in need. By providing these medical needs, the WHO helped face cholera cases and other illnesses that have devastated the Yemeni population.

Other organizations, such as “CARE” and “War Child”, have been offering humanitarian assistance by providing clean water, proper sanitation and other hygiene services to the armed and unarmed population.



UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Resolution 2402 (2018)
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2402.pdf , this resolution extended the Yemen sanctions regime.
- Resolution 2342 (2017)
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2342.pdf , with this resolution the Yemen sanctions regime was renewed.
- Resolution 2266 (2016)
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2266.pdf
- https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2018_5.pdf
- https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2017_14.pdf

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Combating famine

A mean to combat the food crisis in Yemen could be through providing food vouchers, which can ensure that the vital nutrition needs of the suffering Yemen population will be fulfilled.

By spreading awareness to the international community for the desperate need of food supplies in Yemen, more food donations could be implemented for the cause of saving millions of lives that are threatened due to malnutrition.

Combating the cholera outbreak

In the attempt of facing the threat of the cholera outbreak, it is of primary importance that clean water and proper sanitation are provided to the people of Yemen who do not have access to goods and services that are vitally important.

Furthermore, health education such as comprehending the necessity of hand washing with soap after defecation as well as before consuming their food, should be obligatory for every region of Yemen. This is necessary as there is no hope of facing this issue if the victims are not aware of the proper means to protect themselves and prevent the further spread of cholera.

Food hygiene must be implemented through conserving and preparing food appropriately and consistently whilst taking all necessary measures. The health education messages could be spread faster by the use of mass media such as the radio, television and newspapers, where social and religious leaders can share their corresponding knowledge.

Fundraising and donations

Organizations around the world, such as Doctors without Borders, the Red Cross or UNICEF have to intervene more effectively in the struggle of the Yemen people. Except from providing the necessary commodities as well as health treatment, they should care for raising large sums of money to support the backbone of the country's crippling economy. In order for these sums to be funneled into the right purposes, they have to set up independent panels that will overlook the procedure and ensure that the money is not embezzled or diverted into the civil war expenses.

Condemnation of intervention policies

All outside attempts, aiming at meddling with the situation in Yemen for financial or political leverage must not be tolerated. Public opinion has to take firm critical stance against such acts, on the grounds that violate the sovereignty of Yemen. The UN, on the other side, has the legal obligation to deter such actions via implications for any country that preys on the current circumstances at the expense of the Yemen people.

But, although these measures are well-intended, they are more or less temporary solutions that alleviate the pain of the population, but not terminate it. The humanitarian crisis is a product of the civil war the country has been plunged in during the 2010s. The solution can come only from a political endeavor, in which all warring factions and political parties will sit around the negotiating table and agree unanimously on a permanent peace treaty, with hefty sanctions in case a country violates the agreed upon terms.

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