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**UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**  
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**THE QUESTION OF YEMEN**

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## Basic Overview of the Issue

Yemen is in a state of emergency, facing a severe crisis due to war, famine, and disease that deem daily life unlivable. The United Nations has consistently described the situation as the "largest humanitarian crisis in the world." Yemen is located in the southeast part of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Peninsula. It is notably the least economically developed Member State of the region, dealing with several separatist movements, civil wars, and poverty throughout the past few decades.

The conflict in Yemen effectively began with the unification of the Republic of Yemen in 1990. The country was unified under President Saleh of the North, and after 33 years, it experienced its first political transition. Although many point to 2015 as the beginning of the crisis, the year the Houthi forces took control, the initial uprisings or rebellions of these groups were ignited by the Saleh government, who later opposed them. The Houthi group ultimately seized control of the Yemeni government in 2015. However, there are branches of other terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the region. The

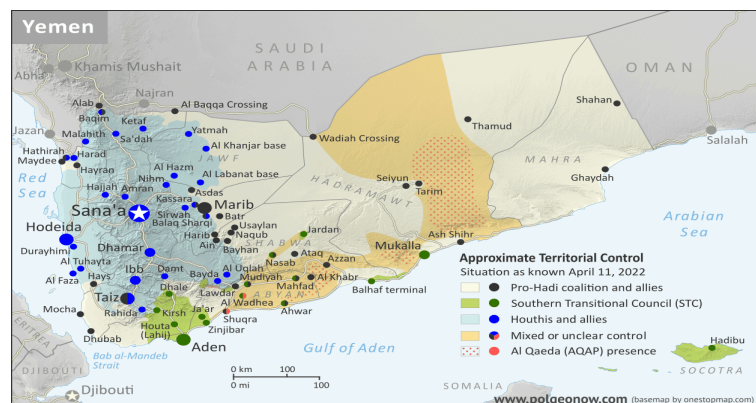


Figure 1: Territorial control of groups in Yemen

presence of such groups has done nothing but increase the issues and tension in the region. All groups have differing agendas and this has led to even more tension, leading to human rights violations and a crippling system in Yemen. The presence of opposing groups has disabled Yemen from finding peace and tranquility. Below, you may find the current map of Yemen.

From the start of this humanitarian crisis, Yemen has been home to a scene of constant turmoil and organized crime. Therefore, it is with utmost urgency that the fruitful diplomacy of the United Nations Security Council addressed these issues delicately.



## Explanation of Important Terms

### *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)”(United Nations).

### *Civil War*

A civil war is a “violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state’s territory. Civil wars are thus distinguished from interstate conflicts (in which states fight other states), violent conflicts or riots not involving states”(Britannica).

### *Shi’a Muslims*

Shi’a Muslims constitute a significant subgroup of the Islam religion. It is a sect that has separated from the Sunni sect following the death of Prophet Muhammed due to debates regarding his heir. Those who supported Abu Bekir to be the caliph became Sunni while those who supported Ali became Shi’a. This has created an extreme divide between the two groups to this day. A sect of Shi’a known as the Zaydi Muslims make up 30-40% of the population of Yemen. It is important to consider religion while examining the situation in Yemen.

### *Arab Spring*

The Arab Spring was a series of uprisings against local governments to tackle oppression and demand democratic rule in countries of the Arabian Peninsula and Northern Africa, such as Libya, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen. These protests have often resulted in further turmoil caused by the aggressive response by governments.



### *Complex Emergency*

The United Nations defines a complex emergency as “a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/ or the ongoing United Nations country program.”

### *Rebel and Third Party Groups*

The rebellion groups are organizations that protest a certain aspect of the government’s ruling, either with or without force. The rebellion groups could be declared as third-party terrorist organizations by countries, which deem them a global insecurity from the lens of the United Nations.

## **Detailed Background of the Issue**

### *Earlier History*

The committee will mainly focus on post 2011 Yemeni conflicts, but it is important to briefly mention the earlier background as well. Before 1990 Yemen was divided as North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic), which became an independent state after the collapse of Ottoman Empire and a republican government after the North Yemen Civil War in 1962, and South Yemen (People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen), which was a British colony until 1967 and later became a socialist state. Following a small conflict between the two sides, the Cairo Agreement that laid plans for the unification of Yemen was signed in 1972.

After two exhausting decades of unification efforts, the two countries were merged under former President of North Yemen, Ali Abdallah Saleh, with him becoming the president, and Ali Salem al-Beid, his Southern counterpart, becoming the vice president of the newly formed nation. Nonetheless, the unification didn’t end the tension between the two sides – if not, it escalated it. Later in May 1994, this tension became a civil war following the antidemocratic treatment of the parliament toward Southern Yemen. The civil war ended with Northern forces entering Aden, the capital of the South approximately two months later. In





1999, president Saleh became the first democratically elected president of the unified state and remained in office until 2012.

## 2011 Yemeni Revolution

In early 2011, a wave of democratic uprisings swept through the Middle East and North Africa, leading to radical changes throughout the region. This series of revolutions forced president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia; Hosni Mubarak in Egypt; Muammar Gaddafi in Libya out of power. Notably, these protests occurred with somewhat non centralized leadership through a combination of several different groups that forced the change, which wouldn't be the case with the protests in Yemen.

With the Arab Spring democratic movement spreading to Yemen in 2011, demonstrations arised to protest the corrupt president Saleh. Yemenis demanded an end to

the incompetent government which had halted national development and antagonized democratic civil liberties such as freedom of speech. The demonstrations were initially intended to be peaceful; however, following the increasingly violent responses from the government, they became extreme protests. On another note, the protests in Yemen had been organized by a coalition of strong Yemeni



*Figure 2: Protesters in Yemen*

opposition groups, which cornered president Saleh and forced a spark of change. Saleh initially proposed that his son could replace him, but this attempt of turning the government into a sultanate wasn't met positively by the protestors. The Gulf Cooperation Council intervened, and Saleh agreed to transfer power to his Deputy.



## 2014 Houthi Takeover

Following the uprisings of the Arab Spring, a conference was held between the leaders of national movement groups and the government in an attempt to revise the constitution and reconstruction of the country. The meeting ended with two Houthi representatives getting murdered. This angered the Houthi group, laying ground for the upcoming seizure of the capital.

The main reason behind the Houthi takeover was the government's decision to end oil subsidies. Oil subsidies had been an important source of financial stability for the people, and the removal of it meant that the prices of basic services were going to increase. With the previous corrupt actions of the Saleh government and certain financial blunders, the angered Houthi forces entered the capital in 2014. They took over many significant buildings, and forced the Prime Minister to resign. This ignited a UN-brokered peace agreement that formed a unified nation combining the previous government and the Houthis. This great influence of the Houthi group allowed them to pressure the government into any legislative action they wanted to take, including the reinstatement of the Prime Minister with Khaled Bahah. This antidemocratic system eventually led the United Nations to intervene by placing sanctions on the Houthi leaders. Although a new government was formed under the peace agreement, the Houthis repeatedly refused to take part in it and resume their de-facto reign. Their influence also led to President Hadi's resignation. Afterward, the Houthis formed a committee to execute all state affairs. This committee advanced toward Southern Yemen, prompting a Saudi response to take back control of the capital and reinstate the former president. Currently, the Houthis maintain a mandate over the capital and the Saudi operations lead to the death of many civilians.



## Major Parties Involved

### *The Republic of Yemen*

The current Republic of Yemen was formed following the unification of South and North Yemen in 1990. The United Nations had first recognized Southern Yemen as “The Democratic Republic of Yemen” in 1967. The years of civil war, changing governments, and presence of militant groups have engendered a complex emergency in the region of Yemen. Currently, Ahmed-al Rahawi is the prime minister, and he was appointed by the President of the Supreme Political Council Mahdi al-Mashat on 10th of August 2024. He was tasked with forming a ministry called “Government of Change on Construction” (Afghan Voice Agency).

### *The Houthis*

Formerly known as “Ansar Allah”, the Houthis are an extremist Shia-Islamist movement and terrorist organization. As visible in the first map of the basic overview section, the Houthis control approximately one-third of Yemeni soil. It also holds two-thirds of the country’s population. These numbers have allowed them to become an important force in this conflict. On several occasions, it has been either speculated or proven that this organization is being supported by another Shia Muslim country, Iran. They also play an important role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, due to their attacks on Israeli territory backed by Tehran, they have been a target of US and Israel airstrikes in the recent months.

### *Iran*

The fundamentals of Iran’s foreign policy rely on its active regional role and opposition to Western forces. Throughout the past, the lack of regional authorities in the Middle East has allowed Iran to intervene in various conflicts regionally: 1980s Lebanon, Afghanistan, post-invasion Iraq and post-Arab Spring Yemen. Iran has explicitly admitted to providing support to the Houthi militants in Yemen, consisting of both military and financial aid. Houthis have been able to gain significant territory thanks to Iran. (Middle East Council on Global Affairs).



## *United States of America*

The military presence of the United States of America is to fight against certain Islamic State groups and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Moreover, following the seizure of Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, by the Houthi forces in 2014, newly elected president Trump intensified the United States' already abundant military presence in the Middle East. This action was construed as an attempt to avoid the complete fall of Israel and Saudi supported forces in the region. As another aspect, the Human Rights Watch published an article about the possible American war crimes in 2020, and the possibility of officers prosecuted in the International Criminal Court. However, as the US hasn't ratified the Rome statute, there've been several deficiencies in fully addressing these war crimes. Furthermore, the US support for Israel was made clear once again with the bombing of Houthi forces in Yemen who were aiding Hamas.

## *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)*

AQAP has had a similar agenda to the Houthis. As a group that is an extension of the original Al-Qaeda, the AQAP aims to spread religious wars and increase their religious influence all over Yemen. One of their main enemies in the region is the USA which has aimed to suppress the group's power for a long time. Other groups such as the AQAP also have immense influence in the region and their influence continues to extend all around the region.

## *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

Being an eastern neighbor of Yemen, Saudi Arabia has been a significant power in the conflict. Due to their regional interests and religious discrepancies with Iran and the Houthis, they side with the US and Israel on this issue. The unifier of Northern and Southern Yemen, President Saleh was initially worried about Saudi forces, as he was a supporter of the first sparks of the Houthi movement in 1990. The Houthis and Saudi have been in an almost everlasting state of conflict, with repetitive border clashes and territorial disputes. Before and after the fall of Sana in 2014, the Saudis made significant efforts toward preserving the existing government of President Hadi. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia launched a coalition of





other Arab allies, which aimed to restore president Hadi who was overthrown by the Houthis. (ACLEDE).

## Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
<b>14th December 1967</b>	The UN recognized the People's Republic of Southern Yemen (Democratic Yemen) as a member state.
<b>22 May 1990</b>	Northern and southern Yemen is unified to form a single state under president Ali Abdullah Saleh.
<b>12 June 2000</b>	The 'Treaty of Jeddah' is established between President Saleh and the Saudi Arabian government. The Houthis who were established and supported by the Saleh government as a defence against Saudi's were no longer endorsed by the government.
<b>2004-2008</b>	The Houthis began violent rebellions consisting of several armed attacks, moments of peace, ceasefires, surrenders, which created a state of prolonged warfare. With Ramadan in 2008, President Saleh retained several prisoners which sparked a temporary peace.
<b>August 2009</b>	The "Operation Scorched Earth" endorsed by the Yemen government took place in an attempt to crush the Houthi rebellion.
<b>November 2011</b>	President Saleh yielded his duties to his deputy, president Hadi through signing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
<b>September 2014</b>	Houthi rebels storm the government, taking over Sanaa.
<b>February 2015</b>	The Houthis take over the government completely in a



	coup. Hadi resigns. The Houthis reject drafting a constitution.
<b>March 2015</b>	Saudi-led Arabic coalition against the Houthis is initiated with the attempt to revert the coup.
<b>May 2015</b>	The former president Saleh expresses support and alliance with the Houthis.
<b>September 2015</b>	Hadi tries to announce a new federal constitution following the recapture of Shabwah.
<b>2016</b>	The United States government intensifies military presence in the Middle East with president Trump.
<b>December 2017</b>	The Hadi government has most of its forces in the South while the Houthis are located in the North. The Houthis fight with Saudi Arabia; former president Saleh switches sides and is killed.
<b>2020</b>	The COVID-19 pandemic hits Yemen, adding to the instability and insecurity of the region.
<b>September 2024</b>	Israel and the US airstrike the Houthis due to their support to Hamas.
<b>10 January 2025</b>	The first attacks of the new year begin as Israel starts the first airstrike on Yemen in 2025

## Relevant International Documents

All of the relevant United Nations resolutions could be found in this link:

[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un\\_documents\\_type/security-council-resolutions/?ctype=Yemen](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/?ctype=Yemen)

- Security Council Resolution 2216, April 14th, 2015 (S/RES/2216)
- Security Council Resolution 2624, February 28th, 2022 (S/RES/2624)



- Security Council Resolution 2739, June 12th, 2024 (S/RES/2739)
- Security Council Resolution 2758, September 15th, 2024 (S/RES/2758)
- The Riyadh Agreement, November 5th, 2019
- International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Geneva Conventions, August 12th, 1949
- The Joint Declaration for a Comprehensive Ceasefire and Peace Agreement, October 15th, 2020
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative, November 23rd, 2011

## Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The 2011 Revolution can be viewed as an unsuccessful attempt to address Yemen's issues, as its aim was to make the country less corrupt, more prosperous, and inclusive. However, these efforts backfired, resulting in further conflict and the rise of AQAP. Instead of fostering prosperity, the revolution worsened Yemen's economic situation, leaving little hope for recovery. Additionally, the post-revolution government risked becoming a failed state, further enabling AQAP's expansion.

Similarly, the Saudi intervention against the Houthis proved to be ineffective. Rather than restoring government control, it caused widespread civilian casualties, significant urban destruction, and a blockade that exacerbated food shortages and malnutrition in Yemen.

UN-mediated peace efforts between the Houthis and the government also failed, as the Houthis rejected reform attempts and refused to cooperate with the government, forcing the Hadi administration to resign and relocate to Aden. This marked another failed attempt at forming a stable government in Yemen, as the GCC agreement with President Saleh was unable to establish a reformed administration, largely due to Houthi resistance and the failure to address the nation's core challenges.



## Solution Alternatives

As mentioned above, several attempts have been made toward averting the humanitarian crisis in Yemen; although they've been somewhat effective, the situation is still far from ideal. The full-scale implementation of the following proposals could make the necessary change.

One of the solutions could be creating a special fund for Yemen to tackle the humanitarian crisis in an attempt to combat famine could be in place; this fund could be transformed into a forum that would create plans of humanitarian reconciliation. There also needs to be a mechanism that would ensure that the allocation of the fund is toward the right and intended purposes.

Another way of tackling the issue is the establishment and universal acceptance of a formal, sustainable government in Yemen; most of the problems that occur in the area are results of civil distrust and lack of authority. Although it may be hard to pass, such a solution would guarantee that each minority is fully represented, and that the society can be transformed into a self-governing entity. Another solution is increasing and maintaining the accountability measures in the region would act as a deterrent for terrorist organizations, and any countries that may have individual interests on Yemeni soil. The delegates can also consider the promotion of agriculture could provide the citizens and the refugees with the initial spark of economic growth. Deployment of peacekeeping operations inside Yemen, based on the United Nations capabilities and criteria is also a plausible method of resolution. Unofficial negotiations and diplomatic talks could take place between the leaders of third-party organizations in the area. The Houthis are a significant force and gaining the support of the group could ultimately reverse the situation.

## Useful Links

- [Yemen - The World Factbook - CIA](#)
- [2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Yemen](#)
- [Zaydi Shi'a in Yemen - Minority Rights Group](#)
- [US launches multiple strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen after terrorists targeted Israel](#)





- [5 Things to Know About the Houthis](#)
- [Yemen's Zaidis: A Window for Iranian Influence](#)
- [Yemen | United States Institute of Peace](#)
- [How Sunni-Shia Sectarianism Is Poisoning Yemen](#)
- [CENTCOM Forces Strike Multiple Houthi Targets in Yemen](#)
- [Framing Yemen's Zaydi Shi'a - Fondazione Oasis](#)

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