

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Formulating and International Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

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Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Marianna Garitsi and it is my immense pleasure and great honor to be serving as the co-chair of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee in the 1st session of DSTMUN. Through my involvement with the MUN conferences throughout the past years, I have come to understand the value of being involved in such an activity and simulation. MUN Conferences, in general, are a great setting where people can try to face their fear of public speaking, expand their knowledge about global issues, increase their diplomacy and negotiation skills and enhance their leadership skills. My role, as a chair, is to enhance your efforts in researching, forming your resolutions and coming up with solutions to problems that political leaders and diplomats have failed to find an adequate solution. This is what I am trying to accomplish with this Study Guide. I would like to remind you that although the role of this Study Guide is to introduce you to the main aspects of the topic, you should not rely solely on it, as the issue of the Yemeni Crisis is a vast one and more research will of course be needed, especially when it comes to your countries' policies. You can always use the links in the bibliography to broaden your knowledge. If you need any help do not hesitate to contact me on my email: melodia888@gmail.com. Your messages are welcome.

I look forward to hear what new, innovative and effective proposals our committee will bring to the tables as we try to tackle this issue as efficiently as possible. I look forward for meeting you all and hope for a fruitful debate.

Best regards,

Marianna Garitsi

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

In March 2015, the president of Yemen, Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi, was forced to flee the country by Houthi rebels. The Zaidi Shia Houthis were supported by elements of Yemen's military loyal to the country's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. In response, Saudi Arabia formed a coalition of a dozen countries to restore Yemen's internationally recognised government to power. The coalition included the Gulf Cooperation Council states (with the exception of Oman), Egypt, and Sudan, and was backed by the United States and United Kingdom.



Families fleeing violence in Yemen.

“Children ride on the back of a pick-up truck with their luggage, as they flee Sanaa”, Yemen, 6th April 2015 (Reuters/ Khaled Abdullah),
<https://www.thenation.com/article/yemen-the-worlds-next-great-refugee-crisis/>

The peace in the troubled country seems as far off as ever. The bulk of Yemen's northern highlands, and the capital city of Sanaa, remain under the control of the Houthis and their allies. Amid ongoing fighting, conditions in the country continue to deteriorate. The country's infrastructure and industrial capacity are in ruins, and the humanitarian crisis is edging toward famine. Even areas now under the control of the Hadi government are riven with instability.

The unrest in Yemen is not a single conflict but is instead a mosaic of multifaceted regional, local, and international power struggles which are the legacy of recent and long-past events.

Over two thirds of the country's population (some 18 million people) need humanitarian aid, according to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). That includes 10.3 million in acute need — those requiring immediate, life-saving assistance in at least one sector.

According to senior UN aid official and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brian, the country is experiencing a “humanitarian catastrophe.”

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Houthi rebel movement

The Houthis' current rebellion against the Hadi administration. The Houthis previously fought against the government of former president Ali Abdullah Salem,

though they reconciled with the leader in 2014 and have since worked with him to rebel against the current administration.

Bab al-Mandan Strait¹

A narrow waterway linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, through which much of the world's oil shipments pass.

Sanaa²

Sanaa is the largest city in Yemen and the center of Sana'a Governorate. Now, it's a Houthi stronghold. Through that waterway pass many of the world's oil shipments

Jihadi

Jihadi is a person who takes part in a jihad. A jihad is a holy war which Islam allows Muslims to fight against those who reject its teachings.

Islamic State

IS, ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh; a fundamentalist, jihadist group seeking to establish a global caliphate in the name of Islam

Humanitarian crisis³

A humanitarian crisis is defined as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area. Local, national and international responses are necessary in such events

Humanitarian needs⁴

The provision of such assistance to those affected by a disaster, based on an initial rapid assessment of needs, and designed to contribute effectively to their recovery. It consists of the delivery of a specific quantity and quality of goods to a group of beneficiaries. It includes food, shelter, non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.

Zaidi Shia Houthis⁵

¹ Nick Cunningham, "The 4 Key Chokepoints for Oil", Oilprice 26th July 2018, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/The-4-Key-Chokepoints-For-Oil.html>

² "Sana'a", Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a>

³ "Humanitarian Crisis", Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitarian_crisis

⁴ "Humanitarian Needs", Humanitarian Coalition, <https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/humanitarian-needs>

⁵ "Zaidiyyah", Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaidiyyah>

Zaidism is one of the Shia sects closest in terms of theology to Hanafi Sunni Islam. The Hanafi school is one of the four religious Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical background

Since 2015 Yemen has been the site of a devastating war between forces loyal to the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement. As of June 2017, since the outbreak, nearly 8,000 have been killed and 42,000 injured, mostly in air strikes led by the Saudi-organized multinational coalition in support of President Hadi's regime.

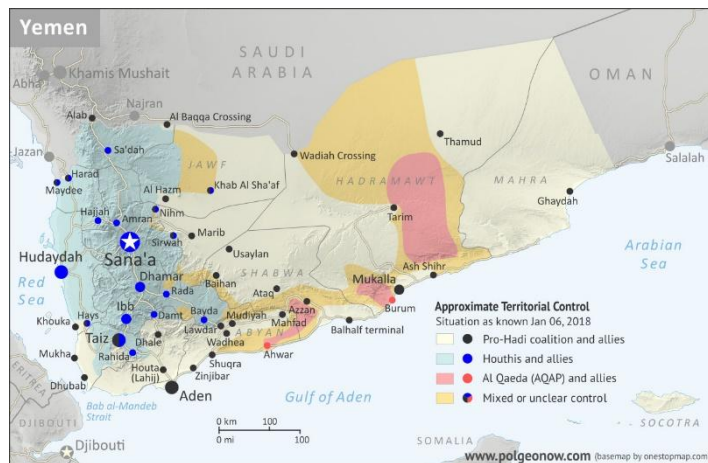
Though the Yemeni conflict was originally a civil war, the number of international players has propelled it to the international stage, featuring Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States, the United Kingdom, and many others.

Beyond the call for intervention on account of the humanitarian crisis, Yemen is considered strategically important because it has direct access to the Bab al-Mandan Strait.

Governmental Transition

The origins of the conflict can be found in the unsuccessful transition of power between current Yemeni President Hadi and his predecessor. Hadi was elected into power in November 2011 when the longtime authoritarian president Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced out through uprisings and civilian political demonstrations.

Upon entering office, Hadi faced many struggles such as a separatist movement in the southern part of the country, attacks by al-Qaeda, sects still committed to the former president, general corruption, unemployment, and food shortages. Even before the war, Yemen was considered to be among the poorest countries in the Arab World.



This map shows which group is in control of what region.

Source: <https://www.polgeonow.com>

The Houthi movement (a Shia group) attempted to take advantage of the new president's weakness by seizing control of Sanaa (a northern province) and its surrounding area.

A large number of the Yemeni people (including Sunnis) were disappointed with the new regime and thus supported the Houthi rebels. In September of 2014, they set up roadblocks and street camps effectively blocking off President Hadi and his cabinet and placing them under unofficial house arrest. The president subsequently fled to the city of Aden after which Houthi forces loyal to former President Saleh attempted to take control of all of Yemen, thereby forcing President Hadi to flee abroad in March of 2015.

International Presence in Yemen

The presence of Iran in Yemen is complex and the subject of enormous controversy. Several Gulf Arab States accuse Iran of supporting the Houthi rebels through financial and military backing, though Iran has officially denied such allegations, claiming that they are backers of President Hadi.

A recent Reuters report (informed by anonymous Iranian military officials) stated that Iran has been increasing its support of the Houthis by providing military training, weaponry, and financial resources. This is supposedly to pre-empt the stricter policy toward Iran suggested by United States President Donald Trump.

Given that Iran is the largest Shia power in the region, Saudi Arabia and several other Sunni Arab states (Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain) became alarmed at the idea of clandestine support for the Houthis, and thus commenced an air campaign targeting the rebels and supporting Hadi's government. This coalition received intelligence support from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The conflict in Yemen is therefore also considered a Sunni-Shia conflict and thus an indirectly Saudi-Iranian conflict.

The United Nations has agreed on a resolution urging the Houthis to leave and restore power to President Hadi.

Jihadist Resurgence

Given the weakened and chaotic state of the country, militant jihadist groups al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State (IS) have made moves to claim territory and reassert their presences in Yemen. There has been an increase in attacks in the South, especially in Aden, a government-controlled city.

According to Western intelligence agencies, AQAP is considered the most dangerous branch of al-Qaeda because of its “technical expertise and global reach.” Needless to say, the rise of IS in Yemen is also a major concern and pressing issue.

Humanitarian Crisis

In light of the widespread and multi-partied conflict, Yemen is experiencing a massive humanitarian crisis. Tragically, Yemen’s civilians (especially minors) have been the primary subject of the conflict’s violence and resource paucity. At least 4,773 civilians had been killed and 8,272 others injured (as of March 26, 2017) according to the United Nations. Because roughly one half of the national population is under the age of 18, children make up onethird of civilian deaths.

A lack of access to resources is perhaps the most pressing issue for the Yemeni people. Destruction of infrastructure in conjunction with restrictions imposed by Saudi Arabia on food and fuel imports have put Yemen in a state of emergency, approaching mass famine. Estimates say that 17 million people are food insecure and nearly 7 million are extremely food insecure.

Roughly 3.3 million children and pregnant or breast-feeding women are malnourished, including 462,000 children under the age of five who face severe malnutrition. Furthermore, only 45% of the over 3,000 medical facilities in the country are fully functioning (according to a United Nations survey in November of 2016.)

Finally, the United Nations has reported that 2 million Yemenis are internally displaced and that nearly 200,000 have fled the country in search of refugee status.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Iran

The Iranian perspective is a complex one. Many countries (including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the United States) have accused the Iranians of supporting the Houthi rebels with training, weaponry, and other resources. Iran has publicly denounced this accusation, claiming to support the Hadi administration. Depending on where one is in the world, there are two drastically opposing perspectives on what Iran’s true stance is.

The Shia–Sunni divide must not be ignored. Iran is the major Shia power in the region and Saudi Arabia the major Sunni power. Accordingly, many believe that Yemen is the battleground on which the Shia–Sunni/Iranian–Saudi battle is being fought.

United States

The United States has backed the Saudi-led coalition, albeit reluctantly, along with the United Kingdom and France. The US has an interest in not only maintaining stability in Yemen and security for Saudi borders, but also ensuring free passage in the Bab al-Mandeb for economic reasons as well as guaranteeing a government in Sana'a that will cooperate with US counterterrorism programs. American intelligence agencies consider AQAP the most dangerous branch of al-Qaeda and the emergence of IS affiliates in Yemen is a serious concern. Thus far, Washington has supplied the Saudi-led coalition with logistical and intelligence support, and remains the largest provider of arms to Saudi Arabia. Despite its continued support for coalition operations, however, the US has warned the Saudis against the intensity of their bombing campaign as potentially jeopardizing their shared political goals.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations has decisively supported the administration of President Hadi and condemned the Houthis for their destruction. The UN passed resolution 2216, which demanded a ceasefire and Houthi withdrawal from their territories. Despite such a clear position, the United Nations has also been willing to host and facilitate peace talks between the Saudis and the rebels.

AQAP

AQAP has greatly benefited from the political instability. The U.S. government has ranked it as the most dangerous al-Qaeda affiliate. Reuters has even called it a "mini-state" within Yemen. The militia spans over 350 miles and finances itself through the profits of port trade and the national oil company. Some Sunni-tribes have allied with AQAP, scared of the advance by the Houthis in recent years. Due to the increased Saleh-Houthi threat, the Yemeni army has relaxed its pressure against the militia. In April 2015, AQAP was able to report a large victory. It managed to capture the major city of Mukalla and released three hundred inmates. Many are believed to be AQAP members. Since then, the militant group has expanded its control westward to Aden and even seized parts of the city. The type of war fought against AQAP has changed more recently. While U.S. drone strikes continue, Washington withdrew special operations forces in 2015 that were training and assisting Yemeni troops. The UAE group troops have, however, been more efficient than the US airstrikes and have even managed to regain control over Mukalla. While these are improvements, Al-Qaeda is enmeshed in tribal networks and some estimate that they have thousands of supporters.



Source: <https://www.sott.net/article/367192-UN-Yemen-facing-largest-famine-in-the-world-if-Saudi-blockade-not-lifted>

Britain

The UK considers itself one of the largest donors to aid the Yemen humanitarian missions, having spent Sterling 130 million last year for aid. However, it sold weapons worth USD 3.3 billion to Saudi in the same year— over 25 times that which it spent for humanitarian causes. More alarming even, is that some of the cluster bombs used by the Saudi alliance have been determined to be of British origin. While Britain would be violating the Convention on Cluster Munitions, neither the US, Saudi Arabia nor Yemen have signed or ratified the document. After this information came to light, the Saudi alliance switched from British to Brazilian cluster bombs. Due to the predicted British recession on account of Brexit, analysts doubt whether the May administration will stop selling weapons to the Saudi coalition.

Saudi Coalition

In March 2015 a Saudi-led coalition began bombing Houthi rebels who had forced Yemen's president, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, into exile. Saudi Arabia regards the Houthis as Iranian proxies and intervened to check their advance. The Saudi air war is in support of forces loyal to Hadi, who aim to retake the capital, Sana'a, from the Houthis. The Saudi-led coalition has been repeatedly



This photo shows the immediate effects of an airstrike led by the Saudi Coalition.

Source: www.bbc.com

accused by rights groups of unlawful airstrikes on civilian targets, some of which, they say, may amount to war crimes. Riyadh insists it does all it can to avoid civilian casualties, though a UN panel of experts that reviewed 10 Saudi airstrikes reported in January 2018 that “even if the Saudi Arabia-led coalition had targeted legitimate military objectives ... it is highly unlikely that the principles of international humanitarian law of proportionality and precautions in attack were respected”.

The panel found Saudi denials of involvement in these specific airstrikes were implausible, and individuals responsible for planning, authorizing or executing the strikes would meet the standard for the imposition of UN sanctions.

Gulf Cooperation Council

GCC is an intergovernmental organization in the Persian Gulf region seeking political and economic unity. The GCC was established in 1981. Even though Yemen is not a member of the GCC, it represents a strategic key to the regional security. Yemen has officially requested military assistance from the Council against the Houthi rebels. Many believe that a decisive military intervention by GCC can affect the outcome of the crisis and change things in the region.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
2011 November	President Saleh agrees to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Unity government including prime minister from opposition formed.
2012 February	Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi inaugurated as president after uncontested elections
2012 September	Defence Minister Muhammad Nasir Ahmad survives car bomb attack in Sanaa that kills 11 people, a day after local al-Qaeda deputy head Said al-Shihri is reportedly dead in the south.
2012 November	A Saudi diplomat and his bodyguard are shot dead in Sanaa. Security officials say the assailants, who opened fire on the diplomat's convoy, were dressed in police uniforms.
2014 January	National Dialogue Conference winds up after ten months of deliberation, agreeing a document on which the new

	constitution will be based.
2014 February	Presidential panel gives approval for Yemen to become a federation of six regions as part of its political transition.
2014 August	President Hadi sacks his cabinet and overturns a controversial fuel price rise following two weeks of anti-government protests in which Houthi rebels are heavily involved.
2014 September	Houthi rebels take control of the most of capital Sanaa.
2015 January	Houthis reject draft constitution proposed by government.
2015 February	Houthis appoint presidential council to replace President Hadi, who flees to Aden southern stronghold.
2015 March	<p>Islamic State carries out its first major attacks in Yemen - two suicide bombings targeting Shia mosques in Sanaa in which 137 people are killed.</p> <p>Houthi rebels start to advance towards southern Yemen. President Hadi flees Aden.</p> <p>Saudi-led coalition of Gulf Arab states launches air strikes against Houthi targets and imposes naval blockade.</p>
2015 June	Leader of Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, killed in US drone strike in Yemen.
2015 September	President Hadi returns to Aden after Saudi-backed government forces recapture the port city from Houthi forces and launch advance on Aden.
2016 April	Start of UN-sponsored talks between the government on one side and Houthis and former President Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) on the other.
2016 May-June	Islamic State group claims responsibility for a number of attacks, including a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 army recruits in Aden.

2016 October	Airstrike by Saudi-led coalition hits a crowded funeral in Sanaa, killing 140 mourners and injuring 500.
2017 January	A US raid kills several suspected Al-Qaeda militants and civilians in America's first military action in Yemen under President Donald Trump.
2017 May	Houthis continue firing missiles into Saudi Arabia, claiming to have fired one at the capital Riyadh.
2017 June-November	Outbreak of cholera kills 2,100 and affects almost 900,000 others, medical agencies say.
2017 December	Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh is killed after fierce fighting in the capital Sanaa.
2018 January	Southern Yemeni separatists - backed by the United Arab Emirates - seize control of Aden.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Resolution 2201, 15th February 2015

This resolution called for freezing the assets and issuing a travel ban for Houthi and Saleh affiliated officials who have taken control of the government and dissolved the Yemeni parliament. It has also demanded for the Houthis to withdraw their forces from Sana'a and engage in peaceful dialogue.

Resolution 2216, 14th April 2015

President Hadi's administration has declared that no solution can be found unless United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2216 is fully implemented. Resolution 2216 demands the immediate withdrawal and cessation of the Houthis from all their controlled areas in the country. The resolution was adopted in 2015 with 14 affirmative votes, zero against, and one abstention. The UNSC also demanded that the Houthis refrain from threatening other neighboring states under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The Council lastly demanded that the rebels stop recruiting children. Given that the UN resolution has not been effectively imposed, the Council has taken further measures against the Houthis such as imposing numerous sanctions. These include asset freezing, travel bans, and arms embargoes on Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh (the son of the former authoritarian president who held office before Hadi and was removed in 2011) and Abdulmalkk al-

Houthi (the Houthi leader.) Resolution 2216 requests all parties of the Yemeni war to abide by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and to resume the political transition of President Hadi, as brokered by the United Nations. It further asks that all parties aid international organizations in the evacuation of civilians.

Resolution 2402, 26th February 2018

Extends until 26 February 2019, the time limited assets freeze and travel ban against individuals or entities designated by the Committee; and extends the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 28 March 2019.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Since the war's outbreak, there have been attempts to create a peaceful agreement. The United Nations organized three rounds of peace talks between the Houthis and the Saudis, the most promising of which took place in April of 2016 during the peace talks in Kuwait. Unfortunately, only three months after negotiations, the talks collapsed and there was a large escalation in combat, leading to many civilian casualties.

After more than two years of sporadic fighting, neither the Houthis nor the Yemeni government forces have been able to come to a decisive victory. The situation is fluid; the Houthis occasionally claim more territory and the government forces respond with an offensive to reclaim territory. Government forces were successful in preventing the Houthis from claiming the city of Aden (though only after a horrific, four-month battle that left hundreds of people dead.)

In 2015, the Saudi coalition placed a severe naval embargo on Yemen, meaning that the Yemeni people have severely reduced access to resources. Yemen is not an agricultural economy, and thus usually imports more than 90% of its staple foods. This is further complicated by the attacks made in Aden and Hudaydah, two of the country's major port areas, and the general destruction of roads and travel infrastructure, meaning that food and medical supplies are not easily delivered or distributed. Despite the rigorous and ongoing air campaign and embargo, government forces have been unable to strip the rebels of their control over the north of Yemen, including Sanaa and its surrounding province.

In a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published in August 2016, Zeid Raad Al Hussein put forth numerous allegations of international humanitarian law violations by both sides. Hussein called on the international community to create or enlist an international body to thoroughly investigate possible human rights violations in Yemen.

President Hadi and members of his administration have recently returned to the country after a successful offensive in the Southern part of the country. They are unable to return to the capital due to safety concerns, so they have established a temporary.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The possible interventions in Yemen are numerous, though they can be broken down into a few key categories. The ultimate focus of these solutions is disempowering the Houthi rebels, creating a peaceful agreement between the Houthis and the Hadi administration, and offering humanitarian aid to civilians.

Empowering Saudi Coalition

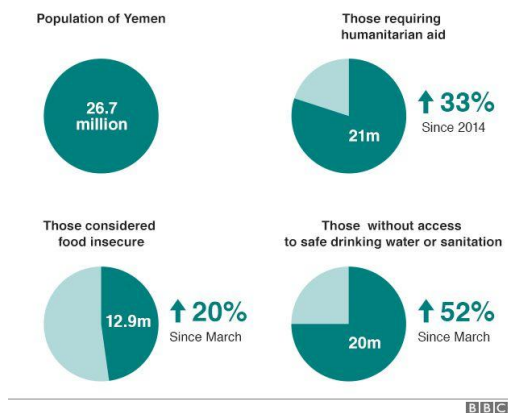
The Saudi Coalition has amassed great support, both from other Arab countries as well as from Western powers. Many believe that the only way to establish productive, United Nations-brokered negotiations with the Houthis is through military intervention. Saudi attacks have been effective in disempowering the rebels, though they have never been able to secure the northern province of Sanaa. The concern with further military action by the Saudi Coalition is that it could exacerbate the humanitarian crisis; if Houthi controlled ports are destroyed, civilians would have severely reduced access to resources. But the Saudis may be able to disrupt their enemies without actually launching a ground incursion. Just the threat of an attack could distract or fix al-Houthi forces that have been driving south to fight the government troops. Indeed, since the Saudi airstrikes began, we have seen Saleh-aligned forces move north toward the Saudi border in response to fears of a ground incursion. As Yemen approaches total famine, some consider this too great a risk and thus critics of this solution believe that Yemen cannot be fixed through military intervention.

Fostering Peace Talks through Non-Military Intervention

In line with the critics of the previous proposed solution, some favor non-military intervention in the region. Many have been critical of the Saudi-led air strikes and embargo, claiming it was hasty and its humanitarian consequences have been severe. A possible counter-solution would be extending to Yemen full membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which has been recommended by several Saudi leaders. The incorporation of Yemen into the GCC would be a significant act of unification for the peninsula, reflecting the European Union's incorporation of poorer European countries to help promote a prosperous economic future. This would help secure stability in the country and could thus encourage the government and Houthi rebels to meet and collaborate on peace talks. There are,

however, several difficulties associated with this, the first being the great expense imposed onto other GCC members. Yet, an argument can be made that these nations (especially Saudi Arabia) are already investing heavily in military and aid and the funding could be perceived as a shift as opposed to an additional expense. The other major concern with this strategy is the current international reputation of Qatar. Many Arab countries are in the process of cutting ties with the country for funding terrorist groups, thereby threatening the stability of the GCC. Introducing another unstable state could therefore be detrimental to the council.

Humanitarian Aid



Graphs showing some of the humanitarian effects of the Yemeni crisis.

Source: www.bbc.com

Finally, many focus on providing humanitarian aid (food, medical supplies, emergency infrastructure repair and so forth) to deal with the crisis. Although this does not directly address the conflict between the Yemeni government and the rebels, it is an important component to the conflict and should also be considered. It is difficult to establish how adequate aid should be raised for civilians in Yemen and how it can be effectively distributed among the population. Furthermore, some question whether this aid should come from governments or NGOs and non-profit organizations. The two sides

have to back off their extreme positions and allow the World Food Program deliveries to be made and Doctor Without Borders to bring in needed medical staff.

Youth approach

The young people of Yemen want to be heard and so far they have neither experienced enough nor adequate opportunities nor venues to express their voices. The youth also often feels ignored by the system at all levels of government, both formal and informal. They don't know where to voice their concern about their challenges and they feel that there is a gap between them and their representatives. These grievances create a void that put these young people at risk – not only to their own community, but more to the influence of radical ideas. They could easily become clients of radical groups or ideology, if these radical groups promise them opportunities that their current community, society and social roles cannot provide. In order to engage youth in their communities, youth and local leaders need to be

brought together and participate in dialogues, where the needs of the community will be identified and the most pressing issues will be addressed. Furthermore, equipping youth and local leaders with skills on consensus building, leadership and decision making through



trainings, will eventually increase interactions among these stakeholders and thus the gap between them will be filled. In that way, peace on local level will be restored and as a result, restoring peace on national level will be much easier.

Young people comprise the 75% of the total population.

Source: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2015/01/31/yemen-s-new-youth-revolution/>

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