



General Assembly 2: The Yemen Civil War

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Welcome Note

Hey delegates!

First and foremost, welcome to GA2!

We're really glad to have this opportunity to be your chairs as you embark on this journey of discovery. As your chairs, we aim to facilitate meaningful discussion and aspire to allow each of you to get to know one another, especially outside of your usual circle of friends. Remember, the more people you get to know, the more enjoyable IPYLC will be, and, more importantly, the more friends you will have at the start of IB. <3

As all of you would have known by now, our topic of discussion is the Yemeni Civil War. For many of you, this will be your first time delving into global politics. We want you to know that delving into current affairs or politics isn't as scary as it seems. All it takes is the openness to try new things and a bit of time spent searching up 3-minute YouTube videos, which one of your chairs can attest to. We hope that through this experience, you will gain a deeper interest in what is happening in the world around you, even though you may not be directly affected by what goes on.

Take note: current affairs doesn't just involve the major political parties in a country, it directly and significantly impacts the lives of innocent civilians who happen to be caught in the midst of the chaos. For those who suffer from acute malnutrition and a lack of food and water, or who live in constant fear of the next air strike, the issues faced within Yemen are very real. These issues go right to the heart of humanity- the concepts of give and take, of political strategy and selfishness will allow you to understand more about the human condition as much as it will help you to understand the chaos our planet is in today.

That being said, we also hope that y'all will enjoy the 3 days of IPYLC! Don't be afraid to ask us any questions, even seemingly minor queries, so long as they're relevant. We're here to guide you and help you make the most out of IPYLC 2019, so we encourage you to seize this opportunity to grow intellectually, but more importantly, as a person. Have courage to speak up, and be heard.

We hope that you will enjoy this experience as much as we did planning it!

All the best,
Gareth, Eliza and Regan

Introduction to the General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations (UN) and is its main deliberative, representative and policy-making organ. All 193 Members of the UN have **equal representation**, with no country holding veto powers, unlike other councils. The assembly is a distinctive platform for **multifaceted discussion and negotiation**, through means such as high-level Thematic Debates organised by the President of the GA to consider current issues of great significance to the international community, as well as regular informal sessions between the President and Member States to ensure clear and consistent exchange between both parties.

A two-third majority is required for decisions on especially important matters such as those regarding peace and security, election of Security Council members and the admission of new Member States. Other issues are decided by a simple majority (50%).

Functions and powers of the General Assembly

The assembly meets from September to December every year, and from January to August as required, such as to review proposals from the Fourth and Fifth Committees. On the whole, the assembly is entitled to make recommendations to Member States on international issues within its scope. Significant milestones include the Millennium Declaration, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals released in 2015. These reflect the assembly's desire to reach specific aims of peace, security and disarmament, increase development and eradicate poverty, safeguard human rights, and overall strengthen the UN.



The assembly is responsible for considering and approving the UN's budget and conducting the financial assessments of Member States. It makes recommendations to other councils on general principles of cooperation to maintain international peace and security, the peaceful resolution of situations that may cause friction between Member States, as well as considers reports from the Security Council and other organs of the UN. While the assembly does not have powers to directly force Member States into making a decision, its role is pivotal in ensuring fair representation of all countries in debating social, economic and political issues spanning globally.

In the event of a breach of peace where the Security Council has failed to act due to a veto from one of the Permanent 5 members, under the *Uniting for Peace* resolution of 3 November 1950, the assembly has the rights to consider the matter directly and recommend collective measures to restore international peace.

History of the Yemeni Conflict

The Houthi movement first came about as a Zaidi Shi'ite¹ rebel movement in the 1990s stemming from dissatisfaction with the corruption of the then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his government. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq greatly radicalised the Houthis, prompting them to adopt their slogan "God is great, death to the U.S., death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam". Saleh's government launched efforts to get rid of the Houthis in the same year, succeeding in killing Hussein al-Houthi, the group's leader, in 2004. A sporadic insurgency continued until 2011, when the Tunisian revolution sparked violent uprisings against Saleh in Yemen. The Houthis joined this movement, though they were primarily concerned with their own interests. When Saleh was ousted and replaced by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, a Sunni Muslim from the South, however, the Houthis were highly dissatisfied.

A national dialogue conference was instituted by the UN to address the future of Yemen's politics after protests in 2012 against President Hadi's appointment. It proposed a federal solution of six provinces with some autonomy within each province. The Zaidi-dominated north was divided into two landlocked entities (majority of Saba and Azal), which the Houthis argued was gerrymandered against them to prevent them from securing a parliamentary majority in the Yemeni government. The Houthis attempted to expand their territory but lacked military power and in 2014, they began colluding with Saleh against Hadi secretly, which came as a surprise as Saleh was supposedly the Houthi movement's sworn enemy. Much of the army remained loyal to Saleh and his family, so together with the Houthis the two wielded significant influence in the country.

Meanwhile, conflict between Shi'ite and Sunni forces began to spread from northern Yemen to the capital, Sana'a. Tensions between the Houthis and the government army were exacerbated as a result of the government's cutting of fuel subsidies, in addition to great dissatisfaction with government accountability, corruption and spreading Western influence, which eventually led to the outbreak of civil war in 2015 during the Houthis' violent takeover of Sana'a. In response, governmental forces, led by President Hadi, launched a campaign against the Houthis, resulting in more than 100,000 deaths due to both armed conflict and a lack of basic needs such as water and food.

¹ The Zaidi Shi'ites are a sect of the Shia branch of Islam, accounting for about 42% of Yemen's population. Within the Islamic world, however, the Shi'ites are a minority (as compared to the Sunnis).



L: Houthi child soldiers; R: Newly-recruited Houthi fighters in the capital, Sana'a in 2017

Following the outbreak of armed conflict, countries in the region quickly took sides. President Hadi fled to self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia and appealed for military support from the Saudis. Saudi Arabia began an international coalition against the Houthis, receiving support in both equipment and manpower from Kuwait, Egypt, the United States, France and other countries. Meanwhile, the Houthi movement received backing from Russia, Iran and North Korea, with many other countries being accused of supporting the Houthis but most denying the allegations.



L: Iran's presence in Yemen has greatly increased the number of casualties; R: President Hadi meets Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2018

To limit the aid received by the Houthis, Saudi Arabia and its allies imposed a blockade on the port city of Aden shortly after Saudi Arabia began intervening militarily, Aden being a critical point for the receipt of the vast majority of Yemen's international and much-needed imports. The blockade was further tightened in 2017 following the deployment of ballistic missiles by the Houthis against Saudi targets. Air strikes carried out

by the Saudi coalition against the port city of al-Hudaydah² and other targets along the Red Sea coast have destroyed residential areas, medical facilities and infrastructure, further adding to the severity of the humanitarian disaster. Due to the extreme lack of medical and food supplies, an estimated 17 million — 60 percent of the total population — are food insecure, of which 8.4 million are at risk of famine, with the situation being described by the United Nations as ‘the worst man-made humanitarian disaster’ in the world. At least three million have fled their homes, public services have broken down, less than half of the health centres are functional, medicine and equipment are limited, and there are no doctors left in 49 out of 276 districts. The lack of access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation has increased the risk of communicable diseases such as cholera and diphteria.

Compounding the issue is the presence of multiple terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, which operate in the area and have historically been opposed to negotiations, complicating the peace process and posing an immediate threat to civilians in both Houthi- and government-controlled areas. This raises the possibility of international aid being hijacked to fund terrorist causes and heightens the threat of terrorists groups seizing power in the aftermath of the war. The presence of such terrorist organisations was keenly felt in 2015, with Al-Qaeda’s brief takeover of the city of Mukallah, which only ended with the deployment of 2,000 coalition troops to retake the city.

² Note: al-Hudaydah is also seen elsewhere as al-Hodeidah, al-Hudeidah, Hudaydah, Hodeidah and Hudeidah.

Timeline of Key Events

Sep 2014	21 Sep Houthi rebels seize control of the capital Sana'a. Houthis and incumbent government signs a UN-brokered deal to form a 'unity government'.
Jan 2015	19 Jan Houthis surround the prime minister's residence and seized control of local news outlets' headquarters. Government accuses Houthis of launching a coup.
	20 Jan Houthis attack President Hadi's residence. Hadi flees to Aden in the south of the country.
Mar 2015	Saudi-led coalition places Aden and other ports under a naval blockade. Blockade remains in place as of Feb 2019.
Jun-Nov 2017	Medical agencies report than an outbreak of cholera has killed 2,100 and affected more than 900,000 others.
Jan 2018	Southern Yemeni separatists fighting against President Hadi's forces, backed by the United Arab Emirates, seize control over the port of Aden.
Nov 2018	Mid Nov Fighting between pro-government forces and Houthis intensifies in Hudaydah
Dec 2018	6 Dec Peace talks between the official Yemeni government and Houthi delegation in Stockholm. Temporary ceasefire in Hudaydah is agreed but faces opposition on the ground and only takes effect on 18 Dec. UN peacekeepers arrive on 22 Dec to monitor truce
	14 Dec US Senate votes to end US backing for Saudi Arabia in the Yemen conflict
Jan 2019	Mid Jan Ceasefire is falling apart, with violations made by both sides
	31 Jan Growing public backlash against the conflict culminates in a Bill to block further involvement of the US military in the Middle Eastern conflict
Feb 2019	4 Feb Yemeni hospitals struggle to cope with swine flu outbreak, an additional blow to the already bleak humanitarian situation

6 Feb

Amnesty International accuses the UAE of recklessly arming extremist militias as the fight against the Houthis turns desperate

7 Feb

Important US congressman alleges that arms sold by the US to Saudi-UAE coalition are being given to terrorist-linked militants like Al-Qaeda

10 Feb

Pair of conjoined twins die in the blockaded capital after doctors' pleas for international aid go unanswered

11 Feb

UN warns that enough grain to feed 3.7 million people has been inaccessible for 5 months and is at risk of rotting

12 Feb

Trump threatens to veto Bill to block US involvement

Current Situation



Map showing current areas of control by Houthi and government forces, as of Dec 2018

2019 marks the eighth anniversary of the insurgency that overthrew former President Saleh. Since then, the people's hopes for a more peaceful future have been largely dashed by the civil war which has been raging since 2015. As the years have passed, the fighting has raged primarily around key ports through which foreign exports enter the war-torn country. Following the blockade of the key port city of Aden, Yemen has been largely dependent on the port of Hudaydah for the flow of essential goods such as food and medicine. On 5 Dec 2018, both the Yemeni government and the Houthi movement sent delegations to Stockholm in a desperate attempt to stop the fighting in Hudaydah from cutting Yemen's final remaining lifeline. A temporary ceasefire was agreed but proved difficult to implement on the ground, and only came into effect on 18 Dec, with UN peacekeeping troops arriving on 22 Dec to monitor the situation. While the ceasefire remains in place until now, both sides have violated the truce on multiple occasions since Jan 2019, highlighting the temporary and fragile nature of the ceasefire, with Hudaydah remaining directly on the front line.

International support for the war has also begun to die down, with the US Senate voting to withdraw American support for the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis on Dec 14. In addition, the high-profile assassination of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi has largely turned public opinion against the long-standing involvement of the US in Middle Eastern conflicts and against its apparently unshakeable support for Saudi Arabia, whose government is widely regarded as having been behind Khashoggi's killing. However, given that these sentiments run counter to President Trump's stance on the conflict, concrete measures such as the withdrawal of American troops still have not been taken.

At the same time, one cannot forget that the Yemen conflict is now a fully global crisis. Dubbed the world's worst humanitarian crisis, Yemen's situation has shockingly been ignored for a long time and has only recently been put under the spotlight. Every country has a stake in the conflict, not just major players like the United States. For example, the UK's arms sale to Saudi Arabia accounts for almost half of UK arms exports, with US\$6 billion worth of arms sent to Saudi Arabia since March 2015, and numerous other countries have sent military or logistical support for the both sides. The conflict remains complicated due to the deep-rooted diplomatic situations between the countries involved, which often centre on issues irrelevant to the conflict, but which are deemed more important than the situation in Yemen³. Because of Saudi Arabia and Iran's ongoing rivalry and their respective stakes in the outcome of the conflict, the war is unlikely to be resolved in the near future.

³ For example, the US' unwavering support for Saudi Arabia has nothing to do with the Yemen conflict; instead, the US depends on Saudi Arabia for oil. A diplomatic rift between the two countries could see Saudi Arabia hiking prices or refusing to sell oil to the US, either of which would create significant problems for the US.

Key Issues of the Conflict

The Yemeni Armed Conflict

The most immediate concern for the UN is the issue of resolving the conflict between the Houthis and the Yemeni government. Previous efforts by the UN to resolve the conflict include the establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy to the Secretary-General on



Yemen to advise the Security Council, in order to provide support for the government transition of Yemen. The UN has also brokered many negotiations to resolve the political impasse but have largely been unsuccessful in getting both parties to achieve a long-term ceasefire and come to an agreement. In fact, it was one of these failed diplomatic negotiations in early 2014 that resulted in the beginning of the armed conflict, showing the deep divisions that run through the country and the lack of mutual understanding on both sides. In December 2018, a UK-led resolution for a ceasefire was passed by the UNSC, the first UN resolution passed on Yemen in three years, in a move that brought hope to many. However, the ceasefire truce was violated within days of it being adopted, leaving Yemeni citizens as vulnerable as before.

The sheer number of sources of tension which fuel this armed conflict make brokering an armistice or peace treaty extremely difficult. Besides the deep-seated internal political rivalry between the Houthi movement and President Hadi's ruling party, the conflict has been further aggravated by external factors, including Saudi Arabia's desire to settle a score with its old enemy, Iran, which has been supplying the Houthis with short-range ballistic missiles and other military equipment. American and Russian involvement on opposing sides compounds the situation, developing this conflict into a full-blown proxy war. With either side being unlikely to back down, the chances of a peaceful end to the conflict are slim.

The Humanitarian Crisis



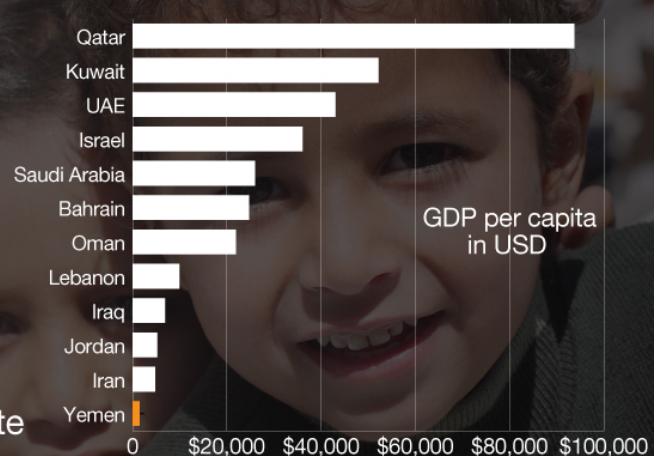
Another key issue for the UN is the humanitarian crisis that has developed as a result of the conflict. As stated earlier, the international coalition headed by Saudi Arabia imposed a blockade on the port of Aden and has been bombing another port city, Al-Hudaydah, in an attempt to cut off

the Houthi rebels' supply line. This has had a profound impact on the lives of civilians, the vast majority of whom now struggle to gain access to basic living necessities such as food, water as well as medical supplies and treatment. In Yemen today, close to 14 million are at risk of starvation resulting from famine, and 24 million, or 75 percent of the population are in need of humanitarian aid. Despite this, the impact on the Houthi movement as a result of this blockade seems to be limited, with the Houthis receiving aid from their allies over land rather than through ports. Aid convoys sent by the UN and other humanitarian aid organisations intended for civilians are frequently delayed due to the blockade imposed on ports, as well as hijacked by terrorist organisations operating in the area. The World Food Programme has also accused the Houthis of diverting much-needed aid supplies from areas under its control and putting it up for sale instead or giving it to those not entitled to it. Furthermore, coalition air strikes have been known to deliberately

CHILDREN OF YEMEN



At least **847,445** children have acute malnourishment, of which **20%** suffers from severe acute malnourishment.



Source: UNICEF/World Bank (2013) ALJAZEERA

hit aid convoys and warehouses, posing a further challenge to the delivery of essential aid supplies.

Beyond the immediate issue of ensuring that aid is successfully transported to the desired target locations lies the problem of sustainability. Having countries and organisations from around the world pour money and resources into Yemen is simply unsustainable and Yemen cannot completely and indefinitely depend on external aid. Furthermore, dependency on international aid, particularly on nations or organisations which have a key stake in the conflict, is unreliable due to the ever-changing geopolitical climate. For example, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates pledged a combined total of US\$930 million⁴ in aid to the humanitarian crisis on 3 April 2018, but the flow of humanitarian aid and resources can be stemmed immediately if they so choose. This possibility is extremely real due to the Saudi-led coalition's previous decision to cut off access to basic supplies by bombing and blockading the port cities of Hudaydah and Aden.

The Presence of Terrorist Organisations

A final key issue is the presence of terrorist organisations operating within Yemen, such as al-Qaeda and affiliated organisations. Terrorist organisations thrive in chaotic or anarchical situations as these allow the group to smuggle contraband items such as weapons into the country without government regulation. Such unstable locations also serve as a launching pad from which terrorist attacks can be carried out both in the region as well as in the rest of the world, as was revealed following the Manchester arena bombing on 22 May 2017. The suicide bomber, Salman Abedi, was found to have recently travelled to Libya (one example of a war-torn country which has become a hotbed for extremist organisations) to meet with his counterparts from the Islamic



⁴ Something to think about: Saudi Arabia is by far the largest state donor of humanitarian aid to Yemen, yet its forces continue to conduct numerous daily air strikes on the very civilians that their aid is intended for. Why?

State (IS). Yemen, like Libya, is ideal for use as a terrorist base: it has porous borders, an abundance of loose weapons as a result of the war and plenty of oil and people to smuggle and thereby finance terrorist missions - IS and other jihadist groups are reported to earn up to US\$323 million from human trafficking alone.

Complicating the issue are results from an investigation conducted by The Associated Press (AP), alleging that the Saudi-led coalition had struck deals with al-Qaeda on numerous occasions with the knowledge of US forces, allowing the terrorist group to cede their territory peacefully to the coalition with all their weapons and wads of looted cash while US forces halted drone strikes against them to ensure safe passage. The investigation also found that al-Qaeda fighters had even been recruited by the coalition as regular soldiers, allowing terrorists to disappear and intertwine themselves within the ranks of the coalition's forces, making them significantly more difficult to deal with later on and complicating the overall war on terror.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Yemen's National Dialogue Conference: A transitional dialogue process held in Sana'a from 23 March, 2013, to 24 January, 2014, as part of efforts to accelerate the Yemeni crisis peace process. The diplomatic conference eventually resulted in a successful agreement but it was never implemented, and the Houthis took the opportunity to overthrow the weak transitional government and take control of the capital.

Saudi Arabian-led coalition: Beginning on March 25, 2015, the Saudi Arabian-led coalition in Yemen now consists of 10 directly involved countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, and is receiving further logistical support from another 13 countries. The coalition has imposed an indefinite blockade on the port city of Aden in the south, and has been accused by the UN of breaching international law through their indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets. Much of the suffering faced by Yemen's citizens today is blamed on the coalition which has been responsible for numerous indiscriminate air strikes.

Gerrymandering: To manipulate the boundaries of an electoral constituency so as to favour a particular party or class.

Humanitarian disaster: A singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or wellbeing of a community or large group of people, who are often not directly involved in the conflict.

Food security: The state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Famine: A situation in which there is an extreme scarcity of food for a great number of people, causing illness or death. Most international aid organisations declare a famine when:

1. At least 20% of the population has access to less than 2,100 calories per day
2. There is acute malnutrition in 30% of children
3. At least 2 people out of 10,000 or 4 children in 10,000 die every day due to lack of food

Proxy war: A war initiated by a major power which does not itself become directly involved. One example of a proxy war would be the currently ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, whereby the two directly involved belligerents (Israel and Palestine) are supported by a few indirectly involved stakeholders (The United States, The Soviet Union and Arab League nations).

Key Stakeholders

The Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) is made up of Zaidi Shiites, an Islamic minority sect. Shiites themselves are already considered a minority among Muslims, and Zaidi Shiites are a completely different branch from Iranian or even Iraqi Shiites, and fought for control of Yemen intermittently with varying degrees of success, until a Zaidi republican general, President Ali Abdullah Saleh came to power in 1978. President Saleh's reign was challenged by a Zaidi rebel group in the 1990s as a result of dissatisfaction with the corruption within the government. It was led by the charismatic leader Hussein al Houthi after whom the group is now named. The Houthis seized Sana'a in March 2015 in an attempt to form a new government, accusing President Hadi's government of corruption and lack of accountability.

Saudi Arabia entered the war on 25 March, 2015, in support of Yemeni government forces. It currently leads an international coalition against the Houthis, receiving support from over 20 countries. It sees the Houthis as both terrorists and Iranian proxies and seeks to extend and cement their influence in the Middle East, which involves eradicating the Houthis. Its frequent conducting of airstrikes against targets in Houthi-controlled areas aims to negatively affect the Houthis by cutting off their access to food and medical supplies, but also directly impacts civilians who face the reality of daily bombing and also bear the brunt of the lack of basic necessities. As such, Saudi Arabia has been accused by international organisations such as the UN and Human Rights Watch of committing war crimes and breaching international law.

Iran, being a majority Shia Muslim country, has long feuded with Sunni majority Saudi Arabia. This rivalry has played out on numerous occasions, with both countries having fuelled proxy wars in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. Iran's support for the Houthis in the Yemeni Civil War stems firstly from the fact that the Houthis are a Shia Muslim group. Furthermore, Iran sees Yemen as part of a buffer zone between itself and the Sunni Middle East, and having a stable Shia government in place not only gives it a dependable ally but also allows them to threaten Saudi Arabia's borders if necessary. Beyond that, due to Yemen's geographical location at the doorstep of Saudi Arabia, winning the Yemeni Civil War would help define the balance of power in the middle east and give Iran an upper hand in this Saudi-Iran rivalry.

The United States is a long-time ally of Saudi Arabia and has committed significant logistical support to the Saudi-led coalition. Under the current Trump

administration, the US has adopted a significantly more pro-Saudi stance than before and has sought to increase its military support of the coalition, but these actions have recently been blocked by the US Senate. Tensions between the US and Iran have also increased in the past few years as the US has repeatedly accused Iran of supplying the Houthi rebels with weapons, which Iran denies, creating diplomatic rifts between the two countries and hampering the UN's efforts to pass a resolution on the issue.

Guiding Questions

- According to your country's stance, what would be some possible solutions to the armed conflict in Yemen?
 - What measures can be taken to de-escalate the conflict?
 - To what extent is a peace treaty between the Houthis and the Yemeni government feasible?
- To what extent should the UN or other nations respect the territorial sovereignty of Yemen when intervening militarily?
- How can the UN provide sustainable aid to civilians affected by the crisis?
 - How can the UN ensure that the aid provided is used appropriately?
- What are the restrictions governing the role of UN peacekeeping troops in Yemen?
- How can sufficient aid be delivered to the millions of Yemenis in the warzone?

Useful Links and Bibliography

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/about/>

<https://www.un.org/undpa/en/middleeast-westasia/yemen>

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