Forum:	Advisory Panel
Issue:	The question of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen
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Position:	Chair of Advisory Panel

Introduction

Yemen, officially the Republic of Yemen, is a country located at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia, faced with almost every imaginable humanitarian crisis: war, disease, famine, economic collapse, international terrorism, human rights violations and war crimes. With over 80 percent of the population requiring humanitarian assistance and protection, Yemen has been declared the world's largest humanitarian disaster by the United Nations in 2017.

Yemen has been exposed to war since 2014, when the Iran-aligned Houthi group, an Islamic political rebel group, overran much of the country, instead of the president. The Houthis rebel began as a movement preaching peace, born in opposition to Saudi Arabia's influences. However, it has how become the center of an international conflict. The conflict escalated as Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies launched an air campaign aimed at restoring the internationally recognized pro-Saudi president of Yemen Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi's government. The coalition received logistical and intelligence support from the US, UK and France. This has led to a long-lasting conflict between the Houthi group and the government, further causing various humanitarian issues, most of them being related to the health of the people.

During the war since 2015, at least 7,025 civilians have been killed and 11,140 has been injured, with 65 percent of the deaths attributed to Saudi-led coalition air strikes. Along with this, Yemen has also faced numerous other problems, such as severe famine and cholera breakouts and lack of clean water and health care. The United Nation's 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview report that only 50 percent of health facilities in high-risk districts are fully functional, leaving 24 million people without access to doctors, medicines and other healthcare resources.

Definition of Key Terms

Humanitarian Crisis

A humanitarian crisis (or humanitarian disaster) is an event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or a country. Humanitarian crisis can emerge from a variety of events, such as natural disasters, man-made disasters or complex emergencies, which is a result of various factors and events that prevent a large group of people from accessing their fundamental needs, such as food, water and shelter. Every humanitarian crisis is caused by different factors and each of them requires unique responses, targeted towards the specific area and community.

Internal Displacement

This is when an individual is forced to flee their home in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts and violence violation of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, but remains within their country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall into the legal definitions of a refugee. There is currently a total of 41.3 million internally displaced persons due to conflicts and violence. This includes, families caught between warring parties, residents of poor neighborhoods rendered unhabitable, indigenous communities forced to leave their ancestral lands, families pushed to leave their homes by local gangs, communities of coastal mountainous or arid areas forced to flee from natural disasters, etc.

Houthi Movement

The Houthi movement is an Islamic political and armed movement emerged from Sa'dah, a province in the north of Yemen, bordering Saudi Arabia. Its initial intention was to confront corrupted governments and bring peace to the country. However, it has grown to one of the strongest armed rebel groups and has been locked in a complex war with the Saudi-led coalition. Their influences have grown since 2014, as they took over Sanaa and most of the north of Yemen.

Saudi-led Coalition

The Saudi-led coalition, otherwise known as the Arab coalition, is an intervention launched by Saudi Arabia in 2015 in response to the Houthi movement against the pro-Saudi president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who has fled to Saudi Arabia after the conflict. It is backed by its global strategic ally, the US, UK and France. The intervention initially consisted of a bombing campaign on Houthi rebels and the deployment of ground forces into Yemen. The Coalition has attacked the Houthi militia and loyalist of Saleh, supported by Iran, in order to restore President Hadi's government.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a multi-national militant Sunni Islamist organization founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden, Abdulla Azzam and other Arab volunteers during the Soviet- Afghanistan war. It works as a network of Islamic extremists. Its ultimate goal is to overthrow the corrupt "apostate" regimes in the Middle East and replace them with "true" Islamic governments. Al-Qaeda militants are effectively in hand with Saudi-led coalition, against the Houthi group.

General Overview

Civil War

The Yemeni Civil War is an ongoing conflict that began in 2015 between Yemeni government, led by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, and the Houthi armed movement, along with their allies, for control over Yemen.
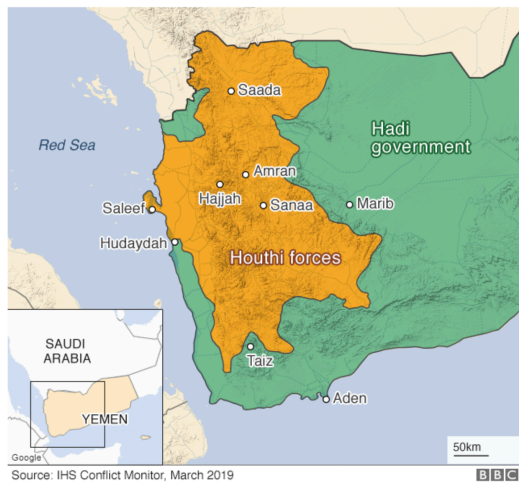
Before the war - Houthi movement

The Houthi movement became active since 2011, when an uprising forced the country's long-time president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. This political transition was aimed at bringing stability to the economy of Yemen however, President Hadi struggled to resolve various issues such as militant attacks, corruption, food insecurity, etc. The fight began in 2014 as the Houthi rebel movement took advantage of the new president's weakness to seize control of northern Yemen. With the former president Saleh, the Houthis took over the capital, Sanaa, forcing President Hadi into fleeing to Saudi Arabia. As a response to the Houthi rebel group, Saudi Arabia and eight other Sunni Arab states began and air campaign in order to restore President Hadi's government. They were joined and aided by the US, due to the 1951 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement. They have joined the war targeting Al-Qaeda fighters. The UK and France, tied together with Saudi Arabia as global strategic allies, has also shown support towards Saudi Arabia by contributing to the war.

The war

Over the first few months of the war, coalition troops helped force the Houthis out of the south. President Hadi's government established a temporary base in Aden, but struggled to provide basic services and security and the president remained in exile. Meanwhile, the Hothis maintained a siege of the third city of Taize. During this time, militants from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the local affiliate of the rival Islamic State Group (IS) have taken advantage of the war by seizing territory in

the south and carrying out deadly attacks, especially in Aden. The attack alone had led to 36 deaths and countless injuries, followed by over 100,000 disease and famine related deaths.

Figure 1: Areas of control in Yemen

The coalition accused Iran of smuggling weapons to the rebel groups - which Iran denied – and restricted the transport of resources in and out of provinces which led to substantial increases in the price of food and fuel, further pushing more people into poverty. It launched a ballistic missile towards Riyandh in November 2017 in order to tighten its blockade of Yemen.

In June 2018, the coalition attempted to break the deadlock on the battlefield by launching a major offensive on the rebel-held Red Sea city of Hudaydah, which was the principle lifeline for majority of Yemen's population – over 80 percent of Yemen's food and medicals supplies are imported from foreign countries, mostly coming in from the port of Hudaydah. Since the city of Hudaydah has become the battlefield, supply routes were destructed, putting more civilians under risks of hunger and diseases. In December, government and Houthi representatives agreed to a ceasefire in Hudaydah city and promised to redeploy their forces by mid-January. However, no action of withdrawal has been seen from both sides, raising fears that the deal with collapse, escalating the war once again.
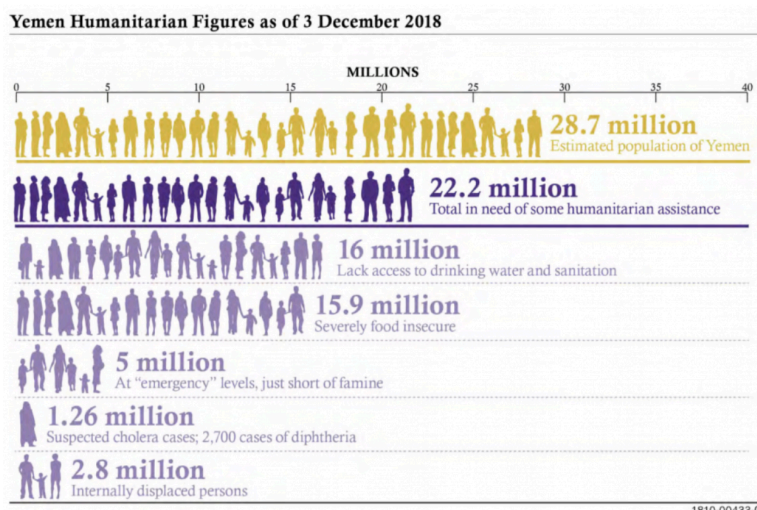
Human Cost

The Yemeni Civil War has led to the destruction of countless infrastructure and displacement of over 3.3 million people, along with various health problems, such as disease breakouts and shortage of clean water and basic health care. According to the UN, an estimate of 24 million people – around to 80 percent of the population – are in need of assistance and protection.

Famine and Diseases

Famine is one of the most pressing issue in Yemen, with an estimate of 100 children dying of starvation every day. The World Food Programme (WFP) has called the situation of Yemen 'the world's worst humanitarian crisis'. According to the UN officials, the cost of food has risen by 35 percent in 2018 and the Yemeni riyal has depreciated by 180 percent. It is estimated that 12 million people are at risk of starvation. The city of Hudaydah, where around 80 percent of the country's food and medical supplies arrive has now become a battlefield of Houthis and Saudi-led coalition, trapping the civilians on the southern outskirts of Hudaydah, with severe lack of food supply. With the civil war disrupting markets and trade routes, 32 percent of all districts in Yemen are at high risk of sliding into famine. The UN reports that more than two million children are malnourished, with more than half of them suffering stunted growth due to food shortage.

The outbreak of cholera in Yemen infected a large proportion of the population. Despite being a preventable and treatable disease, due to lack of medical knowledge and supply, thousands of people die from the disease every year. The Ministry of Public Health and Population of Yemen reported an extremely high number of 1.2 million suspected cases of cholera since April to October 2018. During the time, there has been an estimate of 2,510 deaths mainly caused by cholera. Due to lack of medical care and clean water, other contagious diseases such as diphtheria are easily spreading throughout the country.

Figure 2: Graph showing the number of civilians in need of protection and help in Yemen

Displacement

Although displacement has always been an existing issue in Yemen, the number of internally displaced people has increased sharply since 2015, after the civil war has become internationalized. The war between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition has led to the displacement of around 3 million people. Due to the ongoing conflict, Yemen continues to face severe challenges such as discrimination, marginalization and shirking protection space for the internally displaced people. According to the UN, violence against women has increased to 3 million women girls by 2018 and discrimination against Muhamasheen has increased from prior to the conflict, limiting their access to education, healthcare and work opportunities. Many hospitals and shelters lack supply and facilities for the IDPs. Despite such obstacles, displaced people continue to flee towards the southern coastal governorates for protection. They find shelter on the outskirts of cities, in camps founded by local hospitals, the UNHCR and other NGOs. However, due to the continuous war and the growing number of IDCs, the government and organizations fail to provide appropriate shelter and supplies, leading to countless deaths and illnesses.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN, with the cooperation of various organizations and countries, works towards the UN Strategic Framework, aimed at "mitigating the impact of the current conflict on the social and economic conditions in Yemen, and on the capacity of state institutions while contributing to ongoing peacebuilding effort". The framework seeks to outline the measures needed to be taken to prevent the complete collapse of national capacity in Yemen and restrict the humanitarian crisis from growing from the current state. The measures taken by the UN are focused at sustaining basic social services, socio-economic resilience, cohesion and protection. The overall goals of the framework includes: critical state institutions, contributing the confidence building between the parties to the conflict; basic social services; better managing abilities of communities from external threats with increased economic self-reliance; effective leadership, participation and engagement of women, youth and civil society.

UNHCR responds to the medical needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable host community members by supporting the government facilities. UNHCR provided a total of 38,629 with essential medicines. They continue to monitor the effect of the conflict on the civilians and provide assistance and services, such as shelter and food supply. From January to March of 2019, the overall civilian casualties decreased by 30 percent in comparison to the monthly average rate in 2018. The Protection Cluster also provides support to new partners in a nationwide scale-up of 28 community

centers to allow the vulnerable community members. The cluster further created area-specific protection plans to address protection issues to sub-national level, ranging from civilians trapped in conflict zones to IDPs.

The UN further attempted to prevent the collapse of the ceasefire agreement by endorsing a new security council resolution, increasing the number of monitors overseeing the deal in Hudaydah. The resolution, drafted by the UK, extends the UN monitoring role for a further six months and increases the number of monitors to a maximum of 75 people. However, the terms of the ceasefire – agreed at the UN brokered talks in Stockholm in December – were seen as flawed due to lack of precision and the country's geographical limits. Due to this, The Houthi rebels, and the UN-backed government of President Hadi and his coalition have accused each other of numerous breaches of the ceasefire.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August, 2014	Presidential panel approves federal constitution to accommodate Houthi and southern grievances, but Houthis reject the deal and controls most of Sanaa
February, 2015	Houthis appoint presidential council to replace President Hadi
March, 2015	First major attack of Islamic State on Yemen – two suicide bombing, killing 137
June, 2015	people
December 3, 2015	Leader of al-Qaeda, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, is killed in a US drone strike in Yemen
July 29, 2016	Al-Qaeda claimed to seize the Yemeni towns of Zinjibar and Jaar from pro-government forces, consolidating their power over southern parts of the country
April 24, 2016	The UN criticized an agreement signed between Saleh and Houthi reels to form a political council to run the country
April 26, 2017	Un-brokered peace talks in Kuwait ended, with no breakthroughs
November 7th, 2017	The UN warmed that 17 million Yemenis are in immediate danger inf dying of starvation
December 4th, 2017	Yemeni President Hadi held under house arrest
January, 2018	Ali Abdullah Saleh killed by Houthi group two days after he publicly broke off ties with the group
November, 2019	Southern Yemeni separatists, backed by the UAE, seize control of Aden, the main city in the south of Yemen
	Separatists and governments sign power-sharing agreement to bring an end to the conflict in southern Yemen

Possible Solutions

In order to bring an end to what the UN calls "the world's worst humanitarian crisis", related nations must come together to provoke dialogue and **advocate for a constructive and detailed peace deal between the Houthi group and the Saudi led coalition**. The safety of civilians and the blockage of supply routes must be considered, and vows must be set between the groups. Other supporting nations such as the US, UK, and France must be engaged in the peace deal as well as the two groups. The peace deal must assure that the port of Hudaydah remains untouched by both groups, in order for organizations and civilians to safely receive incoming supplies from outside of Yemen. The **ceasefire in Yemen must further be modified** into more precision and with achievable measures. This way, further breaches of the ceasefire may be prevented.

Furthermore, organizations and clusters must respond to the growing number of displaced families and need for shelter and supplies. Governments and organizations must come together to **improve healthcare and infrastructure** in damaged areas, along with temporary shelters. In order to achieve this, food and medical supply must be increased, and safer transportation routes must be found, due to the destruction of the port of Hudaydah, the main port of Yemen. **Other ports, apart from Hudaydah must be established** for further import of medical and food supply from foreign countries, and the government must cooperate with UNOs and NGOs to increase security around IDP camps and transportation routes.

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