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UNITED NATIONS SECUTIRY COUNCIL

COUNTRY GUIDE

PERNAMBUCO MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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COUNTRY GUIDE

TOPIC A:

Human rights, accountability and justice: promotion and strengthening of international humanitarian law

TOPIC B:

The situation in the middle east: Yemen



RECIFE
2021

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STUDY GUIDE

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Maresa das Graças Barbosa Chaves
Rafaella de Lourdes de Almeida Salles

COVER ART

Anna Cecília de Medeiros Aquino

DESIGN

Gabriel Lima da Costa Câmara
Geórgia Moreira Ribeiro
Marcela Maria Nahum de Souza

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*We seek peace, knowing that peace is the climate of
freedom.*

Dwight D. Eisenhower.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
ASEAN	ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
AQAP	AL-QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA
BICHL	BELGIAN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMISSION FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW
BRC	BRITISH RED CROSS
BRI	BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE
BRICS	BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA AND SOUTH AFRICA
CEPI	COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS
CENTO	CENTRAL TREATY ORGANIZATION
G4	GROUP OF FOUR
G20	GROUP OF TWENTY
ICRC	INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
ICHL	INTERMINISTERIAL COMMISSION FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW
IHL	INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW
MENA	MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
NATO	NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
OIC	ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CORPORATION
OHCHR	OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
OPEC	ORGANIZATION OF THE PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES
PLO	PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
PRC	PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
RCD	REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
SRCS	SOMALI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY
STC	SOUTHERN TRANSITION COUNCIL
UAE	UNION OF ARAB EMIRATES
UAV	UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES
UCAV	UNMANNED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLES

UN	UNITED NATIONS
UNHCR	UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
UNHRC	UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
UNICEF	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN FUND
UNRIC EUROPE	UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE FOR WESTERN EUROPE
UNSC	UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
US	UNITED STATES
WFP	WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
YCHO	YEMEN COMPREHENSIVE HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

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1 PERMANENT MEMBERS

1.1 People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has nearly 1.4 billion residents and is currently considered the world's most populated country. It has been inserted into a socialist system since 1949, nevertheless its participation in the world economy has expanded, becoming one of the key actors in the international scenario. However, this economic growth did not match with any type of political reform, prior to the fact that the Communist party plays a very influent and controlling role on many aspects of the civilians' lives (ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, 2020; BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION, 2018).

In several UN Security Council meetings, the Chinese representative has stressed the importance of strengthening and promoting International Humanitarian Law (IHL) describing it as the "shining principles of humanity", acknowledging that the Law of War suffers from numerous violations caused by the international community. Thus, China recognizes IHL's importance to the actual scenario, the uphold of its principles and, most importantly, the punishment that parties must receive if any violation occurs (XINHUA NET, 2019).

In a previous context, the PRC's government has been actively cooperative regarding this matter, and from 2005 to 2008 provided technical humanitarian training to many African countries, besides granting donations of equipment and munitions. In 2007, China's National Committee on IHL was established and helped to perpetuate its standards, its diffusion and implementation (UNITED NATIONS, 2019).

Regarding the humanitarian situation, in 2017, the Chinese government assisted Yemen's government, investing over 22 million dollars in the country, aiming to fight against food shortages and the rampant waterborne diseases, such as cholera (RAMANI, 2017). In 2019, PRC's Representative to the UN called upon all nations to provide assistance and to improve the civilians' conditions of living (RAMANI, 2019).

Moreover, despite the controlling policy already asserted, since the 1990s, the Chinese government has been increasing its participation in international organizations. Even before the Arab Spring and its breakouts, the PRC has been ensuring peaceful relations with Yemen's government. However, especially in the past few years, aiming for economic benefits, the

long-term political balance of the Yemeni state has become China's ultimate goal (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2020; RAMANI, 2017).

Having no history of diplomatic interventions and keeping good relations with the country, the Chinese republic keeps a steady but smart connection with Yemen and the Middle East. For example, in 2015, PRC "has criticized attempts by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels to form a new government in Sana'a and has sold stealth weaponry to Saudi Arabia to assist Riyadh's military intervention in Yemen", thus showing a certain type of alliance with Saudi Arabia (RAMANI, 2017). In this sense, China also had a very strategic past endorsement to Hadi's pro-Saudi forces was specifically intended to establish an authoritarian leadership in Yemen, since an eventual truce could have projected PRC's geopolitical influence even further in the Middle East region (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2020; RAMANI, 2017).

As one of the first foreign investors in the Yemeni economy, China looks to amplify even more its power through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to construct an economic corridor, allowing the Chinese republic to participate once more in the oil commerce in the region (CAFIERO; WAGNER, 2017). Recently, the republic has been effectively supportive of Yemen's internationally recognized government, but still keeps connections with the Houthis¹ and the Southern Transition Council (STC) to establish and expand its economic presence (RAMANI, 2019).

However, a controversial subject calls out the international community's attention: Chinese drones. Also called UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) or UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles), they have been an object of exportation to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, bringing to light a dubious sense regarding its use: whether it is helpful to governments and conflicted parties, or if it is just used to kill and to harm the population (ROBLIN, 2019).

Many human rights abuses in China were reported to international organizations, the government was accused of arbitrary detention and imprisonment, controlling the media and other massive forms of communication and also was accused of persecuting minorities (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2019).

¹ However, the Houthi connection seems rather controversial, since in 2016, China's government expressed its concerns over the Houthis taking over Yemen's government and how it could affect any progress made by the UN (REUTERS, 2016).

Furthermore, the imminent danger further threatened the Yemeni population, their healthcare system still remains in tatters due to the conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic led to a large-scale humanitarian disaster. Yemeni people find themselves in an urgent need of humanitarian assistance (NASSER, 2020).

China's permanent representative to the United Nations, Dai Bing, stressed that the international community, as a whole, must take immediate actions by increasing assistance to Yemen, to prevent further worsening of the ongoing humanitarian situation, and to ensure safe access to the supplies to those in need. The PCR has been a long-term Yemen supporter through bilateral and multilateral ways, and continued to help even more the affected country during the pandemic, by providing testing kits, masks and personal protection devices (XINHUA NET, 2021).

1.2 Republic of France

The French Republic has been a member of the United Nations since its creation in 1945, and has a permanent seat in the Security Council, holding, therefore, the right to veto. However, as a key actor invested in seeking for diplomatic means to solve international crises, the country, often concerned with the promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law, has not used its veto power since 1989 (FRENCH MINISTRY FOR EUROPE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2020).

In addition to that, France is fully committed to matters of international security, having contributed not only with national forces to peacekeeping operations, but it is also the second troop contributing country among the five permanent members, having deployed 940 blue helmets to eight different peacekeeping operations (UNITED NATIONS, 2020). The Republic is deeply involved with the promotion of IHL, having signed and ratified several treaties on the matter, most notably The Geneva Conventions and its additional Protocols (1949), The Hague Conventions (1899 -1907) (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

Regarding the situation in Yemen, the French Republic was lately criticized about arms exportation to Saudi Arabia. A document from the French military intelligence agency concluded that arms, such as tanks and laser-guided missile systems sold to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, were being used in the conflict and part of the civil population of Yemen is within their range (FRANCE 24, 2019).

Furthermore, in the past decade, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been the biggest export markets for French arms (FRANCE 24, 2019). For that reason, the criticism about France's role in the Yemeni civil war has been growing and recently an UN panel of experts presented a list of actors who may be complicit in war crimes in Yemen, especially with the providing of arms to the parties involved in the conflict, in which the French Republic figures as one of the key actors (THE GUARDIAN, 2019).

After this critic, the French Republic expressed more concerns about the civil war in Yemen, stepping up the level of vigilance and scrutiny in the exportation of war material to assure that they are in accordance with France's international obligations such as the Arms Trade Treaty (FRENCH EMBASSY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 2019).

Moreover, France urged all parties of the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and carry out transparent investigations into violations of human rights, also pointing out the importance of the commitment to reach a political settlement between the parties through diplomatic actions (FRENCH EMBASSY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 2019).

Ultimately, in November 2020, the permanent representative of France to the UNSC stated the urgent need of a cessation to the existing conflict between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi forces. The need of forming a new Yemeni government was also raised, as a necessity to find an all-inclusive solution. Recognizing that the humanitarian situation is getting worse and hunger is plaguing Yemen, France asserted that the Covid-19 virus cannot be underestimated and the consequences of a second wave would be tragic. The representative finished his statement repeating that all parties have the obligation to guarantee humanitarian access to the people in need (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

1.3 Russian Federation

Recently, Russia has been allocating efforts in expanding its role as a global power. Moscow keeps an active stand in building the UNSC policy regarding international crisis and outside intervention. Even though the country holds a limited part in providing financial assistance and personnel for UN peace operations, since the Russian Federation invests more effort in regional peace operations. Also, it is important to say that Russia supports the reform of the UNSC and the inclusion of countries of the Group of Four (G4)² and BRICS³ groups in the council. However, the Russian state stands firm on the conservation of the veto power only for the Permanent Five (P5) members (NIKITIN, 2012).

Regarding the international humanitarian law subject, it is important to emphasize that Russia has been accused of breaking the rules of war on occupied territories of the Crimea region. Russian forces took control of the security operations on behalf of Crimea's local authorities, impeded the Ukrainian forces from leaving their bases, commanded strategic facilities in the Ukrainian territory and secured the administrative borders between Crimea and Ukraine. All this happened because of Crimea's decision to separate from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. Thus, Russia is being incompatible as the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols provide that the occupying power has the obligation to restore and maintain the public order and safety, respecting human rights (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2014).

The Russian state has valued the strategic importance of the Gulf of Aden since the stabilization of South Yemen in 1967, and its later declaration as a socialist state. In the 70s, the Soviet Union took advantage of its alliance with the state to secure a naval base in the area. However, the posterior unification of Yemen, in the 90s, caused Russia to lose access to the strategic area. As different parties maintained control of all the coast areas in the Yemeni state, Russia decided to remain neutral to secure a future possibility of a base presence in the Gulf of Aden (RAMANI, 2019).

Therefore, the Russian Federation has strict relations with Yemen. Russia has a policy of universal engagement in Yemen that has been consistent since the start of the civil war. Due to strategic concern in the Gulf of Aden, and the desire to balance the conflicting interests of

² Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan.

³ Brazil, Russia, India China and South Africa.

regional partners, Russia took a policy of nonalignment in Yemen. In 2015, Russia was the only UN member to abstain in the Resolution 2216, which imposed a penalty on Houthi officials for compromising the stability in Yemeni state. The country also maintained its diplomatic crew in Sana'a and Aden until the Houthi rebels assassinated the former president, Saleh (RAMANI, 2019).

In 2017, the Russian government retained an agreement with Hadi's government to print and transfer banknotes from Moscow to Aden. This contract helped the government of Yemen to pay its military forces in the southern area of the country. Due to this, the separatists militias were contained and the crisis in the war-torn region was alleviated (RAMANI, 2018).

Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 indicated the beginning of its increasingly dominant status in the Middle East and North Africa. As the Federation expands its Middle East presence, it could represent a future intervention of the state in Yemen conflicts. The confrontations between the pro-secession Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the internationally recognized Yemeni Government opened a space to a larger Russian involvement. With the lack of the United States' control and other world powers to help in legal negotiations, Russia is in a strategic position to lead a major role in this conflict because of its contact with all the warring parties (FENTON-HARVEY, 2019).

Russian Federation's officials met with Yemen's Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed and representatives of the Houthi Supreme Political Council to discuss the resolution of the Yemeni civil war. This meeting was important to underline Russia's ability to mediate relations between the internationally recognized government and the Houthis. On the occasion, Russia supported the Prime Minister's vision for a political solution to the conflict and agreed with Houthi criticisms of North American military troops deployments to the Persian Gulf (RAMANI, 2019).

1.4 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

As one of the United Nations founding members, the United Kingdom (UK) always aimed for the principles of international collaboration on peace and security. For that purpose, the UK has been one of the largest contributors to the UN's regular and peacekeeping budget. The United Kingdom has also played a vital role in the adoption of resolutions on conflict situations, especially because of its right to veto over decisions (UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION UK, 2019).

The matters discussed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have been addressed by the UK as much as the Security Council, proving the country's concern about the matter. In other words, the UK has been deeply involved with the development of human rights laws and norms, and their protection worldwide, focusing on aspects such as efficiency and transparency to reach its goal (UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION UK, 2019).

In addition, there are several British institutions that play a role in International Humanitarian Law at domestic and international levels, such as the Department for International Development, which is a ministerial department that aims to build a safer and healthier world for people in developing countries and in the UK. Also, there is the British Red Cross (BRC), which does voluntary work responding to emergency situations such as conflicts or natural disasters. The BRC has an officially recognized status alongside the United Kingdom National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, also known as Interdepartmental Committee on International Humanitarian Law, responsible to ensure the full implementation of IHL obligations and to encourage its dissemination (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT, 2019).

The recent participation of the United Kingdom in the Security Council towards the Yemeni situation can be summed up in the financial commitment of nearly \$1 billion of assistance since the conflict began in the area, and over a quarter of this amount in the year of 2019. Another contribution addresses the issue of starvation in Yemen, as the United Kingdom is directly fighting the immediate monthly food's necessity in the country, treating 70.000 children for malnutrition and providing over one million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT, 2019).

Furthermore, the UK's direct contribution in the conflict also counts on the support of the implementation, in 2019, of this new aid package, which includes giving cash and vouchers to 3.8 million Yemenis across the country that can be used to buy food, helping the people at the highest risk rate of starvation (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT, 2019).

Similarly to the United States, the UK expresses its support towards the Saudi-led intervention in the region (RUYS, FERRO, 2016) and also provides personnel and expertise to work alongside Saudi Arabia in the civil war against the Houthis (THE GUARDIAN, 2019).

However, there has been a recent repercussion involving the United Kingdom, as the results of a UN commissioned group's research about Yemen pointed out that third parties to the conflict like the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Iran may be complicit in war crimes committed in Yemen (CNN, 2019), because of their constant supply of weapons to the actors involved (INDEPENDENT, 2019).

Related to the impact of the Covid-19 in Yemen, the representative of the United Kingdom, Jonathan Guy Allen in a meeting of the UNSC in 28 of July 2020 stressed that statistical modelling suggests that as many as 85,000 people could die from Covid-19 in Yemen, he also said that the Houthis are not reporting cases in the territory that they control and called for that group to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access to combat the pandemic. Besides that, he said that the Yemeni parties must make compromises to achieve a comprehensive ceasefire and get the political process on track (UN, 2020).

It must be said that the United Kingdom highlighted in a UNSC meeting on November 2020, that the UK supports all the efforts to achieve progress to a political solution, because only an end to the violence could help bring an enduring humanitarian relief in Yemen (UN, 2020).

Finally, the United Kingdom advocates that a ceasefire and cooperation with the United Nations-led political process in Yemen would be the greatest defense for the Yemeni population against Covid-19.

1.5 United States of America

The United States of America is a Republic composed of 50 states and a federal district located in North America, with a system of representative democracy. The USA is known as the world's foremost economic and military power combined with a global interest and an incomparable global reach (BRITANNICA, 2020).

Most States profess, as a matter of principle, their commitment to various forms of international law. The United States was actively engaged in the post-World War II movement to better define the line separating combatants and civilians, and to more clearly articulate the rights and protections to be afforded to those not taking part in hostilities (DAVIS, 2014).

At the early stages of the consolidation of international humanitarian law, the US acted as a big supporter. Moreover, the United States ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1955, as well as their additional protocols, but added some reservations on questions like the death penalty (COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, 2006). As seen below:

The Geneva Conventions are another long step forward toward mitigating the severities of war on its helpless victims. They reflect enlightened practices as carried out by the United States and other civilized countries and they represent largely what the United States would do whether or not a party to the Conventions. Our own conduct has served to establish higher standards and we can only benefit by having them incorporated in a stronger body of conventional wartime law. (DAVIS, 2014, p.19)

Furthermore, it must be emphasized that the US has changed their view of the humanitarian law several times through the years, especially after the attacks of September 11, as seen below:

From the time of the Vietnam war and its My Lai massacre, the United States showed increased attention to international humanitarian law (also known as the laws of war) until the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. From the time of those attacks until about 2005, the Bush Administration reversed course and downplayed both IHL and international human rights law in the treatment of enemy prisoners. At the time of writing the U.S. view toward IHL is much debated, with important congressional and judicial challenges to Bush policies. The U.S. military has returned to a more sensitive appreciation of IHL, while the CIA position is not clear. (FORSYTHE, 2008, p.1)

Therefore, after the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks, the United States, especially during the government of George W. Bush,⁴ started to glorify the virtues of US sovereignty. It must be taken

⁴ Was during Bush administration, from 2001 to 2009, that the US started to use the detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba, as a main prison expecting to avoid legal review by US courts, especially because "Guantanamo was intended as a legal black hole, where neither IHL nor US law would apply" (FORSYTHE, 2008, p. 5).

into account that during the campaign of “war against terrorism”, it was noticed an increase of the intense nationalism and the concomitant exultation of State sovereignty (FORSYTHE, 2008).

With a major disregard to the Human Rights and the Humanitarian Law, it must be emphasized the US actions in the occupations of Afghanistan from late 2001 and Iraq in 2003, where was found circumstantial evidence of a pattern of harsh detention conditions and abusive interrogation in military and CIA installations (FORSYTHE, 2008). This shows that even though the US has ratified several treaties on Human Rights and IHL, all of it was chosen to be ignored over the idea of their sovereignty.

Moreover, the U.S. armed forces failed on several occasions to adhere to the standards established by the Geneva Conventions and the determinations of international humanitarian law. However, entering the 21st century, the scenario changed and the United States were recognized as adhering to IHL standards into the battlefield. This happened mainly because the US Congress adopted several pieces of legislation incorporating IHL standards (FORSYTHE, 2008).

It is relevant to note that the third article, common in all Geneva Conventions, was always put in question by the US Government on the subject of CIA interrogators located overseas. Nevertheless, in July 2006, the Supreme Court, in the case *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, decided that this article does indeed apply to the suspects detained in CIA prisons as well as in Guantanamo Bay (FORSYTHE, 2008)

The US position can be resumed as:

Advocating for the necessity of respect for human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law, while opting to avoid the limitations of major international humanitarian initiatives, creates an appearance that the United States is better at preaching than it is at practicing. Expressions of ideals that do not match corresponding actions (DAVIS, 2014).

Regarding the situation in Yemen, it must be said that the United States of America has a large role over Yemeni conflicts, mainly because this country is a key site for U.S. intelligence gathering and for its drone attacks on Al-Qaeda. Their participation in this conflict is mainly through logistical and intelligence support, especially after the Houthis occupied the capital of Yemen (SHARP, 2017).

It is important to emphasize that the United States, by intervening in these conflict, aims to receive cooperation of the Yemen's government to implement a counterterrorism program designed by the U.S., mainly to dismantle the al-Qaeda group. Another purpose is to help secure

its supporters' borders, Saudi Arabia, in order to obtain easy access to the strait of Bab Al-Mandeb (LAUB, 2015).

At first under Barack Obama's administration and then under Trump's, the US continues to approve weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, its largest buyer. Since the intervention in Yemen's civil war in March 2015 by the coalition, the United States gave its full support to a relentless air campaign where Saudi warplanes and bombs hit thousands of targets. From the beginning, US officials insisted they were helping the Saudis to avoid causing even more civilian casualties (BAZZI, 2019).

Today, the US still continues to provide the Saudi-led coalition with logistical and intelligence support, not without some conflicts as seen below:

Throughout the war, the Saudi-led coalition has emphasized its commitment to reinstating Yemen's president Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power. However, recent events show members of the alliance that is backed and aided militarily by the United States cannot even agree on the coalition's goals in Yemen. Continued U.S. participation only serves to prolong an increasingly aimless intervention that, according to a recent United Nations report, may implicate the U.S. in war crimes (AL-ADEIMI, 2019).

It is seen that the United States keeps acting in the conflict authorizing several airstrikes against al-Qaeda in Yemen. As it can be exemplified with the killing of its leader, Qassim al-Rimi, in January in an airstrike at Yemen, in which also died the medic Ayman al Zawahiri, considered as possible successor in the organization. (NEW YORK TIMES, 2020).

Regarding the situation in Yemen during the pandemic, the United States representative in the UNSC, Martin Griffiths, stated that: "There is no better option than a ceasefire, combined with a return to the political process, for the parties to create stability on the front lines" (THE UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

Also, it must be said that the U.S. government provided more than \$630 million in humanitarian assistance to Yemen in 2020, to support interventions including emergency food assistance, medical treatment and hygiene kits and water treatment supplies to reduce the spread of disease. This also includes support for vulnerable refugees and migrants living in Yemen (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

In addition to that, at the UNSC meeting on September 2020 the United States representative Kelly Craft said it is important for parties in Yemen to de-escalate tensions and recommit to a United Nations-mediated settlement, especially with COVID-19 spreading around the country. The representative insisted, notably by approving pending sub-agreements,

respecting independent procurement procedures and facilitating free movement for aid workers. She expressed that the rights of all members of Yemeni society must be respected (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

On a closing note, the position adopted by the United States is that all parties to the conflict must support aid delivery to support the population in Yemen (UNITED NATIONS, 2020). Also, the country stands by the United Nations and its initiatives to provide aid, believing that all Yemenis have a right to have life-saving assistance until peace is restored in the country.

2 ELECTED MEMBERS

2.1 Kingdom of Belgium

The Kingdom of Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy, one of the founders of the UN, and has always been present on very important matters concerning the peace and security situation throughout the world (PERMANENT MISSION OF BELGIUM TO THE UN, 2020). Within the Security Council, its representatives aim to line up with the UN charter, acting upon all international communities. Remaining truthful to resolve the conflicts through dialogue under their motto: “Building consensus, acting for peace” (BELGIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2019).

Since the outbreak of Yemen’s civil war, Belgium has donated over 25 billion euros of humanitarian aid, in a response to requests from the United Nations, to help contain damages and to prevent even more human suffering. The funds were mostly sent to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). An urge to end all armed conflicts was made in 2018 by Belgium’s Development Cooperation Minister, at that time, Alexander de Croo (SCHNEIDER, 2018).

Belgium stresses that the conflict needs special attention, and aims to discuss the regional situation, regarding the fight against terrorism, famine and the growing diseases given its unhygienic surroundings. By acknowledging this, the Kingdom endorses the efforts of the special Envoy of the UN Secretary-general in Yemen and claims to all parties and countries involved in the conflict to engage and settle the current situation (BELGIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2020).

Moreover, Belgium fully supports the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Law since 1952, by respecting its pillars of neutrality, independence and impartiality. It is important to say that Belgium belongs to the ICRC’s Donor Support Group, a special organization for major donors in the institution, and has been playing an active role committing to activities and projects since its establishment in the country (BELGIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2020).

With the support of the United Nations, the Belgian Interministerial Commission for Humanitarian Law (ICHL) was created in 1987, and it plays a “key role” on the accountability of the International Humanitarian Law, addressing its implementation by encouraging other States

and their National Societies to work together aiming to disseminate these rules into domestic law and promote compliance with them. On this matter, the Kingdom of Belgium has participated in numerous peacekeeping operations to implement and develop the Law of War (CASIER; JANSSENS, 2015).

The Kingdom of Belgium addressed the situation of the pandemic in Yemen in June 2020, stating that “Yemen remains both the world’s largest crisis and its largest humanitarian response. Millions of people depend on this response to survive, and we must do everything we can to ensure that help reaches all those who need it in accordance with humanitarian principles” (BELGIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2021)

Thus, as a firm believer of the principles and application of International Humanitarian Law, Belgium has been supporting numerous organizations that effectively provide humanitarian assistance to Yemen and those in need, such as the OCHA’s Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) and decided to increase the amount donated to the Yemen Humanitarian Fund aiming to alleviate the situation of the civilians and to promote a ceasefire (BELGIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2021).

2.3 Federal Republic of Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany holds a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for the term of 2019/2020. This is the sixth time that the reunified Germany is part of the UNSC and the current expectations about this term are that Germany will be close to its traditional allies, especially because of the recent campaign for a permanent seat at the Council (E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, 2019).

Germany has been, throughout the years, a very important member of the international community, and always initiates debates about its political role (E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, 2019). For example, Germany has historically supported and helped create resolutions on humanitarian aid and international humanitarian law, like shown in Resolution 1034, that said “that all those who commit violations of international humanitarian law will be held individually responsible in respect of such acts” (UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 1995, p. 2).

As International Humanitarian Law results in principles and rules for parties involved in armed conflict, over the past decades, its implementation in Germany has increased and started with the adoption of the first Geneva Convention, passed over the Hague Conventions and continued with others like the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their destruction; the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, 2019).

Regarding German diplomatic relations with Yemen, Germany has been able to establish good relations with the Yemeni government since the 1960's (FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, 2019). Understanding Yemen's current situation as extremely serious, Germany became a partner country and developed a cooperation programme to help Yemen survive its humanitarian crisis. About this matter, according to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019), there is no German personnel on Yemeni ground at the current moment, but the Country supports international and non-governmental organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the

World Food Programme (WFP) on Yemen's grounds.

The German government also stated that:

The purpose of Germany's activities is to stabilise the living conditions of Yemen's people and to help those public institutions that are still operating to continue to provide basic services (water supply, health, education). For example, Germany is assisting local water utilities in assessing damage, drafting emergency plans and procuring urgently needed spare parts. Since the beginning of the conflict, the activities have helped to provide better access to water supply and sanitation for more than two million people (FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2019).

Besides that, the fund is also being used to repair water supplies and sanitation systems, school feeding programmes, improved health care and assistance for needy families and represent the German effort to support Yemen in this crisis (FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2019).

On the whole, the German government also announced that it would immediately stop approving arms exports to any country participating in the Yemeni conflict, which also included Saudi Arabia, a major buyer of German weapons. On funding, Germany has fulfilled its commitments and is the third largest donor regarding Yemen, defending that the other countries must comply with their commitments (DEUTSCHE WELLE, 2018).

Regarding the situation in Yemen during the Covid-19 pandemic, the German position is that it is unacceptable that there are bureaucratic rules creating obstacles in work of the humanitarian organizations, especially with all the violence and bombings in Yemen are still ongoing (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

The representative Christoph Heusgen expressed the concerns of his country on UNSC Meeting of November 2020, as resumed below:

He spoke in his national capacity to stress deep disappointment that parties have not agreed on a ceasefire or signed the Joint Declaration. Indeed, he denounced the lack of food and medicine in Yemen and said people do not know how they will survive each day, citing the increases in Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and coalition air strikes on Sana'a. Further, the United Nations humanitarian response is highly underfunded and he called on countries in the region to pledge and disburse funding as soon as possible (UN, 2020).

Germany advocates that all parties in conflict should immediately stop hostilities, and return to the negotiating to be able to agree into a nationwide ceasefire, to establish a limit to the spread of Covid-19 and allow the entry of aid workers, medicine and medical supplies into Yemen (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

2.4 Republic of Indonesia

Indonesia has one of the largest Muslim-majority population in the world. The archipelago has struggled with its independence after the Dutch colonization process since the 17th century. Later, the territory was occupied by Japan in the 1940s and only reached its independence in 1949, however, its first-ever presidential elections as a democracy did not happen until 2004. Nowadays, Indonesia joined the Group of Twenty (G20)⁵ in the early 2000s as an official member and is considered one of the most promising emerging economies by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION, 2008; MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE, 2019; CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY; 2020).

The International Committee of the Red Cross was established in Indonesia in 1979. Its legal system is constructed on a dual approach of the International Law⁶. The ICRC works closely with its regional humanitarian organization, the Indonesian Red Cross Society, aiming to protect civilians against hostilities and to spread the concept and strengthening of International Humanitarian Law. In 2006, the ICRC acted upon capacitation missions and by providing aid supplies and, in 2013, it promoted International Law classes in Muslim schools to share its fundamental principles and pillars (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2006; INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2013).

Moreover, both Indonesia's economic and cultural ties with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region transcend centuries through mutually beneficial connections, such as intellectual exchanges, commerce and migrant labor programs (MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE, 2019). Yemen and Indonesia have many religious correlations due to the fact that both share the Muslim tradition through their histories, more specifically the Sunni Muslim denomination. Also, another common aspect it is their engagement on the Organization of Islamic Corporation (OIC)⁷. Recently, the country was asked to play a more active role on the matter, since Indonesia did not join the Saudi-led coalition against terrorism in 2015 (REVOLVY; OIC, 2020).

⁵ An international forum for the governments and central bank governors, composed by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union (INVESTOPEDIA, 2019).

⁶ Any endorsement that concerns IHL made by the government is ratified in its national law as well (ICRC, 2006).

⁷ The institution plays an important role on spreading a wider perception of the Muslim world (OIC, 2019).

Lately, Indonesia has been looking for investment opportunities in the Yemeni region. The Indonesian ambassador stressed their interest in different areas such as scholarships programs and small business training. However, many of these actions could not be fulfilled due to Yemen's instability (INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY WATCH, 2020).

In 2019, the Indonesian delegate to the UNSC stressed to the Council that all parties alongside with the UN must take action, particularly to the humanitarian situation, by keeping on track reports by the Special Envoy in Yemen to ensure the accountability of past resolutions (UNITED NATIONS, 2019).

As a member of the United Nations Security Council, Indonesia's delegation has as its priority the assurance of world peace through dialogue and consequently peaceful resolutions, to promote partnerships between countries and regions, to increase the participation of women in the appeasement and security strategies. Thus, deeply encouraging all parties to combat terrorism, authoritarianism, radicalism and to increase the influence of their sovereignty in the decision-making process as it takes wider proportions such as the UNSC (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, 2019).

Furthermore, the Indonesian representative to the UN stated that a political solution is deeply needed in Yemen, stressing that the threat of the pandemic to the humanitarian scenario can be the worsening cause of the actual humanitarian condition. The representative also stressed the concern over the - necessary - restrictions, and how it compelled more people into displacement, requiring even more assistance from those nations who have the capacity to help (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

2.6 Republic of South Africa

South Africa was once known as the Union of South Africa. In the beginning of 1910, the Afrikaners and the British ruled together. In 1948, when the National party had the power, a policy of “apartheid”, the racial segregation which favored the white minority, was instituted. The African National Congress (ANC) was responsible to lead the opposition to apartheid and as a result of that, many ANC’s leaders, as Nelson Mandela, were persecuted and spent many years in prison. Many internal protests and rejections by western countries drove the collapse of the regime. In 1994, the first multiracial elections happened. Since then, South Africa is attempting to deal with the inequality created by the apartheid in wealth, housing, education, health care, etc (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2020).

In 2018, there was the 18th regional IHL seminar co-hosted by the department of international relations of South Africa and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Many African government representatives discussed the current status of implementation and compliance with international humanitarian law in the region and the concern to contribute to the development of IHL at the global level. Moreover, the states reaffirmed their commitment to the already existing international laws and pledged to identify new approaches that could be appropriate to accomplish the full implementation of these rules (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2018).

The Republic of South Africa is considered the most developed country in the African continent. The state is very committed to the maintenance of the peace and to avoid conflicts. South Africa ratified numerous treaties relating to IHL, as the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, in 1949; the Hague Convention (III) on the Opening of Hostilities, in 1907; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, in 1948; the Arms Trade Treaty, in 2013, and many others (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

On the other hand, the state is directly involved in the Yemen conflict. There are evidences that shows that South African military equipment is being used by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the Union of Arab Emirates (UAE) represent at least a third of South Africa’s arms exports. As a signatory of the Arms Trade Treaty, South Africa must confirm that the conventional arms are not capable of committing serious violations of international human rights

and humanitarian law. However, the country has continued to authorize the sale of the weapons used in Yemen, despite accusations of serious violations of IHL (ADAM, 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to say that, recently, South Africa remained silent about human rights issues when it abstained from voting on a resolution at United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that termed an extension of the mandate of an international investigation regarding human rights violation in Yemen. This event is part of a South African policy in the UN to abstain on certain subjects that are not inside the African continent and stay not aligned to any geopolitical bloc. In the Yemeni case, it is clear that the Republic of South Africa does not want to risk its arms trades with Saudi Arabia and the Union of Arab States (UAE) (ADAM, 2018).

Hence, the presence of South Africa in UNHRC and in UNSC is raising questions by other countries as it is hesitating in taking positions on global importance matters. In the past years, South Africa's international policy seems to have shifted. During the Mandela era, the state was known as a solid human rights defender, and now it took a position focused on economic development through foreign investments. It seems that South Africa is abdicating its essence of value of human rights (ADAM, 2018).

In the meantime, recent news points that South Africa is blocking arms sales to Saudi Arabia and to the UAE in an inspections dispute. It centers on a clause in exporting documents that call for foreign customers to pledge not to transfer arms to third parties and to permit South African officials to inspect their facilities to be certified of the compliance. The South African director for conventional arms control in the defense ministry said that "authorities considered criteria including human rights, regional conflict, risk of diversion, United Nations Security Council resolutions and national interest when evaluating application for export permits" (ALJAZEERA, 2019). Nonetheless, some states refused to sign the document claiming a violation to their sovereignty (REUTERS, 2019).

In May 2020, the permanent representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila, made a statement regarding the situation in Yemen. It was reaffirmed that Yemen is not well-equipped to handle the COVID-19 outbreak due to only half of health facilities currently working. It was also remembered the danger of the virus reaching the north of the country, because it is there that the most vulnerable groups are located. South Africa welcomed the measures taken by the government and the Houthis to stop the spreading of coronavirus and highlighted the ability of both sites to work together towards a common goal. It was reminded that the parties to the

conflict that they should take all the necessary measures to respect their commitment to the Geneva Conventions (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & COOPERATION, 2021).

2.7 Socialist Republic of Vietnam

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the easternmost country in Southeast Asian, with a socialist-oriented market economy. Its foreign policy follows a line of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development. Vietnam always acts as a reliable partner of all countries in the international community, actively taking part in international and regional cooperation processes (EMBASSY OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 2020).

It is important to say that Vietnam joined the Geneva Conventions on International Humanitarian Law in 1957, an act that was considered as a historic milestone and a testament to the respect for and promotion of the enforcement of the International Humanitarian Law in particular and international law. Furthermore, it has highlighted all the humanitarian and tolerant traditions of the Vietnamese people (NHÂN DAN, 2019).

The Vietnam actively supports and has a leading role in the efforts to strengthen and further develop International Humanitarian Law, especially since:

As a country that has experienced many wars, Vietnam fully understands the devastating legacy of wars and knows that wars do not only cause losses to people and the country during wartime but also leave behind incomprehensible losses for the following generations (PEOPLE'S ARMY NEWSPAPER, 2017)

It must be said that several new rules of IHL were adopted during and after the Vietnam War, addressing a number of issues that arose during that conflict. Some of these problems were directly addressed by the Countries to develop new rules of IHL, as example of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to Protocol III (OKIMOTO, 2019).

Today, the Vietnamese government defends the viewpoint of promoting international integration, and this is the reason why the country is an active member of several international conventions and treaties. Vietnam plays an increasing role in international forums, including those of ensuring human rights, especially to integrate into the world and participate in international conventions. This is an opportunity for the country to share and learn more experiences in better ensuring human rights, with focus on helping Vietnamese people to enjoy more fundamental rights (NHÂN DAN, 2019).

Regarding the situation in Yemen, at the 18 February 2020 UNSC meeting of the Security Council, the Vietnamese representative expressed their concerns about the complicated humanitarian situation in Yemen, which has significantly impacted the region's peace, stability

and security. Also, Vietnam is very supportive of the Stockholm and the Riyadh Agreements as they would help contribute to deescalation of the conflicts in the country (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

The Vietnam position stands that Yemeni-led political settlement is the only way to foster stability in Yemen, always highlighting the Council's vital role in supporting the peace process. Also, it must put the interests and well-being of all Yemeni citizens first (UNITED NATIONS, 2020)

The representative Dang Dinh Quy expressed the concerns of his country on the 18 February 2020 UNSC Meeting, as resumed below:

He urged the parties to fulfil their obligations under international law and facilitate the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations. He went on to commend the humanitarian flights that brought Yemeni patients from Sana'a to Jordan, saying that, despite the current fragile situation, a peaceful political settlement of the conflict is achievable. Viet Nam calls upon the parties to implement the Stockholm and Riyadh accords, he added (UNITED NATIONS, 2020)

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam believes that the focus must be in overcoming the humanitarian challenges. In order to do that, it is necessary to support all countries through the peace process and its efforts (UNITED NATIONS, 2020).

3 INVITED MEMBERS

3.1 International Committee of The Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross comes up after the First Geneva Convention. In 1863, the “Committee of Five”, composed by Henry Dunant and four other members of the Geneva Public Welfare Society created the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded, which became the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1876, translating Dunant’s ideas of a politically neutral body for the care of the wounded soldiers and civilians (SOLIS, 2010).

The Red Cross is known as the guardian of IHL since its foundation, as their basic pillars are impartiality in the provision of medical care and the principle of the neutrality of medical action (BUGNION, 2012). It is important to say that the ICRC is a private actor. The committee uses its resources entirely in the mission of relieving the pain and the suffering of those in need or in a state of vulnerability. Bearing this in mind, this committee needs permission of the countries involved to act. Thus the ICRC cannot interfere if a State declines its help (FORSYTHE, 1990).

The ICRC can also act as an intermediary between the parties involved in a conflict. Through its Central Tracing Agency, the committee is allowed to visit and interview prisoners of war or interned civilians and transmit information to the other party, helping families to be informed. The organ has the role to promote and disseminate humanitarian law. Its crew has given various courses for security forces, armed personnel and civilians in general. Another role of the ICRC is the expansion of International Humanitarian Law by studies and its involvement in new IHL treaties (LAVOYER; MARESCA, 1999).

Regarding the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the International Committee of the Red Cross team on the ground is working incessantly to provide food, clean water and other ordinary essential items for the affected population. The crew is also working hard to improve living conditions in Yemeni prisons and to support structures. The ICRC had provided relief aid to more than 500 thousands Yemenis affected by the conflict - and the committee also helped more than 2 million people to access clean water (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

Furthermore, the ICRC has been active in aiding people in several conflicts recently. In 1994, during the Rwandan genocide, the committee decided to stay in the country while all other international institutions and organizations were leaving. The action of the Committee of the Red Cross was called “a drop of Humanity in an ocean of horror” by Philippe Gaillard, head of ICRC’s delegation in Rwanda, as around 80 thousand people were saved (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2019).

Another example of the action of the Red Cross is the association with The Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in helping the victims of conflicts and natural disasters. The crew provides emergency assistance to civilians, mostly children and women, who have been affected by a drastic drought. This water problem is impacting agriculture causing food insecurity and water scarcity, which make Somalia experiences one of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world presently. Also, the current conflict in the state is one of the oldest civil war in Africa. The entire country is dangerous and unstable. The ICRC is working hard to deliver emergency food and household material to many displaced persons (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

The ICRC’s job during the Covid-19 pandemic is hampered as Yemen’s health system is working by half. Their main priority is to keep helping people affected by the conflict while following all the pandemic preventive protocols. The Committee is working alongside with the Yemen Red Crescent to spread awareness of the danger of the virus (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

The International Committee of the Red Cross and Yemen Red Crescent are leading the job to improve the conditions of people in quarantine through: upgrading access to medicines and medical equipment by donation of material. They are also donating hygiene items improving general living conditions of the Yemeni people (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

The ICRC is also working in isolation centers, where people with severe covid symptoms are staying, in places of detention and in healthcare facilities. Their work includes providing donation of food, hygiene items, medicines and medical equipment and further in organizing healthcare workshops and awareness sessions of Covid-19 (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 2020).

3.2 Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran lives under a theocratic government, in which most policies are based on Islamic religious ideologies. The Iranian political structure includes the supreme leader, the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, the Assembly of Experts, the Expediency Discernment Council, and the City and Village Councils of Iran (WORLD ATLAS, 2019). Where the most important politician is the Supreme Leader, in charge of many aspects of political and civil life in Iran, among those, are: the power to decide on Iran's domestic and foreign policies, control over Iran's intelligence and security operations, and the authority to declare war. The Supreme Leader also has power over the state radio and television networks, as well as the choosing of the twelve members of the Council of Guardians, which is the body in charge of the Parliament's activities and determines which candidates are qualified to run for public office (OUR POLITICS, 2016).

Since 1979, Iran has had only two supreme leaders to have held the office, the current Supreme Leader is Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The president is the second most important official, and follows a mandate similar to occidental countries, though the constitution subordinates the entire executive branch to the Supreme Leader. The president is responsible primarily for setting the country's economic and social policies and plays the role of representing Iran internationally (OUR POLITICS, 2016).

Iran is a great oil producer, member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), besides petroleum, Iran possesses other natural resources, such as natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc and sulphur. The country occupies an important role in the international economy, given its natural capacities (ORGANIZATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES, 2020).

Ever since the tension built in the hostage crisis in 1979, Iran and the US have been involved in many conflicts over the years. It was after an attack on the USS Stark involving Iraq missiles in 1987, that there was a revision to the U.S. rules of engagement, allowing U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf to assume more protective measures. Then, in 1988, an American warship USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air flight, killing 290 people on board - most of which were Iranian pilgrims on their way to Mecca. The passenger plane was in Iranian territory and the United States said that the Airbus A300 was mistaken for a fighter jet (BRITANNICA, 2020).

It was only in 2013, after thirty years of aggression, that the moderate president Hassan Rouhani and US President Barack Obama spoke on the phone. They were able to reach agreements towards nuclear and economic matters. Iran agreed to a long-term deal on its nuclear programme along with the P5+1 (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany). Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow in international inspectors in return for the relief of economic sanctions (BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY, 2020).

The good relations didn't last long, for in 2018, the now President of the United States, Donald Trump, abandoned the deal and reinstated economic sanctions against Iran, sinking the country's economy. The aggression became more active and violent, reaching the point where explosions hit six oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, and the US government accused Iran. In 2019, Iran broke the deal related to its nuclear power (BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY, 2020).

Besides the tensions with the United States, Iran had to deal with a series of domestic and political problems. Given the presence of extremist groups and the disputes over the power, the right to protest and free speech is a delicate matter in the country. In December 2017, the anti-government protests emerged, in the most populous cities, thousands of people protested, and about 4,900 were arrested and at least 21 were killed, and the authorities refused to give out information on those arrested or dead in custody. In April 2018, the prosecutor of the second branch of Tehran's Culture and Media Court ordered all internet service providers to block access to Telegram, Facebook and Twitter, along with hundreds of other websites (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2020).

The society face several human rights offenses and the death penalty is used for acts such as "insulting the prophet," "apostasy," same-sex relations, adultery, and certain non-violent drug-related offenses. The UN criticized Tehran's government, for in 2019 at least two minors were killed in the capital, although in 2013, changes to legislation were made to make it harder for child offenders to be executed in Iran. Even though it still has a lot to grow, the country has been making changes towards a more tolerable society (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2020).

On the 60th anniversary of the Geneva convention, the head of the ICRC mission in Iran, Peter Stocker, said that the Iran signed the Geneva Conventions and have been trying to bring the internal laws in terms with the protocols and with customary international law, but that the country is not a party to the additional protocols. The Human Rights Council, on March 23,

2016, adopted the resolution A/HRC/RES/31/19 discussing the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the report, the Council demonstrates its concern about the lack of access permitted to the Special Rapporteur to travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran (ICRC.ORG, 2020).

Iran is involved in conflicts with its neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the history involving the three countries is complex. With political and religious important roles, Yemen and Iran have had cordial relations since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Ties between the two states, however, have been damaged in recent years by the Islamic Republic's support for Shi'a rebels engaged in armed conflict with Yemeni government forces, and Iran has been accused of providing funding and weapons to the Houthi. (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT, 2020).

Tensions continued, and, on December 27, 2019, an Iranian-backed militia group in Iraq, attacked a military base north of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk, and killed an American contractor, wounding several other US citizens and Iraqis. Although the militia denies having any involvement in the attack. As a response, Trump attacked five sites controlled by the militia in Iraq and Syria, killing 25 members and wounding more than 50 others. The people revolted, marching towards an American embassy in Iraq. In order to send a stronger message, the American president authorized the death of Qassem Soleimani, the Quds Force⁸ commander (VOX.COM, 2020).

Iran supports the rebel movement Houthi, present in Yemen, which is part of the Shia community in the country. The group is opposed to the Yemeni government, and in 2015, helped bring down Yemen's president and regional U.S. ally, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The UN doesn't recognize the legitimacy of Houthi authorities openly expressing support to the government (WASHINGTON POST, 2019).

It was in late February 2020 that the Iranian government confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the country, in that year, The country registered over 1.1 million infected people distributed in three waves and 54,000 were killed. Two major lockdowns were imposed in March and November. The government has accused the U.S. administration of trying to block the purchase of vaccines through the World Health Organization (WHO). The pandemic contributed to the number of dead in the country, already high from the conflicts. The economy was also

⁸ Unit in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) specialized in unconventional warfare and military intelligence operations (NBC NEWS, 2020).

affected, it shut borders and hugely affected non-oil exports that were on the rise in absence of significant oil exports. The economy was already in a bad shape, due the U.S. sanctions, the inflation and high unemployment continues to hurt average Iranians whose quality of life has significantly deteriorated in the past three years. It was also in 2020 that accusations of abuses against the human rights were made, and the hashtag #DoNotExecute was created. Cases of hanging as in the case of champion wrestler Navid Afkari, were publicly known. While the authorities said that he was being punished for stabbing a man, critics of the regime say that it was because he was participating in the 2018 protests (AL JAZEERA, 2020).

3.3 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula, and it is a leading producer of oil and natural gas (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2020). Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina. Also, the country is an absolute monarchy, ruled by the House of Saud (CIA, 2020).

Regarding the consolidation of the International Humanitarian Laws, it is seen that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1963 and their additional Protocols in 1987 and 2001. The Kingdom is committed to the principles of the United Nations and to support and promote human rights, peace and global stability, fight terrorism and support the prosperity and development of all people (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2016).

Recently, it must be said that Saudi Arabia has been accused of several violations on IHL, especially regarding their situation in Yemen. The Human Rights Watch Report (2019) accused that the Saudi-led military coalition bombing Houthi rebels in Yemen carried out 87 unlawful attacks resulting in nearly 1,000 civilian deaths. The Saudi-led coalition has denied war crime allegations, emphasizing that they are trying to support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yemen (AL JAZEERA, 2018).

However, the position of Saudi Arabia on the effectiveness and guarantee of international humanitarian law is considered controversial worldwide. In this sense, the government defends that:

We underscore the Joint Forces Command's commitment to applying the highest standards of targeting and implementing the customary International Humanitarian Law in its military operations. We will take all necessary procedures pertaining to incidents, god forbid, to achieve the highest levels of accountability and transparency (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2019).

Regarding the situation in Yemen, Saudi Arabia started to get severely involved when it established a coalition⁹ in March 2015, and launched a military operation aimed at restoring the rule of Yemen's internationally recognized President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The Sunni Muslim allies joined forces regarding the situation of Yemen expecting to contain Iran and Islamist movements, whom they see as a threat to their rule (SHARP, 2017), making this

⁹ The coalition is composed of Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Senegal. The Saudi-led coalition also has the support of some local Yemeni forces to carry out their operations. (SHARP, 2017)

coalition be seen as a form of consolidation of Saudi Arabia's leadership over the Arab states (LAUB, 2015).

Saudi Arabia and its allies entered the war in Yemen, citing UNSC resolutions 2140 and 2216 as the reason for their intervention. These resolutions addressed the Council's support for Hadi's government, asking all parties to reject violence and demands that Houthi forces withdraw from all areas seized during the latest conflict, relinquish arms and cease all violent actions (HRW, 2019). The Saudis' position stands that Houthi control over any part of Yemen means a hostile neighbor close to its borders (LAUB, 2015). Further, it must be emphasized that this coalition happened after the formation of an alliance by Iran and the Houthi movement (SHARP, 2017), because the Saudi government feared the Shia Iran would use it to build influence along its border (KALIN; GHANTOUS, 2019).

Also, Saudi Arabia defends that the humanitarian situation in Yemen requires the commitment of the international community to deal with this situation. The country remains deeply concerned about Iranian-backed Houthi militia that continues to impede the delivery of humanitarian aid, recruiting and placing children on the front lines of the conflict (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2019).

In addition to that, it is valid to acknowledge that the coalition started, in 2018, a program that commits billions of dollars in aid and support for the humanitarian response to the conflict in Yemen, called the new Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO). It aimed to improve the Yemeni humanitarian situation with immediate aid while simultaneously building capacity for long-term improvement of the country. The plan focuses on addressing the main needs of Yemenis in all regions (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2018).

The Saudi-led coalition can be resumed as:

The Saudi-led Coalition, in partnership with UN agencies, continues to make the welfare of the Yemeni people its top priority in its efforts to restore peace and stability to Yemen. The Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations reinforce the Coalition's commitment to bringing needed food, medicine, humanitarian assistance and fuel supplies to the people of Yemen in all regions (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2018).

At last, the Coalition defends that a severe set of rules should always be imposed in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights. In order to prevent civilian losses during the conflict, it is provided advance warning of strikes, as well as the forces are trained according to international law. The Arab coalition defends that the military involvement

in Yemen is necessary, especially because of the increase of the Houthi aggression (SAUDI EMBASSY, 2016).

In April, during the COVID-19 Outbreak, the kingdom and its allies announced an unilateral cease-fire motivated by the pandemic. The officials believe that this cease-fire could be the first movement to create a great environment for peace talks. Although, the country reserved the right to react in case a Houthi attack happens in Saudi territory. Also, the defense minister of Saudi Arabia announced that the kingdom would donate to the UN 500 million dollars for humanitarian work in Yemen and 25 million dollars to fight the coronavirus (THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2020).

3.4 League of Arab States

The Arab League or League of Arab States, was created in Cairo on 22 March 1945 with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Yemen became a member on 5 May 1945. All the seven members were part of the Ottoman Empire and became independent after the defeat of Turkey during World War I. The idea was to strengthen the relations between the members and to further the joint interests of all Arab nations. The league played an important role in the creation of The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) on June 2nd, 1964, and in 1976 PLO was accepted in the Arab League, showing its support to the creation of the State of Palestine (ARAB.ORG, 2020).

The League operates respecting and recognizing the sovereignty of each government. The governance of the Arab League has been based on the duality of supranational institutions and the sovereignty of the member states. The influence of external powers that might oppose Arab unity can be seen as obstacles towards a deeper integration of the League. It also promotes a solidary relation among the states-members, in order to defend themselves and each other from external threats, being arbitrary in certain internal conflicts, and opposing any use of force. The principles of the League are collaboration, transparency, innovation and leadership, and nowadays, 22 countries are members (ARAB.ORG. 2020).

In its charter, the Arab League demonstrates the importance of the development of human rights in the Arab societies. Nevertheless, the league does not have a strong and consistent strategy for its implementation, and its organization still needs to deal with a lot of obstacles involving the current religious laws in many Arab countries. Civil society organizations have, for example, engaged very closely with the process of revising the Arab Charter on Human Rights. They have also worked with the League on the Darfur and Syria crisis (OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS, 2020).

The League possesses The Permanent Human Rights Commission, which meets twice a year, and it is made up of one representative from each member state, who sits on the Committee as a political representative, not as an independent expert in human rights. Therefore, the representatives tend to be political appointees rather than human rights experts. Facing the Committee, all states have equal rights. One of the Committee's characteristics is to promote the

implementation of human rights treaties and recommendations (UN HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, 2020).

Since 2013, the ICRC and the Arab League have been joining efforts to build a community in accordance with the IHL, therefore, the organization needs to work through a series of political and cultural obstacles inside the Arab States. The eighth report on the implementation of international humanitarian law at the level of Arab States, was written by the ICRC in cooperation with the Arab League. It affirms that the League is willing to implement national IHL committees in those States that still doesn't possess one, as well as legislative adaptations (EIGHTH PERIODIC REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IHL AT THE LEVEL OF ARAB STATES, 2019).

Yemen is an example of a country where the Arab League has difficulties implementing its ideas, the organization is openly in favor of the Yemeni government and against the Houthi. In 2018, the Secretary General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit affirmed that the Houthi do not seek a peaceful solution for the crisis in Yemen. The Secretary-General defends the Saudi supported government and its legitimacy. He also condemned an Iranian intervention and said that the security in Yemen is key to the Arab national security system (AA.COM, 2020).

On November 21, 2019, Iran handed the Yemeni embassy to the Houthi militia, and the action was condemned by the Arab League. The Secretary-General accused Yemen of violating the UNSC Resolution 2216, which among other affirmations, demands the Houthi to cease all actions that are exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen. The Secretary-General pointed out that Iran was putting the neighboring countries in danger with its actions (ARAB NEWS, 2020).

Preliminary estimates of ESCWA suggest that the region could lose at least 1.7 million jobs in 2020. The organization registered that every country in the Arab League has COVID-19 cases, to deal with the economic spiral, several Arab countries have already put in place mitigation measures. For example, United Arab Emirates announced a US\$27 billion stimulus plan to help boost the economy, including subsidies to water and electricity for citizens and commercial and industrial activities. Qatar announced a similar package of US\$23 billion to support and provide financial and economic incentives to the private sector (UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, 2020).

3.5 Republic of Yemen

Yemen lives through one of the most severe humanitarian crisis. The armed conflict in Yemen has killed 6,872 and injured 10,768 civilians in 2018, the majority of which are casualties of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes (OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS' HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, 2020). As a consequence, the civilians have to be displaced, are suffering from the lack of food and are victims of various diseases. Besides it, the parties in the conflict have been impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2020).

The current situation in Yemen is constituted of oppression and violence, especially as the president Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi was forced to flee into exile before attempting to reestablish the government with regional military support in the southern city of Aden. The country was, therefore, left under the control of the Houthi rebel movement and allied forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Without an official or stronger power figure, various militias and extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda, that held territory in Yemen, dispute over power and control, aggravating the number of violence and, thus, instituting the civil war going on in the country (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2020).

Not only crimes against international humanitarian laws, but also violations of the laws of war are seen in Yemen (FREEDOM HOUSE, 2020). Although the country still faces a major health crisis and many humanitarian aids are being kept from reaching the population, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that with the help of the Arab League, they are acting in Yemen, seeking to provide those in need with medical care. The organization is not enough to give support that the country needs (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2020).

By declarations dated February 10 of 1977, and received by the Swiss Government on 25 May 1977, the Popular Democratic Republic of Yemen adhered to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the protection of war victims. The country ratified the 1979 International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, on 14 of July, 2000 (UN Treaties Collection, 2020). Despite treaties and efforts to keep up with the international humanitarian law, Yemen still has a lot of work to do in the matters of a free society.

Given the importance that the groups inside the conflict see in keeping the power, the free speech is a delicate matter in Yemen. In this sense, the Human Rights Watch documented seven

incidents involving attacks on journalists and the media between December 31, 2014, and March 7, 2015. Both the Hadi government and the Houthi rebels invested in their media operations (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2020).

The Arab League is an active supporter of the government, opposed to the actions of the Houthi rebel movement and the intervention of Iran in Yemen, the League also tries to find common ground in the conflict, in order to reach peace for the Yemeni and its neighbors. The UN has expressed its support to the government of Yemen, defending its sovereignty and having many documents written by the UN Security Council according to the situation in Yemen, for example, the resolutions S/RES/2481 and S/RES/2505 discuss the issues faced by the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa. In the reports, the parties reached agreements for an immediate ceasefire in all the places mentioned above, however the arrangements are not being respected in its entirety (UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 2018).

The country was already facing the worst humanitarian crisis, after the beginning of the pandemic, the number of dead only rose. The first attack against the virus is with sanitation and proper health care, but the Yemeni are forced to deal with it during a civil war. The impact on the country was great, given the internally displaced, the injured and those facing malnutrition. The real numbers are not clear, for that many dies without ever knowing the cause, few are the ones that can make the trip to COVID-19 centers or government-controlled hospitals. The government encourages the people to get tested and vaccinated, but the other adversities ongoing in the country seem to take the urgency from that situation (BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY NEWS, 2020). The health care system collapsed, it is common to see doctors and nurses without masks and gloves, basic safety equipment. Although the government declared over 900 cases, the real number is unknown, given the small number of tested people.

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