Houthi movement

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# Houthi movement

* *They also claim to support a more democratic non-sectarian republic in Yemen.*
* *Houthis have gained control of most of the northern part of Yemen's territory and since 2015 have been resisting the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen that claims to seek to restore the internationally recognized Yemeni government to power.*

The Houthi movement (/ˈhuːθi/; Arabic: الحوثيون‎ al-Ḥūthiyyūn [ˈħuːθij.juːn]), officially called Ansar Allah (anṣār allāh أنصار الله "Supporters of God"), is an Islamic religious-political-armed movement that emerged from Sa'dah in northern Yemen in the 1990s. They are of the Zaidi sect, though the movement reportedly also includes Sunnis.

Under the leadership of Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, the group emerged as a Zaydi opposition to former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, whom they charged with massive financial corruption and criticized for being backed by Saudi Arabia and the United States at the expense of the Yemeni people and Yemen's sovereignty. Resisting Saleh's order for his arrest, Hussein was killed in Sa'dah in 2004 along with a number of his guards by the Yemeni army, sparking the Houthi insurgency in Yemen. Since then, except for a short intervening period, the movement has been led by his brother Abdul-Malik al-Houthi.

The Houthi movement attracts its Zaidi-Shia followers in Yemen by promoting regional political-religious issues in its media, including the overarching US-Israeli conspiracy and Arab "collusion". In 2003, the Houthis' slogan "God is great, death to the US, death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam", became the group's trademark. Houthi officials, however, have rejected the literal interpretation of the slogan.

The movement's expressed goals include combating economic underdevelopment and political marginalization in Yemen while seeking greater autonomy for Houthi-majority regions of the country. They also claim to support a more democratic non-sectarian republic in Yemen. The Houthis have made fighting corruption the centerpiece of their political program.

The Houthis took part in the 2011 Yemeni Revolution by participating in street protests and by coordinating with other opposition groups. They joined the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen as part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative to broker peace following the unrest. However, the Houthis would later reject the November 2011 GCC deal's provisions stipulating formation of six federal regions in Yemen, claiming that the deal did not fundamentally reform governance and that the proposed federalization "divided Yemen into poor and wealthy regions". Houthis also feared the deal was a blatant attempt to weaken them by dividing areas under their control between separate regions. In late 2014, Houthis repaired their relationship with the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, and with his help, they took control of the capital and much of the north.

In 2014–2015, Houthis took over the government in Sanaʽa with the help of the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, and announced the fall of the current government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. Houthis have gained control of most of the northern part of Yemen's territory and since 2015 have been resisting the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen that claims to seek to restore the internationally recognized Yemeni government to power. Additionally, the Islamic State militant group has attacked all of the conflict's major parties including Houthis, Saleh forces, the Yemeni government, and the Saudi Arabian-led coalition forces.

# History

* *According to a 2015 September report by Esquire magazine, the Houthis, once the outliers, are now one of the most stable and organised social and political movements in Yemen.*
* *During this prolonged conflict, the Yemeni army and air force was used to suppress the Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen.*
* *The power vacuum created by Yemen's uncertain transitional period has drawn more supporters to the Houthis.*

According to Ahmed Addaghashi, a professor at Sanaa University, the Houthis began as a moderate theological movement that preached tolerance and held a broad-minded view of all the Yemeni peoples. Their first organization, "the Believing Youth" (BY), was founded in 1992 in Saada Governorate:1008 by either Mohammed al-Houthi,:98 or his brother Hussein al-Houthi.

The Believing Youth established school clubs and summer camps:98 in order to "promote a Zaidi revival" in Saada. By 1994–1995, 15–20,000 students had attended BY summer camps. The religious material included lectures by Mohammed Hussein Fadhlallah (a Lebanese shia scholar) and Hassan Nasrallah (Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah Party).":99

The formation of the Houthi organisations have been described by Adam Baron of the European Council on Foreign Relations as a reaction to foreign intervention. Their views include shoring up Zaidi support against the perceived threat of Saudi-influenced ideologies in Yemen and a general condemnation of the former Yemeni government's alliance with the United States, which, along with complaints regarding the government's corruption and the marginalisation of much of the Houthis' home areas in Saada, constituted the group's key grievances.

Although Hussein al-Houthi, who was killed in 2004, had no official relation with Believing Youth, according to Zaid, he contributed to the radicalisation of some Zaydis after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. BY-affiliated youth adopted anti-American and anti-Jewish slogans which they chanted in the Saleh Mosque in Sanaʽa after Friday prayers.  
According to Zaid, the followers of Houthi's insistence on chanting the slogans attracted the authorities' attention, further increasing government worries over the extent of the al-Houthi movement's influence. "The security authorities thought that if today the Houthis chanted `Death to America', tomorrow they could be chanting `Death to the president [of Yemen]".  
800 BY supporters were arrested in Sanaʽa in 2004. President Ali Abdullah Saleh then invited Hussein al-Houthi to a meeting in Sanaʽa, but Hussein declined. On 18 June 2004 Saleh sent government forces to arrest Hussein. Hussein responded by launching an insurgency against the central government, but was killed on 10 September 2004. The insurgency continued intermittently until a ceasefire agreement was reached in 2010. During this prolonged conflict, the Yemeni army and air force was used to suppress the Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen. The Saudis joined these anti-Houthi campaigns, but the Houthis won against both Saleh and the Saudi army. According to the Brookings Institution, this particularly humiliated the Saudis, who spent tens of billions of dollars on their military.

Later, the Houthis participated in the 2011 Yemeni Revolution, as well as the ensuing National Dialogue Conference (NDC). However, they rejected the provisions of the November 2011 Gulf Cooperation Council deal on the ground that "it divide[d] Yemen into poor and wealthy regions" and also in response to assassination of their representative at NDC.

As the revolution went on, Houthis gained control of greater territory. By 9 November 2011, Houthis were said to be in control of two Yemeni governorates (Saada and Al Jawf) and close to taking over a third governorate (Hajjah), which would enable them to launch a direct assault on the Yemeni capital of Sanaʽa. In May 2012, it was reported that the Houthis controlled a majority of Saada, Al Jawf, and Hajjah governorates; they had also gained access to the Red Sea and started erecting barricades north of Sanaʽa in preparation for more conflict.

By 21 September 2014, Houthis were said to control parts of the Yemeni capital, Sanaʽa, including government buildings and a radio station. While Houthi control expanded to the rest of Sanaʽa, as well as other towns such as Rada', this control was strongly challenged by Al-Qaeda. It was believed by the Gulf States that the Houthis had accepted aid from Iran while Saudi Arabia was aiding their Yemeni rivals.

On 20 January 2015, Houthi rebels seized the presidential palace in the capital. President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was in the presidential palace during the takeover, but was not harmed. The movement officially took control of the Yemeni government on 6 February, dissolving parliament and declaring its Revolutionary Committee to be the acting authority in Yemen. On 20 March 2015, The al-Badr and al-Hashoosh mosques came under suicide attack during midday prayers, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant quickly claimed responsibility. The blasts killed 142 Houthi worshippers and wounded more than 351, making it the deadliest terrorist attack in Yemen's history.

In a televised speech on 22 March, Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi accused the US and Israel of supporting the terrorists attacks. He blamed regional Arab states for financing terrorist groups operating inside Yemen. On 27 March 2015, in response to perceived Houthi threats to Sunni factions in the region, Saudi Arabia along with Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan led a gulf coalition airstrike in Yemen. The military coalition included the United States which helped in planning of air strikes, as well as logistical and intelligence support.

According to a 2015 September report by Esquire magazine, the Houthis, once the outliers, are now one of the most stable and organised social and political movements in Yemen. The power vacuum created by Yemen's uncertain transitional period has drawn more supporters to the Houthis. Many of the formerly powerful parties, now disorganised with an unclear vision, have fallen out of favour with the public, making the Houthis — under their newly branded Ansar Allah name — all the more attractive.

Houthi spokesperson Mohamed Abdel Salam stated that his group had spotted messages between UAE and Saleh three months before his death. He told Al-Jazeera that there was communication between Saleh, UAE and a number of other countries such as Russia and Jordan through encrypted messages. The alliance between Saleh and the Houthi broke down in late 2017, with armed clashes occurring in Sanaʽa from 28 November.  
Saleh declared the split in a televised statement on 2 December, calling on his supporters to take back the country and expressed openness to a dialogue with the Saudi-led coalition. On 4 December 2017, Saleh's house in Sanaʽa was assaulted by fighters of the Houthi movement, according to residents. Saleh was killed by Houthis on 4 December.

# Membership and support

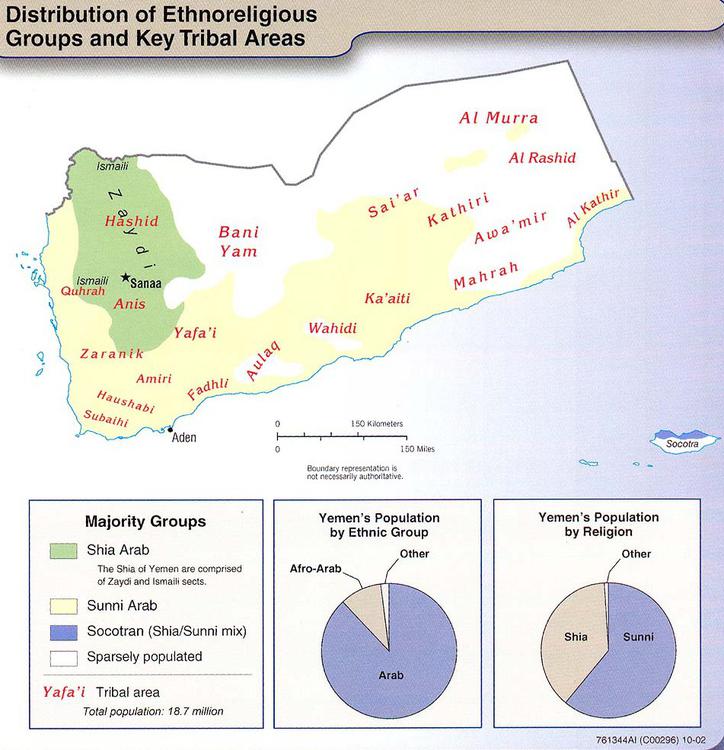
* *According to Houthi expert Ahmed Al-Bahri, by 2010, the Houthis had a total of 100,000–120,000 followers, including both armed fighters and unarmed loyalists.*
* *The movement was called by their opponents and foreign media "Houthis".*
* *In 2010, the Yemen Post claimed that they had over 100,000 fighters.*
* *The Houthis avoid assuming a singular tribal identity.*

There is a difference between the al-Houthi family:102 and the Houthi movement. The movement was called by their opponents and foreign media "Houthis". The name came from the surname of the leader of the movement Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi who died in 2004.[citation needed]

The Houthis avoid assuming a singular tribal identity. Instead, the group strategically draws support from tribes of the northern Bakil federation, rival to the Hashid federation which had been a traditional ally of the central government. The Houthis' lack of centralised command structure allows them to generate immense support, as Yemenis from diverse backgrounds have joined their cause.

Membership of the group had between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters as of 2005 and between 2,000 and 10,000 fighters as of 2009. In 2010, the Yemen Post claimed that they had over 100,000 fighters. According to Houthi expert Ahmed Al-Bahri, by 2010, the Houthis had a total of 100,000–120,000 followers, including both armed fighters and unarmed loyalists.

As of 2015, the group is reported to have managed to pick up swaths of new supporters outside their traditional demographics.  
  
On 5 February 2016, Iran's PressTV reported that Men of Hamdan, one of Yemen's most powerful tribes, rallied to the north of the capital, Sanaʽa, vowing to provide support in the form of potential mobilisation for the country's fighters resisting the Yemeni government. In a gathering held in the capital, hundreds of tribesmen from the southern parts pledged union against what they described as a U.S.-Israeli initiative targeting the country, which was being implemented by Saudi Arabia.

  
*Ethnoreligious groups in 2002. Zaidi Shia followers make up over 42% of Muslims in Yemen.*

# Ideology

* *The Zaydis ruled Yemen for 1,000 years up until 1962.*
* *Houthis belong to the Zaidi branch of Islam, a sect of Islam almost exclusively present in Yemen.*
* *During this time they ferociously defended their independence and fought off foreign powers (Egypt, the Ottomans) who controlled lower Yemen and tried to extend their rule to the north.*

Houthis belong to the Zaidi branch of Islam, a sect of Islam almost exclusively present in Yemen.

Zaydis make up about 25 percent of the population, Sunnis make up 75 percent, and there are also tiny minorities of Muslims who are members of other Shia sects — the Ismaili and Twelver communities. Al-Houthi Zaydis are estimated to make up about 30 percent of the shia population, according to Hassan Zaid, secretary-general of the al-Haq opposition party. The Zaydis ruled Yemen for 1,000 years up until 1962. During this time they ferociously defended their independence and fought off foreign powers (Egypt, the Ottomans) who controlled lower Yemen and tried to extend their rule to the north.

Similar to Shia Muslims in matters of religious law and rulings, the Houthi belief in the concept of an Imamate as being essential to their religion makes them distinct from Sunnis.

As a consequence, the Houthis have regularly been accused, even by many fellow Zaidis, of secretly being converts or followers of the Twelver sect, which is the official religion of Iran.

# Slogan

* *Ali al-Bukhayti, the spokesperson and official media face of the Houthis, rejected the literal interpretation of the slogan by stating in one of his interview that "We do not really want death to anyone.*
* *Some Houthi supporters stress that their ire for the U.S. and Israel is directed toward the governments of America and Israel.*

The group's slogan reads as following: "God Is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam". This motto is partially modelled on the motto of revolutionary Iran and North Korea, which reads "Death to U.S., and death to Israel".

Some Houthi supporters stress that their ire for the U.S. and Israel is directed toward the governments of America and Israel. Ali al-Bukhayti, the spokesperson and official media face of the Houthis, rejected the literal interpretation of the slogan by stating in one of his interview that "We do not really want death to anyone. The slogan is simply against the interference of those governments [i. e., U.S. and Israel]". In the Arabic Houthi-affiliated TV and radio stations they use religious connotations associated with jihad against Israel and the US. They also call Saudi Arabia a U.S. puppet state.

# Charges of harassment against Jews

* *Houthi officials, however, have denied any involvement in the harassment, asserting that under Houthi control, Jews in Yemen would be able to live and operate freely as any other Yemeni citizen.*
* *According to Israeli Druze politician Ayoob Kara, Houthi militants had given an ultimatum telling Jews to "convert to Islam or leave Yemen".*

The Houthis have been accused of expelling or restricting members of the rural Yemeni Jewish community. Reports of abuse include Houthi supporters bullying or attacking the country's Jews. Houthi officials, however, have denied any involvement in the harassment, asserting that under Houthi control, Jews in Yemen would be able to live and operate freely as any other Yemeni citizen. "Our problems are with Zionism and the occupation of Palestine, but Jews here have nothing to fear", said Fadl Abu Taleb, a spokesman for the Houthis. But despite insistence by Houthi leaders that the movement is not sectarian, a Yemeni Jewish rabbi has reportedly said that many Jews remain terrified by the movement's slogan. As a result, Yemeni Jews reportedly retain a negative sentiment towards the Houthis, who they allege have committed persecutions against them. According to Israeli Druze politician Ayoob Kara, Houthi militants had given an ultimatum telling Jews to "convert to Islam or leave Yemen".

# Charges of harassment against Baha'i minority

* *Houthi leader Abdel-Malek al-Houthi has targeted Bahais in public speeches, and accused the followers of Bahá'í Faith of being "satanic" and agents for the western countries, citing a 2013 fatwa issued by Iran's supreme leader.*
* *The Houthis have been accused of detaining, torturing, arresting, and holding incommunicado Bahá'í Faith members on charges of espionage and apostasy, which are punishable by death.*

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# Leaders

* *Fares Mana'a – Houthi-appointed governor of Sa'dah, and former head of Saleh's Presidential committee*
* *Saleh Habra – political leader*

Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi – former leader (killed 2004)

Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi – leader

Yahia Badreddin al-Houthi – senior leader

Abdul-Karim Badreddin al-Houthi – high-ranking commander

Badr Eddin al-Houthi – spiritual leader (died 2010)

Abdullah al-Ruzami – former military commander

Abu Ali Abdullah al-Hakem al-Houthi – military commander

Saleh Habra – political leader

Fares Mana'a – Houthi-appointed governor of Sa'dah, and former head of Saleh's Presidential committee

# Motives and objectives

* *In an interview with Yemen Times, Hussein al-Bukhari, a Houthi insider, said that Houthis' preferable political system is a republic with elections where women can also hold political positions, and that they do not seek to form a cleric-led government after the model of Islamic Republic of Iran, for "we cannot apply this system in Yemen because the followers of the Shafi (Sunni) doctrine are bigger in number than the Zaydis".*
* *Zaidi Shi'ites compose one-third of the population of Yemen and Houthis have often voiced the grievances of the Zaidi population.*

When armed conflict for the first time erupted back in 2004 between the Yemeni government and Houthis, the then-Yemeni President accused Houthis and other Islamic opposition parties of trying to overthrow the government and the republican system. However, Houthi leaders, for their part, rejected the accusation by saying that they had never rejected the president or the republican system, but were only defending themselves against government attacks on their community. Zaidi Shi'ites compose one-third of the population of Yemen and Houthis have often voiced the grievances of the Zaidi population.

The group has also exploited the popular discontent over corruption and reduction of government subsidies. According to a February 2015 Newsweek report, Houthis are fighting "for things that all Yemenis crave: government accountability, the end to corruption, regular utilities, fair fuel prices, job opportunities for ordinary Yemenis and the end of Western influence".

The Houthis have asserted that their actions are to fight against the expansion of Salafism in Yemen, and for the defence of their community from discrimination, whereas the Yemeni government has in turn accused the insurgents of intending to overthrow the regime out of a desire to institute Zaidi religious law, destabilising the government and stirring anti-American sentiment.

Hassan al-Homran, a former spokesperson for Ansar Allah, has said that "Ansar Allah supports the establishment of a civil state in Yemen. We want to build a striving modern democracy. Our goals are to fulfil our people's democratic aspirations in keeping with the Arab Spring movement." In an interview with Yemen Times, Hussein al-Bukhari, a Houthi insider, said that Houthis' preferable political system is a republic with elections where women can also hold political positions, and that they do not seek to form a cleric-led government after the model of Islamic Republic of Iran, for "we cannot apply this system in Yemen because the followers of the Shafi (Sunni) doctrine are bigger in number than the Zaydis".

Ali Akbar Velayati, International Affairs Advisor to Supreme Iranian Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, stated in October 2014 that "We are hopeful that Ansar-Allah has the same role in Yemen as Hezbollah has in eradicating the terrorists in Lebanon".

# Activism and tactics

# Political

* *Similarly, following 2015 Saudi-led airstrikes against Houthis which claimed civilians lives, Yemenis responded to the Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's call and took to streets of the capital, Sanaʽa, in tens of thousands to voice their anger at the Saudi invasion.*
* *During their campaigns against Hadi government, Houthis used civil disobedience.*

During their campaigns against Hadi government, Houthis used civil disobedience. Following the Yemeni government's decision in 13 July 2014 to increase fuel prices, Houthi leaders succeeded in organising massive rallies in the capital Sanaʽa to protest the decision and to demand resignation of the incumbent government of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi for "state-corruption". These protests developed into the 2014–2015 phase of the insurgency. Similarly, following 2015 Saudi-led airstrikes against Houthis which claimed civilians lives, Yemenis responded to the Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's call and took to streets of the capital, Sanaʽa, in tens of thousands to voice their anger at the Saudi invasion.

# Cultural

* *The Houthis have also held a number of mass gatherings since the revolution.*

The Houthis have also held a number of mass gatherings since the revolution. On 24 January 2013, thousands gathered in Dahiyan, Sa'dah and Heziez, just outside Sanaʽa, to celebrate Mawlid al-Nabi, the birth of Mohammed. A similar event took place on 13 January 2014 at the main sports' stadium in Sanaʽa. On this occasion, men and women were completely segregated: men filled the open-air stadium and football field in the centre, guided by appointed Houthi safety officials wearing bright vests and matching hats; women poured into the adjacent indoor stadium, led inside by security women distinguishable only by their purple sashes and matching hats. The indoor stadium held at least five thousand women — ten times as many attendees as the 2013 gathering.

# Media

* *The Houthis are said to have "a huge and well-oiled propaganda machine".*

The Houthis are said to have "a huge and well-oiled propaganda machine". They have established "a formidable media arm" with the Lebanese Hezbollah's technical support. The format and content of the group's leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's televised speeches are said to have been modeled after those of Hezbollah's Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah. Following the peaceful youth uprising in 2011, the group launched its official TV channel, Almasirah. "The most impressive part" of Houthi propaganda, though, is their media print which includes 25 print and electronic publications.

Another western-based media, "Uprising Today", is also known to be extensively pro-Houthi.

# Combat and military

* *In 2009, US Embassy sources have reported that Houthis used increasingly more sophisticated tactics and strategies in their conflict with the government as they gained more experience, and that they fought with religious fervor.*

In 2009, US Embassy sources have reported that Houthis used increasingly more sophisticated tactics and strategies in their conflict with the government as they gained more experience, and that they fought with religious fervor.

# Armed strength and horizontal escalation of the conflict outside of Yemen

* *Late in 2015, Houthis announced the local production of short-range ballistic missile Qaher-1 on Al-Masirah TV.*
* *The Houthi militias have captured dozens of tanks and masses of heavy weaponry from the Yemeni Armed Forces.*

Late in 2015, Houthis announced the local production of short-range ballistic missile Qaher-1 on Al-Masirah TV. On May 19, 2017 Saudi Arabia intercepted a Houthi-fired ballistic missile targeting a deserted area south of the Saudi capital and most populous city Riyadh. The Houthi militias have captured dozens of tanks and masses of heavy weaponry from the Yemeni Armed Forces.

# Allegations of Iranian and North Korean support

* *Essentially, Iran is backing the Houthis to fight against a Saudi-led coalition of Gulf States fighting to maintain government control of Yemen.*
* *Joost Hiltermann wrote that Iran does not control the Houthis' decision-making as evidenced by Houthis' flat rejection of Iran's demand not to take over Sanaa in 2015.*
* *Smyth claimed that there is a strong bond between Iran and the Houthi uprising working to overthrow the government in Yemen.*

Former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh had accused the Houthis of having ties to external backers, in particular the Iranian government. Saleh stated in a New York Times' interview that "The real reason they received unofficial support from Iran was because they repeat same slogan that is raised by Iran death to America, death to Israel". He also said "The Iranian media repeats statements of support for these Houthi elements. They are all trying to take revenge against the USA on Yemeni territories". Tehran has denied allegations of Houthis receiving arms support from Iran. The Houthis in turn accused the Saleh government of being backed by Saudi Arabia and of using Al-Qaeda to repress them. Under the next President Hadi, Gulf Arab states accused Iran of backing the Houthis financially and militarily, though Iran denied this, and they were themselves backers of President Hadi. Houthis denied reception of financial or arm support from Iran. Joost Hiltermann of Foreign Policy wrote that whatever little material support the Houthis may have received from Iran, the intelligence and military support by US and UK for the Saudi Arabian-led coalition exceed that by many factors.

In April 2015, the United States National Security Council spokesperson Bernadette Meehan remarked that "It remains our assessment that Iran does not exert command and control over the Houthis in Yemen". Joost Hiltermann wrote that Iran does not control the Houthis' decision-making as evidenced by Houthis' flat rejection of Iran's demand not to take over Sanaa in 2015. Thomas Juneau, writing in the journal, International Affairs, states that even though Iran's support for Houthis has increased since 2014, it remains far too limited to have a significant impact in the balance of power in Yemen.

A December 2009 cable between Sanaa and various intelligence agencies disseminated by WikiLeaks states that US State Dept. analysts believed the Houthis obtained weapons from the Yemeni black market and corrupt members of the Yemenis Republican Guard.  
On the edition of 8 April 2015 of PBS Newshour, Secretary of State John Kerry stated that the US knew Iran was providing military support to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, adding that Washington "is not going to stand by while the region is destabilised".

Phillip Smyth of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy told Business Insider that Iran views Shia groups in the Middle East as "integral elements to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)". Smyth claimed that there is a strong bond between Iran and the Houthi uprising working to overthrow the government in Yemen. According to Smyth, in many cases Houthi leaders go to Iran for ideological and religious education, and Iranian and Hezbollah leaders have been spotted on the ground advising the Houthi troops, and these Iranian advisers are likely responsible for training the Houthis to use the type of sophisticated guided missiles fired at the US Navy. For Iran, supporting the revolt in Yemen is "a good way to bleed the Saudis", Iran's regional and ideological rival. Essentially, Iran is backing the Houthis to fight against a Saudi-led coalition of Gulf States fighting to maintain government control of Yemen. The discord has led some publishers to fear that further confrontations may lead to an all-out Sunni-Shia war.

In 2013, photographs released by the Yemeni government show the United States Navy and Yemen's security forces seized a class of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles not publicly known to have been out of state control.

In April 2016, the U.S. Navy intercepted a large Iranian arms shipment, seizing thousands of weapons, AK-47 rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. The Pentagon stated that the shipment was likely headed to Yemen.

In August 2018, the United Nations had found out the North Korean government had armed the Houthis via Syria after a meeting between a Houthi member and a North Korean government official.

# Allegations of human rights violations

* *HRW has also accused the Houthis of interfering with the work of Yemen's human rights advocates and organizations.*
* *The UNICEF mentioned that children with the Houthis and other armed groups in Yemen comprise up to a third of all fighters in Yemen.*
* *According to Human Right Watch, Houthis inclined up their recruitment of children in 2015.*

Houthis have been accused of violations of international humanitarian law such as using child soldiers, shelling civilian areas, forced evacuations, executions and human shielding.

According to Human Right Watch, Houthis inclined up their recruitment of children in 2015. The UNICEF mentioned that children with the Houthis and other armed groups in Yemen comprise up to a third of all fighters in Yemen.

Human Rights Watch has further accused Houthi forces of using landmines in Yemen's third-largest city of Taizz which has caused many civilian casualties and prevent the return of families displaced by the fighting.

HRW has also accused the Houthis of interfering with the work of Yemen's human rights advocates and organizations.

An HRW researcher, quoted in 2009 US embassy report, has downplayed the allegations by the former government of Yemen accusing the Houthis of using civilians as human shields, by saying that they did not have enough evidence to conclude that the Houthis have been intentionally using civilians as human shields.

According to the Human Rights Watch, the Houthis also use hostage taking as a tactic to generate profit. Human Rights Watch documented 16 cases in which Houthi authorities held people unlawfully, in large part to extort money from relatives or to exchange them for people held by opposing forces.

The United Nations World Food Programme has accused the Houthis of diverting food aid and illegally removing food lorries from distribution areas, with rations sold on the open market or given to those not entitled to it. The WFP has also warned that aid could be suspended to areas of Yemen under the control of Houthi rebels due to "obstructive and uncooperative" Houthi leaders that have hampered the independent selection of beneficiaries. WFP spokesman Herve Verhoosel stated “The continued blocking by some within the Houthi leadership of the biometric registration ... is undermining an essential process that would allow us to independently verify that food is reaching ... people on the brink of famine”. The WFP has warned that "unless progress is made on previous agreements we will have to implement a phased suspension of aid". The Norwegian Refugee Council has stated that they share the WPF frustrations and reiterate to the Houthis to allow humanitarian agencies to distribute food.

# Governance

* *According to the 2009 US Embassy cable leaked by WikiLeaks, Houthis have reportedly established courts and prisons in areas they control.*
* *AP's reporter, Ahmad al-Haj argued that the Houthis were winning hearts and minds by providing security in areas long neglected by the Yemeni government while limiting the arbitrary and abusive power of influential sheikhs.*

According to the 2009 US Embassy cable leaked by WikiLeaks, Houthis have reportedly established courts and prisons in areas they control. They impose their own laws on local residents, demand protection money, and dispense rough justice by ordering executions. AP's reporter, Ahmad al-Haj argued that the Houthis were winning hearts and minds by providing security in areas long neglected by the Yemeni government while limiting the arbitrary and abusive power of influential sheikhs. According to the Civic Democratic Foundation, Houthis help resolve conflicts between tribes and reduce the number of revenge killings in areas they control. The US ambassador believed that the reports that explain Houthi role as arbitrating local disputes were likely.

# Areas under administration

* *North Yemen was united with South Yemen in 1990; the Yemen government has repeatedly suppressed separatist protests by force.*
* *The Houthis exert de facto authority over the bulk of North Yemen.*

The Houthis exert de facto authority over the bulk of North Yemen. North Yemen was united with South Yemen in 1990; the Yemen government has repeatedly suppressed separatist protests by force. The Houthis' direct administration includes the following territories:

Saada Governorate

'Amran Governorate

Majority of Al Jawf Governorate, including:  
Al Hazm District (presence)[160]  
Al Maton District[161][162]  
Az Zahir District[161][163]  
Al Matammah District[161]

Hajjah Governorate

Sanaʽa Governorate including strong presence in:  
Arhab District (partial control)[165]

Dhamar Governorate

Al Mahwit Governorate

Raymah Governorate

Ibb Governorate

Al Hudaydah Governorate

Al Bayda Governorate

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# External links

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