

Committee: Security Council

Topic: The situation in Yemen

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**Children and Youth: Fostering Peace
and Security for Future Generations**

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I. Introduction

Yemen, one of the oldest areas in the Middle East, is located at the southern part of the Arabian peninsula. Yemen has had a turbulent history with upheaval, occupation, and conflict. The Yemen Civil War began in March of 2015, and has continued to escalate despite many stalemates, alliances, and ceasefires.

The war is widely considered to be one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world currently. Even before the conflict broke out, Yemen was one of the poorest countries in the Middle East, with an HDI (Human Development Index) of 154. With around 6,000 civilians dead, 3 million displaced, and 2.5 million children out of school in Yemen, there are a huge number of humanitarian issues that need urgent assistance. According to Amnesty International, all of the parties involved in this crisis have committed numerous violations of human rights. These violations include acts like air strikes and attacks specifically on civilian homes, hospitals, and schools.

Overall, this topic will not be focusing on how to cease the conflict in Yemen, but rather about how to curb the humanitarian issues that are occurring and how to effectively distribute aid to these groups. As we move into constructing resolutions on this topic, it is especially important to consider all of the historical factors that led up to this conflict and their impact on the civilian population.

II. Definition of Key Terms

a) Houthis group:

- i) A religious group affiliated with the Zaydi sect of Shia Islam.

b) Shia and Sunni:

- i) There are two distinct groups in the Islam world, Shia and Sunni Muslims. The majority of Sunni Muslims, believe that the successor to Prophet Muhammad was to be his ally and father-in-law Abu Bakr, whereas the Shia Muslims believe that the successor should have been Abi Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law.

- ii) Another key difference between the two groups is that the Sunni faction abides by the sayings of Prophet Muhammad whereas the Shias rely on the teachings of high-ranking clerics called Ayatollahs for guidance.

c) Proxy war:

- i) A war designated by major powers who do not become involved themselves.

d) Blockade:

- i) The act of closing and sealing a place to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving.

e) Coalition:

- i) A temporary alliance for combined action, especially of political parties forming a government.

III. General Overview

a) Political Influences of the Conflict:

As a whole, the crisis in Yemen can be boiled down to the conflict between the official republic government led by Hadi and supported by Saudi Arabia, and the Houthi groups funded by Iran and Saleh supporters. However, if we look at the political roots of this conflict, the situation becomes much more complicated. Historically, Shia Muslims, the Zaidis located and lived in the north for thousands of years. The south, largely remained divided with local sultans until British took control in the 1930s. The People's Republic of South Yemen was formed in 1967 when the British eventually gave up power and the fighting between the North and South continued still.

After multiple attempts to unify the two factions, it wasn't until 1990 when the Republic of Yemen was established with Sanaa as the capital. This new country was led under Ali Abdullah Saleh who would lead for the next years until his resignation in 2012. Even though Yemen was now unified, Saleh had many struggles with controlling the many divisions and sections of Yemen that have historically been separated. The elections in the year 1993 led to many people feeling dissatisfied with how the current government was running and civil war broke out between the North and South again. With Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi now in power, the Houthis and Saleh supporters joined forces and launched

attacks on the government. This group is considered to have been funded by Iran, which led to Saudi Arabia and other countries supporting the official Yemen government run by Hadi.

b) Humanitarian Issues:

Due to continued fighting, systems and administrations in Yemen have slowly been deteriorating. According to the WHO annual report, Yemen has failed “in terms of accessibility, commercial and humanitarian blockades in accessing the country, bureaucratic impediments in the importation of medical supplies, and in the logistics of their distribution across the country”.

i) Sanitation:

The destruction of key infrastructure in Yemen due to airstrikes and attacks have led to the worsening of many of these humanitarian issues. UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore states that there has been “an escalation of targeting of systems and facilities that are essential to sustaining the lives of children and families”. In August of 2018 a sanitation UNICEF led sanitation center and one water station was hit by airstrikes.

ii) Malnutrition

In October of 2018, the United Nations warned that “Yemen could face the worst famine in 100 years”, while another source says that around 85,000 children throughout the three years of fighting have died from starvation or malnutrition.

iii) Economic crisis

Even before the war, Yemen’s economy was depleting due to mismanagement and corruption. However, due to the civil conflict, the economy has almost collapsed. With food prices have increased 80 percent throughout the three years of fighting, currency depreciation, and high levels of unemployment, the famine like situation in Yemen has dramatically worsened.

iv) Displacement

The crisis has forced around 3 million people out of their homes and into the streets. According to one UN source these internally displaced people struggle with the needs of finding basic shelter, food, and water. Also, recently the time spent outside of their homes has increased to an average of ten months.

v) Disease

The Cholera outbreak recently is one of the fastest epidemics to affect a region in recent memory, affecting nearly 1 million people and 600,000 children. Cholera, a highly infectious, waterborne bacteria disease has swept the nation into yet another public health crisis, the large demographic affected being children. Combined with the destruction of nearly 278 health facilities nearly 16.4 million Yemenis do not have adequate access to healthcare to combat this disease. Shortages of basic medicines and equipment are also a leading factor in the increased number of infected people.

IV. Major Parties Involvement and their Views

a) Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia first intervened in the Yemen war in 2015 which involved a deployment of ground forces, bombing campaign, and naval blockade against the Houthis. In support of the Hadi led government, Saudi Arabia formed an international coalition with nine other countries from the Middle East and Africa (UAE, Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Eritrea, Djibouti) who deployed their own personnel and conducted their own air strikes.

One of the supposed reasons that Saudi Arabia has become involved in Yemen is due to the continued Saudi-Iran proxy war, or commonly known as the Middle East Cold War. Both countries have external and open support of different countries the most notable being North Korea's support of Iran and the United States support of Saudi Arabia. These proxy wars include also the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Saudi Arabia, due to the funding between the Houthi groups and Iran, believed that this was a ploy designed for Iran to gain a "foothold" in the region.

Human Rights Watch have previously stated that the airstrikes led by the Saudi coalition on Saada City have breached international law. They've also reported that these airstrikes have targeted civilian bases and hospitals. According to one source, the Saudi blockade also led to around 20 million Yemeni people in urgent need of food and other supplies like medical aid.

b) Iran

Back in the years when Yemen was still controlled by president Saleh, the relations between Iran and Yemen were good and in 2003 many cooperation agreements were drawn

up. However, in 2004, when president Saleh was ousted from power, he claimed that Iran was supporting the Houthis led group, however US analysis claimed otherwise.

Overall, evidence in the beginning of the conflict concludes that Iran has had a marginal role but was funding Southern separatists movements. In January 2013, the US and Yemen navies cooperated and took over an Iranian shipment carrying a variety of artillery like ammunition, grenades, explosives, and Katyusha rockets to Houthis groups. Iranian support grew more and more apparent in 2014, due to successful moves and drives by Houthi and Saleh supporters. Iran, since then, has provided training to soldiers, and deployed personnel, including Lebanese Hezbollah allies.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Iran would support Secretary of State John Kerry's proposal of ending the civil war through Hadi stepping down and a Houthi withdrawal from the capital. However, in multiple occasions it appears that Zarif "has repeatedly argued that Iran's "four-point plan" is the only viable option for ending the Yemen conflict. "We urge ceasefire, humanitarian assistance, intra-Yemeni dialogue and establishment of broad-based government,".

c) United States

After Saudi Arabia's involvement in the Yemen civil war in 2015, the United States, under Barack Obama, joined the fighting. The US since 2015 has been reportedly supplying Saudi Arabia with targeting intelligence and other military supplies and refueling. Human Rights Watch also stated that there was evidence that US-made bombs were used in combat against civilians.

In 2016, the Senate voted 72-27 against the sale of 1.15 billion dollars worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia. Some Americans are divided by their relations with Saudi Arabia, claiming that there is too much responsibility in the civilian casualties. This uncertainty can be seen how in 2017 the US sent around 5 million dollars in foreign aid to Yemen while still supporting and funding the Saudi-led coalition.

In December, the senate voted to end all support to Saudi, claiming that there were acts of war crimes being committed in this conflict. However, following this new policy, the pentagon issued a hefty bill of 331 million dollars in support of Saudi Arabia.

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

1) UN Documents

- a) Report of the Secretary General on children and armed conflict in Yemen.
June 28th, 2013.
 - i) This report gives a holistic summary of the conflict developments in Yemen up from 2011 to 2013, and specifically analyses the impact of the war on children.
- b) Security Council Resolution 2452, January 16th 2019.
 - i) A recent UN resolution concerning the situation in Yemen overall.
- c) General Assembly Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, July 30th 2018.
 - i) This report focuses on the issues and trends of the issues that children face in areas where armed conflict is occurring and the Special representative's measures to limit these problems have been implemented.

2) Additional Documents

- a) WHO Annual Report 2017 Yemen
 - i) This report gives an all-encompassing look at the health problems and issues of infrastructure in Yemen and the measures so far the WHO has taken.

VI. Questions to Consider

- 1) Is solving the humanitarian issues of Yemen connected to solving the political conflicts present currently? Can solving humanitarian issues be separate?
- 2) How can this committee come to a full and effective solution?
- 3) How does the council specify and look for effective solutions directed to the safeguard of children?
- 4) Are there ways in which airstrikes against civilians can be prevented and stopped?

VII. Conclusion

The topic for this year's 2019 ZYGMUN conference is the fostering of peace and security specifically for the youth and future generations and leaders of this world. The

situation in Yemen is deemed the worst humanitarian crisis in the world right now with disease outbreaks, high unemployment, and child mortality rates, a burgeoning famine issue, and thousands of displaced families without access to education or basic necessities. In light of this compelling focus on the youth, nations are urged to take this opportunity to specify and focus their causes and solutions to effectively tackle how to help our most vulnerable.

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