

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen

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Introduction

Over the last decade, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has drastically worsened. Plagued by government instability, widespread poverty, and high starvation rates, Yemen's citizens are in dire need of humanitarian aid and assistance.

Previously, there have been several uprisings throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa. The overthrowing of dictators has given citizens in other nations the courage to stand up to their governments. This is precisely what has occurred in Yemen. After a long authoritarian rule from Yemen's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemeni uprisings have forced Saleh to hand over his presidency to Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, his deputy. What would have been a peaceful transition of power then turned horrific, as the new president had to deal with attacks from al-Qaeda, separatist movements in the south, the continuing loyalty of many military officers to Saleh, as well as corruption within his own government. These issues, championed by increasing threats from Yemen's Shia-Houthi minority, forced Hadi to flee abroad, leaving his nation in turmoil.

A food crisis in Yemen is also a catalyst for its deadly situation. Malnutrition rates are steadily rising in spite of recent World Health Organization (WHO) interventions. Despite funding from the UN, much of Yemen's main sources of food (fishing and farming) are both at risk due constant Saudi bombings. Its citizens mostly rely on what little flour they are able to purchase and the water they eat it with. Much of Yemen's population is malnourished, with the majority being children under the age of 18. Coupled with Yemen's worsening health system the crisis taking a turn for the worst. These various components need to be taken into account when creating a long-term, sustainable resolution that addresses the various aspects of the Yemeni humanitarian crisis.

Definition of Key Terms

Sectarian Conflict

Sectarian conflict is essentially excessive attachment or loyalty to a certain sect, political party, or religion. Generally, sectarianism is the root of most religious conflict in today's society. Often people feel extremely devoted to a belief or cause that they are willing to possibly declare war in order to serve that belief or cause.

Sunnis

Sunnism is a sect of Islam, comprising of about 80% of all Muslims. The original divide between Sunnis and Shiites can be traced back to around 632 C.E. when Prophet Muhammad passed away. Most people believed that the rightful heir to the political and religious office should be Abu Bakr, a close friend of the Prophet. This group then came to be known as the Sunnis.

Shiites

Others Muslims believed that the heir should be akin to the prophet. They became known as the Shiites. Sunnis and Shiites have had rivalries in the past, though not as big as the Thirty Years War (fought between sects of Christianity). However, tensions are continuing to escalate as the divide becomes more prominent throughout the Middle East.

Proxy War

A proxy war is essentially a war in which the nation that started it does not become actively involved in it.

Coalition

A coalition is an alliance that is comprised of multiple states, usually to take action militarily against other states or parties.

Background Information

Over the years, the Yemeni humanitarian crisis has drastically worsened. Outbreaks of cholera combined with increasing starvation rates have made providing aid to people in Yemen increasingly difficult. The war itself has yet to be fully solved, making the Yemeni crisis an extremely difficult crisis to resolve.

History

In order to create long-term solutions to resolve the Yemeni crisis, it is first important to understand the history behind the conflict and why it occurred. It is estimated that around 10,000 people have died from the conflict, with an additional 40,000 being severely injured.

Shifts in political power

After 33 years of power, Yemen president Ali Abdullah Saleh formally handed over his presidency to his deputy and vice-president, Abdrabbu Mansour Hadi in February of 2012. Years of protests against Saleh's government had even resulted in military officers gunning down protesters in fear of their own lives. The Arab Spring had also paved way to stronger protests in Yemen, in which citizens demanded that Saleh step down as president. This forced the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to intervene in the matter. The GCC told Saleh that if he was to step down as president, he would be granted immunity from any prosecutions that followed. As Hadi was then the sole candidate running for president, he was then elected to be Saleh's successor.

Government failure

Hadi was faced with a huge task: to restore balance to Yemen. However, continuous protests and disloyalty from government officers made this difficult. Furthermore, Hadi's budget and constitutional reforms sparked outcries from Houthis from the North, whose protests eventually turned violent. By 2014, the Houthis had taken over the Yemeni capital of Sa'naa, forcing Mr Hadi to relocate to the port city of Aden.

Involvement of foreign nations

The Yemeni crisis then became worse. Houthis began pushing their forces South, further worsening the situation. As Yemen was dominated by Sunnis, Saudi Arabia sided with Hadi's government. Alongside other nations such as the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Morocco, Sudan, Jordan and Egypt, the Saudi-led coalition conducted multiple airstrikes against the Houthis. The United States of America, the United Kingdom and France have aided the coalition, providing intelligence, although not taking part in the war militarily. Iran, on the other hand, has aided the Houthis, sending military aid which has been intercepted by the Saudi coalition multiple times. The involvement of these nations has drastically worsened the crisis in Yemen, despite UN intervention.

Health

The impact the war in Yemen has had on the health of citizens has not primarily been the focus of nations around the world. Despite WHO interventions, the health situation in Yemen is quite dire.

Around 3.3 million people in Yemen are acutely malnourished, with around 2/3 of that group under the age of 18.

Some people, including the UN's humanitarian chief and the UN coordinator in Yemen, believe that the no-fly zone ban on Yemen and the closure of the airport in Sa'naa has been a major error in judgement, stopping life-saving medicine from abroad being flown in. Furthermore, the ban has not allowed Yemeni citizens to leave their country, which has prevented them from receiving medical care abroad.

The Cholera Outbreak

The United Nations has declared the cholera outbreak in Yemen to be the worst in the world. The WHO estimates that around 500,000 people in Yemen have Cholera, and approximately 2,000 people are believed to have died from it. The main cause of the Cholera endemic in Yemen is a result of deteriorating sanitation services and water cleanliness. The main cure for this case of Cholera is rehydration combined with mild antibiotics, a luxury most people in Yemen do not have access to.

The WHO has played a major role in containing this outbreak. They have established 47 diarrhoea treatment facilities and 278 oral rehydration centres. Furthermore, they have been actively training health workers to manage cases aiding water purification in communities and have improved Yemen's disease warning systems.

Food Crisis

The UN believes that the current food crisis in Yemen could very well become a famine over the coming months. Around 2 million people require food aid immediately, while the malnutrition levels in children have risen to 63%. An additional 14 million people out of the nation's' 28 million are currently struggling for food. Estimates by the UN humanitarian coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick, showed that wheat supplies, the main grain keeping families alive in Yemen, will run out over the next 7 months. Despite WHO interventions, the food crisis is getting increasingly worse.

The food crisis in Yemen is, however, a man-made one. After Houthis started receiving military aid from Iran, Saudi Arabia started bombing Houthi territory, including bridges and ports to prevent access to Iran's aid. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has set up a blockade around the coast of Yemen, covering around 70% of the Yemeni coast. As a result of this blockade, 85% of food that comes through ships are not allowed to dock at Yemeni ports. The Saudi air strike on the seaport of Al-Hudaydah, one of Yemen's key ports, drastically reduced the humanitarian aid and food that was entering Yemen. Even UN interventions have not been able to deliver commercial

goods and provide humanitarian aid. It is necessary man-made food crisis is tackled in order to support Yemeni citizens.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The Houthis

The Houthis are much of what represent the Shiite minority in Yemen. Feeling that the current government had failed them, the Houthis have become a predominant military group in northern Yemen. Their territory encapsulates Yemen's capital, Sanaa, stretching far north to Saada. The expansion and the growing power of the Houthis have threatened Saudi Arabia, and have forced them to declare the Houthis a terrorist organization. However, the Houthis are still receiving support from Shiite-led Iran, who has reportedly sent military shipments to them.

Yemen

Yemen itself has been embroiled in one of the largest political coups in history. Its government is desperately trying to regain power after widespread Houthi movements, which has prevented it to be fully engaged in the war and rely heavily upon allies. The continuing loyalty of military officers to Saleh continues to plague Hadi's already doomed presidency, further restricting possible actions that Mr Hadi can take.

Iran

Iran has played a major role in escalating the Yemeni humanitarian crisis by causing the Yemen conflict to be a proxy war. A Shiite dominated nation, Iran has continually supported the Houthi campaigns against Yemen, and have aided their efforts in countering Saudi Arabia as well. According to Reuters, Iran has stepped up its involvement in the war, continually sending advanced military aid to the Houthis. Western coalitions alongside Saudi Arabia have tried to intercept these deliveries, and despite having been unsuccessful earlier, have intercepted multiple military deliveries to the Houthis.

Saudi Arabia

Supporting Sunnis in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has staunchly remained loyal to the previous Yemeni government, with their main objective to reinstate Hadi into presidency. However, the Saudi-led coalition has not been entirely successful, with many members pursuing their individual agendas which have weakened Hadi's position. Despite this, Saudi Arabia has continued to be militarily involved, sending airstrikes to Houthi bases and bombing campaigns in Northern Yemen. Recently, the Saudi government has expressed some interest in withdrawing its forces from Yemen, which many argue will only worsen the conflict and lead to Houthi domination. However, regardless of future outcomes, it is safe to say that

Saudi Arabia has been one of the major forces in the escalation of the severity of the Yemeni humanitarian crisis.

The United States of America

Although not directly involved in the Yemeni conflict, the United States has played a major role in supporting Saudi Arabia's coalition through providing them military aid. Since World War II, Saudi Arabia has been one of the United States' greatest allies. The US has provided them weapons and have further taught them how to use US manufactured planes and tanks, amongst other weapons. From March of 2016, the Saudis have spent approximately \$22 billion on US weapons. However, the US has not just provided the Saudis military aid, but has also refueled their planes mid-air. When Saudi planes request refueling, giant tankers take-off from nearby Turkey, or other bases. These tankers then connect with Saudi airlines mid-air and refuel them, allowing Saudi planes to bomb more territories in Yemen.

The World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization has been collaborating with the World Bank in order to provide increased medical care for people wounded in battle or those suffering from malnutrition. Currently, the Al Jumoori Hospital is the only hospital in a 240 km radius around Saada, a city heavily engulfed in conflict. The WHO has not only provided staff in order to treat patients, but has also provided it with generators and fuel for the hospital so it can run efficiently. Furthermore, the WHO is investigating and treating cholera outbreaks across the country, a disease that is now affected around 500,000 individuals across the country.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
November, 2011	President Saleh agrees to handover presidency to Mr. Hadi. After months of political protests and unrest, President Saleh was practically forced to handover his presidency to his deputy, which angered those who had supported his reign, both inside and outside Yemen.
February, 2012	Mr. Hadi was officially instated as the president of Yemen in February 2012, despite early protests.

August, 2014	August 2014 saw a major rise in Houthi protests across Yemen renouncing government policies and actions. In August, President Hadi had also overturned a fuel price and fired much of his cabinet which only further angered Houthis and those opposing his new form of government.
September, 2014	Houthis officially take over the Yemeni capital of Sa'naa.
February, 2015	The Houthis officially appoint a presidential council with the objective of removing Mr Hadi from office, who then flees to Aden (a city in Southern Yemen where his government has more control).
March, 2015	As Houthi forces march South, President Hadi flees to Riyadh while a Saudi-led coalition launches airstrikes against the Houthis.
September, 2015	President Hadi returns to Yemen after Saudi forces recapture Aden and continue their advance to the North.
April, 2016	The UN sponsors peace talks between the Houthis and Mr Hadi's governing party — the General People's Congress.
May, 2017	Houthis and Saudi Arabia continue firing air strikes at each other, with the Houthis claiming to have fired one directly at Riyadh.
July, 2017	The World Health Organization officially announces that 1,500 people have died from Cholera outbreaks in Yemen, despite their efforts to contain the disease.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Below are the list of relevant UN resolutions and statements issued on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. It is important to recognise that while these solutions have been quite successful in reducing the conflict in Yemen, there are ways that it can be built upon.

Resolutions:

- 26th February, 2014 (S/RES/2140)
- 14th April, 2015 (S/RES/2216)
- 24th February, 2016 (S/RES/2266)
- 23rd February, 2017 (S/RES/2342)

Security Council Presidential Statements:

- 25th April, 2016 (S/PRST/2016/5)
- 22nd March, 2015 (S/PRST/2015/8)

A link to a comprehensive list of all related resolutions, presidential statements, and other documents regarding the humanitarian crisis in Yemen can be found in the appendix.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Although there have been past effort to reduce conflict in Yemen, most of these have been futile attempts have had barely any impact on the crisis whatsoever. The UN had started peace talks between parties involved, however the negotiations have stagnated with national political groups falling apart. The UN also encouraged ceasefires between the Houthis and Mr. Hadi, despite multiple previous ceasefires having collapsed. Furthermore, local solutions within Yemen have only exacerbated the conflict. For example mosques in Yemen were previously open to any Muslim. However, in an attempt to dissipate tensions, some Sunnis declared certain mosques as Zaidi mosques, and therefore force other Sunnis from avoiding it due to connections with the Houthis. This was designed to prevent and reduce contact and tensions, however, has only worsened political and religious tensions, and has resulted in a battle for mosques between Sunnis and Shiites, not only in Yemen, but across the Middle East.

Apart from military attempts to solve the crisis in Yemen, the WHO and the World Bank have developed multiple projects and initiatives in order to combat starvation and disease in Yemen as a result of the war. Recently, the World Bank has announced that it will provide Yemen two new grants to provide Yemeni citizens better access to healthcare and food. The first grant is a \$450 million grant targeted towards providing emergency support across the nation to those who are most vulnerable, particularly women and children. It provides health and nutrition coverage, as well as income opportunities to sustain families. The second grant is \$250 million grant that extends and builds upon a current initiative, the Emergency Crisis Response Project. This grant further provides income opportunities for poor households and develops the Social Fund for Development (SFD) and Public Works Project (PWP), two organizations that provide communities multiple services the Yemenis heavily rely upon.

Possible Solutions

In order to achieve peace in Yemen, negotiations are the first priority. All parties need to be involved in peace talks in order for each party to express their needs while taking into consideration the

needs of others. Although the UN has attempted brokering deals alongside all parties, this has been extremely unsuccessful with the negotiations having been brought to a standstill. Therefore, this is the first step in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Another solution that would further de-escalate tensions and would lead to many other solutions would be to incorporate Yemen in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Through the GCC nations will be able to significantly help people in Yemen and move forward peace processes regarding other nations. Furthermore, since Saudi Arabia and Iran are both in the GCC, this will drastically reduce tensions between the nations.

Besides military solutions, Yemen also needs humanitarian aid for its citizens. While the World Bank and the WHO continue to provide hunger relief, this initiative requires more support from foreign nations especially from More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs). Donations from nations to continue the efforts of the WHO and World Bank are necessary in order for them to continue and expand their work. Furthermore, it is necessary for nations to work alongside the WHO to fully eradicate diseases that are spreading around in Yemen, such as Cholera and Typhoid. Not many incentives will be necessary for the MEDCs, as major nations such as the United States, France and the United Kingdom are heavily involved in the war, and have expressed their interest in negotiations and peace, as well as the safety of Yemeni citizens.

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Appendix

- I. <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/yemen/> (List of all UN documents regarding the humanitarian crisis in Yemen)

This link contains multiple significant documents regarding the humanitarian crisis in Yemen addressed by the Security Council and the Human Rights Committee. The website contains UN resolutions, presidential statements, Secretary General reports and sanctions regarding the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.