



THE YEMEN CRISIS

PEAMUN XII | November 8, 2020





Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome you to PEAMUN XII! My name is Sabrina Kearney, and I am honored to be chairing this committee with the wonderful Cindy Su this year. We look forward to hearing your creative resolutions and thoughtful debates surrounding how to solve the issues in Yemen.

In this committee we hope to explore issues surrounding the many economic and social issues that are currently taking place in Yemen. Civil conflict, human rights, famine, and the COVID-19 pandemic will be central problems to focus on. Delegates should cooperate and form blocs in order to reach a peaceful solution that prioritizes the health and safety of Yemeni civilians. Delegates should also engage in respectful and diplomatic debate while advocating for their policies to be most effective at creating a solution for the issue.

In preparation for the committee, delegates should conduct thorough research into the Yemen crisis including its root causes, and previous international action. This background guide contains general information about the issue, however delegates should also do additional research on their countries and the stances that they might have regarding it. We are also excited to welcome any delegates that may be new to MUN. These delegates may also find it beneficial to research parliamentary procedure before the conference to become more familiar with the system of debate that will take place during committee.

My co-chair and I are excited to meet you during the committee and we hope that this will be a fun and educational experience for all! If you have any questions please contact me at skearney@exeter.edu or Cindy at cdsu@exeter.edu.

Thanks,

Sabrina Kearney



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Intro to Topic

According to UNICEF, the Yemen crisis is “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than 24 million people — some 80 percent of the population — in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 12 million children.”¹ Yemen is currently facing many issues, such as political unrest, war, famine, human rights issues, and mass population displacement.

Especially now with the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation in Yemen is worse than ever. Lack of masks and protective equipment runs rampant, and medical professionals are sparse.² This all makes life even harder for the poverty stricken population in desperate need for humanitarian aid. Therefore, delegates must work together to ease the political unrest while prioritizing the safety of the Yemeni people.

Geography and Location:

Yemen is located in Western Asia at the tip of the Arabian peninsula. The country is surrounded by Saudi Arabia, Oman, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. Divided geographically into four main regions, Yemen consists of the coastal plains, the western highlands,



¹ <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis>

² <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis>



the eastern highlands, and the Rub' al Khal.³ A very arid and flat coastal plain that runs along Yemen's Red Sea coastline is the Tihāma, or the "hot lands." Despite the aridity, the presence of many lagoons makes this region very marshy and a suitable breeding ground for malaria mosquitos. The Tihāma is also home to many crescent shaped sand dunes.

The climate of Yemen is subtropical dry, which means it is a hot desert climate with low annual rainfall, with very high temperatures in summer and a big difference between maximum and minimum temperatures, especially in the inland areas.

From March till August, sometimes the Shamal, a very hot and dust ridden wind will cause sandstorms.

History of the Issue:

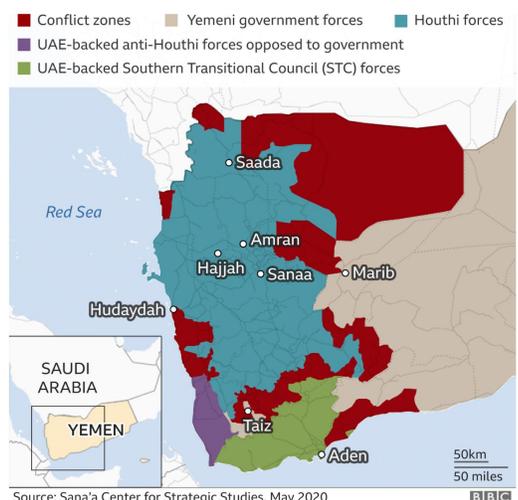
The Conflict:

The conflict in Yemen started in August 2015 as a result of political instability after the Arab Spring uprising, and has since evolved into a civil war between Abdrabbuh

Mansour Hadi's government and the Houthi rebel movement.⁴ As the war escalated, it has also become a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, both major military powers in the region.

Through allying themselves with the two opposing sides, Saudi Arabia and Iran have escalated the conflict by providing opposing sides with armies, missiles, and drones. Saudi forces have

Yemen: Areas of control and conflict

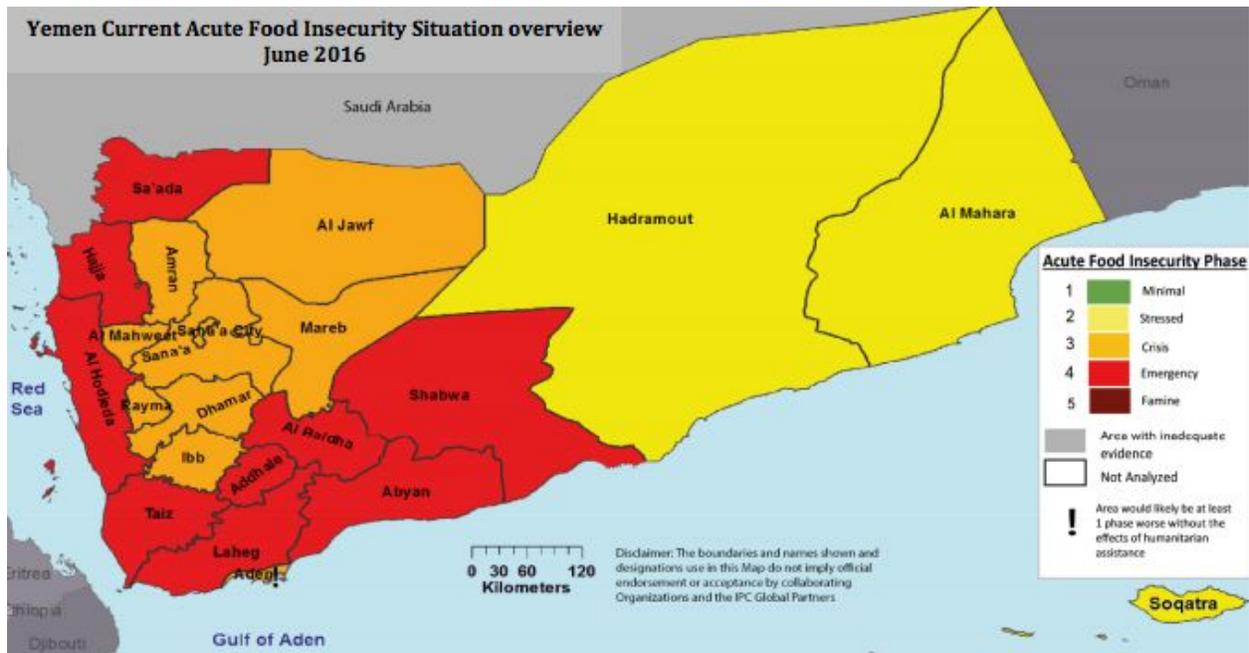


³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>.



also implemented an economic blockade that prevents Yemen from accessing resources and aid, which has created widespread food insecurity.



On September 13, 2018, the two sides met in Stockholm to try to peacefully resolve the issue. Although there has been some progress, such as an exchange of prisoners, military forces have not been withdrawn from the area as written in the Stockholm agreement. The United Arab Emirates, an ally of Saudi Arabia, announced in July of 2019 that they would be removing their troops from the area. However, this has simply created more conflict. A month later, Yemeni forces received support from Saudi Arabia and the Southern Transition Council (STC), a separatist movement backed by the UAE started a conflict.⁵ An agreement between Hadi's administration and the STC was made, however, the conflict between the Houthis and government forces became more violent in January of 2020 and included several missile strikes

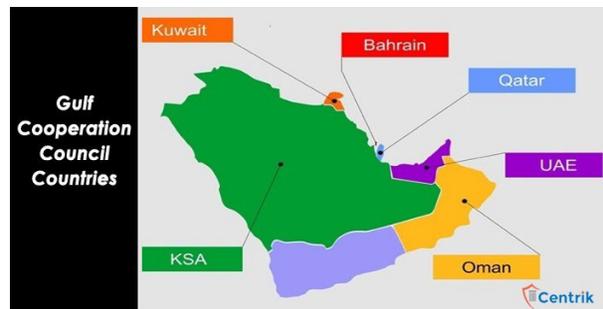
⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>



and air raids. The STC forces declared self-rule of Aden, an area in southern Yemen in April, which broke their agreement with Hadi's administration.⁶ Most recently, Saudi Arabia has tried to call for a pause to the conflict because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Houthis have not agreed because Saudi Arabia still has blockades on the country's major port cities.

Past UN Action:

The UN has made over 2216 actions in Yemen to try and help resolve the issues, but their efforts have been futile thus far. For example, the UN has advocated for negotiations between the two sides, which resulted in the formation of



the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative in 2011. The UN secretary general also established the Office of the Special Envoy to the Secretary-General of Yemen to supervise the transition. Furthermore, the UN helped create A Constitution Drafting Commission to create a new constitution for Yemen. Although these initiatives helped create some progress, it ultimately did not help the armed conflict in Yemen, and military tension escalated later in 2014.

In response to the violence, the UN tried to administer negotiations between the two sides in 2015. This was not very effective, however, and other major powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran became militarily involved. Both Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and António Guterres have

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/yemen-southern-transitional-council-200426072715154.html>



maintained that the conflict must be solved through peaceful negotiations to limit further damage to the Yemeni people. Since 2015, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen has also been established and works with promoting peace and negotiation between the two sides of the conflict.

Present Situation:

Along with other issues, Yemen has recently been experiencing an especially dangerous flood season. These flash floods have displaced and killed many of the Yemeni people already, collapsing buildings and homes as well as ruining a displaced persons camp where 1,340 people lived. So far, the floods have killed 172 people and have also damaged a UNESCO world heritage site.⁷

Issues to Consider:

Civil War:

Yemen has been entrenched in civil war for four years, and it has had devastating effects on its civilians. The civil war is the root cause of a host of the other issues such as mass displacement, the exploitation of child soldiers, and famine. According to the UN,



⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/172-killed-yemen-flash-floods-month-200812112022171.html>



“the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen [is] a man-made disaster, where conflict has exacerbated and exponentially increased the suffering”⁸. It is crucial for delegates to solve this issue as peacefully as they can to not further worsen these issues and cause more damage to civilians, the Yemeni economy, and infrastructure.

Famine + Clean Water:

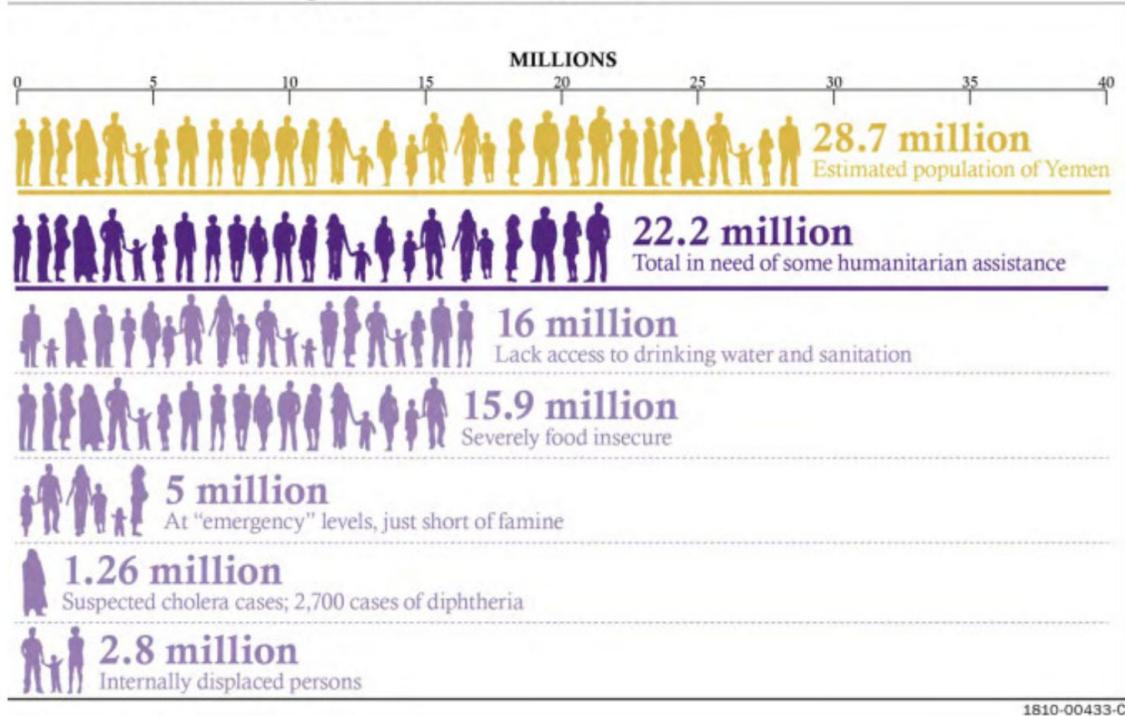
The economic blockade combined with attacks on supply routes has caused 10 million Yemenis, 70% of the population, to be “one step away from famine” according to the UN World Food Program⁹. The Yemeni coalition and Houthi force have restricted supply movement making it difficult for Yemeni people to get medical supplies. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Yemen experienced the largest cholera epidemic in the world, with over 1 million cases. Since the outbreak of the new COVID-19 pandemic, the situation has only become worse, with a lack of clean water and severely undersupplied and understaffed medical facilities further jeopardizing the safety of Yemeni civilians.

⁸<https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/23/issue/5/yemen-and-stockholm-agreement-background-context-and-significance>

⁹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035501>



Yemen Humanitarian Figures as of 3 December 2018



Children's Rights:

Thinking towards the future of Yemen, their children continue to suffer on a daily basis. Lack of food, shelter, and clean water are just the basic necessities that are being neglected. The UN children's agency has warned that nearly 7.8 million children are not in school, which in turn puts them at a higher risk of exploitation through child labor, early marriage, and recruitment into armed groups. Child soldiers are being recruited by both sides of the war, enticed by promised paychecks and non-combatant roles, which are not being delivered. Save the Children, a charity foundation, have estimated that "85,000 children with severe acute malnutrition might have died between April 2015 and October 2018." Millions of children and families are



attempting to flee the country, which has caused a large influx of refugees into the Horn of Africa, despite the war going on there as well, and even as far as Europe.

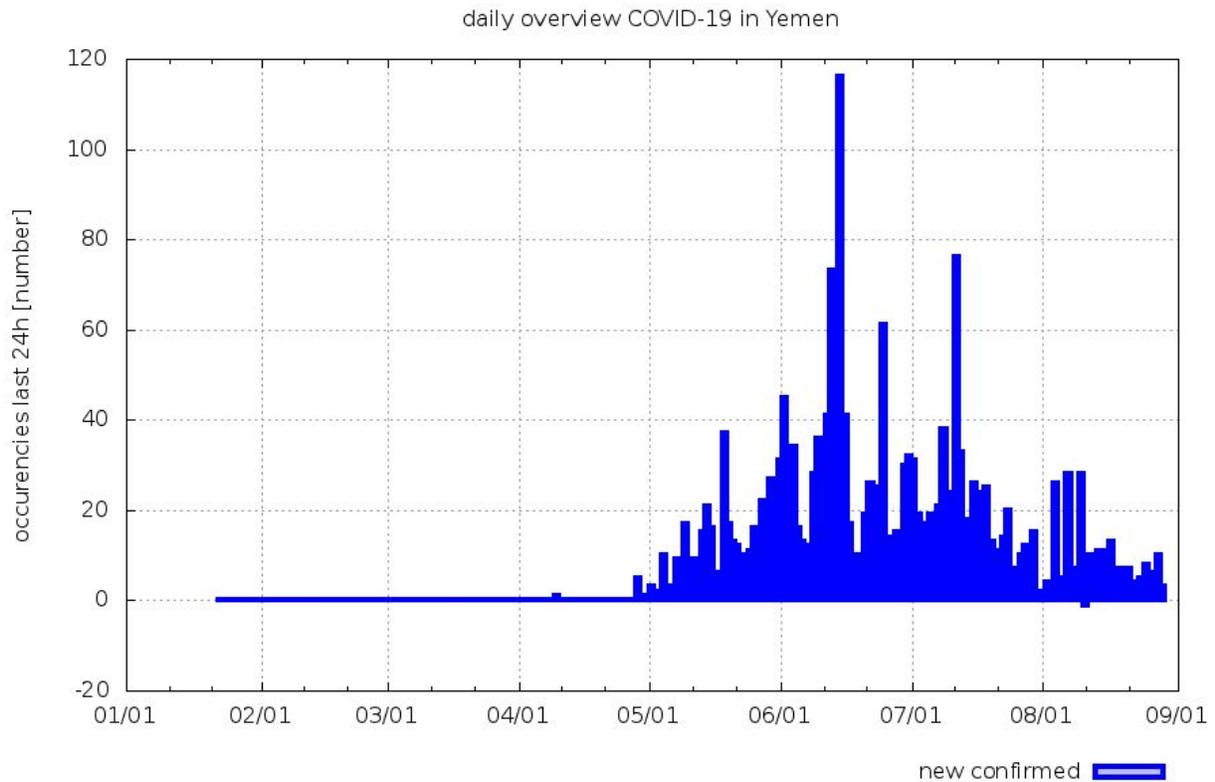
Mass Displacement + COVID-19:

As a result of the violence, lack of supplies, and famine that Yemeni civilians face every day, thousands of people have been displaced and seek refuge in other countries. Delegates must decide how to support and help transition families seeking refuge and asylum into their communities. In addition, recent extreme weather events like flash floods and heavy rain have devastated camps, and the UN refugee agency UNHCR warned in a recent statement that emergency funding is needed to provide necessary food and medicine to Yemeni refugees.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, Lise Grande, the U.N.'s head of humanitarian operations has estimated that the death toll from this disease could, “exceed the combined toll of war, disease, and hunger over the last five years (in Yemen).”¹⁰ It is imperative for delegates to gather funding and medical personnel for Yemen as soon as possible in this time of need.

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<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/06/15/yemen-and-covid-19-the-pandemic-exactly-its-devastating-toll/>



Questions to Consider:

- What is your country's stance on the conflict?
- How can you help resolve the civil conflict peacefully? Is your country in a unique position to help negotiations?
- How will you gather funding and aid?
- How has the Yemen crisis impacted your country and region? How can your country benefit from helping Yemen become more stable?
- What makes your solution different from the previous work done in Yemen by the UN? How do you know it will work comparatively with our current solutions?



- How will Yemen transition back to the global economy after the crisis is resolved?

Possible Bloc Positions:

There are many possible blocs that may form throughout the committee session based on a country's view on the Yemen Crisis and their current involvement in the region.

One possible scenario of bloc formations is allying based off of religion and the conflict. For example, since the Houthi rebels practice the Shia sect of Islam, other Shia countries such as Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and Azerbaijan may choose to form a bloc with them. Conversely, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and other Sunni Islamic countries may choose to form a bloc. Another possible regional and cultural bloc is one made from members of the Gulf Cooperation Council whose members already have economic and political partnership.

Another possible scenario of bloc formations is based off of the size of the countries and geographic location. For example, countries such as Oman, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sudan may choose to form a bloc, as they are central to the refugee part of the crisis with thousands of refugees currently camped in their countries.¹¹

Possible Solutions:

The crisis that Yemen is facing is multi-faceted, so resolutions should be detailed in addressing all of the issues.

¹¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/yemen/>



One issue that delegates must solve is access to drinking water. This situation in Yemen is dire, and the city of Sana' is rapidly running out of water, so delegates must construct some type of system to deliver water.¹² One question that delegates should consider is: where can they get the water from? Yemen is very arid and dry, and the water that is already in Yemen's aquifers has been heavily depleted due to agriculture. Delegates may consider collaborating with water-rich countries and countries near Yemen to supply water to the Yemeni people.

Another critical issue in this crisis is the famine. On this issue, delegates should consider both how to gather funding and aid to send to Yemen as well as how the aid will be distributed. One major cause of the famine is the economic blockade imposed on Yemen by Saudi Arabia. Delegates could use negotiation and peaceful tactics to de-escalate the tensions in the region so that the civilians may receive the aid packages.

After the initial economic blockade is reduced, delegates should look towards negotiations for ending the civil war. Delegates should keep in mind their countries relationships with the key countries backing either side. Each country has a unique relationship to each other, and delegates should use these to push forward negotiations. Although resolving the war is a very important issue, delegates should also consider how to help Yemen adjust back into the global economy after the war is over. Yemen's economy has become severely underdeveloped due to this war, and it will need some help to get back on its feet. One possible way for delegates to help is by establishing trade deals with Yemen for its natural resources such as oil and natural gas.

¹² <https://www.mei.edu/resources/transcript/addressing-crisis-yemen-strategies-and-solutions>



Glossary and Terms

Arab Spring: A series of uprisings in 2011 that promoted democracy in several Muslim countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt, and Bahrain¹³.

Houthi Rebel Movement: A movement of Zaydi Shiites, who are a religious minority who believe in fighting corruption and oppose Abradduh Mansour Hadi's government¹⁴.

Southern Transitional Council (STC): A separatist group backed by the United Arab Emirates that has accused the Yemeni government of corruption and declared self-rule in the southern region of Aden in Yemen. ¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>

¹⁴

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-the-m/>

¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/yemen-southern-transitional-council-200426072715154.html>



Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): An economic and political partnership formed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. ¹⁶



Further Reading

For your information, the [Yemen Wikipedia](#) page or the [CIA Factbook of Yemen](#) is always a good place to start to understand the situation and history there more in detail.

The official [UN page for Yemen](#) can help you better understand how COVID-19 is affecting the country and what current things need to/can be done.

¹⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gulf-Cooperation-Council>



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