

Committee: Security Council

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Issue: The situation in Yemen



Research report

Dome Model United Nations 2026

Forming a Dome of international peace

Research Report

Forum: The United Nations Security Council

Issue: The situation in Yemen

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Position: President

Introduction

In 2014, Yemen, which at that point was already the lowest-income country in the Middle East, was further destabilised by a civil war shaped by proxy intervention. The consequences were not only years of cruel conflict, but also the destruction of almost every governmental system that people rely on to survive.

Today, two-thirds of the Yemeni population face one of the world's worst humanitarian crises from climate shocks, mass displacement and severe water shortages. More than 21 million civilians require urgent aid from the consequences of a crisis that shows no clear end. (*Yemen Crisis*, n.d.)

General Overview

Yemen before the conflict

Lying at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen has always been a crucial spot for trade. It was also one of the oldest centres of civilisation in the Near East because of its relatively fertile land and adequate rainfall. Greek geographer Ptolemy described it as 'Eudaimon Arabia' which means 'Fertile Arabia' or 'Happy Arabia'. Before the civil war, Yemen was a decently stable country, but it did suffer from corruption and poverty, with ~50% of its population living below the national poverty line. The economy was mostly dependent on oil. This was also one of the reasons of the destabilisation which eventually led to rebellion: Oil production was declining and the economy was not diversifying. Official unemployment was 17% but youth unemployment was estimated at 60%. (World Bank, 2026)

The unification of 1990

Before the unification Yemen was divided in two. In the South was the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, whose capital was Aden. In 1989 this was the only communist country in the Middle East; it was led by a single party, and allied with the USSR. In the North was the Arab Republic of Yemen, with its capital Sana'a. This was an Islamic state. It had more than triple the inhabitants of its southern neighbour and was much more prosperous. (Carapico, n.d.) With the end of the Cold War coming near, the USSR was weakening. This caused a decline in financial aid for South Yemen, paving the way for reunification talks. Then, in 1990 the Republic of Yemen was formed, with Sana'a as its capital.

The Gulf War and first difficulties

In 1991, the nation took a stance against the intervention in Iraq in the Gulf War. In response, western financial support to the nation was cancelled. During this period, many Yemeni workers were working in Saudi Arabia, but the Saudis were becoming more and more opposed to this. With this destabilisation and financial difficulties, in 1994 the southern leader Ali Salim al-Beidh, who was vice president of the unified state, led a movement to divide Yemen again. After a short civil war, the North prevailed and Yemen stayed unified.

The Houthis

In 2004, Zaydi Shia tribes in the north complained about being marginalised and started an insurrection. The rebels call themselves Houthis, named after their leader who was killed by the army. The group is very anti-American and anti-Zionist. (Al-Batati, 2025)

The Arab Spring and the Southern Movement

The unification of Yemen was causing continued frustration in the south. In 2007 the Southern Movement was formed, which is a separatist political group which participated in the Yemeni revolution in 2011. Encouraged by the Arab Spring, people marched on the streets for an end to corruption, a healthier economy and lower unemployment. President Saleh tries to stay in power, but is eventually replaced by his vice president Hadi who starts discussions on a more democratic form of government. (Yemen Revolution | Global Nonviolent Action Database)

The Yemeni civil war

In 2014, the promised reforms were not completed, and the Houthis were feeling resentful because they do not have any political power in their region. They take violent armed action and begin the Yemeni civil war, with support from part of the population and other forces loyal to former president Saleh, who tried to return to power. Together they conquered Sana'a, forcing Hadi to flee to Aden and then to Saudi Arabia. The international community sees this as a coup and condemns this action. Iran is also accused of militarily supporting the Houthi rebellion. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia does not want to see the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which is the fourth most important global sea crossing point for oil, in rebel hands. Saudi Arabia sets up an international coalition which attempts to restore Hadi to power, and they receive support in logistics and intelligence from the United States. The coalition starts bombarding strategic Houthi positions, while the UN imposes an embargo against the sale of arms to the Houthis and their allies. (*Yemen Civil War - Human Conflicts*)

Humanitarian consequences

The UN Development Programme estimated that the war had caused around 377,000 deaths by the end of 2021, with nearly 60% being indirect—meaning they stemmed from causes such as disease or hunger rather than direct combat (Al Jazeera, 2021). With 21.6 million people requiring humanitarian assistance, Yemen faces what the UN considers the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The Saudi-led coalition's naval and air blockade has restricted food, fuel, and medical imports, leading to widespread cholera outbreaks and famine. Furthermore, the coalition's air campaign has struck hospitals, schools, markets, weddings, and funeral halls, with weapons supplied by the US and UK identified at the sites of hundreds of civilian casualty incidents between 2021 and 2022. An estimated 4.5 million Yemenis have been internally displaced—many multiple times since 2015—80% of whom are women and children, making Yemen the fifth-largest internal displacement crisis globally.

Major Parties Involved

Houthis (Ansar Allah)

The Houthis, officially known as Ansar Allah, are a Zaydi Shia political and armed movement based mainly in northern Yemen. They took control of Sana'a in 2014 and became the main force opposing Yemen's internationally recognised government. The Houthis currently control large parts of northern and western Yemen, including the capital.

The Houthis are directly involved in the conflict through their control of territory and military operations against the Yemeni government and its allies. They have also launched missiles and drones towards neighbouring countries and attacked commercial shipping in the Red Sea, making the conflict an international security issue.

Presidential Leadership Council (PLC)

The Presidential Leadership Council is the body representing Yemen's internationally recognised government. It was established in 2022 to unite several anti-Houthi political and military factions under one governing structure. The PLC is primarily based in Aden and controls areas of Yemen outside Houthi territory.

The PLC is directly involved in the conflict because it seeks to maintain the authority of the Yemeni government and oppose Houthi territorial control. It receives substantial political, economic and military support from Saudi Arabia. However, disagreements between the factions within the PLC have made it difficult to establish a unified anti-Houthi position.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the most important external actors in the Yemen conflict. In 2015, it led a coalition that intervened militarily in Yemen in support of the internationally recognised government against the Houthis. Although its direct military involvement has decreased, Saudi Arabia continues to support the PLC and remains heavily involved in Yemen's political and security affairs.

Saudi Arabia is also directly affected by the conflict, as the Houthis have launched missiles and drones towards Saudi territory. Saudi Arabia has therefore sought to protect its borders while supporting efforts to reach a political settlement in Yemen.

Iran

Iran is an important external actor because of its political and military relationship with the Houthis. Iran has been accused by international governments and organisations of providing the Houthis with weapons, training and other forms of military assistance. Iran's involvement has contributed to the regional dimension of the Yemen conflict.

Iran's relationship with the Houthis is also connected to its broader rivalry with Saudi Arabia. However, the Houthis maintain their own political and military objectives and are not simply an Iranian proxy.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates participated in the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis from 2015 and supported several southern Yemeni political and armed groups. In particular, it supported the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which advocates greater autonomy or independence for southern Yemen.

The UAE reduced its direct military presence over the years, and in December 2025 the Yemeni government called on its remaining forces to leave after the STC seized large parts of southern Yemen. (CNN, 2026) Its previous involvement continues to influence Yemen's political landscape. Its support for southern factions contributed to divisions within the broader anti-Houthi side of the conflict.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations is involved in Yemen through diplomatic mediation, humanitarian assistance and efforts to establish a lasting political settlement. The UN Special Envoy for Yemen works with the Yemeni parties and regional actors to encourage negotiations and reduce violence.

The UN also coordinates much of the international humanitarian response in Yemen. It played an important role in the 2022 nationwide truce, which significantly reduced fighting, although it did not result in a permanent peace agreement.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The UN Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security and has adopted several resolutions concerning Yemen. These include measures relating to sanctions and restrictions on the transfer of weapons to the Houthis.

The Security Council remains involved because the conflict threatens not only Yemen's population but also regional stability and international shipping. It regularly discusses developments in Yemen and considers measures intended to support peace and security.

United States

The United States is involved in Yemen primarily because of regional security and the protection of international shipping. The US has supported the internationally recognised Yemeni government and has conducted military operations against Houthi targets in response to attacks on US interests and commercial vessels.

The US is particularly concerned with the security of the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, an important international shipping route connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.

Oman

Oman has mainly played a diplomatic rather than military role in the Yemen conflict. Its geographical position and relationships with different parties, including the Houthis, have allowed it to act as an intermediary.

Oman has facilitated communication and negotiations between opposing sides and has supported efforts to achieve ceasefires and a political settlement. Its role makes it an important actor in diplomatic attempts to resolve the conflict.

Timeline of Events

<i>[1990]</i>	[Yemen is unified, creating the Republic of Yemen from North and South Yemen]
<i>[2011]</i>	[Inspired by the Arab Spring, Yemeni civilians protest against the president, demanding an end to corruption]
<i>[2014]</i>	[The Houthi movement seizes control of Sana'a, trying to fight government corruption and mismanagement]
<i>[Jan 2015]</i>	[President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi resigns under pressure from the Houthis, the start of the Yemeni power struggle. He later withdraws his resignation from Aden.]
<i>[Mar 2015]</i>	[A Saudi military intervention attempts to restore Hadi's government as he flees to Saudi Arabia, causing a full-scale civil war]
<i>[June 2015]</i>	[The conflict causes widespread devastation with millions suffering from hunger, homelessness and displacement.]
<i>[2016]</i>	[A widespread cholera outbreak affects over 1 million people, and humanitarian aid is restricted by a blockade]
<i>[2018]</i>	[The UN reports that 22 million people require humanitarian assistance, with 8 million at risk of famine.]
<i>[2020]</i>	[COVID-19 causes even more poverty and food insecurity, a terrorist attack on the airport kills at least two dozen people]
<i>[Jan 2021]</i>	[The Trump Administration uses the December attack to justify calling Houthis a foreign terrorist organisation]
<i>[Feb 2021]</i>	[The Biden administration aims to revoke the designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organisation, and ends US support for the Saudi offensive]
<i>[Jan-Feb 2022]</i>	[Houthi rebels launch unprecedented attacks against the UAE and Saudi Arabia, including air attacks and seizing a Red Sea vessel. Saudi Arabia responds with a bombing]
<i>[Apr 2022]</i>	[A truce by the UN offers some hope, but clashes persist]
<i>[2023]</i>	[Disruptions in the Red Sea complicate humanitarian aid]
<i>[Jan 2024]</i>	[The Biden administration re-designates the Houthis as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group, a Houthi leader states that the group will continue escalating its attacks on Red Sea shipping if aggression against Gaza does not stop.]
<i>[July 2024]</i>	[The IDF launches an attack at a Yemeni port, targeting weapon storage facilities and petroleum infrastructures]

[Jan 2025] [Israeli Air Force conducts air strikes with American and British Air Forces on multiple Houthi targets]

[Jan 2026] [After the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council seizes large areas of the south in December 2025 and the UAE pulls out its remaining forces, Saudi-backed government forces move into Aden, the STC's stronghold (Al Jazeera, 2026)]

Possible Solutions

Renewed Peace Negotiations

The international community could support renewed negotiations between the Houthis, the internationally recognised Yemeni government and other relevant Yemeni political groups. The United Nations could continue acting as a neutral mediator. A long-term political agreement should address not only the Houthi-government conflict but also disagreements between southern and northern political factions.

Nationwide Ceasefire

A renewed nationwide ceasefire could reduce civilian casualties and create better conditions for negotiations. The agreement could include mechanisms for monitoring violations and ensuring that both sides are held accountable. Regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Oman could contribute by encouraging the parties they have influence over to respect the ceasefire.

Humanitarian Assistance

The international community should continue providing humanitarian aid to civilians affected by the conflict. This could include food, clean water, healthcare and assistance for displaced people. Humanitarian organisations should be given safe and reliable access to areas controlled by different parties.

Protection of International Shipping

Because attacks in the Red Sea have affected international shipping, measures could be taken to improve maritime security while avoiding further escalation of the conflict. International naval cooperation could protect commercial vessels, while diplomatic negotiations should address the underlying reasons for the attacks.

Reduction of Foreign Military Involvement

A long-term solution could involve reducing the supply of weapons and military support to Yemeni armed groups. Regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, could support diplomatic efforts instead of further military escalation. International agreements and monitoring mechanisms could help prevent the transfer of weapons that contribute to the continuation of the conflict.

Inclusive Political Settlement

A lasting solution would need to include Yemen's different political and regional groups. This could involve negotiations over the distribution of political power, regional autonomy and the country's future political structure. Including southern political movements, women and civil society organisations could help ensure that an eventual settlement represents a wider part of the Yemeni population.

Economic Reconstruction

The international community could support Yemen's economic recovery once security conditions allow. Assistance could focus on restoring infrastructure, healthcare, education and essential services. Economic reforms and the payment of public-sector salaries could also help reduce instability and improve living conditions.

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