



Research Report Security Council

Addressing the conflict in Yemen and the
situation of the Houthi Rebels

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Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

Introduction

In 1990, North and South Yemen were officially united, forming the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (DPRY). This unitary state marked the end of the civil war between North Yemen and the communist South Yemen. Unfortunately, this fragile equilibrium was shattered during the Arab Spring, which started in 2011. The state was torn apart, and since then, Yemen has been in an increasingly unstable and frail condition.

It is one of the worst current conflicts and humanitarian crises. Having been going on for about three years, the fighting caused more than 10,000 deaths, left more than 40,000 people injured and struck 80% of the population with food, with 4,5 million people needing treatment for malnutrition immediately.

Apart from the humanitarian catastrophe, Yemen is of international relevance due to its strategic location in the Gulf of Aden and its role in the power struggle between IS and opposing forces led by the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. The situation is too dangerous for the inhabitants and the UN Security Council must do all to resolve the situation

The committee

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council's powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations and international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.

Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created after World War II to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace. The Council held its first session on the 17th of January 1946.

The Security Council consists of fifteen members. China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are the five permanent members of the committee and have the right to veto any Security Council resolution. The other ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly to serve two-year terms.

In MUNA the Security Council consist of 15 double delegations. The countries that were in the Security Council in December before the start of the conference are selected. Security Council members prepare themselves the same as they would for other committees. However, since its resolutions will be made ad-hoc, the debate does not start with an entire resolution but is built up clause by clause during the debate and the Security Council will not participate in the plenary session.

Keywords

- Arab Spring

A series of anti-government uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, starting in 2010, in which protesters challenged the existing authoritarian regimes. The 2011 Yemeni Revolution is a part of the Arab Spring.

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The GCC is political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries. These countries are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The goal of the alliance is to achieve unity among its members

- Houthi

The Houthi movement, officially called the Ansah Allah, is an Islamic religious-political-armed movement that emerged in northern Yemen. They are one of the main belligerent groups in the Yemeni civil war.

- Proxy War

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

- Sunni and Shia Muslims

Sunni Islam and Shia Islam are two major denominations of Islam. They chose sides following the death of their prophet Mohammed in 632 AD. Sunni Muslims believe that after Mohammed's death, his father-in-law Abu Bakr was his rightful successor as Caliph, while Shiite Muslims believe that his rightful successor was his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib. Sunnis and Shiites have always lived together peacefully. However, some on-going conflicts still bear the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in their roots.

Background information

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

History

In order to create long-term resolutions to resolve the Yemeni crisis, it is first important to understand the history behind the conflict, and why it occurred.

- 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, Abrabbu Mansour Hadi in February 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 had to step down as president. This forced the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to intervene the matter. The GCC told Saleh that if he were to step down as president, he would be granted immunity from any prosecutions that followed.

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- The involvement of foreign nations

As Yemen was dominated by Sunnis, Saudi Arabia sided with Hadi's government. The Saudi 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 that the Yemen war has had on the health of inhabitants has not primarily been the focus of nations around the world. Despite interventions by the World Health Organization (WHO), the health situation in Yemen is quite dire. Around 3,3 million people in Yemen are malnourished, with around 2/3 of that group under the age of 18.

- The Cholera Outbreak

The cholera outbreak began in early October 2016. The WHO considers the outbreak to be unusual in its rapid and wide geographical spread. The main cause of the Cholera epidemic in Yemen is a result of a sewer system, which stopped working and a lack in proper hygienic services. The main cure for this Cholera outbreak is rehydration combined with antibiotics. Unfortunately, this is a luxury most people in Yemen do not have access to.

The United Nations has declared the outbreak in Yemen to be the worst in the world. The WHO estimates that around 500,000 people in Yemen suffer from Cholera, and approximately 2,000 are believed to have died from it.

- Food shortage

Yemen is the poorest nation in the Middle East. Before the civil war, the poverty rate nationwide was already at 50 percent. The United Nations has stated that The United Nations believes that the current crisis could very well become a famine over the coming months. Around 2 million people require food aid immediately, with around 2/3 of that group under the age of 18. An additional 14 million people out of the nation's 28 million are currently struggling for food. Despite WHO interventions, the food crisis is getting increasingly worse.

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Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1500s	The Ottomans absorb a part of Yemen into their empire, but they got expelled in the 1600s.
1849	The Ottomans return to the north of Yemen. They face a lot of revolt.
1918	The Ottoman Empire dissolves. This causes North Yemen to gain independency. North Yemen got ruled by Imam Yahya.
1948	Imam Yahya got assassinated. His son, Imam Ahmed succeeds his father.
1962	Imam Ahmed dies and is succeeded by his son, but army officers seize power. This leads to the set up of the Yemen Arab Republic. A civil war in North Yemen begins between royalists, backed by Saudi Arabia and the Republicans, supported by Egypt.
1970	End of the civil war.
1972	A ceasefire is brokered by the Arab League, following clashes at the border between North and South Yemen.
1978	North Yemen has a new president: Ali Abdallah Saleh.
1979-1990	After a period of fighting between North and South Yemen, they got united in 1990 as the Republic of Yemen under the leadership of President Saleh. Tensions remain.
May 1994	President Saleh declares a state of emergency and dismisses Vice-President Ali Salim Al-Beid and other Southern government members following fighting. A civil war breaks out, but the reunification occurs within a month after the south is defeated.
October 2000	The first Al-Qaeda attack occurs: USS Cole, a US naval vessel got damaged in an Al-Qaeda suicide attack. Seventeen US personnel were killed.
October 2002	Al-Qaeda attacks and badly damages oil super tanker MV Limburg in the Gulf of Aden, killing one and injuring twelve crewmembers. This costed Yemen a lot of port revenues.

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June-September 2004	A conflict breaks out between Yemeni troops and a Shia insurgency led by Hussein al-Houthi in northern Yemen. Houthi is killed in September by Yemeni forces and his father takes over.
January 2001	Uprising erupts in Yemen during the Arab Spring.
February 2012	There comes an end to the revolution in Yemen. Hadi becomes president.
September 2014	Houthi rebels take over Sana'a, the capital of Yemen.
March 2015	President Hadi flees to Saudi Arabia.
March 26 th , 2015	Saudi Arabia sets up coalition and starts airstrikes.
November 2017	The Houthi rebels launch a missile to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
December 2 nd , 2017	Former president Saleh starts negotiations with Saudi Arabia.
December 4 th , 2017	Former president Saleh is killed by Houthi rebels.
January 2018	NATO joins the Saudi-led coalition
July 4 th , 2018	A United Nations report stated that over 121,000 Yemenis had fled port city Hudaydah due to an attack by the Saudi-led coalition

Major countries and Organizations involved

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 have prevented it to be fully engaged in the war and rely heavily upon allies.

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 the capital of Yemen, 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.

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Iran

Although the Iranian government has denied some accusations, Iran is widely believed to be backing the Houthi rebels and to provide them with weapons and intelligence. Therefore Iran is another major party within the conflict. Iran has played a major role in escalating the Yemeni humanitarian crisis by causing the Yemen conflict to be a proxy war. Iran has also been backing the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah for the past years, an organization that has also provided weapons and intelligence to the Houthi rebels.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is leading the coalition of the Arab States to intervene in the civil war. Since 2015, they have launched airstrikes against the Houthis and forces. Supporting the Sunnis in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has staunchly remained loyal to the previous Yemeni government, with their main objective to reinstate Hadi into presidency.

The United States of America

Although not directly involved in the Yemeni conflict, the United States of America 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 greatest Allies of the United States. The US has provided them weapons and have further taught them how to use US manufactured planes and tanks, amongst other weapons.

The World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO, a UN agency, is primarily tasked with ensuring a healthier future for people all over the world. It does so by providing hygienic services, food, water and medicines in (conflict) zones all over the world.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Imposing sanctions on individuals it said there were undermining the stability of Yemen, the Security Council demanded that all parties in the embattled country, in particular the Houthis, immediately end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition.

Adopting resolution 2216 (2015) by 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russian Federation), the council also demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all areas seized during the latest conflict. The resolution also called upon all Yemeni parties to comply with the GCC and other initiatives.

Concerning the humanitarian crisis, a variety of UN agencies, such as the WHO, and non- governmental organizations have put effort into supplying the population with healthcare and food to prevent malnutrition and starvation. This has certainly helped many civilians, but as Saudi Arabia set up a blockade on Yemen and the funds of the organizations are insufficient, the aid that has been given has not been enough to help the whole population.

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Resolution

The civil war in Yemen is one of the most complicated conflicts currently going on with several countries and organizations each following their own interest. It is the task of the Security Council to define a path for this conflict to be solved. So far there are already measures in place but they did not achieve lasting peace or a drop of violence. Therefore, you as delegates have to think whether there are other possible solutions. To get you in the right direction, you could try to incorporate the answer of these questions in a resolution:

- Is there any possibility to force the Houthis to negotiate and follow the political transition process established after resignation of Saleh?
- How to deal with the Iranian government, who assumingly are helping the Houthis?
- In what way will the conflict be dealt with that does not evoke any other worsening of groups?

Links and sources

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