

Forum: *Security Council*

Issue: *The Situation in Yemen*

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Introduction

Since 2015, situated in the Arabian Peninsula, the civil war in Yemen has remained in a state of internal conflict ever since March of 2015. With the civil war revolving around the two main forces, the Yemeni government and the Houthi Rebels, the conflict quickly escalated into one of multiple rising issues that must be addressed by the international community. According to the United Nations, fourteen million Yemenis are facing food starvation, and eight civilians die from bombings or shootouts every day. Facing both economic and political concerns, all member nations must address the internal affairs and status quo of the situation in Yemen. With past invasion coalitions led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UN also estimates that the coalition airstrikes backed by the Yemeni government are responsible for at least sixty percent of all civilian deaths. Though lacking a strong air force, reports also claim that the Houthi rebels have shelled civilian neighborhoods and laid landmines across the conflict zone, contributing to the many deaths of innocent men and children.

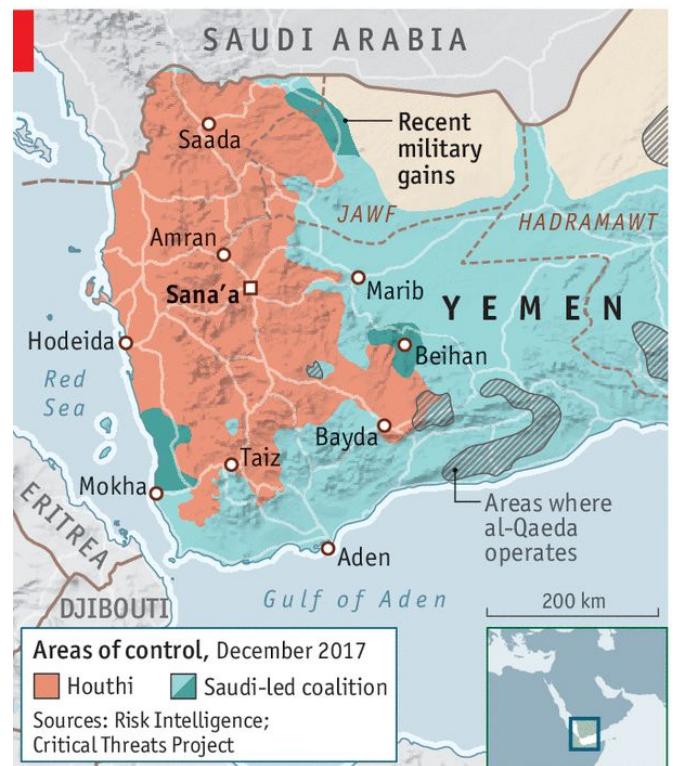


Figure 1: Map of the Yemen Conflict

In order to effectively address the issue, member nations must address the needs of the civilian population in Yemen as well as appealing to both the Yemeni government and the Houthis to prevent rising tensions in the peninsula. Countries must also acknowledge the disparity in political and religious

views to truly transition the state of Yemen into a peaceful democratic society that best ensures the safety of all.

Definition of Key Terms

The Houthi movement

The Houthi movement, also known as Ansar Allah, is an armed political-religious campaign with the central goal of combating corruption in the Yemenis government. The movement arose in the late 20th century and initially preached tolerance and peace according to professor Ahmed Addagashi from the Sana'a University. Following a branch of Shia Islam known as the Zaidi Sect, the group is led by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi and currently maintains a strong presence in the northern province of Saada.

Sunnis

As the largest denomination of Islam, the Sunnis are one of the two member branches of Islam. The group is originated from the term *Sunnah*, which alludes to the actions and behaviors of prophet Muhammad. In Yemen, the Sunnis constitute around 65% of the Yemenis Muslim population, with most living in the South and East.

Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), internally displaced people (IDPs) refer to individuals who have lost their homes but “stay within their country and remain under the protection of its government, even if that government is the reason of their displacement.” In other words, while similar but slightly different from a refugee, IDPs are essentially victims of civil wars, yet are unable to flee from their country. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) claims that as of December 2017, over 2 million people are displaced as a result of conflict and violence.

Sana'a

As the largest city and the capital of Yemen, the region of Sana'a today is under the control of the Houthis. The city was invaded by the Houthis after the September 21 Revolution, heightening tensions between the government and the rebels in the civil war. Sana'a houses the presidential palace, the parliament, Yemenis supreme court, as well as the government ministries. The region is also divided into the Old City District, otherwise known as al-Qadimah, and the new city, known as al-Jadid.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic union consisting of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was founded on May 25, 1981, in Riyadh. Though never admitted membership, Yemen underwent negotiations in 2015 with the GCC to be added as a new member due to similar cultural alignments. Since then, however, with the eruption of the Yemen war, the GCC has been heavily involved in the war with imposed blockades in the region.

Background Information

Historical division of Yemen

In the early to mid 20th century, the entire region of Yemen was predominantly split into two portions: there was the north, or the Northern Yemen Arab Republic (NYAR), and the south, or the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The two regions were bordered by the distinction between the British and Ottoman rule, and both regions were culturally divergent given the 1000 year-long Zaidi theocratic rule, or a branch of Shi'ism found exclusively in Yemen.

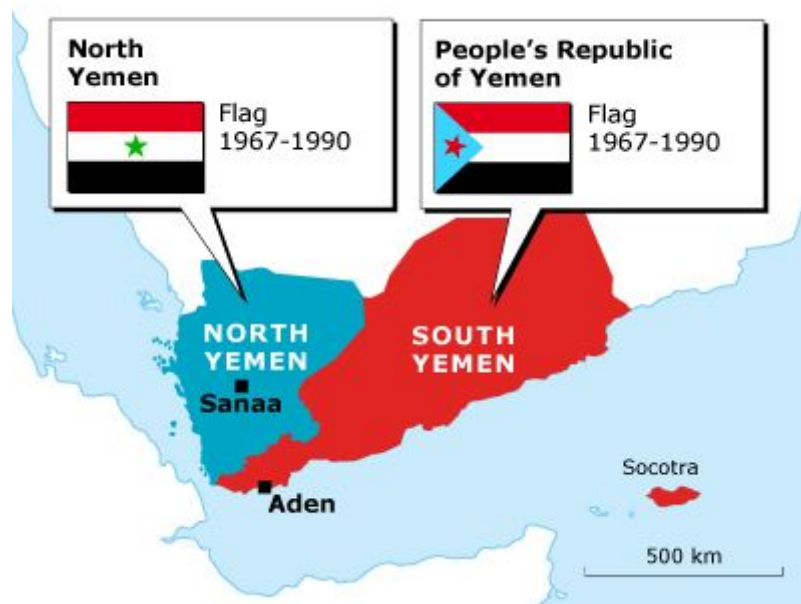


Figure 2: Map of Yemen prior to its unification

On May 22, 1990, the NYAR was unified with the PDRY and became what is known today as Yemen. Ali Abdullah Saleh from the north became the Yemen Head of State, and Ali Salim al-Beidh from

the south became the Head of Government. Soon, governmental reforms in the unified state were carried out, appointing a prime minister and a jointly elected presidential council.

Demands for reform

With President Saleh's rule expected to last longer, many people immediately began to protest and demand for reform from the government, calling for better lives he had continued to promise. For a moment in time, Yemen was one of the poorest countries in the world, with unemployment and inflation rates spreading across the country. Reports also indicated that forty percent of Yemen's population lived less than two dollars a day. With charges of corruption and mismanagement, many citizens protested for change and demanded president Saleh to step down. Protestors clashed with the Yemen police force in Sana'a, Yemen's capital, where government loyalists remained at the scene. Within a few months after the protest, Saleh's reign ended when he brokered a deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council and agreed to step down, handing over his power to Abdrabbuh Hadi, Yemen's current president. President Hadi was elected as the only capable candidate on paper in the election in 2012.

Perpetual struggle in Yemen

Although President Hadi promised for reforms that would better improve the poor living conditions in the country, the Yemeni government was faced with continued accusations of corruption, food shortages, and financial indiscrepancies. This on one hand not only allowed the Al Qaeda terrorists to establish some authority in the region, but it also brought along the Houthi movement that would soon clash with the governmental forces. In March 2013, President Hadi called upon the National Dialogue Conference to bring together Yemen's diverse issues. Hadi emerged with a speech that sought for reform in the government, calling for a federal model of government for the future of Yemen. However, critics have claimed that those living in the mountainous regions of Yemen would be more detached from the government and receive less pay, leading to a "decentralized" state that would affect many lives.

Further political outrage

In July 2014, President Hadi lifted fuel subsidies after being intensely pressured by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This led to huge public backlash and criticism among many, and the Northern Houthis continued to protest the government for their believed inability to lead the country with widespread economic failure. Two months later, the Houthis took control of Sana'a, Yemen's capital, and proceeded to take control southward of the Yemen's second-largest city, Aden. The rebels immediately

seized the presidential palace and placed President Hadi under house arrest. Subsequently, the president attempted to escape to his hometown Aden and denounced the Houthi invasion.

Third-party intervention

In 2015, former President Saleh re-emerged as allies with the Houthi fighters. The Houthi rebels were slowly gaining territorial control in Yemen as indicated by the first figure. With government instability at its peak, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia along with Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Senegal, and Sudan was formed as requested by President Hadi to suppress the Houthis. Code named as Operation Decisive Storm, the coalition was launched in compliance with Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, with conducted bombings and an eventually imposed naval blockade in the region. The UAE also deployed ground troops in the south. After the entire Saada Governorate was declared by Saudi Arabia as a military target, the UN declared Yemen a “level three” state of emergency, or the highest UN emergency level, on July 1, 2015 for six months.

The result of the Saudi-led coalition were responsible for the many deaths, notably from the notorious airstrikes that are still conducted today. Since December 10, 2015, over 2.5 million people have been displaced as a result of the fighting, and over a million victims have fled the country for Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan. The war has also provoked a famine crisis, described by UNICEF as “a living hell for children,” claiming that in every 10 minutes a child is dying as a result of the war. Reports also indicate that about 85,000 children have died as a result of starvation.

Saudi-led coalition against Yemeni rebels



Figure 3: Map of the Decisive Storm Coalition (Source: al-Arabiya)

Key Issues

Terrorism

Regardless of the political parties in the conflict actively seizing territorial control in Yemen, the growing presence of terrorism have also been responsible for the deaths of many. The US government describes Yemen as “an important partner in the global war of terrorism.” Since 2002, many terrorist attacks have broken out in the region prior to the civil war involving the Houthi rebels. In October of that year, suicide bombers rammed an explosive boat into *Limburg*, a French oil tanker that spilled over 90,000 barrels into the Gulf of Aden; it is speculated that former Al Qaeda leader Abu Ali al-Harithi bought and transported the explosives. On January 19, 2007, Al Qaeda members sent death threats to Jews living in the region, accusing them of their involvement in the “international Zionist conspiracy.”

Reports have also shown that the Islamic State (IS) has been actively involved in the region, organizing assassinations and direct attacks against both the Yemen government as well as the Houthi rebels. The instability of Yemen has allowed terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State to assert their influence in the region, and in some cases even serve as de facto rulers in certain regions.

Health risks

Cholera outbreak

Another growing issue in the last few years in Yemen is the spread of disease amongst the civil community. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the cholera outbreak in Yemen has increased to about 10,000 suspected cases reported a week. The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) also claimed that almost 2 million children are malnourished, making them more prone to disease. Over 2500 deaths have been reported in the region, with children accounting for 30 percent of all cholera infections in the region. With thousands of victims as a result of the spread of disease, the poor living conditions in the region would only be exacerbated by the political war in Yemen.

According to Save the Children, a nonprofit charity organization promoting children’s rights in Yemen, the bombings and airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia had damaged a sanitation facility with clean water supply held by the Houthi rebels. After the bombings, reports claim that the suspected cholera cases even doubled, speculating that the bombings may have been

responsible for the spread of disease. Since then, the WHO has continued to distribute aid and medication to victims in the districts, attempting to extend its program to other parts of Yemen.

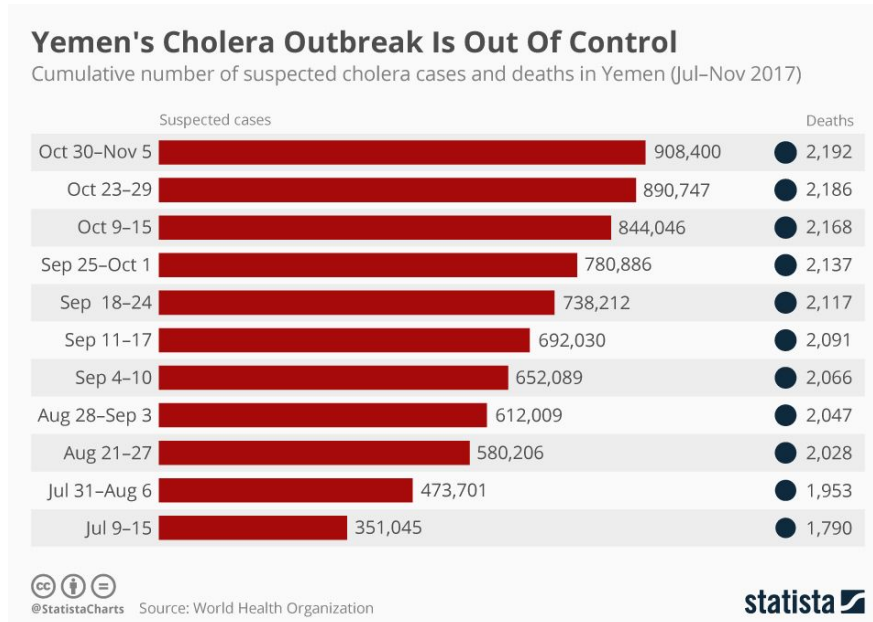


Figure 3: Diagram of Cholera outbreaks in Yemen (Source: WHO)

Hunger and starvation

According to the top UN emergency relief officials, Yemen is transitioning into what would become known as one of the “worst famines in living memory.” Statistics indicate that as many as half the population, more specifically 14 million people, are almost entirely dependent on external aid to survive, including access to basic resources and sustainable food supplies. With shipment blocked as a result of the conflict, resources are unable to enter the country to aid those in need, and food prices have nearly doubled according to Save the Children. Fighting around the port city of Hodeida also made it more extremely difficult to import adequate food supplies for the starving civilians in the region. With gradual damage to public infrastructure as a result of the war, the international community should also address the economy of the nation to ensure sustainable living for the civilians in the war. Today, at least 8.4 million people are at risk of starvation and 22.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. Severe acute malnutrition is threatening the lives of almost 400,000 children under the age of five.

Airstrikes and bombing coalitions

With Saudi Arabia as the forefront of the many bombing attacks in Yemen, attempting to seize the Houthi rebels, many innocent victims have been reportedly killed in these bombings unintentionally. With Saudi Arabia as the US’s main customer for military arms and bombing equipment, both countries have

claimed that they would “limit” the civilian casualties in the Yemen conflict, keeping in mind of the numerous human rights violations committed by dropping such bombs. For instance, when Saudi Arabia dropped a bomb from a warplane on August 9 of 2018, over 40 children aged from 6 to 11 were killed when the kids were attending a school trip. CNN reports that the weapon used in the incident was a 227 kg laser-guided bomb manufactured by Lockheed Martin, a US military manufacturing company that sold thousands of goods to Saudi Arabia. Although the Obama administration halted the sale of guided munition technology to Saudi Arabia after a funeral hall was bombed in October 2016, the Trump administration immediately reinstated the sales of military weaponry, prolonging the bombing coalition in the Yemen crisis.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The Middle East

Iran

As a ninety percent Shia-dominant country, Iran has been accused of supporting the Houthi movement in the Yemen war with early Shia roots since Islam’s origin. Although Tehran continues to deny that they provide arms and resources to the Houthis, the US Navy has intercepted at least two ships in the Arab Channels from Iran packed with weapons and resources for the Houthis. In another 2015 UN report, claims that Iran provided the rebels with arms, money, and training have stirred debate over the involvement of Iran in the proxy war. Ultimately, this most likely correlates with allowing the Houthis to gain better grounds in the peninsula ever since the conflict.

Saudi Arabia

Contrary to Iran, Saudi Arabia’s Muslim population is 80% Sunni. As it geographically shares a portion of its border with Yemen, Saudi Arabia has addressed its concerns over the Houthi movement, which exacerbates the proxy war given Iran’s claimed support for the rebels. In response to this, Saudi Arabia led a military coalition in 2015 with several African and Middle Eastern countries after President Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia in response to the Houthi invasion. Fighter operations, air bombings, and naval blockades were and still are being conducted today. Most of all, with many civilians being caught in the airstrikes, Saudi Arabia’s aggressive stance in Yemen left the UN on July 1, 2015, to declare Yemen a “level three” (the highest UN emergency level) emergency for six months. As Saudi Arabia’s financial resources allow them to continue purchasing military equipment and munitions from the United States, the UN has accused Saudi

Arabia of several human rights violations including rape, torture, disappearance, and the “deprivation of the right to life.”

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Similar to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also been actively involved in the war, where it has regularly taken part in the Yemen bombing raids. The UAE also opposes the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. Given Yemen’s geographic strategic importance, the UAE fully supports the Saudi-led coalition to contain Iranian influence in the region. Through the Red Crescent Society, the UAE has spent millions of dollars providing assistance to the Yemen government including the payment of government workers to ensure the continuation of their services. With the UAE’s main focus in the South of Yemen, the country had previously sent troops in the region earlier in the conflict but now has launched humanitarian programs aimed to provide assistance and help train the local military fighters. UAE also recognizes Al Qaeda as a threat to their royal family.

United States of America (USA)

Since the conflict in 2015, the United States of America has provided support for the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi rebels in the region. In attempt to suppress Iranian influence in the region, the US has supported Saudi Arabia with established naval blockades to prevent Iran from smuggling resources to the Houthis. Ever since the Obama administration, the US has provided the Saudis with arms including F-15 fighter jets, armored vehicles, a missile-defense system, and bombs. Although Saudi Arabia became a large customer for US weaponry, many American-manufactured bombs have claimed the responsibility for the deaths of many civilians in Yemen, including a US-supplied MK-84 bomb in March 2016 that killed almost 100 people. The international community has become significantly critical of the American involvement in the war as well as Saudi Arabia’s inexperience with airstrike coalitions and bombings.

United Kingdom (UK)

Like the United States of America, the United Kingdom (UK) has also shown active interest in supporting Saudi troops and the coalition. The UK has provided military resources by selling arms and providing training to Saudi Arabia. Since Saudi Arabia entered the battle in Yemen, arms sales from the UK has increased five fold. As a result, similar to the US, the British government has been accused of providing arms that are responsible for the deaths of many Yemeni citizens. According to the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), the British government was called upon to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia as it failed to comply with British arms export criteria including the direction that sale should not

take place if there is a clear risk that British-made arms may be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Indeed, the supplies supported by the UK have caused serious damage in the Yemen crisis.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
1918	<p>Early Independence in Northern Yemen</p> <p>As the Ottoman Empire dissipates, Northern Yemen gains independence and is ruled by Imam Yahya.</p>
September 26, 1962	<p>North Yemen Civil War</p> <p>Yahya's son Imam Ahmad dies, and army officers seize control and set up the Yemen Arab Republic, causing a civil war between the Saudi Arabian royalists and Egypt-backed republicans.</p>
May 22, 1990	<p>The Unification of Yemen</p> <p>The Republic of Yemen is formed after the five separate regions within the area. General Ali Abdullah Saleh is elected as the president of the unified country.</p>
February 2002	<p>Al Qaeda's Presence</p> <p>The Yemeni government expels over 100 foreign Islamic clerics from the country under the suspicion of the presence of Al-Qaeda.</p>
March 2005	<p>Houthi Clash</p> <p>Fighting between the rebels under Hussein al-Houthi and the government continue in Yemen, with more than 200 people killed</p>
September 2011	<p>Protests over Yemeni Government</p> <p>Over 2 million Yemenis call for the removal of President Abdullah Saleh from power after unarmed protestors were injured by governmental forces in a university in Sana'a in March.</p>
February 25, 2012	<p>President Hadi Takes Power</p>

President Saleh resigns from power and vice president Abdrabbuh Rabu Mansour Hadi takes power and becomes the current Yemeni president.

The National Dialogue Conference

January 24, 2014

President Hadi, along with the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), sign on an agreement to the NDC document, calling for Yemen to be transformed into a 6-federal system. Sana'a did not have a special status and will not be part of any region.

September 2014

Houthis take Sana'a

The Houthi Rebels take control of Sana'a, Yemen's capital.

Saudi-led Airstrikes

June 12, 2015

A Saudi-led airstrike targeting Shiite rebels and their allies in Yemen led to the destruction of historic buildings as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Formation of the Southern Transitional Council (STC)

May 11, 2017

the Southern Transitional Council (STC) is formed, consisting of 26 members of the governors from Southern Yemen as well as two government ministers.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- 21st October 2011 (**S/RES/2014**)
- 26th February 2014 (**S/RES/2140**)
- 5th February 2015 (**S/RES/2201**)
- 24th February 2016 (**S/RES/2266**)
- 23rd February 2017 (**S/RES/2342**)
- 26th February 2018 (**S/RES/2402**)
- 21st December 2018 (**S/RES/2451**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

With the imminence of the pressing issue today, the UN has taken many measures to cope with the crisis in Yemen. However, it should also be noted that the UN has not been able to achieve a peaceful and long lasting solution that addresses all sides of the parties. Given the nature of the Security Council, plans including the creation of a neutral, investigative body have been blocked by members

involved in the war, discussing the many war crimes that the United States and the United Kingdom committed through the conducted bombings. The involvement of the GCC and vague declarations against the nature of the Houthi movement may have brought forward the international community in taking the right legal actions, but the prolonged use of military strategies have only deteriorated the situation in Yemen on the long run. Thus, it is with utmost importance for the members of the Security Council to seek both feasible and applicable solutions on the long run.

Countries like the US and the UK as granted with their P5 powers are likely to use their veto threat as a means of stopping actions that call for a halt to the military coalition. This has made solving the issue a significantly complex matter, to appease all parties in the Yemen crisis. Past resolutions including Resolution 2216 have been called to be biased towards the Houthis, with actions carried out that seemed to justify the continuation of military strategies utilized by the government and other member states. The UN must address the topic with great oversight towards the involved actions in Yemen and the international humanitarian laws that seek to establish order and peace in the conflict zone.

Possible Solutions

To effectively address and combat the issue in Yemen, the international community must take actions that address all the aforementioned aspects of the conflict region. While it is important for all parties in the conflict to be addressed, the process of disarmament and establishing peace in the region is one that takes into careful account of all the factors of war to transition into a peaceful government. It is also essential to note all the involved parties, including the third party countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, to reach consensus among not just the Arabian peninsula but also for the entire international community. Though currently in a less aggressive state, both the Houthi rebels and the government should first establish an agreed legal ceasefire before reforming the nation. Not only does this halt the violation of more international humanitarian laws, but it also engages both sides of the party towards becoming a unified state. It is true that the Houthi rebels have gained a significant portion of the region, but the Saudi-backed Yemeni government must first acknowledge the presence of the rebels to conduct dialogue in the region to stop any more attacks especially in the recent decade.

With a ceasefire established, the international community can also turn to reopening trade in the region given the imposed trade barriers so that the country can import resources that can aid those in need, especially those suffering from starvation and disease. The reopening of these ports can allow for the flow of food, water, and important medical supplies that can help citizens whose homes are destroyed and pulled into suffering as a result of the war.

When drafting resolutions in the committee, member states must also address the existing humanitarian laws and treaties. No matter which party or side of the conflict, it is under the international community's moral obligation to protect the lives of the civilians. By establishing a legal framework, and to prevent any loopholes for either party to abuse, the international community can work towards effectively implementing the legal measures in the conflict. Additionally, by considering a fully transparent and objective third party for supervision, peace can once again be restored in the region of Yemen where citizens can live without risking their lives in the war.

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