

**Committee: DISEC 2**

**Topic: The question of Yemen**

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## Summary

The Yemen civil war started in 2014 stemming from political, economic, and sectarian violence following the Arab Spring. The conflict began when President Ali Abdullah Saleh was removed from power, and his successor, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi struggled with economic challenges and corruption prompting the Houthi movement, a northern Shia rebel group, to seize the capital, Sanaa. This resulted in a Saudi-led coalition intervention to restore Hadi's government, introducing a regional power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, accused of backing the Houthis. The war persists due to this geopolitical rivalry, internal Yemeni divisions, and the involvement of militant groups like AQAP and ISIS. The conflict has created a severe humanitarian crisis, drawing international criticism and highlighting the broader Middle East power struggle, with implications for global security. Urgent international efforts are needed to address the humanitarian disaster and achieve a political resolution.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Yemen Civil War** - Armed conflict starting in 2014, involving multiple factions including the Houthis, government forces, and a Saudi-led coalition.

**Houthis** - Also known as Ansar Allah, a Zaidi Shia insurgent group controlling northern Yemen and aligned with Iran.

**Arab Spring** - Series of uprisings in Arab countries from late 2010, leading to political instability and transitions, including in Yemen.

**Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi** - Former president of Yemen, recognized by Saudi Arabia and the international community, opposed by Houthi rebels.

**Saudi-led Coalition** - Military alliance supporting the internationally recognized Yemeni government against Houthi rebels, including airstrikes and ground operations.

**Iranian Involvement** - Alleged support of Houthi rebels by Iran, escalating regional tensions and geopolitical dynamics.

**Proxy War** - Conflict where external powers support opposing factions, in Yemen's case, Saudi Arabia (backing Hadi) and Iran (allegedly backing Houthis).

**United Nations Resolution 2216** - Adopted in 2015, calls for Houthi withdrawal from seized areas and for political dialogue to resolve the crisis.

**Blockade of Yemen** - Imposed by the Saudi-led coalition, restricting imports and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

**Tribal Dynamics** - Influence of tribal affiliations and loyalties in Yemeni society, impacting political alignments and conflict dynamics.

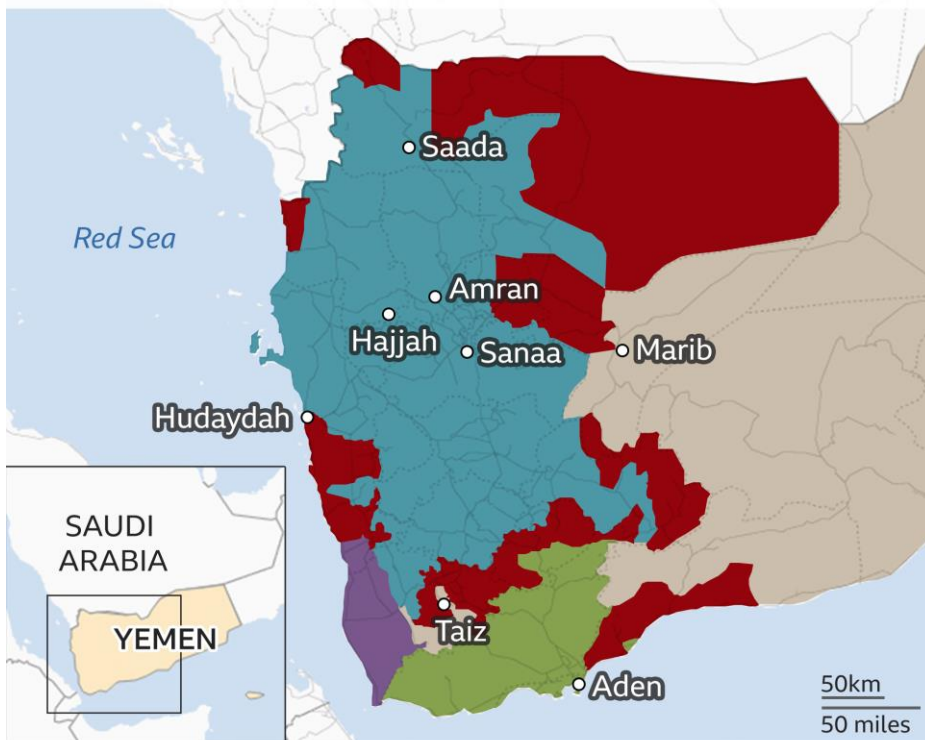
**Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** - Active terrorist organization exploiting the chaos in Yemen, posing a threat to regional and global security.

**Peace Talks** - Various attempts, facilitated by the UN and other actors, to negotiate ceasefires and political settlements, often stymied by ongoing conflict.

## Background Information

### Yemen: Areas of control and conflict

- Conflict zones
- Yemeni government forces
- Houthi forces
- UAE-backed anti-Houthi forces opposed to government
- UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces



Source: Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, May 2020



Figure 1- showing the controlling powers over certain areas in Yemen.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Yemen, situated on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, has been embroiled in a devastating civil war since 2014, stemming from a complex mix of political, economic, and sectarian tensions worsened, by the fallout from the Arab Spring in 2011. The conflict has led to widespread suffering and a humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions.

The Yemeni civil war escalated in September 2014 when Houthi rebels, supported by forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, seized control of the capital, Sanaa. The Houthis, a Zaidi Shia insurgent group from northern Yemen, had long been marginalized and excluded from political power, despite their significant demographic presence in the country. Their takeover of Sanaa marked a significant shift in the balance of power and triggered a military response from a Saudi-led coalition in March 2015, aiming to restore the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi.

One of the key aspects of the Yemeni conflict is the control and administration of disputed territories (Figure 1). After seizing Sanaa, the Houthis expanded their control over much of northern Yemen, including strategic areas like the port city of Hudaydah on the Red Sea coast. Hudaydah is crucial because it serves as a major entry point for humanitarian aid and commercial goods into Yemen. The Houthis' control over Hudaydah has been fiercely contested due to its strategic importance and has been a focal point of international efforts to secure a ceasefire and ensure humanitarian access.

In addition to Hudaydah, the Houthis have maintained a strong presence in other northern provinces, including Saada, their traditional stronghold. The group has utilized local alliances, tribal networks, and military prowess to consolidate its control over these areas, often facing resistance from local militias and forces loyal to President Hadi. The Houthis have established their own administrative structures, providing basic services and governance to the areas under their control, albeit amidst ongoing conflict and humanitarian challenges.

The Yemeni civil war has had a devastating impact on civilians throughout the country. Conflict-related violence, including airstrikes and ground fighting, has resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and widespread displacement. The destruction of essential infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, and water facilities, has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, leaving millions of Yemenis without access to basic services and vulnerable to disease outbreaks like cholera and diphtheria.

The blockade imposed by the Saudi-led coalition on Yemen's ports has compounded the humanitarian suffering by restricting imports of food, fuel, and medical supplies. This has led to severe shortages and skyrocketing prices, pushing Yemen to the brink of famine. The United Nations has repeatedly called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, unrestricted humanitarian access, and a negotiated political settlement to address the root causes of the conflict.

The international community, led by the United Nations, has expressed grave concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen and the continued loss of civilian lives. The UN Security Council has called for all parties to respect international humanitarian law and human rights, protect civilians, and facilitate humanitarian assistance to those in need. Despite these efforts, achieving a

sustainable peace remains elusive, with continued violence and political deadlock prolonging the suffering of the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni civil war remains one of the world's most pressing humanitarian crises, with its origins rooted in political instability, economic hardship, and regional power struggles. The control and administration of disputed territories, such as Hudaydah, underscore the complex dynamics of the conflict and the challenges facing international efforts to broker a lasting peace. Urgent action is needed to address the humanitarian needs and find a political solution that restores stability and ensures the well-being of all Yemenis.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description
21/09/2014	Houthi rebels seize control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, after months of protests against President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi's government.
22/01/2015	President Hadi and his cabinet resign amid escalating violence and political instability.
26/03/2015	Saudi Arabia launches a military intervention, leading a coalition of Arab states in airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen. The coalition aims to restore Hadi's government and prevent Iranian influence.
13/04/2015	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2216, demanding Houthi withdrawal from seized areas and reinstatement of Hadi's government.
13/12/2017	Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had allied with the Houthis, is killed by Houthi forces after switching sides to support the Saudi-led coalition.
13/06/2018	Saudi-led coalition launches an offensive to retake the port city of Hudaydah, a crucial entry point for humanitarian aid.
13/12/2018	UN-sponsored peace talks in Sweden lead to the Stockholm Agreement, which includes a ceasefire in Hudaydah and prisoner exchanges. Implementation remains challenging.
10/12/2019:	UN warns that Yemen is on the brink of a major famine, with millions facing food insecurity due to conflict and economic collapse.
01/03/2021	President Biden announces an end to U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen, signalling a shift in American policy towards the conflict.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events and their Outcome

### UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (14/04/2015):

**Aim:** Demands Houthi withdrawal from seized areas and restoration of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi's government.

**Outcome:** Partially achieved. The resolution was intended to facilitate a political solution and halt Houthi advancements. However, implementation has been challenging, with ongoing conflict and territorial disputes persisting.

### UN-Sponsored Peace Talks in Switzerland (17/12/2015):

**Aim:** Facilitate negotiations between Yemeni factions to reach a ceasefire and political agreement.

**Outcome:** Limited success. The talks led to temporary ceasefire agreements but failed to establish a sustainable peace framework. Renewed hostilities resumed shortly afterward.

### Stockholm Agreement (13/12/2018):

**Aim:** Brokered by the UN, this agreement aimed to achieve a ceasefire in the strategic port city of Hudaydah, facilitate humanitarian access, and initiate prisoner exchanges.

**Outcome:** Partial success. While the ceasefire in Hudaydah initially reduced hostilities and allowed some humanitarian aid to flow, violations have occurred, and full implementation remains elusive due to ongoing tensions and mistrust between parties.

### UN Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan:

**Aim:** Coordinated by UNOCHA, aims to provide humanitarian aid and support to millions of Yemenis affected by the conflict.

**Outcome:** Ongoing. The response plan has mobilized international humanitarian efforts to address the dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen, providing food, medical care, and essential services. However, funding gaps and access constraints continue to hinder full implementation and impact.

### UN Special Envoy for Yemen:

**Aim:** Appointed by the UN Secretary-General to facilitate peace talks and negotiations between Yemeni parties.

**Outcome:** Mixed results. Various special envoys have made efforts to mediate between conflicting factions and promote dialogue. While some agreements have been reached, sustainable peace remains elusive due to deep-seated grievances, regional rivalries, and continued violence on the ground.

## UN Human Rights Council Reports on Yemen:

**Aim:** Document human rights abuses and violations committed during the conflict, advocating for accountability and justice.

**Outcome:** Reports have highlighted widespread violations, including attacks on civilians, recruitment of child soldiers, and humanitarian access restrictions. However, achieving accountability and justice has been challenging amidst ongoing conflict and limited international consensus on accountability mechanisms.

## UN Security Council Statements and Resolutions:

**Aim:** Condemn attacks on civilians, call for humanitarian access, and urge all parties to respect international humanitarian law.

**Outcome:** Statements and resolutions have played a crucial role in shaping international responses and humanitarian efforts in Yemen. However, challenges in implementation persist due to the complex and volatile nature of the conflict.

## Possible Solutions

**Political Negotiations and Inclusive Dialogue:** Facilitate inclusive peace talks with international mediation to resolve political grievances and integrate armed groups, fostering national reconciliation.

**Humanitarian Access and Relief Efforts:** Ensure unrestricted humanitarian aid delivery across Yemen, prioritizing vulnerable populations and minimizing bureaucratic hurdles.

**Ceasefire Implementation and Monitoring:** Implement a monitored nationwide ceasefire to protect civilians and lay the groundwork for broader peace negotiations.

**Economic Reconstruction and Development:** Support Yemen's economic recovery through targeted reconstruction, job creation, and infrastructure investments.

**Regional Diplomatic Engagement and Security Guarantees:** Foster regional diplomatic engagement to address security concerns and build trust through commitments to non-interference and sovereignty respect.

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*Figure 1: Yemen Control Map. BBC News. Retrieved*

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