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# **2019**

# **ChaIr REPORT**

## specIal polItIcal and decolonIzatIon commIttee (specpol)

## addressIng the Issue of the war In yemen

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**Introduction**

Arab world’s poorest country Yemen’s civil war is the world’s largest and the worst humanitarian crisis according to United Nations. At least 10,000 Yemenis had died; more than 3 million people have been displaced. Yemenis are facing starvation and diseases/ cholera epidemic.

According to United Nations, the conflict has seen widespread violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. The poorest country in the Arab region has become the center of violence.

For nearly 40 years, Middle East is locked in a cold war for economic, geopolitical and sectarian influence between Saudi Arabia, majority of Sunni Muslim Kingdom, and Iran, home of Shiite Islam.

The Saudis and Iranians have never actually declared war on each other, instead they fight indirectly by supporting opposing sides in other countries (war in Iraq / Syrian civil war / YEMEN’S CIVIL WAR) and inciting conflicts that is known as proxy warfare.

**Key Vocabulary**

**2011 Arab Spring:** Arab Spring, wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the [Middle East](https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East) and [North Africa](https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Africa) beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region’s entrenched [authoritarian](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authoritarian) regimes. Demonstrators expressing political and economic grievances faced violent crackdowns by their countries’ security forces. Yemen is one of the countries affected from the Arab Spring

**The Houthis:** The Houthis are the Shia rebel group; they have been at war with Saleh’s government for years. Houthis claimed the government discriminated them for years, mistreated them; and their fight is to be treated fairly.

The Houthis receive money and weapons from Iran to overthrow Yemenis government. Saudi Arabia blames Iran because of the missiles, military aids to the Houthis which Tehran denies.

**Saudi-led Coalition:** Coalition of 10 countries which are, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar (expelled from the coalition in 2017), Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia, neighboring Saudi Arabia who is backed by US.

The coalition supports Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadiformer Yemeni government. Also supported by the US, Germany, France, England and Turkey with intelligence, logistic or weapons.

Local observers in the Yemen Data Project say almost 1/3 of the Saudi led coalition airstrikes had targeted non-military zones such as marketplaces, schools, hospitals etc.

**ISIL:** Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant also known as ISIS/ISIL and Islamic State (IS).

The group implements Sharia Law, rooted in 18th century Islam, to establish a society that mirrors the region’s ancient past

**Al-Qaeda:** al-Qaeda is formed in 1988. It’s one of the most powerful terrorist organizations in the world, with a long history and a global reach. AQ and its affiliates have been responsible for many of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the past 25 years.

**Focused Overview**

In late January 2011—after a popular uprising in Tunisia, known as the Jasmine Revolution, thousands of protesters gathered in Sanaa and several other Yemeni cities to call on Saleh to step down as president. The result of the 2011 Arab Spring, Yemenis protested country’s long time ruling President Ali Abdullah Saleh, criticized for causing widespread unemployment and government corruption. In November, Saleh was forced to hand over his position to Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The political transition to Hadi failed: massive unemployment, food insecurity, suicide bombings, separatist movements in the South occurred/continued.

UN sponsored national dialogue was established to address the future of the country. Presidential panel approved draft federal constitution. However, tensions flored again when a proposal was made to divide Yemen into 6 federal regions. The Houthis and a southern separatist movement called “the Hirank” objected the proposal stating that the proposal was “undermining their own distinct interests and national vision”. The government couldn’t maintain order.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and DAESH took advantage of the political instability across country. Meantime, Houthis were making territorial gains but lacked military power. They turned to Saleh, two sides collaborated. In 2017 Saleh offered to put an end to the fight with the Saudi-led Coalition. Saleh was found dead 2 days later. Hotuhis admitted killing him. Most of Saleh’s supporters became anti-Houthi.

Meanwhile, the Hadi government was dealing with a separatist force in the South- backed militarily and financially by United Arab Emirates.

Houthi forces took over Yemen’s capital Sanaa. Next year, Saleh loyalists and Houthis tried to take control of the entire country, forcing Hadi to flee Saudi Arabia.

**MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED**

**Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia considers the conflict as a blatant act of aggression by the Iranian regime and could rise to be considered as an act of war against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has contributed the civil war with the help of other 10 neighboring countries named “Saudi-led Coalition” and with the support by US.

**The Houthis**

The Houthis aim to rise up against injustice ruler, they wanted to control their religion and culture under the leadership of Husein Badreddin al-Houthi at first and the Houthi movement was born. Husein Badreddin al-Houthi criticized Saleh, called him a “US backed dictator”. Husein al Houthi was killed in 2004 and his brother Abdul malik al-Houthi took over. Iran began to support the Hotuhis, the Houthi movement accepted Iran’s support but resisted direct interference. The Houthis achieved a military success which provoked more Saudi backed government force. The parties then reached a ceasefire agreement in 2010. A year later when the Arab Spring reached Yemen the Houthis were one of the many groups calling for Saleh to step down. When saleh did, the houthis joined a national dialogue the new president abd rabbu Mansour hadi also backed by the Saudis, had trouble stabilizing the country, they couldn’t stop al-qaeda’s attacks and fuel prices and unemployment began to skyrocket, this provoked a new rebellion. This time Houthis allied with their once sworn enemy, former president Saleh. In 2015 Houthi rebels gained control of the major cities of Yemen. When they took control of the capital Sanaa, they opened the air traffic between Tehran and Yemen. Saudi Arabia has seen this move as a dangerous move near their borders against their proxy war with Iran. Saudi Arabia formed coalition with other Arab states backed but the US, UK, France and began strikes on the Houthis. Despite this, 3 years later, the Houthis still had control large parts of the country.

**Iran**

Iran is accused of backing the rebels by Saudi Arabia, but Tehran denies any involvement.

The Houthis accepted Iran’s military and financial support; Iran has been helping the Houthis ever since but denying any involvement.

**USA**

United States of America carried out its own campaign in Yemen, not only supplying Saudi-led Arabian Coalition with billions of dollars’ worth of weapons, but also targeting al-Qaeda and DAESH.

The US has supported the Saudi Arabia since the World War 2: selling arms, providing military aid and training the Saudi military on how to use US manufactured planes tanks and other weapons. In recent years Saudi Arabia has bought more weapons from the US than any other country in the world. Since 2015, the US authorized 22 billion dollars’ worth of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. The weapons that US sell also include cluster bombs, banned by most of the international community. US support to Saudi Arabia is beyond the weapons sales. It’s directly contributing the current fight. The most important reason that US supporting Saudi Arabia is because they are the most long-standing allies, after the world war 2 Saudi Arabia has been a vital partner against communism and now terrorism; and they are also fighting with the terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in Yemen. Some in the White House are worried that US was potentially committing war crimes because of its assistance to Saudi Arabia.

In the implication of a 2013 international court decision, implying that if the US were to provide practical assistance, encouragement or moral support to the Saudis, the US could be charged with war crimes. In an effort to avoid this the US issued a no strike list to the Saudis, included places like hospitals, universities, schools even cemeteries that Saudi’s apparently were ignoring it.

**Timeline of Events**

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| **November 2008** | Police fired warning shots at opposition rally in Sanaa. Demonstrators demand electoral reform and fresh polls. |
| **August 2009** | The Yemeni army launches a fresh offensive against Houthi rebels in the northern Saada province. Tens of thousands of people are displaced by the fighting. |
| **September 2010** | Thousands flee government offensive against separatists in southern Shabwa province. |
| **September 2011** | Al-Qaeda leader in Yemen Anwar al-Awlaki is killed by US Forces. |
| **2011** | Arab Spring affected the Middle East and North Africa Region. |
| **November 2011** | Saleh was forced to hand over his position to Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. |
| **February 2012** | Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi inaugurated as president after uncontested elections but it is unable to counter al-Qaeda attacks in the capital as the year goes on. |
| **March 2013– January 2014** | The National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was held in Yemen. A new federal system was agreed on. |
| **August 2014** | The Houtis seized control of most of capital Sanaa in August and rejected the deal. |
| **March 2015** | Saudi-led coalition got involved. Saudi Arabia launched airstrikes against Houti targets and imposed naval blockade. Markets, schools, hospitals were targeted; it caused civilian casualties, 140 people were killed in a single strike.  Islamic State carious out its first major attacks in Yemen –two suicide bombings targeting Shia mosques in Sanaa, in which 137 people are killed. |
| **June 2015** | Leader of al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, Nasser al-Whayshi was killed in a US drone strike in Yemen. |
| **August 2015** | Saudi’s bombed the vital port of Al-Hudayday severely damaging the main source of Yemen’s food, any humanitarian aid shipments which resulted in the increased chances of mass starvation. |
| **2017** | Saleh offered the Houthis to put an end to the fight with the Saudi-led coalition. Houthis had seen this offer traitorous, 2 days after; Saleh was found dead. Houthis admitted to killing him. |
| **June 2017** | Qatar was expelled from the Saudi-led Coalition. |
| **January 2018** | Southern Yemeni Separatists- backed by United Arab Emirates- seized control of Aden, the main city in South. |
| **November 2019** | Separatists and government sign power-sharing agreement to end conflict in southern Yemen. |

**Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

* Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Yemen, 3 June 2019. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_453.pdf>
* Report on the implementation of resolution 2451, 21 January 2019. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_69.pdf>
* Secretary-General's report on progress regarding the implementation of resolution 2451, 4 January 2019. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_11.pdf>
* Developments in southern Yemen and efforts to resume comprehensive political negotiations, 29 August 2019. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PRST_2019_9.pdf>
* The presidential statement calling for the full and sustained opening of all of Yemen's ports, including Hodeidah and Saleef ports, and for increased access to Sana'a airport, 15 March 2018. <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2018_5.pdf>

**Possible Solutions**

1. 17 million Yemeni’s will face famine unless they receive humanitarian help soon. One fear is that international aid is not getting to those who need it the most since the cholera outbreak, which is making it more difficult to control. It can’t be blamed on Saudi actions alone. The majority of the outbreaks are in the Houthi-governed areas where they failed to manage garbage & sewerage, filling the streets.
2. Civillians need urgent aid:

-2/3 of the Yemenis don’t have access to clean water,

-370.000 malnourished children,

-10.000 died from preventable disease,

-3.000.000 displaced according to UN.

1. Besides finding solutions to the Yemenis as humanitarian aids, the conflict between the countries must be solved. It’s a “proxy war” between Saudi Arabia and Iran, both sides want to control over the entire region. For a long-term solution, political conflict between the governments and the Sunni-Shia conflict must be solved in order to stop the ongoing civil war. Therefore, there won’t be any more casualties and a peaceful environment would be established.

**Further Reading**

Yemen Civil War Explained

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/20/yemen-civil-war-the-conflict-explained>

ISIS

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/isis-fast-facts/index.html>

Al-Qaeda

<https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-qaeda>

Useful Links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_KGSO0MBcc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwwP3SiBIC8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLRgdFP-s30&list=WL&index=40&t=3s>

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Britannica, Yemen’s Civil War, 18.11.19

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen/Arab-Spring-and-civil-war>

Britannica, Arab Spring History/Timeline/Events, 18.11.19

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>

BBC, Yemen Timeline of Events, 19.11.19

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>

United Nations, Security Council Reports, 19.11.19

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/yemen/>