

## **Security Council Committee Report**

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### **Research Report Concerning the Ongoing Crisis in Yemen**

#### **History and Background**

In 1839 Aden in South Yemen came under British rule and it served as an essential refuelling port for ships passing through the Suez Canal. North Yemen gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire upon its collapse in 1918; however, it took until 1969 for South Yemen to gain its independence from Britain.

Upon the departure of the British, South Yemen became a communist state and thus aligned itself with the Soviet Union, also renaming itself the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

It was only in 1990 that North and South Yemen united.

A number of domestic conflicts then occurred in the country:

- 1994 – A brief war of secession ended in the defeat of southern Yemeni separatist forces.
- From 2000 – Al-Qaeda gained a foothold in the country, ushering in a period of frequent terrorist attacks.
- 2011 – The Arab Spring – President Saleh, who had ruled autocratically since 1990, agreed to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.
- 2014 – Houthi Shia rebels seized control of the capital city, Sana'a. This event sparked the civil war which still grips Yemen today.

#### **Political Situation**

The conflict in Yemen was originally a civil war fought between Houthi rebels allied with the former president Saleh – who had ruled Yemen from 1990 to 2012 – and those loyal to the internationally recognised president of Yemen, Hadi, who are supported by a Saudi-Arabian-led coalition.

However, today, the distinction between opposing forces is not so easy to gauge. The alliance between the former president Saleh and Houthi rebels ended in December 2017 after Saleh distanced himself from the Houthi-led ballistic missile attacks on Saudi Arabia. Saleh was

then killed by Houthi rebels on 4 December 2017 after he had expressed an interest in negotiating with Hadi and the Saudi coalition.

Another alliance – between the previously pro-Hadi government Southern Transitional Council and Hadi himself – deteriorated in 30 January 2018 after the STC accused the Hadi regime of corruption and discrimination.

Al-Qaeda also holds areas of territory in South-eastern Yemen, whilst Islamic State also has a number of active cells in the region.

The most recent battles have been staged in Al Hudaydah, to where the Saudi-led coalition sent 10,000 troops in October. In November, these troops assaulted the city backed by airstrikes.

In all, the conflict led to 16,000 civilian casualties, including 6000 deaths.

## Stakeholders

The conflict is not as simplistic as a clash between Shias and Sunnis or indeed between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the form of a proxy war, although these are certainly factors. In the localities, alliances are often determined by tribal affiliations more so than pro-government or anti-government sentiments. However there are some key players in the conflict:

### The Houthis

A group of Zaydi fighters led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi. Their power base is centred in the North of Yemen. In November 2016 the Houthis established a second government in Yemen with the General People's Congress, which was closely associated with Saleh. Factions of the army also aligned themselves with the Houthis. There are approximately 30,000 Houthi fighters in Yemen. Iran *allegedly* supplies the Houthis with arms; this support increased between February-March 2017 and is now crucial for supporting the Houthi war effort.



### Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda – based in the South-east of the country – is fighting the Houthis, and thus appeals to local Sunni communities for support. Since April 2016, the Saudi-led coalition and the

Hadi government have intensified operations against Al-Qaeda, which still targets cities such as Aden, Abyan and al Mukalla.

### Islamic State

Roughly 200 IS members (eight cells) are estimated to be in Yemen currently. Isis cells in Yemen resumed suicide attacks in November 2017.

### Saudi-led Coalition

A coalition of predominantly Sunni-Muslim countries began airstrikes in support of the pro-Hadi forces on 26 March 2015. These continue today. Its members include: The UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Senegal, Morocco, Sudan and Egypt. Qatar was a member of the coalition until June 2017, when it was expelled following a diplomatic crisis. It is estimated that over 10,000 coalition troops have been deployed. As a result, it is believed that the Saudi government has a strong influence over the Hadi government.

### The United States, The United kingdom and France

Several western nations, including the above, have supplied weapons to Saudi Arabia. In particular, European weapons have been used to destroy vital infrastructure and in unlawful airstrikes. The US has been training Saudi pilots and refuelling planes from the Saudi-led coalition. The US has also carried out airstrikes against Al-Qaeda forces since 2016.

### Economy

The Yemeni riyal (currency of Yemen) has devalued by roughly 226% of its pre-crisis level. This has led to higher prices of goods such as food and fuel. There are currently two central banks in operation: a Houthi controlled bank in Sana'a and a pro-government bank in Aden. Both of these central banks have dwindling foreign currency reserves and are unable to exchange foreign currencies into riyals due to the uncertainty.

### Humanitarian Access

Average delays in entering ports in June 2018

The operational status of ports as shown on the map is based on information provided by Wilhelmson Ship Services AS. Sources: Logistics Cluster, WFP, WSS reports



Insecurity, checkpoints, the unwillingness of transporters to enter areas of conflict and fuel shortages have caused havoc on supply routes into Yemen. The number of those in need of humanitarian aid increased from 200,000 in February 2018 to 1.4 million in August, 1.2 million of whom are considered to be in inaccessible areas. Humanitarian workers have also been subject to attacks. Most prominently, the Medicine Sans Frontiers headquarters was targeted with explosives on 1 October 2018.

The governorate of Al Hudaydah is perhaps the worst affected region. This port city is where 70% of humanitarian aid enters the country, thus its security is of vital importance.

Moreover, aid workers also face significant administrative challenges. Humanitarian and commercial imports have been blocked in Sana'a airport and Aden's port; whilst tonnes of supplies have waited in ports and airports for months due to excessive documentation requirements.

Houthi rebels are also accused of diverting humanitarian aid for their own ends. In November 2017, Saudi Arabia imposed a temporary embargo on imports into Yemen after a missile was fired towards Saudi Arabia. Such an embargo could be reinstated in the future.

### **Displacement**

More than 2 million people are internally displaced in Yemen, 89% of whom have been displaced for over a year. The majority of those who have been displaced originate from Al Hudaydah. Exacerbating the displacement caused by the conflict, Cyclone Luban – an extreme weather event – affected 20,000 people and made 8,000 people homeless.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are also 280,000 external refugees in Yemen, the majority having emigrated from the horn of Africa (98% Somali).

130,000 Yemenis have fled the country since March 2015. Jordan, Somalia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Sudan and Ethiopia are the most frequent destinations. However, Yemen's neighbouring countries, Oman and Saudi Arabia, are not signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Therefore, many refugees rely on smugglers to leave the country. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia reformed its labour laws in November 2017 in order to tackle high unemployment, which has led to over 100,000 Yemeni deportations.

### **Health, Nutrition, Sanitation and Shelter**

Many Yemenis lack access to sufficient healthcare; 2/3 of Yemen's hospitals can no longer provide adequate healthcare due to the conflict. The country faces an outbreak of cholera and diphtheria.

8.4 million people are estimated to be severely food insecure, and Global Acute Malnutrition has exceeded the WHO emergency threshold of 15% in Abyan, Al Hudaydah, Ibb, Lahj and Hadramaut. 400,000 children under the age of 5 are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

16 million Yemenis need support to meet the WASH needs, 11.6 million of whom are in urgent need. This has exacerbated the cholera outbreaks. The cost of water transportation has doubled since September 2018. Yemen already suffered from chronic water shortages due to

its climate, mismanagement and population growth. Only 52% of the rural population can access improved water sources.

The number of those in need of shelter increased from 4.5 million in 2017 to 5.4 million in 2018. Cyclone Lubu and cyclone Mekunu have caused the numbers of those without shelter to increase rapidly.

### **Education**

An estimated 2 million children are out of school in Yemen, compared to 1.6 million before the conflict. 2500 schools are in disuse, 66% of which were damaged by airstrikes.

### **UNSC Resolutions Concerning Yemen**

15 February 2015 – Deplored the Houthis' actions to dissolve parliament on 6 February and urged the acceleration of negotiations.

24 February 2015 – An asset freeze and travel ban was renewed until 2016.

14 April 2015 – Demanded that the Houthis withdraw from seized areas and relinquish arms, and established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to Saleh.

21 December 2018 – Endorsed the agreements made at the Stockholm summit and authorised the deployment of an advance team to implement the terms of the Stockholm agreement.

16 January 2019 – A UN mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement was made.

**December 2018 - Stockholm Agreement:** this breakthrough summit with delegations from the Houthis and the Yemeni government in attendance agreed that troops from either side would be redeployed out of the port-city of Hodeidah in order to allow humanitarian aid into the country.

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## **The situation in Ukraine/Crimea/Russia:**

### **Introduction:**

The current crisis in the Crimean peninsula started on the 21st November 2013, shortly after the pro-Russian Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovich, rejected a deal which would ensure closer ties with the European Union. A huge public outcry followed this, with an increase in pro-EU protests against the Yanukovich regime, with 8,000 protestors protesting in Kiev after only a few weeks. Over the subsequent months of violence in Ukraine, anti protest laws were imposed; however, these laws were abolished within weeks. This led to the Ukrainian government banning Russian as a spoken language in Ukraine; this also was annulled after great discontent in Russian speaking areas of Ukraine. In response to this, President Viktor Yanukovich was impeached by parliament on the 21st February 2014, with an interim government replacing him. However, approximately 200 days later Russian troops entered the Crimea, with pro-Russian forces seizing government buildings in Crimea.

Shortly after this, a referendum was held on March 16th 2014 by separatists, in favour of peninsula becoming Russian territory. The result of this referendum showed that 97% of Crimeans were in favour of Crimea becoming part of Russia. However, as this referendum was co-ordinated by Russia, many people consider this referendum to have been illegitimate. The alleged new status of Crimea being Russian territory, is still yet to be recognised by the United Nations.

### **Definitions of Key Terms:**

**Referendum:** a vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question.

**The European Union:** the organization, since 1993, through which European governments who choose to be members make decisions and agree on shared action in social and economic matters.

**Sovereignty:** the power of a country to control its own government.

**Annexation:** to take possession of an area of land or a country, usually by force or without permission.

**Ukraine:** eastern European country situated between Russia and Europe-GDP: 112.2 bn USD (2017)- Population: approx 45 million

**Crimea:** peninsula in eastern Europe GDP: estimated 4.3 bn USD (2014)- Population: approx 2 million

**Russia:** Population: 144.5 million GDP: 1.578 tn USD

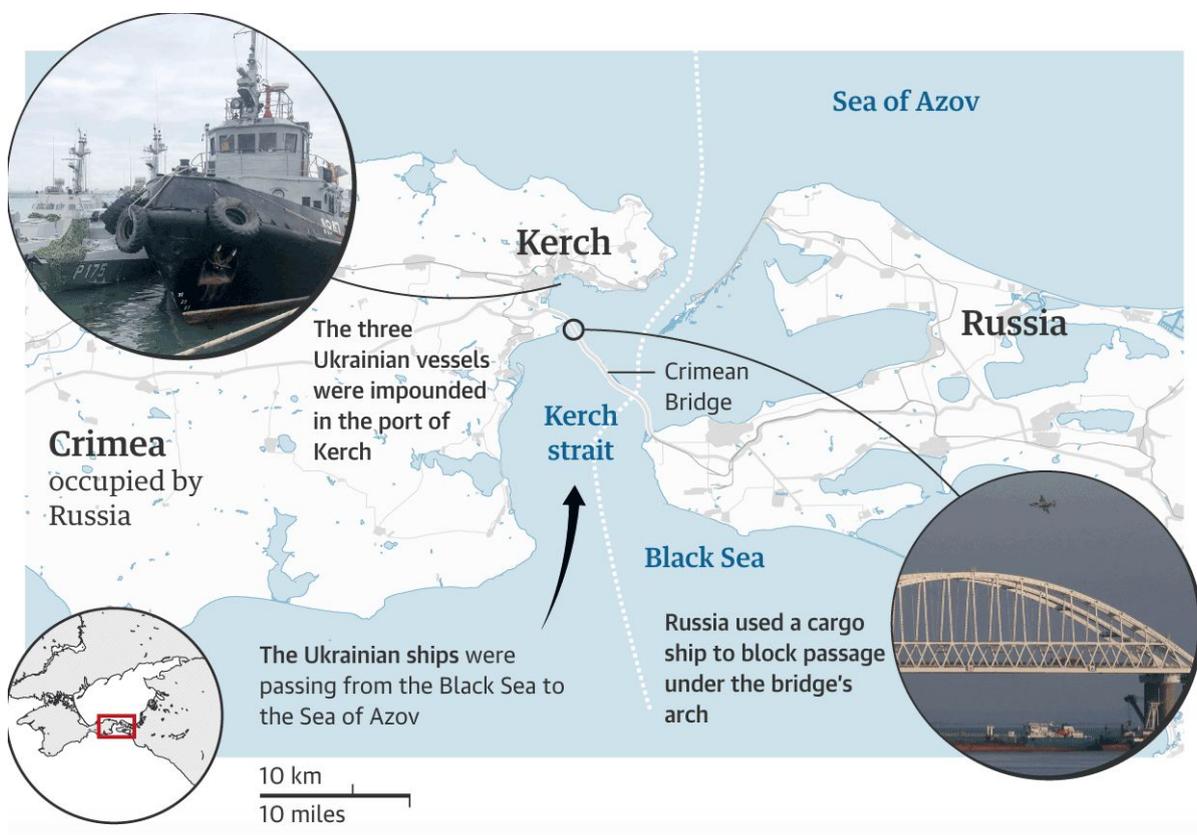
**Parties involved:** Russia- Ukraine-Crimea-Viktor Yanukovich-Berkut (Ukrainian Secret Service)-EU-UN

### **Kerch Strait Incident**

The Kerch strait is the water which divides Russia and Crimea. Due to the annexation of Crimea, the Kerch Strait now act as the gateway into the Sea of Azov, which divides Russia and Ukraine.

On Sunday 25th of November 2018, Russian coastguards fired upon Ukrainian navy ships travelling to the port of Mariupol (Ukraine) through the Kerch Strait from the Black Sea and into the Sea of Azov. A 2003 treaty declared that the waters of the Kerch Strait/ the Sea of Azov would be shared by both Russia and Ukraine. However, according to the Russian coast guard, they asked the Ukrainian vessels to leave ‘Russian waters.’ The Russian coast guard accused the Ukrainian navy of not following the formal procedure before taking the passage through the straits, and that they were not responding to radio communications. The Russian coast guard tried to stop the Ukranian flotilla (which consisted of two gunboats and a tugboat) by placing a cargo ship under the bridge which connects Crimea and Russia, thus blocking the waterway into the Sea of Azov. After 8 hours the Ukranian vessels took action and decided return to the port of Odessa; the Russian coast guard trailed them, firing upon the vessels and seizing them in national Crimean waters.

- 3 Ukrainian sailors injured in the clash.
- 24 sailors detained by Russia in Crimea.



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## **Freedom and Protection of the Press:**

The definition of freedom of press is “the right of newspapers, magazines, etc., to report news without being controlled by the government”. However, there are restrictions as the press is not allowed to print defamation, obscenities and with the purpose to “incite immediate violence or unlawful activity”. Freedom of the press, along with freedom of speech and expression is considered a basic human right and the UN has in a previous conference declared that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

Specific laws vary from country to country and approximately, a third of the world’s population live without freedom of the press. Predominantly, these people live in a non-democratic states where free press could threaten the way the government is run, as public awareness can be detrimental to an authoritarian government, by provoking opposition. In place of a free press, such states often have state-run newspapers that are censored and edited by the government so a positive image of the state is portrayed.

Censorship, false reporting and manipulation by the government are still customary in many countries including China, Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The RSF(Reporters without Borders) estimated that “a total of 80 journalists were killed this year, 348 are currently in prison, and 60 are being held hostage” on December the 14th 2018. The excuse most commonly given is that these journalists belonged to or aided terrorist organisations that were a threat to the government or national security. Governments have justified hundreds of incarcerations and detainments with this argument as it is hard to prove the innocence of a journalist without access to important information which the government in question may have classified. There has also been a surge of arrests due to “fake news” claims according to the CPJ(Committee to Protect Journalists). They suggest this may be due to the President of the U.S.A., Donald Trump. They wrote: “the increase comes amid heightened global rhetoric about “fake news,” of which U.S. President Donald Trump is the leading voice”. The labelling and disregarding of critical news by the U.S. which is ranked 45th out of 180 countries by the RSF, allows other countries to exploit laws set in place, as the U.S. has given them an opening to do so.

## **Crisis in Myanmar**

### **Background information:**

The Rohingya, who amounted to around one million at the start of 2017 according to the BBC, are an ethnic minority in Myanmar, particularly around the Rakhine state (on the Western Coast), making up the largest percentage of Muslims in the country. The Rohingya - who have their own language and culture - claim that they are descendents of Arab traders in the region, and have inhabited it for generations, despite the largely Buddhist government of Myanmar denying them citizenship, and excluding them from the 2014 census, thereby not recognising them as citizens; they are accused by the government of being illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

For decades now, Rohingya people have migrated both in and out of the region in significant numbers, with the latest mass emigration beginning on 25 August 2017, following the deadly missile attack of Rohingya ARSA militants on 30 police posts. Despite this, the Rohingyas who arrived in Cox's Bazar - a fishing town on the South East Coast of Bangladesh - claimed to be fleeing after local troops and Buddhist mobs attacked and burned their villages and people.

According to Medecins Sans Frontieres, at least 6 700 Rohingya, including 730 under the age of 5, were killed in the month after this violence broke out, and Amnesty International reports numerous stories of the Myanmar military physically abusing and sexually assaulting Rohingya women. Although the Myanmar government have claimed that 'clearance operations' have ceased, BBC correspondents claim to have seen evidence of further conflict; at least 288 Rohingya villages have been attacked since August 2017, as shown by analysis of the satellite imagery by Human Rights Watch.

### **International Aid:**

The UN has called the situation of the Rohingya 'the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world'; although around 70% of the refugees now have food and immediate aid,

according to the Inter Sector Coordination Group report from mid-April 2018; and almost 100 000 have been treated for malnutrition.

### **UN Action:**

However, no sanctions have been imposed by the UN Security Council, despite their appeal to Myanmar to stop the violence. Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, UN Human Rights Chief, has stated that genocidal acts against Rohingya Muslims cannot be ruled out, and the US has urged the Myanmar troops to 'respect the rule of law, stop the violence and end the displacement of civilians from all communities.' China has called upon the international community to 'support the efforts of Myanmar in safeguarding the stability of its national development.' Being the destination of most emigrants, Bangladesh plans to build more shelters for the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar, but also wishes to confine the refugees to allocated areas. Bangladesh signed a deal with Myanmar in November 2017 to return hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, although very few have actually been released thus far. Lastly, the UK has pledged £59 000 000 in aid to support the refugees in Bangladesh.

### **Glossary:**

**Amnesty International:** with over 7 000 000 members of the movement, Amnesty International is the world's largest grassroots human rights organisation. The official objective of the organization is to campaign for "a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments."

**ARSA:** the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army is an insurgent Rohingya militant group in the northernmost part of the Rakhine State. Although ARSA was declared a terrorist group by the government of Myanmar on 25 August 2017, ARSA has claimed that these allegations are 'baseless', and that they are solely devoted to safeguarding the rights of the Rohingya.

**MSF:** Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) is an international humanitarian medical organisation dedicated to its projects in conflict zones, which provide immediate medical care to those injured in war, as well as those affected by endemic diseases.

**Rakhine:** the Rakhine State is a province on the West Coast of Myanmar, and the site of much of the conflict of the Rohingya Crisis. The coast of the Rakhine State is also the exit-point of most Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh.

**Rohingya:** the Rohingya people are an ethnic group living primarily in the Rakhine State of Myanmar; although there were an estimated 1 000 000 Rohingya living in Myanmar before the crisis, around 625 000 refugees have crossed into Bangladesh since August 2017.

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