

# YEMENI SITUATION: INSIDE THE CIVIL WAR & TERRORIST ATTACKS

# Introduction

Six years have passed since the Saudi intervention in the Yemen Civil War, but its effects are still present also nowadays. The Yemeni Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates released a statement over the terrorist attack and military escalation by the terror group (The Houthis) which happened on February 7th. It claimed that

On Sunday 7 February against the governorates of Marib and Al-Jawf, causing casualties to civilians. The blatant defiance, targeting innocent civilians, civilian objects, and internally displaced people, is contrary to peace calls by the International community and merits condemnation, and will only worsen the dire humanitarian situation on the ground (...)<sup>1</sup>

This episode is only one of the latest updates of the Yemeni Civil War, which involves many factions, including Houthis and Saudi Arabia, which play an important role in the war.

## Yemen: geography, history and features

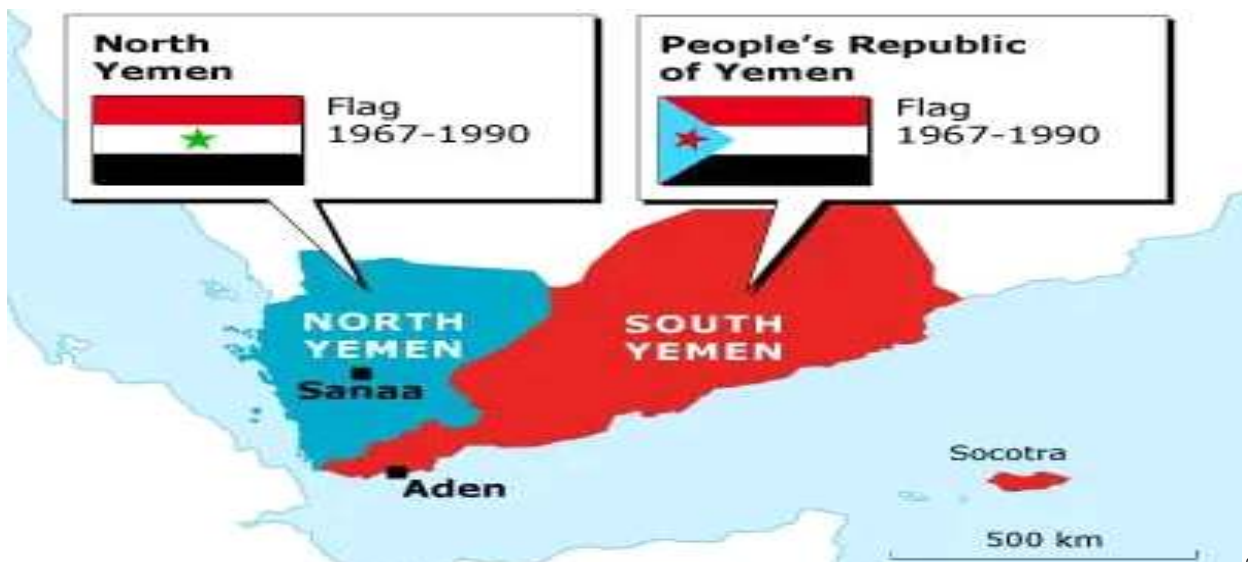
Yemen has officially been known as the Republic of Yemen and it was founded in 1990. Despite its recent birth, the territory has a long story. It borders Saudi Arabia to the North, Oman to the East, the Arabian Sea to the South and the Red Sea to the West.<sup>2</sup>



Yemen is located in a strategic position regarding trade and communication routes with African continent. But despite its position, Yemen was one of the most secluded countries in the world during its long history.

1. Hadi, Wadhad S. O., "Statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates over terrorist attack in Yemen made by Houthi Group on 7th February 2021", February 2021, The Hague.
2. Wikipedia Contributors, "Yemen" (Wikipedia, March 23, 2021) <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen#Geography>> accessed March 23, 2021.
3. Burrowes Robert D., "Yemen" <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen>> accessed February 25, 2021

Yemen was under the control of several empires throughout its history, including the Roman and Ottoman Empires.<sup>4</sup> But in the 19th century, the territory was split into two: North Yemen — which remained under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and the South Yemen — which was conquered by the British Empire.<sup>5</sup>



This division entailed different developments for the two countries. For instance, North Yemen reached its independence in 1918 with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, after the end of WWI. After this declaration, Imam Yahya hamid ed-Din al-Mutawakkil became the ruler of the country<sup>7</sup> until his death in 1962. Afterwards, uprisings spread across the whole country, leading to a civil war,<sup>8</sup> which lasted until 1970. In 1967, after the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from the Civil War, North Yemen renamed its country “Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, South Yemen experienced imperialism and colonialism until 1967, the year in which South Yemen declared its independence from Great Britain. From that moment, the South Yemen was also known as “People's Democratic Republic of Yemen” (PDRY).<sup>10</sup>

The main difference between North and South Yemen was grounded on political division: with its independence, South Yemen was progressively included into the influential sphere of the USSR. Consequently, the US interests in Yemen increased and, therefore, the US included North Yemen in its influential

4. Ibidem.

5. Ibidem.

6. “The Yemen Arab Republic” (Fanack.com, July 28, 2020) <<https://fanack.com/yemen/history-past-to-present/the-yemen-arab-republic/>> accessed February 27, 2021.

7. Wikipedia Contributors, “Yemen” (Wikipedia, March 23, 2021) <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen#Geography>> accessed March 23, 2021.

8. Ibidem.

9. Burrowes Robert D., “THE YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC’S LEGACY and YEMENI UNIFICATION” (1992) 14 Arab Studies Quarterly 41 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41858029.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Acc2878a5c3e70f2bbb076e2e711c39b5>> accessed February 28, 2021.

10. Dunbar Charles, “The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects” (1992) 46 Middle East Journal 456 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4328466.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A019bb521862300921bee49f9fcb2e19>> accessed February 27, 2021.

influential sphere.<sup>11</sup> Hence the YAR seemed to be more modernised and politically developed<sup>12</sup> than PDRY.<sup>13</sup>

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the political gap between the two entities became obsolete and easily surmountable. It was not by accident that the merger between the two States was completed in 1990. What was surprising was the speed with which the unification process was achieved. According to Charles Dunbar, author of the paper “The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics and Prospects”<sup>15</sup>

The successful drive of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR, North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY, South Yemen) to unify in the spring of 1990 took observers both near and far by surprise. [...] . During the course of this author's introductory calls as ambassador in Sanaa in the summer of 1988, two leading Yemeni officials predicted that, while there could be detente between north and south, real unity was at least 50 years away.<sup>16</sup>

From the visit of the president of the YAR, Ali Abdallah Saleh, in 1989 in Aden, where the agreement for the unification was founded. The merger was reached within a year, in 1990.<sup>17</sup>

President Saleh was not only a key player in the Yemeni unification process, but also in its transitional period and beyond. He became the president of the new-born republic—the Republic of Yemen—and he remained in charge until 2012. During his mandate, he tried to solve internal problems originated by the separatist and secessionist movements in the country, which led to political unrest and a civil war between 1993 and 1994. Furthermore, he solved the territorial disputes with Saudi Arabia and Eritrea. He restored the relationship with Saudis, while he reached an agreement for the Hanish Islands with Eritreans.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he faced several economic challenges. For instance, he agreed a package of reforms with World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for economic aid for the sustainability of the Yemeni debt.<sup>19</sup> Finally, he supported the “war on terror” engaged by the Bush administration after the terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001.

Despite his efforts, some divisions remained unsolved into the country. One of these was the separatist pressure in South Yemen. Southern separatists seceded several times, and had re-emerged in 2007.<sup>20</sup> With this exception

11. Rego Charles P., “Effects of US Cold War Policy on the Modern State of Yemen: 1978 through Unification and Civil War” (2018) <<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/42004014/REGO-DOCUMENT-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> accessed March 1, 2021.

12. Burrowes Robert D., “THE YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC'S LEGACY and YEMENI UNIFICATION” (1992) 14 Arab Studies Quarterly 41 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41858029.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Acc2878a5c3e70f2bbb076e2e711c39b5>> accessed February 28, 2021.

13. Rego Charles P., “Effects of US Cold War Policy on the Modern State of Yemen: 1978 through Unification and Civil War” (2018) <<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/42004014/REGO-DOCUMENT-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> accessed March 1, 2021.

14. Ibidem.

15. Dunbar Charles, “The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects” (1992) 46 Middle East Journal 456 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4328466.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A019bb521862300921bee49f9fcbd2e19>> accessed February 27, 2021.

16. Ibidem.

17. Rego Charles P., “Effects of US Cold War Policy on the Modern State of Yemen: 1978 through Unification and Civil War” (2018) <<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/42004014/REGO-DOCUMENT-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> accessed March 1, 2021.

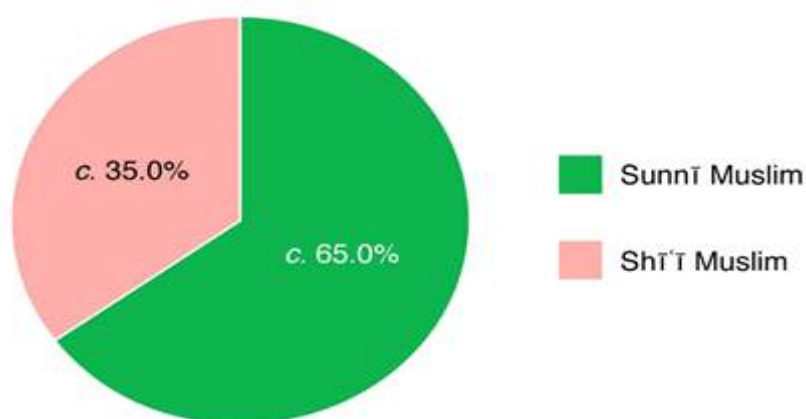
18. Wikipedia Contributors, “Hanish Islands” (Wikipedia, December 16, 2020) <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanish\\_Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanish_Islands)> accessed March 23, 2021.

19. Juliette Harkin, “Brutal Legacy: In Death as in Life, Ali Abdullah Saleh Left Yemen a Worse Place” (Scroll.in December 10, 2017) <<https://scroll.in/article/860847/brutal-legacy-in-death-as-in-life-ali-abdullah-saleh-left-yemen-a-worse-place>> accessed March 23, 2021.

20. Robinson Kali, “Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/background/yemen-crisis>> accessed March 6, 2021.

With this exception, another important aspect which mostly affects the current situation of the country is the different religious affiliations present in the territory.<sup>21</sup> With Islam being the state religion, the majority of the population is Muslim. There exist two Islamic branches are present in the country: the most popular is the Sunni', which follows the Shafi'i school, while the minority is Shi'i and it was represented by the Zaydi school.<sup>22</sup>

### Religious affiliation (2010)\*



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\*Includes small numbers of Jewish, Bahā'ī, Hindu, and Christian adherents.<sup>23</sup>

The Zaydi school has been in the country since the advent of Islam, and became popular in the northern part of Yemen in 9th century.<sup>24</sup> Saleh was a Zaydi Shiite, but he received support from Sunni leaders during his mandate.<sup>25</sup> Beyond the protests led by the extreme wing of the Zaydi, known as the Houthis or "Ansar Allah", in 2004,<sup>26</sup> he was able to reconnect all the various parts of the Yemeni society until 2011.

In 2011, Middle East and North Africa were hit by a massive wave of protests which started in Tunisia, and developed to other countries, including Yemen. Today, these riots are well known as the Arab Spring.

People's political dissatisfaction in the Middle East led to organized remonstrations and some of them achieved some improvement of the human rights conditions. Tunisia, for instance, reached a new level of democracy. Nevertheless, it was not the case of Yemen.<sup>27</sup>

21. Wikipedia Contributors, "Yemen" (Wikipedia March 23, 2021) <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen#Foreign\\_relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen#Foreign_relations)> accessed March 23, 2021.

22. Ibidem.

23. "Yemen: Religious Affiliation" <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen/Plant-and-animal-life#ref273078>> accessed March 4, 2021

24. Al Jazeera, "Yemen: The North-South Divide" (Aljazeera.com, December 8, 2017) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/al-jazeera-world/2017/12/8/yemen-the-north-south-divide>> accessed March 4, 2021.

25. John Pike, "Ali Abdullah Saleh" (Globalsecurity.org, 2017) <<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/yemen/saleh.htm>> accessed March 4, 2021.

26. Bruce Riedel, "Who Are the Houthis, and Why Are We at War with Them?" (Brookings December 18, 2017) <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/>> accessed March 5, 2021.

27. Robinson Kali, "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 5, 2021.



First of all, the uprisings entailed Saleh's dismissal in favor to his vice-president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadid.<sup>28</sup> However, the Houthis were not satisfied because the new Prime Minister was a follower of the Sunni tradition. Moreover, Saleh was forced to step down for a transitional plan to democracy driven by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a regional organization settled in Saudi Arabia, and the UN-sponsored National Dialogue Conference (NDC), supported by the United States. Overall, all the exponents of Yemeni society influenced and attended the conference, including the Houthis. But the attempts to reach an agreement and to resolve the dispute was inconclusive.<sup>29</sup>

From 2012 to 2014, Yemeni politics were unstable. Houthis and Saleh's party, the General People's Congress party (GPC), were sceptical about the transitional process and they were excluded from it over time. As a consequence, this led to a new alliance between Houthi and Saleh. Nevertheless, the alliance was fragile, since Saleh's willingness to mend the rift with Saudi-led coalition.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, in 2017, Saleh was killed by a Houthi group, which perceived his attempts to mediate as a betrayal.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the Houthis began their offensive on Yemeni territory, controlling some areas such as Aden and part of southern Yemen. Furthermore, they began collaborating with Iran, an opponent of Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> Thus, when President Hadi fled Aden at the end of March 2015,<sup>33</sup> Saudi Arabia reacted by bombing Houthi-controlled areas, thereby worsening the conflict.<sup>34</sup>

### Human rights violations in Yemen: the role of Republic of Yemen

The Yemeni war is still ongoing, creating a great deal of problems for the Yemeni population. The Yemeni war is not simply a 'civil war' because several external actors are participating.<sup>35</sup>

#### According to the Dutch NGO Fanack:

Yemen signed the Conventions on 16 July 1970, Additional Protocol I (Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts) and Additional Protocol II (Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts) on April 17, 1990. Moreover, Yemen became signatory to the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 1 May 1991, as well as the Optional Protocol to the CRC on 3 February 2007. During the vote for approval and adoption of the UDHR (ed. Universal Declaration of Human Rights) in 1948, Yemen failed to vote. Yemen has been [a] member of the.

28. Bruce Riedel, "Who Are the Houthis, and Why Are We at War with Them?" (Brookings December 18, 2017) <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/>> accessed March 5, 2021.

29. Robinson Kali, "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 5, 2021.

30. Longley Alley April, "Collapse of the Houthi-Saleh Alliance and the Future of Yemen's War" (Crisis Group January 10, 2018) <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/collapse-houthi-saleh-alliance-and-future-yemens-war>> accessed March 7, 2021.

31. Faisal Edroos, "Yemen: Who Was Ali Abdullah Saleh?" (Aljazeera.com December 5, 2017) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/5/yemen-who-was-ali-abdullah-saleh>> accessed March 7, 2021.

32. Bruce Riedel, "Who Are the Houthis, and Why Are We at War with Them?" (Brookings, December 18, 2017) <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/>> accessed March 8, 2021.

33. BBC News, "Yemen Crisis: President Hadi Flees as Houthi Rebels Advance" (BBC News March 25, 2015) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32048604>> accessed March 8, 2021.

34. May Darwich, "The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status" (2018) 20 Insight Turkey 125 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26390311.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9461b6d90426dc0248a78fd57d154ffc>> accessed March 8, 2021.

35. Gerald Feierstein, "YEMEN: THE 60-YEAR WAR" (2019) <<https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-02/Yemen%20The%2060%20Year%20War.pdf>>, accessed March 8, 2021.

Rights of the Child (CRC) on 1 May 1991, as well as the Optional Protocol to the CRC on 3 February 2007. During the vote for approval and adoption of the UDHR (ed. Universal Declaration of Human Rights) in 1948, Yemen failed to vote. Yemen has been [a] member of the OIC (ed. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) since 1969, and has ratified all of the ILO fundamental conventions .

Instead, to approve the UDHR, Yemen signed the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) because it is an agreement which OIC created. As a consequence of its belonging, Yemen approved CDHRI, isolating the country and reinforcing the Islamic bond.

According to the NGO Human Rights Watch and its World Report 2021, Yemen is facing the world's worst humanitarian crisis of our time, aggravated by COVID-19 pandemic . Observers and NGOs reported significant human rights violations. The bombing of the involved factions significantly affected Yemeni lives both directly and indirectly. The indirect victims in Yemen are experiencing the world's worst food security crisis . Yemen has a population of about 29 million people in its country , of which over 24 million are living on humanitarian aid . Furthermore, the damage of essential infrastructures and housing caused by violence has led to a lack of fuel and basic services . This entails a violation of the article 17 of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) and a violation of the article 25 comma 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) . The destruction of housing increases displacement; approximately 4 million are internally displaced in Yemen, violating article 18 at the points a and c of CDHRI .

36. "Human Rights of Yemen" (Fanack.com, March 24, 2020) <<https://fanack.com/yemen/human-rights/>> accessed March 10, 2021.

37. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch, January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 10, 2021.

38. Ibidem.

39. "Yemen - Place Explorer - Data Commons" (Datacommons.org, 2021) <[https://datacommons.org/place/country/YEM?utm\\_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=en](https://datacommons.org/place/country/YEM?utm_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=en)> accessed March 10, 2021.

40. "You Are Being Redirected..." (Islamic-relief.org, 2021) <<https://www.islamic-relief.org/category/where-we-work/yemen/>> accessed March 10, 2021.

41. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch, January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 10, 2021.

42. "University of Minnesota Human Rights Library" (Umn.edu2021) <<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/cairodeclaration.html>> accessed March 11, 2021.

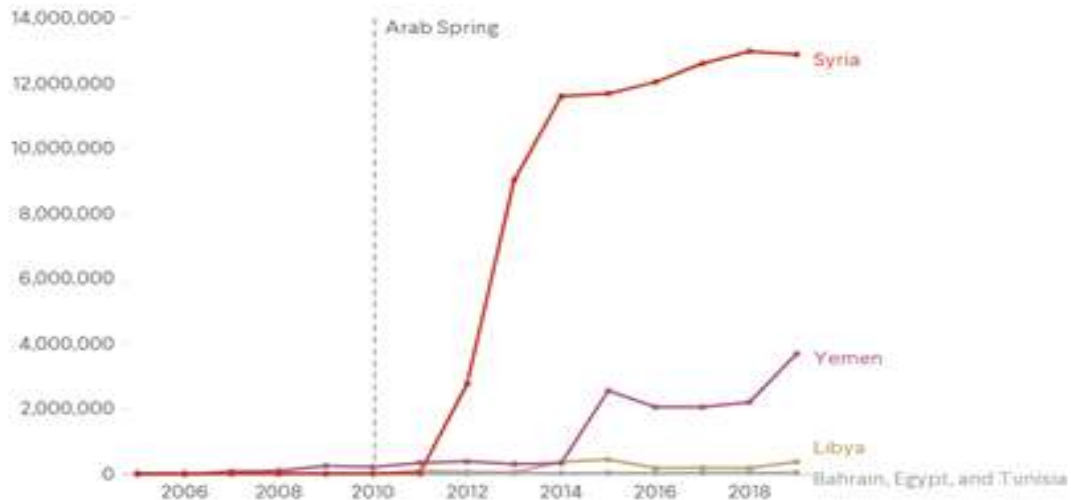
43. United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948) <[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)> accessed March 11, 2021.

44. "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker" (Global Conflict Tracker2015) <<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen>> accessed March 11, 2021.

45. "University of Minnesota Human Rights Library" (Umn.edu2021) <<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/cairodeclaration.html>> accessed March 11, 2021.

# Displacement

**Millions of People Displaced by Conflict**  
Refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people



Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Since the Arab Spring, Yemen has experienced a decline in living standards conditions and a growth of youth unemployment.<sup>47</sup> The poverty rate remains over 50 per cent of the population, making Yemen the poorest countries in the Middle East.<sup>48</sup>

46. "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" (Council on Foreign Relations2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 11, 2021.

47. Ibidem.

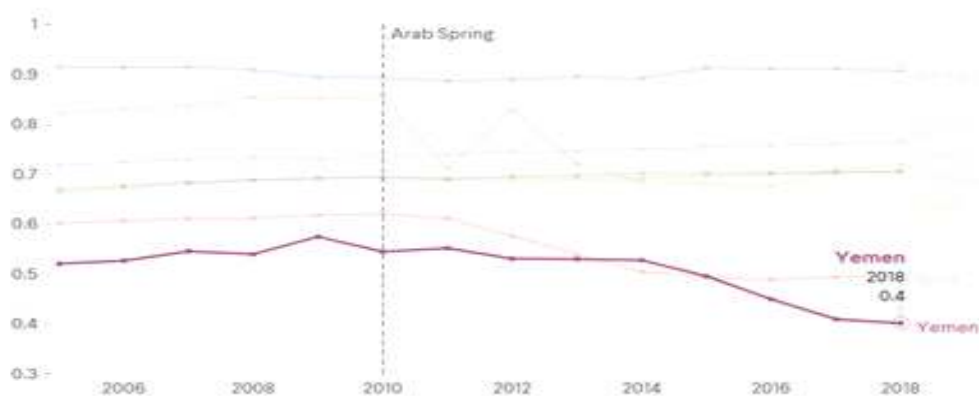
48. "Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering" (Council on Foreign Relations2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis>> accessed March 11, 2021.



## Standard of Living

### Standard of Living Has Fallen in Libya, Syria, Yemen

Index of countries' average incomes (gross national income per capita)



Note: Created by the UN Development Program, the income index is scaled to reflect the fact that an income increase in a lower-income country is more consequential for people there than the same increase for people in a higher-income country.

Source: UN Development Program.

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Of course, the ongoing violence has also severely impacted the healthcare system. Different diseases appeared over time, such as cholera and?.<sup>50</sup> But now, the worries concern the COVID-19 pandemic, which appears for the first time on April 10th in Yemen, infecting over 2 thousand and killing over 500.<sup>51</sup> Current speculations assert that there are more cases than the reported 2,000, but the lack of available and affordable testing makes the situation extremely complicated.<sup>52</sup>

The most affected minorities from the Yemeni crisis are children and women. From the beginning of the Yemeni crisis, the latter have not seen any kind of improvements of their conditions, underlining a certain disinterest on gender equality issue.<sup>53</sup> In addition, women are repeatedly discriminated against, denying their legal protection. According to the World Report 2021 of Human Rights Watch,

Women also continued to face severe discrimination in law and practice. They cannot marry without the permission of their male guardian and do not have equal rights to divorce, inheritance, or child custody. Lack of legal protection leaves them exposed to domestic and sexual violence.<sup>54</sup>

49. "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" (Council on Foreign Relations 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 11, 2021.

50. "Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering" (Council on Foreign Relations 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis>> accessed March 11, 2021.

51. Looi M. Covid-19: Deaths in Yemen are five times global average as healthcare collapses BMJ 2020; 370 :m2997 doi:10.1136/bmj.m2997. Accessed April 26, 2021.

52. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

53. "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" (Council on Foreign Relations 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 11, 2021.

54. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.



This situation infringes article 6 of the Cairo Declaration,<sup>55</sup> article 1 of the UDHR,<sup>56</sup> and article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>57</sup>

The condition of children in Yemen is also extremely dire. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in Yemen 12.2 million children need humanitarian assistance. Of this number, 1.71 million are internally displaced.<sup>58</sup> Regarding education, UNICEF claims in its 2020 report that “an estimated 5.8 million students in Yemen remain in need of sustained support to access

quality education, as more than 2 million continue to be out of school nationwide”.<sup>59</sup> Over ten million children do not have adequate access to water, sanitation, or healthcare, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19.<sup>60</sup>

Another problem is child marriage, since there is not a minimum of age of marriage in Yemen.<sup>62</sup> All these elements violate article 7 of CDHRI,<sup>63</sup> article 25.2 of UDHR<sup>64</sup> as well as articles 24, 27, and 28 of Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), which respectively protect the right to access to healthcare system, the right to have adequate standard living, and the right to access to education.<sup>65</sup>

Overall, the Yemeni population is suffering insurmountable consequences of the war. The persistent violations made by the opposite factions affect innocent lives. And for this reason, it is important to analyse the role of the warring parties, divided in internal and external factors.

49. “The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What’s the Legacy of the Uprisings?” (Council on Foreign Relations2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 11, 2021.

50. “Yemen’s Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering” (Council on Foreign Relations2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis>> accessed March 11, 2021.

51. Looi M. Covid-19: Deaths in Yemen are five times global average as healthcare collapses BMJ 2020; 370 :m2997 doi:10.1136/bmj.m2997. Accessed April 26, 2021.

52. “World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen” (Human Rights WatchJanuary 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

53. “The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What’s the Legacy of the Uprisings?” (Council on Foreign Relations2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>> accessed March 11, 2021.

54. “World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen” (Human Rights WatchJanuary 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

## Internal factors: Houthi movement (and the alleged Iranian link)

Many observers claim that Iran is helping the Houthi movement, which is an Iranian proxy. Their bond relies on their common belief in Shia.<sup>66</sup> In support of this theory, there is the relationship between the above mentioned Yemeni rebels and Hezbollah (another terrorist group which is settled in Lebanon and it was supported by Iran in the opinion of scholars).<sup>67</sup> Despite all these elements, Iranian involvement in the Yemeni war is quite controversial. There is no concrete proof of its commitment to the situation in Yemen. Moreover, other observers claimed that Houthis' remonstrations are the outcome of years of dissatisfaction for the internal situation in Yemen. Still, their claims remained unheard.<sup>68</sup>

The terrorist attacks made by Ansar Allah in Yemen have the same impact on Yemeni population of those made by Saudis. However, since Ansar Allah is a terrorist group rather than a State, it is more difficult to prosecute them. There is no universal definition of terrorism, which complicates legal action.<sup>69</sup> There are at least six conventions on terrorism, but none of their provisions are binding under international law.<sup>70</sup>

Houthi groups used to perform unlawful attacks on civilians. For instance, they use landmines, increasing casualties and injuries among civilians<sup>71</sup> and breaching the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.<sup>72</sup> Landmines exacerbates food insecurity, impeding aid workers to reach vulnerable communities.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Houthis have been accused of torture, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances. According to the World Report 2021 of Human Rights Watch:

Houthi forces [...] have arbitrarily arrested, detained, abducted, or forcibly disappeared people, including children, and tortured or otherwise ill-treated detainees. Houthi forces continued to harass and prosecute dissidents, including academics, lawyers, students, religious minorities, and journalists. Houthi authorities prosecuted 35 parliamentarians in March, with Houthi-controlled courts sentencing them to death in absentia on charges of treason. Women human rights activists faced repression by parties to the conflict for their work on women's rights<sup>74</sup>

This led to the infringement of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,<sup>75</sup> in addition to the violations of articles 20 and 22 (a) of the Cairo Declaration,

66. Gerald Feierstein, "YEMEN: THE 60-YEAR WAR" (2019) <<https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-02/Yemen%20The%2060%20Year%20War.pdf>>, accessed March 8, 2021.

67. "Hezbollah in Yemen | Middle East Policy Council" (Mepc.org2018) <<https://mepc.org/commentary/hezbollah-yemen>> accessed March 8, 2021.

68. <https://nena-news.it/author/redazione>, "Is Iran Really to Blame for Yemen Conflict?" (NenaNews, May 11, 2015) <<https://nena-news.it/is-iran-really-to-blame-for-yemen-conflict/>> accessed March 10, 2021.

69. Boaz Ganor, "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?" (2002) 3 Police Practice and Research 287 <<http://www.rageuniversity.org/PRISONESCAPE/UK%20ANTI-TERROR%20LAW/One-Mans-Terrorist.pdf>> accessed March 11, 2021.

70. O' Donnell Daniel, "International treaties against terrorism and the use of terrorism during armed conflict and by armed forces" (www.corteidh.or.cr) <<https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/a21937.pdf>>, accessed March 11, 2021.

71. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch, January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

72. Louise Doswald-Beck, "Land Mines: A Critical Examination of Existing Legal Instruments - ICRC" (Icrc.org, May 1995) <<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/57jmj8.htm#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20land%20mines,achievement%20of%20legitimate%20military%20objectives.>> accessed March 11, 2021.

73. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch, January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

74. Ibidem.

75. "OHCHR | Convention against Torture" (Ohchr.org2019) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>> accessed March 11, 2021.

which protect human beings against torture, unjustified detention and preserve freedom of speech and expression.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, they infringe articles 5 and 19 of the UDHR.<sup>77</sup>

Houthis also impede the distribution of aid. Human Rights Watch in its 2021 Report claims that Millions have been suffering in Yemen because the Houthis and other Yemeni authorities have denied the UN and other aid agencies unhindered access to people in need. International and local aid groups have faced a wide range of obstacles imposed by parties to the conflict on the ground, severely restricting their work. The Houthi authorities have imposed hundreds of regulations and lengthy delays in approving aid projects. They block aid assessments required to identify people's needs, seek to control aid monitoring, and dictate or interfere with lists of aid recipients in order to divert aid to authority loyalists<sup>78</sup>

Houthis' behaviour contravenes jus in bello, as well as international humanitarian law and its repercussions fall on civilians. This leads to a violation of the article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which aim is to protect civilians in wartime.<sup>79</sup>

### External factors: Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Unlike the debated Iranian presence in the Yemen war, Saudi Arabia has created a coalition in support of the Yemen crisis, and has been joined by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and, before Biden withdrew, the United States.<sup>80</sup> In order to counteract possible Iranian proxies (as the Houthis are considered), Saudi Arabia started its campaign in Yemen, devastating the country and oppressing the local population.<sup>81</sup>

Saudi Arabia has been accused of arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, and — along with its coalition — blocking the delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>82</sup> The coalition is composed by States and, for this reason, they should be more easily prosecuted than the previous one for the violation of international law. [What do you mean? Who should be persecuted?]

The Saudi-UAE intervention is infringing upon Yemen's sovereignty, which lies on the principle of "cuius regio, eius religio"<sup>8384</sup> and sees the State as a "superiorem non recognoscens" entity.<sup>8586</sup> It is protected by the customary international law (which is binding for every country) and guaranteed by the article 2 (a) of the UN Charter.<sup>87</sup> As a consequence of the violation of Yemeni sovereignty, Saudi Arabia and the UAE is

76. "University of Minnesota Human Rights Library" (Umn.edu, 2021) <<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/cairodeclaration.html>> accessed March 11, 2021.

77. United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948) <[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)>.

78. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch, January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 11, 2021.

79. "THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 12 AUGUST 1949" () <<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf>>.

80. Gerald Feierstein, "YEMEN: THE 60-YEAR WAR" (2019) <<https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-02/Yemen%20The%2060%20Year%20War.pdf>> accessed March 11, 2021.

81. MAY DARWICH, "The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status" (2018) 20 Insight Turkey 125 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26390311.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9461b6d90426dc0248a78fd57d154ffc>>.

82. "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen" (Human Rights Watch January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#>> accessed March 12, 2021.

83. "Their own kingdom, their own religion".

84. "Cuius Regio Eius Religio" (Oxford Reference 2011) <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195369380.001.0001/acref-9780195369380-e-462>> accessed March 12, 2021.

85. "Superior, failed to recognize him".

86. "International Organizations – Page 2 – Supranational Democracy" (Supranational Democracy July 2, 2015) <<https://supranationaldemocracy.net/tag/international-organizations/page/2/>> accessed March 12, 2021.

87. Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht, "World Court Digest" (Mphil.de 2021) <[https://www.mphil.de/de/pub/publikationen/archiv/world-court-digest.cfm?fuseaction\\_wcd=aktatdat&aktatdat=104020501100.cfm#:~:text=The%20basic%20legal%20concept%20of,air%20space%20above%20its%20territory.>](https://www.mphil.de/de/pub/publikationen/archiv/world-court-digest.cfm?fuseaction_wcd=aktatdat&aktatdat=104020501100.cfm#:~:text=The%20basic%20legal%20concept%20of,air%20space%20above%20its%20territory.>)> accessed March 12, 2021.

violating the principle of non-interference, which is founded on the principle “rex imperator in regno suo”<sup>8889</sup> and it is safeguarded by the customary international law.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the infringements of formal aspects of customary international law, the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for international humanitarian law breaches. Reports made by Human Rights Watch suggest Saudi Arabia and its allies are used to commit unlawful attacks against civilians. According to the 2021 Report from Human Rights Watch,

In 2020, Saudi-led coalition forces conducted airstrikes that indiscriminately killed and injured civilians. As of March, the Saudi-led coalition had conducted between 20,624 and 58,487 airstrikes since March 2015, according to the Yemen Data Project. Almost a third of all airstrikes carried out by the coalition hit civilian objects such as residential homes, hospitals, schools, weddings, farms, food stores, school buses, markets, mosques, bridges, civilian factories, detention centers, and water wells. The Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis have committed unlawful attacks against detention centers, killing and injuring detainees. The Saudi-led coalition [...] continued to fire mortars, rockets, and other missiles indiscriminately into heavily populated areas including Marib, Taizz, and, Hodeidah. These weapons killed or wounded civilians and damaged critical infrastructure such as schools and health facilities<sup>91</sup>

This constitutes a grave breach of the article 50 of the 1949 Geneva Convention.<sup>92</sup> It is also a violation of articles 2 and 3 of the Cairo Declaration — which are respectively the right to life and a ban to kill non-belligerents in war time<sup>93</sup> — and article 3 of the UDHR.<sup>94</sup>

88. J. Peter Pham, “The Limits of Intervention- Humanitarian or Otherwise” (2005) <<https://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/volumes/2006/pham-2006.pdf>>.

89. “King rules in his kingdom”.

90. Chen Yifeng, ‘The Customary Nature of the Principle of Non-Intervention: A Methodological Note’ (2014) 2 Renmin Chinese L Rev 319.

91. “World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Yemen” (Human Rights Watch January 13, 2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen#b88394>> accessed March 12, 2021.

92. “THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS of 12 AUGUST 1949” () <<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf>>.

93. “University of Minnesota Human Rights Library” (Umn.edu 2021) <<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instate/cairodeclaration.html>> accessed March 12, 2021.

94. United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (1948) <[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)>.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Yemen war is a multifaceted challenge. It has seen different circumstances creating the same effects: oppressing the population. The war, airstrikes, and bombings have created huge disadvantages for civilians. They have endured the damage of essential structure which prevent living a normal life, the bombs which kill and wound innocent people, and the blockage of aid delivery, which entails a humanitarian crisis and the world's worst food security crisis. For this reason, intervention from the international community is vital to uplift the dire situation in Yemen. It will require huge investments and support in order to re-establish lives and livelihoods in the conflict affected countries such as Yemen.



# Yemeni situation: inside the Civil War & terrorist attacks

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