

WORKING PAPER 18-1

By Sonal Marwah and Tom Clark

# The War in Yemen: 2011-2018

## The elusive road to peace

November 2018







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The War in Yemen: 2011-2018: The elusive road to peace

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Arms Trade Treaty:** A multilateral treaty, which entered into force in December 2014, that establishes common standards for the international trade of conventional weapons and seeks to reduce the illicit arms trade

**Asylum seeker:** Someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed

**Battle-related deaths:** Deaths that result from conflict involving the use of armed force between warring parties, either state or nonstate

**Dignity kits:** Kits containing hygiene and sanitary items, as well as other items explicitly tailored to the needs of local women and girls of reproductive age, distributed during humanitarian crises

**Food insecurity:** A lack of access to the quantity and quality of food necessary to preserve health and activity

**Gender-based violence:** Violence that occurs because of the normative role expectations associated with gender, along with the unequal power relationships between males and females, within the context of a specific society

**Internally displaced person:** Anyone forced to leave home or a place of habitual residence, particularly to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or humanmade disasters, but who has not crossed an internationally recognized border

**Internationalized civil war:** A conflict involving organized violence between two or more sides within a sovereign state, in which foreign elements play a role in instigating, prolonging, or exacerbating the struggle

**Refugee:** A person who, to escape persecution, has left his/her home country

**Sexual violence:** Gender-based violence that encompasses all sexual acts, attempts to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting



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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>AQAP</b>  | Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula   |
| <b>ATT</b>   | Arms Trade Treaty   |
| <b>GCC</b>   | Gulf Cooperation Council / Cooperation Council<br>for the Arab States of the Gulf |
| <b>GDP</b>   | Gross domestic product  |
| <b>IDP</b>   | Internally displaced person   |
| <b>IPC</b>   | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification                                     |
| <b>IS</b>    | Islamic State   |
| <b>INGO</b>  | International nongovernmental organization  |
| <b>NGO</b>   | Nongovernmental organization  |
| <b>OCHA</b>  | Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (UN)                           |
| <b>OHCHR</b> | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN)                             |
| <b>UAE</b>   | United Arab Emirates  |
| <b>UN</b>    | United Nations  |
| <b>UNGA</b>  | United Nations General Assembly   |
| <b>UNHCR</b> | United Nations Refugee Agency   |
| <b>UNSC</b>  | United Nations Security Council   |







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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations (UN) has played a key role in most recent peace processes, but has not, thus far, been an effective force for peace in Yemen, which is now the site of one of the world's bloodiest internationalized civil wars. Instead, the flow of the conflict has been dominated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in which Saudi Arabia plays a leading role.

The military attacks on behalf of the internationally recognized Yemeni government by a coalition of Middle Eastern states led by Saudi Arabia ("the coalition"), which began in March 2015, mark the collapse of the GCC process for a peaceful political transition. In April 2015, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2216 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorizing an arms embargo on the Houthi-Saleh forces and legitimizing the coalition's military actions. The conditions laid out in Resolution 2216 formed the only stated international basis for a political solution to the war in Yemen.

In this report, we outline the conflict and its impact on Yemenis. We then examine the role of the global arms trade in this conflict. Coalition members began with generally unhindered access to hi-tech military equipment. It is apparent that the ongoing transfer of arms and ammunition to coalition forces—and Saudi Arabia in particular—has fueled their efforts. Houthi forces, as well, seem to have benefited from an influx of weapons from outside—in this case, Iran.

Next, we consider the prospects for peace. Resolution 2216 was never supported by all actors in the conflict and the path it proposed has already proven unworkable. A more open-ended approach is needed. At one point, Resolution 2216 calls for "a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, including women, for peaceful change and meaningful political, economic and social reform." Here is a better starting point.

We believe that the UN needs to take up its traditional role as the intergovernmental organization that coordinates and builds peace, rather than endorsing an externally developed process. The transfer of weapons must be more effectively controlled and tracked. As well, the original arms embargo on Yemen should be extended to all parties involved in the conflict. There is extensive evidence that the Saudi-led coalition has used arms in violation of international humanitarian law and human-rights law. Under these conditions, no state should supply Saudi Arabia or other coalition members with weapons that could be used in Yemen.



## INTRODUCTION

Almost no twenty-first-century wars are between the governments of two states. The wars of Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen are civil wars, with foreign countries providing military and financial support to one or more sides. Studies have found that when external interventions in domestic conflicts do not lead to a rapid military victory, they are likely to make internal conflicts deadlier and more protracted, and less conducive to traditional peace settlements.<sup>1</sup>

Such internationalized civil wars can be difficult to end, because the sides tend to splinter over time, creating more parties that must be satisfied, each with a veto that could spoil a peace settlement.<sup>2</sup> Foreign countries with diverging interests, which provide varying forms of involvement and support to different actors, add even more complexity.

In the last three-quarters of a century, the United Nations (UN) and its Security Council have played key roles in most peace processes.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, an international peacebuilding force has been put in place. Sanctions and embargoes on arms, travel, or money have been imposed as deemed appropriate. The UN has also coordinated efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by conflict.

However, the war in Yemen is a special case. This conflict has been dominated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) from the beginning. So far, the UN has not been an effective force for peace in Yemen, which is now the site of one of the world's bloodiest internationalized civil wars.

This report provides an overview of the evolution of the conflict in Yemen from 2011 to mid-2018. It examines actions by the UN and other political actors, unpacking and understanding the failure—so far—to achieve peace. Our report finds that the current absence of peace is related to the UN's failure to take up its traditional role as the body that builds peace. In the case of Yemen, it simply endorsed a peace process developed by the Gulf Cooperation Council in April 2011 to end Yemen's political crisis.



Our report begins with the large-scale protests that broke out in Yemen in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings. It then explores the internationalization of the civil war in 2015, when the GCC intervened on behalf of the ousted government, examining the shortcomings of the GCC plan to bring peace to the country. Next, the report shows how the war has led to a deteriorating humanitarian situation for Yemeni citizens, especially since 2015. The final section examines the prospects for peace, with Yemen now in its fourth year of war.


Our findings suggest that the UN, despite its imperfections, is the main body capable of building a process that leads to peace in Yemen by satisfying the internal and external players involved in this internationalized civil war. The main challenge will be to find the political will necessary to bring all parties to the table and hammer out a lasting agreement.

We draw primarily on UN Security Council documents: reports on Security Council sessions dedicated to the Middle East and Yemen, especially reporting by the Special Envoy to the Secretary-General on Yemen; statements by the Security Council President; Security Council Resolutions; and reports by the UN Panel of Experts established by those resolutions. Reports from local NGOs, including women NGOs involved in the peace process, were consulted.

To assess the impacts of the conflict, we drew on the documentation of such UN agencies as the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for data on population displacements and the extent of required humanitarian aid, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for evidence of human rights violations, and the UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) for data on refugees in Yemen and from Yemen.

Finally, a range of international newspapers are referenced.

## BACKGROUND



The modern Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990 with an agreement to unify North and South Yemen. It is the poorest country in the Middle East. Although, like other Gulf States, it has oil, the economic benefits have been experienced mainly in the north and by the Hashid people, to which former president Ali Abdullah Saleh belonged.

Saleh, who had served as President of North Yemen since 1978, became President of the Republic of Yemen in 1990. His administration was considered highly corrupt and unwilling to consider reforms, despite periodic demands for political reform and greater sharing of the wealth.<sup>4</sup>

In January 2011, in the wake of Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, large-scale protests against the Saleh regime broke out in Yemen.<sup>5</sup> At the time, 40 per cent of Yemen's population lived on less than \$2 a day.<sup>6</sup> The regime collapsed in late November.



Figure 1: Map of Yemen<sup>7</sup>



## PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFLICT

### Major local actors<sup>8</sup>

**ABDRABBUH MANSOUR HADI**, the only candidate, was elected President of Yemen in February 2012. Internationally recognized as president, he has not received constant support from the leaders of his own army, although he still enjoys the support of influential Yemeni military leaders. In 2017, Hadi's position was weakened by the defection of several southern governors to the Southern Transitional Council.

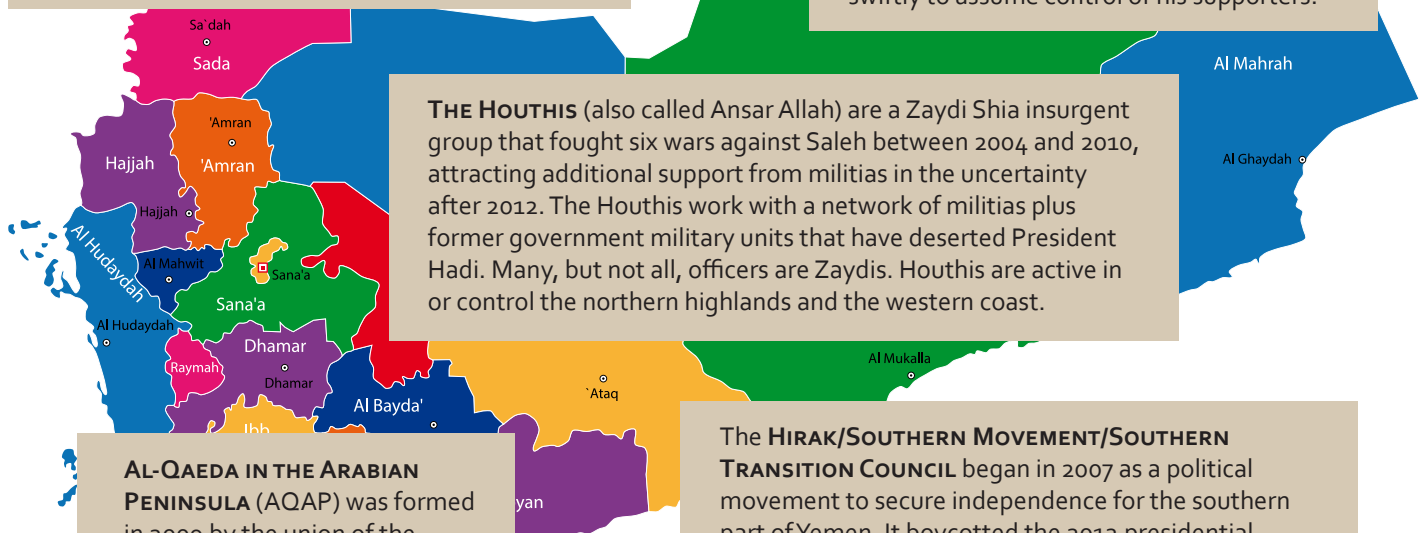
Former president **ALI ABDULLAH SALEH** remained head of Yemen's leading political party after he left office and enjoyed personal loyalty from powerful units of the army. In 2014, he formed an alliance with the Houthis, but maintained his control of military units loyal to him. Following his death in December 2017, the Houthis moved swiftly to assume control of his supporters.

**THE HOUTHIS** (also called Ansar Allah) are a Zaydi Shia insurgent group that fought six wars against Saleh between 2004 and 2010, attracting additional support from militias in the uncertainty after 2012. The Houthis work with a network of militias plus former government military units that have deserted President Hadi. Many, but not all, officers are Zaydis. Houthis are active in or control the northern highlands and the western coast.

**AL-QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA (AQAP)** was formed in 2009 by the union of the Saudi and Yemeni branches of Al-Qaeda. It has become a significant source of local insurgency, seeking to acquire territory and experiment with local government. It was expelled from the port of Mukalla in 2016, but remains active in the south.

The **HIRAK/SOUTHERN MOVEMENT/SOUTHERN TRANSITION COUNCIL** began in 2007 as a political movement to secure independence for the southern part of Yemen. It boycotted the 2012 presidential election. In May 2017, the Hirak factions came together and the movement evolved into the Southern Transitional Council, a third government in Yemen that attracted support from several southern governors. It enjoys some support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) military forces operating in the south as part of the Saudi-led coalition.

The Yemen branch of **ISLAMIC STATE** was established in 2014 and involves mainly non-Yemenis.





## Foreign and regional actors

The members of the **GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL** are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC brokered the power transfer that forced President Saleh to step down in 2011 as part of its initiative to create a transition process involving national dialogue and a new constitution for Yemen.

In 2015, the newly ousted President Hadi requested military aid from outside states to regain the presidency. In response, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the UAE formed a **COALITION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF SAUDI ARABIA** to mount a military intervention in Yemen that involved airstrikes and ground forces.

**PROXY MILITIA** have been established by coalition members to fight in Yemen. The UAE trains and funds elite militias such as the Security Belt Forces and the Hadrami and Shabwani Elite Forces.



With the permission of President Hadi, the **UNITED STATES** is continuing air and drone strikes against AQAP targets in Yemen. It has also undertaken related ground operations. As well, the United States has provided logistic and intelligence support to the Saudi-led coalition.

## Major arms suppliers

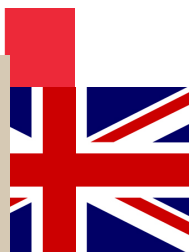


The **UNITED STATES** has been a major supplier to Saudi Arabia of arms, including cluster bombs.



On the other side, there is evidence that Houthis have used **IRANIAN-MADE MISSILES**.

Both the **UNITED KINGDOM AND FRANCE** have been large suppliers of weapons and military equipment to the Saudi-led coalition. UK and French military officers have also been in the command and control centre for Saudi airstrikes on Yemen.



## SUMMARY OF THE CONFLICT (2011-2018)

### Civil strife breaks out (January 2011 to March 2015)

At the peak of the protests in 2011, President Saleh was forced to consider proposals for the peaceful political transfer of power issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council to restore a degree of political stability in Yemen. Later that year, Saleh's deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, became President. In early 2012, Hadi was elected president. These moves were endorsed by the UN Security Council (UNSC).<sup>9</sup>

The intention was for Hadi to lead a political transition that included a Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference,<sup>10</sup> aimed at reaching broad national consensus on a new political order, a revised constitution, and unified armed forces.<sup>11</sup> But from the beginning, the GCC plan ran into difficulties.

The transition deal that was negotiated by power brokers excluded the Houthis, the Hirak, and the protesters. And, while Saleh was granted immunity from prosecution for agreeing to the transfer of power to Hadi, he was not required to abandon politics.<sup>12</sup> Saleh remained the head of Yemen's leading political party and continued to play a divisive role in Yemeni politics, drawing support away from the elected president. Moreover, Saleh retained the loyalty of many military officers.

Hadi faced other challenges, including attacks by AQAP and the Houthis and opposition from the Southern Movement, which boycotted the 2012 presidential election. The GCC initiative was perceived by many as a power-sharing deal among Yemen's political elites that ignored historically marginalized groups and neglected the economic situation of the country.<sup>13</sup>

In June 2014, the process of political transition began to fall apart. The Hadi government decided to cut fuel subsidies, which led to a significant increase in prices and triggered protests and attacks from Houthis and their supporters. By September, Houthi rebels had occupied the capital, Sana'a.

On the same day a UN representative brokered the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, Hadi invited the Houthis to join a unity government.<sup>14</sup> However, Houthi militias continued to seize territory.

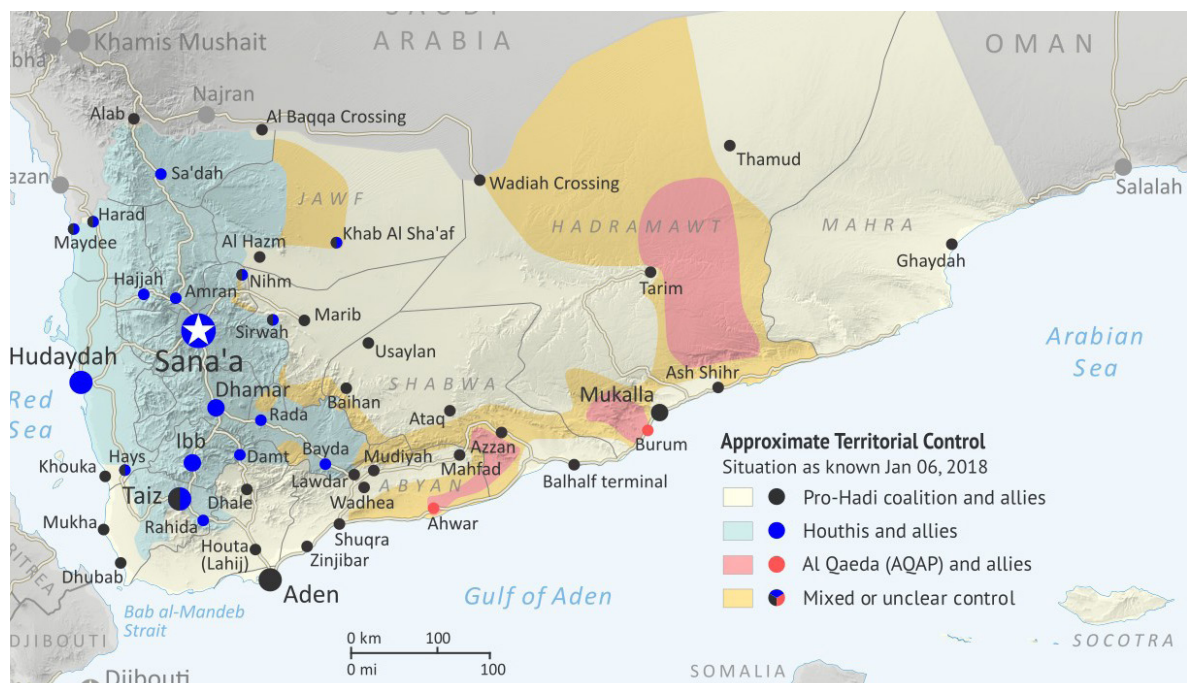
In January 2015, the government issued a new draft constitution, a product of the

GCC process. Having had no input, the Houthis rejected the draft and violence erupted once more.<sup>15</sup> Houthi forces, backed by military units loyal to Saleh, staged a coup in Sana'a and President Hadi was forced to flee to the port city of Aden. The Houthis formed an alliance with former president Saleh, but each side retained control of its respective military forces.

Hadi attempted to reassert his power, but was forced by Houthi advances on Aden to flee to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in March. On March 24, President Hadi asked the GCC “to immediately provide support, by all necessary means and measures, including military intervention, to protect Yemen and its people from the continuing aggression by the Houthis.”<sup>16</sup>

It is ironic—and tragic—that the intensification of the conflict was rooted in the failure of a UN-endorsed plan for a peaceful political transition that aimed to bring political stability, peace, and security to Yemen.

Figure 2: Yemen control map, January 2018<sup>17</sup>



www.polgeonow.com

## The internationalization of conflict (2015)

The GCC intervention, led by Saudi Arabia and codenamed “Operation Decisive Storm,” began in March 2015, with an aerial bombing campaign against Houthi militia targets and a naval blockade.

As the security and governance vacuum in Yemen grew, terrorist organizations AQAP and Islamic State began to consolidate their hold on territory, recruit new members, and stage new attacks. In the month that the GCC intervention began, Islamic State carried out its first major attacks in Yemen: two suicide bombings of Shia mosques in Sana'a that killed 137 civilians.<sup>18</sup> Experts have warned that the foundations being laid by these organizations could last for years.<sup>19</sup>

On April 14, 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2216 to bring an end to the violence in Yemen.<sup>20</sup> The resolution imposed sanctions on individuals undermining the stability of Yemen and authorized an arms embargo against the Houthi-Saleh forces. It also demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all areas seized during the current round of fighting, relinquish arms (ballistic missiles and rockets) seized from military and security institutions, cease all actions falling exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen, and fully implement previous Security Council resolutions.

The resolution, framed as a means of bringing peace and stability to Yemen, included specific directions against the Houthi forces, while supporting the GCC's efforts. Only the Houthis were called on to disarm. The resolution was passed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, opening the door for international intervention and legitimizing the Saudi-led coalition's military approach.<sup>21</sup> Members of the coalition have been adamant that the conditions laid out in Resolution 2216 must form the basis for the political solution to end the war in Yemen.

The coalition attacks that began in 2015 mark the collapse of the GCC process for a political transition led by an elected president in Yemen. Foreign military forces are now part of the calculation.

## An influx of weapons and more human-rights abuses (2016)

In the following months, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reportedly sent separate ground forces to Yemen,<sup>22</sup> while Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the United States were active in the naval blockade. Houthi and allied forces employed banned antipersonnel landmines and indiscriminately launched rockets into populated areas in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia.<sup>23</sup> They engaged in a strategic “land missile

campaign,” using battle-winning weapons such as antitank guided missiles, which, according to a UN report,<sup>24</sup> were covertly shipped to them across the Oman border. The UN also documented the use of short-range ballistic missiles and free-flight rockets.

Between March 2015 and March 2016, there were approximately 9,000 civilian casualties, including 3,218 killed and 5,778 injured. Millions more were displaced. According to the UN Panel set up under UNSC Resolution 2216, the “[Saudi-led] coalition was responsible for twice as many civilian casualties as all other forces put together, virtually all as a result of airstrikes.”<sup>25</sup> The coalition naval blockades systematically kept out humanitarian cargo ships and prevented commercial access to fuel, food, and non-food items. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ra’ad Al Hussein Zeid condemned all sides for the high civilian toll.

In April 2016, the UN, acting under Resolution 2216, sponsored peace talks in Kuwait that included government forces and Houthi militia, but excluded AQAP and Islamic State. During the talks, there were several breaches of the ceasefire, and the initiative petered out in August. Coalition airstrikes and ground fighting resumed.<sup>26</sup>

According to the Yemen Data project, in 2016 alone, the coalition conducted 5,102 airstrikes,<sup>27</sup> with strikes intensifying after talks collapsed. These widespread, indiscriminate aerial attacks have attracted broad international criticism. The UN Panel of Experts was almost certain that at least 10 detailed investigations revealed that the coalition did not meet the requirements of international humanitarian law for proportionality and precautions; some of the attacks might constitute war crimes.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 3: Ten Saudi-led coalition air strikes in 2016 investigated by the UN<sup>29</sup>

| Date         | Location | Target                   | Type of explosive ordnance   | Civilian casualties/consequences   |
|--------------|----------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| March 15     | Hajjah   | Civilian market          | Mk 83 Bomb/ Paveway          | 106 dead, 41 injured               |
| March 25     | Ta’izz   | Civilian residence       | Not confirmed                | 10 dead                            |
| May 25       | Lahij    | Civilian residence       | Mk 82 Bomb/ Paveway          | 6 dead, 3 injured                  |
| May 25       | Lahij    | Water bottling plant     | Mk 82 Bomb/ Paveway          | No fatalities                      |
| August 9     | Sana’a   | Food production facility | High explosive aircraft bomb | Repeat strike; 10 dead, 13 injured |
| August 15    | Hajjah   | Hospital                 | GBU-12 Paveway II            | 19 dead, 24 injured                |
| September 13 | Sana’a   | Water pump factory       | Mk 82 Bomb/ Paveway IV       | No casualties                      |
| September 22 | Sana’a   | Water pump factory       | GBU-24/ Paveway IV           | Repeat strike                      |
| September 24 | Ibb      | Residential complex      | Mk 82 Bomb/ Paveway          | 9 dead, more than 7 injured        |
| October 8    | Sana’a   | Civilian funeral hall    | GBU-12 Paveway II            | 132 dead, 695 injured              |

Note: All air strikes resulted in complete or partial destruction of the targets.







The Saudi-led coalition members began with generally unhindered access to hi-tech military equipment. After repeated evidence of civilian casualties from Saudi-led air strikes, in June 2016, the Obama Administration withdrew U.S. personnel from the joint U.S.-Saudi planning cell and suspended sales of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia.

An early source of Houthi weapons was the national stockpile; since 2015, Hadi's forces had lost control of more than 68 per cent of the armouries. After the Houthi-Saleh forces used up this source, they required suppliers. Saudi Arabia alleged that Iran was supplying many weapons to Houthi forces.

At this stage, the UN Panel of Experts mandated under UNSC Resolution 2216 lacked evidence to confirm the allegation, although there were indicators that the anti-tank guided weapons used by Houthi and Saleh forces were of Iranian manufacture. A Report by the UN Panel of Experts included evidence from Conflict Armament Research,<sup>30</sup> which analyzed seized weapons from sailing vessels near the Horn of Africa and found a significant portion were manufactured in Iran. The areas in which weapons were intercepted suggested that weapons were flowing from Iran and Somalia to Yemen.

The UN has documented Houthi actions that violate international humanitarian law and human-rights norms. For example, investigations of detention centres under Houthi control revealed cases of deprivation of liberty.<sup>31</sup> There is also emerging evidence that Houthis actively recruited boys as young as 15 to fight as child soldiers<sup>32</sup> on the front lines.<sup>33</sup> Recent data suggests that 2,419 child soldiers have been recruited since the start of the conflict, most by Houthi-Saleh forces.

When we look at the government and coalition forces, it is apparent that the transfer of arms and ammunition to coalition forces—and Saudi Arabia in particular—has been fueling their efforts. The main military suppliers—the United States and United Kingdom—have provided combat aircraft, bombs, assault weapons, ammunition, and other forms of material support. For example, the United States has provided targeted intelligence for the bombing campaign and assisted in refueling coalition bombers.<sup>34</sup>

## A humanitarian catastrophe (2017- June 2018)

By 2017, there was no functional state in Yemen. There were “warring statelets,” but no group or alliance had the political support or the military strength to reunite the country or achieve victory on the battlefield.<sup>35</sup> The Houthi-Saleh alliance and the Saudi-led coalition both required external military backing to continue fighting. The following details indicate the extent of the chaos.

Several southern governors deserted Hadi to join the newly formed Southern Transition Council, which came together in May 2017 to advocate for an independent south Yemen. In the north, the Houthis consolidated their hold on Sana'a and took over Saleh's network after he was killed in December.

According to the Yemen Data Project,<sup>36</sup> from March 26, 2015 until the end of 2017, the Saudi-led coalition carried out 15,762 air raids, each comprised of multiple strikes. The total number of raids by the end of June 2018 was 17,801.

Both AQAP and Islamic State frequently attacked Houthi, government, and coalition targets.

In the face of such societal breakdown, Yemenis have tried to escape.<sup>37</sup> But leaving was and remains challenging and often fatal. On March 16, 2017, a boat on the Red

Sea, filled with 145 migrants, including many women and children, was attacked by coalition forces. Forty-two people were killed and 34 wounded.<sup>38</sup> In recent months, Yemenis have been joined by

**Repeated incidents and threats to international humanitarian organizations, and attempts by some armed groups to use humanitarian actors as pawns in the conflict, forced many organizations to discontinue their operations or to operate remotely.**

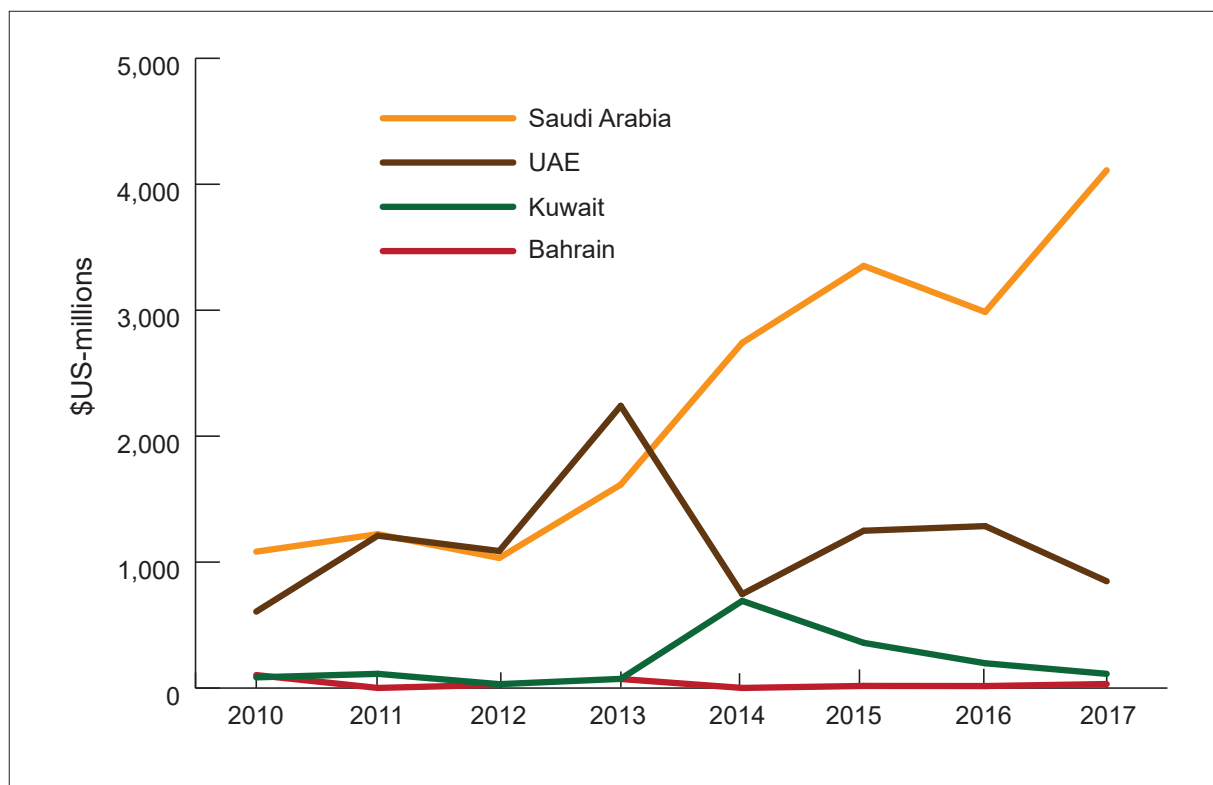
refugees and asylum seekers from other countries, who are seeking to return to their home states.

The continuing flow of arms into the region has added to the insecurity. In 2017, President Trump reversed Obama's June 2016 decision and stated his intention to proceed with the suspended munitions sales to Saudi Arabia, despite documentation of continued unlawful airstrikes in Yemen.

For the first time, the UN Panel of Experts identified remnants of missiles and related military equipment and unmanned aerial vehicles used by the Houthis that were from Iran, brought into Yemen after the arms embargo.<sup>39</sup> This evidence indicated that Iran was not in compliance with UNSC Resolution 2216.

In his last briefing to the UN Security Council in early 2018, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed reported that the incessant military attacks from all parties had resulted in the world's largest humanmade humanitarian crisis, claiming thousands of lives and driving many more from their homes.<sup>40</sup>



Figure 4: Gulf coalition arms imports<sup>41</sup>

The unpredictability of attacks created additional challenges for humanitarian agencies in the country. For example, the UNHCR's operational capacity was severely limited by the lack of security, both for its personnel and partners and for those it wanted to help.<sup>42</sup> Repeated incidents and threats to international humanitarian organizations, and attempts by some armed groups to use humanitarian actors as pawns in the conflict, forced many organizations to discontinue their operations or to operate remotely.

The UN Report for 2017, released in early 2018 by the UN Panel of Experts examining the arms embargo, notes that “after nearly two years of conflict in Yemen, an outright military victory by any one side was no longer a realistic possibility in the near term.”<sup>43</sup>

In March 2018, the president of the UN Security Council reported that “the UN estimated that 22.2 million people were now in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen, a rise of 3.4 million over 2017. Civilians were vulnerable to outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria at a time when Yemeni institutions, including its health system, had been weakened.”<sup>44</sup>

## THE SCALE OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR

Until recently, the conflict in Yemen has been largely ignored by most of the international community. Other Middle East and North African conflicts—in Syria, Libya, Iraq—have been deemed more pressing. But in July 2017, the heads of three UN

agencies—UNICEF, the World Food Program, and the World Health Organization—called the situation in Yemen “the

**“The world’s largest humanitarian crisis”**

world’s largest humanitarian crisis.”<sup>45</sup> And this year, in April, the UN OCHA stated that Yemen “is now facing the worst manmade humanitarian crisis in the world.”<sup>46</sup> The world is beginning to take notice.

One determinant of the severity of a war is the number of battle-related deaths. In our analysis, we also consider the number of forcibly displaced persons—both within the country and beyond Yemen’s borders—and the number of people facing food insecurity. Each indicator tells a part of this multilayered story of conflict in Yemen.

Figure 5: The human costs of war in Yemen<sup>47</sup>

| Indicators                             | Totals as of<br>March 13, 2018 |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Population                             | 28,758,330                     |
| Battle-related deaths <sup>*48</sup>   | 18,312                         |
| Refugees and asylum seekers            | 280,692                        |
| Internally displaced persons           | 2,014,026                      |
| Internally-displaced-person returnees  | 956,076                        |
| Persons in need of humanitarian relief | 22,200,000                     |

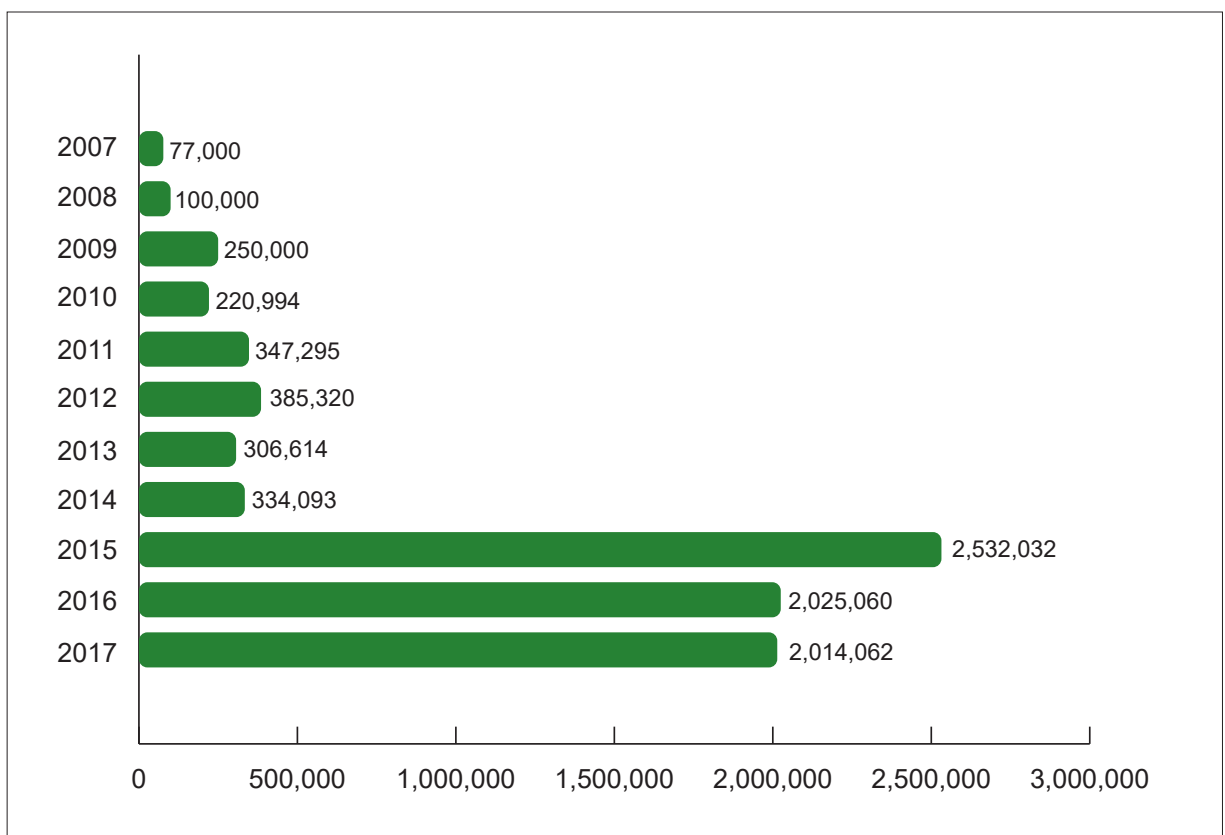
\* Latest figure available

## Battle-related deaths

In 2016, the war in Syria was the deadliest in the world, with approximately 40,000 battle-related deaths. The next deadliest were wars in Iraq (11,500 dead) and Afghanistan (8,400 dead). Yemen recorded at least 2,500 battle deaths that year, with the actual number likely much higher.<sup>49</sup> But these figures do not include consequential deaths; some analysts suggest the need to include additional subsequent deaths, such as those among forcibly displaced persons.<sup>50</sup>

## Forcibly displaced persons

Figure 6: Number of internally displaced persons in Yemen, 2007-2017<sup>51</sup>





While displacement is not a new phenomenon in Yemen, the number of persons internally displaced sharply increased in 2015, when the president was forced from the capital by Houthi forces. According to UNHCR data, Yemen, then with a total population of approximately 28 million, produced the highest number of new internal displacements caused by conflict in 2015. Figures for 2017 were lower, but displaced persons were facing more severe conditions.<sup>52</sup>

By September 2017, more than two million IDPs were facing severe insecurities, with many unable to meet basic needs. Eighty-four per cent had been out of their homes for more than a year.<sup>53</sup> Many have also moved frequently, sometimes fleeing and returning home as violence increased and declined. Because Yemen has a no-camp policy for IDPs, roughly 77 per cent of the displaced have been living with host families or in rented accommodations, centres, and makeshift settlements.<sup>54</sup> This situation makes it difficult for humanitarian agencies to track and assist them. So, not all the internally displaced have been documented. Thus, we believe that the scale of internal displacement in Yemen is even greater than documentation indicates.

It does seem to be clear, however, that, unlike some of the other wars in the region, the war in Yemen has not generated large-scale movements of people across bor-

**“An entire generation of children in Yemen faces a bleak future because of limited or no access to education. Even those who remain in school are not getting the quality education they need.”**

ders. With only Saudi Arabia and Oman as direct land neighbours, Yemen’s geographical position effectively prevents many from using ground transportation to flee. The international airport in Sana’a, damaged in airstrikes in November

2017, has been repaired, but its use has been largely restricted to international relief flights.<sup>55</sup> By late 2017, the coalition had closed all land, sea, and air access to Yemenis, reportedly to prevent weapons from reaching the Houthis.

There were 57,646 Yemeni refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2015. By the end of 2016, the number was 63,750. By October 2017, the number had reached 64,139. According to the UNHCR, most fled to Oman, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

Children, the most vulnerable members of society, are also the first and most affected victims of war. According to UNICEF, since the conflict began, an average of five children have been killed or injured each day.<sup>56</sup> The number of out-of-school children was already high before the conflict and by early 2018 had reached nearly 2 million.<sup>57</sup>

## *The story of 10-year-old Ebrahim*<sup>58</sup>



When the civil war began in 2015, Ebrahim and his family fled their home in Aden's Al-Tawahi district in search of safety and shelter. When they reached Aden's Al Mansora district, they were declared IDPs. Ebrahim described their journey:

"When the fighting got heavier and closer to our house, we had to leave. The only escape route available was the seaport, as all roads were blocked due to the fighting and gun firing. My father was sick then, and we were lucky to get a ride in our neighbour's bus to the seaport. The boat was very crowded with many families and small children huddled in it. The boat ride took about 30 minutes to the other side, but for us it was like an endless journey. As we were approaching land, we could see some of the bombs landing on the dock. One bomb hit a boat close to ours and many, including children, died instantly."

For roughly four months, Ebrahim and thousands of other children from his area lived as IDPs and were forced to miss school. When he and his family eventually returned to their home, they thought that their suffering was over.

However, one day fighting broke out near Ebrahim's home. Driven by curiosity, like all children, Ebrahim stood at his window to watch, even though he knew he shouldn't.

"I was terrified. My father had instructed us to keep away from the window."

A piece of shrapnel from explosives punctured his head, causing him to lose consciousness. He was immediately rushed to the hospital and the doctors were able to remove two fragments, leaving the third still embedded inside his head.

While in hospital, Ebrahim was visited by fellow students and teachers.

"Ebrahim is one of the best students in the school," according to Rahima Tarbosh, the school's headmaster. "He has a friendly spirit and his friends and teachers love him. We were all sad to know what had happened to him, but we continued supporting him, and he is now attending school normally."



According to Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative in Yemen, “an entire generation of children in Yemen faces a bleak future because of limited or no access to education. Even those who remain in school are not getting the quality education they need.”<sup>59</sup> Displaced children are also exposed to various forms of abuse, including early marriage, child labour, sexual and gender-based violence, and exploitation and recruitment into armed groups.<sup>60</sup>

Even though the situation in Yemen is dire, people—most from Ethiopia and Somalia—still seek refuge there.<sup>61</sup> Yemen is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol and has long been a transit country for migrants from the Horn of Africa seeking to reach wealthy Gulf countries. Some, apparently uninformed of the dangers, look to stay. Their unawareness might be partly due to false information from smuggling networks, which downplay the dangers. With heightened insecurity, women and children migrants may have become more susceptible to trafficking.

Figure 7: Yemeni refugees and asylum seekers<sup>62</sup>

| Year | Numbers |
|------|---------|
| 2015 | 57,646  |
| 2016 | 63,750  |
| 2017 | 63,139  |

NB: The numbers for 2015 cover April–December. The 2016 numbers include the entire year. The 2017 numbers cover January to October.



## Responding to gender-based violence

The institutional, economic, and social breakdowns resulting from conflicts affect men, women, and children differently.<sup>63</sup> Men are more likely to be killed; women and children make up most of the refugees and the forcibly displaced. Everyone in Yemen has suffered from the war and, according to reports, displaced women and girls have experienced more hardship and face greater risks of gender-based violence.<sup>64</sup>



Before violence broke out, women and girls in Yemen already faced entrenched gender inequalities due to discriminatory laws and guardianship rules. As the conflict has dragged on, their circumstances have worsened. According to the UN Population Fund,<sup>65</sup> more than three million Yemeni women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence, and 60,000 women are at risk of sexual violence, including rape. Because cases of either form of violence are seldom reported, it is hard to accurately determine the scale of violence against women in Yemen.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen,<sup>66</sup> 10.3 per cent of IDP households are headed by females, 2.6 per cent by minor females. Such households face additional risks when trying to provide for their families. Some coping strategies uniquely harm women and girls. For example, rates of child marriage in Yemen have been increasing, as families seek dowry payments to survive.

To respond to the humanitarian needs of all vulnerable people, Yemeni women have gotten involved in local NGOs to assist families. Many have played multiple active roles, especially at the community level—organizing food relief, taking care of people in need of medical aid, and negotiating humanitarian access.

International humanitarian agencies have organized a gender-based violence subcluster<sup>67</sup> to implement key interventions that<sup>68</sup>

- strengthen the information management system on sexual and gender-based violence;
- provide institutional support to the government of Yemen to facilitate access of refugee women to marriage and divorce certificates issued by local authorities;<sup>69</sup>
- procure and distribute dignity kits;
- build the capacity of service providers;
- raise awareness of women of their rights and encourage them to seek services.

It should be noted that, due to a deteriorating security environment that threatened the ability of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to operate safely, most INGOs have gradually shifted out of Yemen.

## Conflict and food insecurity

Armed conflict displaces populations, destroys property and livelihoods, disrupts agricultural productivity, disrupts the economy, and shatters social systems. Conflict causes and aggravates loss, insecurity, and hunger.<sup>70</sup>

Physical hunger fuels conflict. When food prices rise and social safety nets no longer function, hunger can precipitate social unrest that can lead to, or intensify, violence. This is most readily seen in countries that rely on food imports. Prior to the conflict, Yemen imported over 90 per cent of its staple foods, with most arriving by sea.<sup>71</sup> The war has restricted civilian access to key ports like Al-Hudaydah on the Red Sea and exacerbated food and fuel shortages.<sup>72</sup>

Yemen is currently experiencing the world's worst food insecurity crisis. Its current situation exemplifies the complex interplay of conflict and hunger. In April 2017, 17-million Yemenis (60 per cent of the population) required food assistance; of these, approximately 10.2-million were in crisis and 6.8-million at emergency levels of food insecurity.<sup>73</sup> What does all this mean?

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a “common global system for classifying the severity and magnitude and identifying key drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition situation[s].”<sup>74</sup> It lists five phases of food insecurity: minimal/none, stressed, crisis, emergency, and catastrophe/famine. Once the third stage is reached, an international humanitarian response is urgently required.

Using this classification system, in August 2017, the UN Security Council listed Yemen as one of four countries in the world at risk of famine. Famine is declared when more than 30 per cent of children under five are experiencing acute malnutrition and when the daily death rate from malnutrition is two out of every 10,000 people.<sup>75</sup>

Chronic malnutrition in young children under the age of five has long-term implications for their ability to learn and earn a living. The duration of the conflict correlates to the severity of food insecurity and the lasting effects of chronic undernourishment. There was significant food insecurity in Yemen before the latest rounds of fighting. In 2009, 31.5 per cent (6.8-million) of Yemen's population was food insecure; by 2013, the numbers had risen to 43 per cent (10.5-million).<sup>76</sup> Although rural households depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, both rural and urban households buy most of their food.

In a 2018 statement, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said that the growing conflict in Yemen had constrained humanitarian response and reduced food and fuel imports, raising the risk of starvation and the resurgence of contagious diseases like cholera.<sup>77</sup>

## Infrastructural collapse

Yemen's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 34.6 per cent from 2014 to 2015.<sup>78</sup> This economic contraction has gradually resulted in the collapse of social protection systems and irregular salaries and pensions for civil servants, who comprise about 30 per cent of the workforce. There are approximately 1.2-million civil servants in Yemen, virtually all of whom have not received payment or received it only intermittently since August 2016; this is the single biggest factor in the lack of delivery of crucial public services.<sup>79</sup>

Armed groups have destroyed transportation infrastructure (such as roads) and blocked air and sea access, preventing imports and humanitarian aid from reaching those in need.

Since 2015, coalition naval ships have patrolled the Red Sea to prevent arms shipments from reaching Houthi forces; this action has also delayed or prevented food and humanitarian supplies from reaching Yemen.<sup>80</sup>

The UN Panel of Experts on Yemen reported that the coalition blockade of the Sana'a airport and Red Sea ports, which began in November 2017, has severely impeded the import of humanitarian and commercial goods. They deem the blockade a weapon of war, threatening opponents with starvation. The Panel also found that the Houthi-Saleh forces have obstructed and prevented humanitarian access and distribution of relief in Sana'a.

The healthcare system has been forced to make do with reduced financial resources and medical supplies at a time when violence rages and 50 per cent of children under the age of five are chronically malnourished.<sup>81</sup> A breakdown in health, water, and sanitation systems led to a cholera outbreak in 2017.



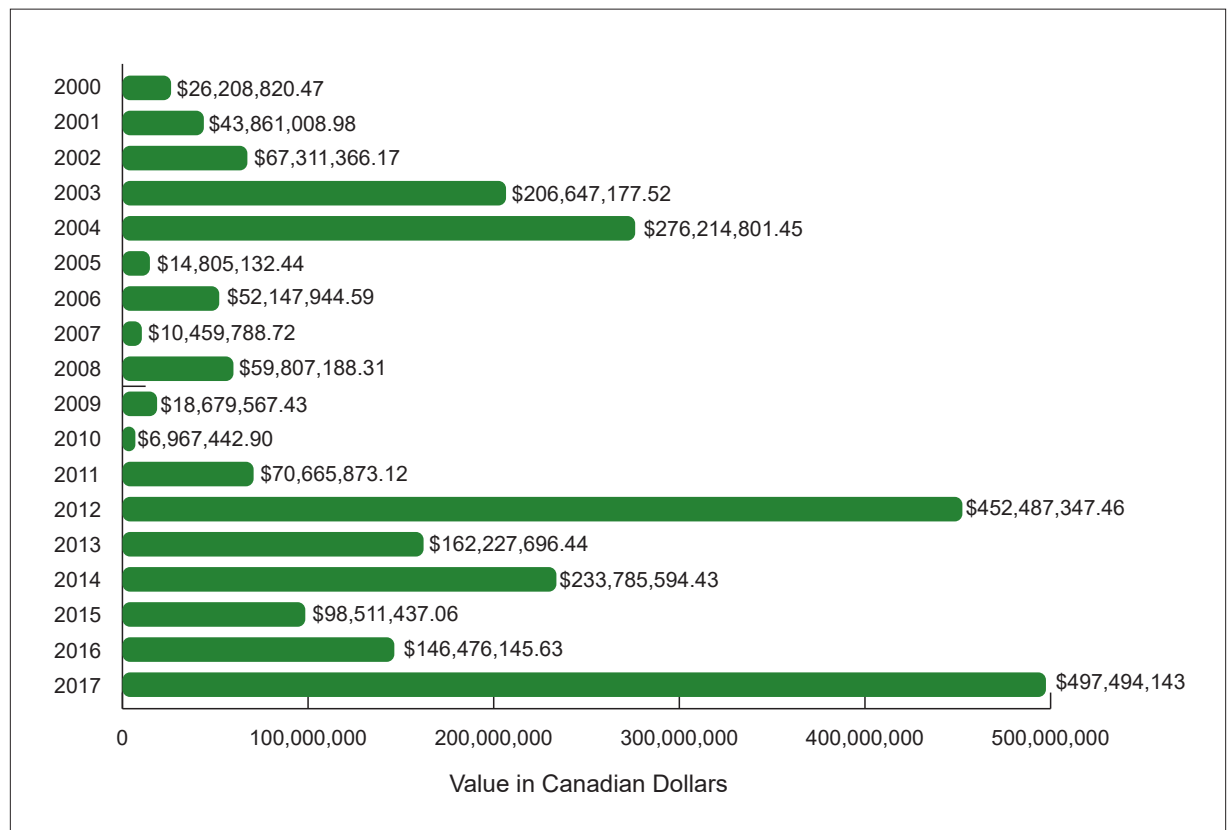
## ARMING SAUDI ARABIA

Between 2013 and 2017, Saudi Arabia was the world's second largest importer of arms.<sup>82</sup> During this period, arms imports increased by 225 per cent over the period 2008-2012. In 2015, the year of the Houthi coup, the total reported value of licences and sales of arms to Saudi Arabia by States Parties and Signatories to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was more than U.S.\$25-billion.<sup>83</sup>

This figure is certainly low, as some states have provided no or incomplete data on transfers in 2015. In 2017, Saudi Arabia spent 10 per cent of GDP on the military—more than any other country in the world.<sup>84</sup> The United States was its largest supplier; other prominent exporters included the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.<sup>85</sup>

Saudi Arabia has been one of Canada's largest arms customers for years. In 2017, Saudi Arabia was second only to the United States, receiving approximately \$497.5-million in Canadian military exports (accounting for 48.25 per cent of the total value of non-U.S. military exports).<sup>86</sup> The 2014 deal (see next page) illustrates the multiple risks of exporting arms to a country at war or involved in war.

Figure 8: Canadian military exports to Saudi Arabia, 2000–2017<sup>87</sup>





## Canada's \$15-billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia

The original 2014 deal was signed by the Conservative Harper government. However, in 2016, the Liberal Trudeau government granted the required export permits.

Details of the deal have been protected by a confidentiality agreement. Only after repeated requests by civil society organizations and investigative journalists did the Liberal government release redacted documents with some details.

The deal is for 742 of Canada's most modern light armoured vehicle, the LAV-6.<sup>88</sup>

It has been documented that Canadian-made armoured vehicles have been used by the Saudi government in its long-running conflict against the civilian Shiite population in Qatif, in the eastern part of the country.<sup>89</sup> The investigation by the Liberal government found "no conclusive evidence that Canadian made vehicles were used in human rights violations." The Foreign Affairs Minister supported the findings, despite concerns raised by civil society and others about the difficulties in conducting a thorough investigation in such a remote region.

Questions have been raised about federal government violations of Canada's weapons export-control rules, which prohibit arms exports to countries with a "persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens."<sup>90</sup>

It is possible that Canadian military equipment sold to the United States has been resold to countries in the Middle East and is being used in Yemen's war. Because Canada does not report on arms sales to the United States, it is impossible to know how many Canadian weapons or weapon components are in use by the Saudi-led coalition.<sup>91</sup>

Project Ploughshares has engaged both the Liberal and Conservative governments on this matter and pointed out the incompatibility of this deal with domestic and international export controls.<sup>92</sup> While the prospect of misuse of Canadian equipment in Yemen is indeed problematic, Ploughshares' concerns are also related to abuses within Saudi Arabia's borders.



## PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

With no political solution in sight in Yemen, arms-exporting countries are starting to pay attention to the scale of the humanitarian crisis and are recognizing the role of arms exports in enabling the Saudi-led coalition's operation.

Civil society actors and human-rights groups have launched legal challenges to pressure their governments to stop exporting arms to coalition members. The UK Campaign Against Arms Trade launched a legal challenge that argued that British arms exports to Saudi Arabia breached UK national guidelines. In France, Droit Solidarité and Aser, which specializes in armament issues, have demanded that export licences to Saudi Arabia and the UAE be withdrawn. Similar legal pressure is being mounted in Italy, the United States, and elsewhere.

In 2016, the European Parliament passed a non-binding resolution calling on all member states to enforce an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia in response to its

actions in Yemen.<sup>93</sup> At the time of the writing of this report, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, and Germany had stopped arms sales to all parties involved in the war.

UN Security Council Resolution 2216 was problematic from the beginning. Its major

**With no political solution in sight in Yemen, arms-exporting countries are starting to pay attention to the scale of the humanitarian crisis and are recognizing the role of arms exports in enabling the Saudi-led coalition's operation.**

accomplishment was to establish an arms embargo and the Panel of Experts, which reported in early 2017 and 2018 on the progress of the conflict and the embargo. Otherwise, it has run counter to the peace efforts.

The resolution requires Yemeni parties to follow the GCC initiative, which was flawed from the beginning. It made unreasonable demands on the Houthis. It locked in the administration of President Hadi as the legitimate government, when his presidency was to be interim for two years, beginning in 2012. (It should also be noted that the continuing GCC presence in the country depends on Hadi's remaining president, because it was he who invited the military intervention.<sup>94</sup>)

In 2018, after years of violent conflict, Yemen has almost ceased to exist as a state.

The authority of the Hadi government has been so reduced that it is doubtful that it can ever reunite Yemen. The conflict is no longer Houthis and Saleh versus government forces, as it was in 2015. It now involves multiple warring factions, as well as the forces of the Saudi-led coalition and their proxy forces.

The armed conflict cannot be won by any side. In the south, popular support for the Southern Transitional Council has grown and there is a real possibility that south Yemen will secede. The Houthis are likely to continue their hold on the capital, Sana'a, and the north. UN experts expect the Houthis to seek an international partner to replace Saleh.<sup>95</sup>

Getting the parties that are directly or indirectly involved to agree on a peace path is the first hurdle. In Resolution 2216, the UN Security Council did not call for a peace path approved by all actors. Almost all provisions require that the GCC plan be followed. But it has failed.

However, one paragraph of the resolution calls for “a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, including women, for peaceful change and meaningful political, economic and social reform.”<sup>96</sup> Moving away from the GCC framework to an open-ended approach that addresses the conflict along these lines would offer a better starting point. It would have to expand to include the needs of all Yemeni parties and also deal with the needs of external parties like the GCC. As the Panel of Experts noted, it would need to recognize the possibility of a two-nation solution.





## Who is missing

*RASHA JARHUM, founder and director of Peace Track Initiative, is from South Yemen. With more than 16 years' experience working on human rights and gender issues, she is now focused on involving women in the process to restore peace in Yemen. Here she discusses the need to include women in the peace process:*

Before the Arab Spring uprising, Yemeni women's status and rights were terrible. Embedded in our society are discriminatory laws and guardianship rules. Generations of Yemeni women have lived with gender discrimination. When we had the uprising, women claimed our rights and space. Then the war broke out.

Since the war began, women are bearing the burden of finding livelihoods because the men are injured, detained, or have been killed. Some women are doing construction work, which was a field in Yemen that was limited to men. Women doing hard manual labour is not something that Yemeni communities are quite ready to see, but women are doing it.

Since the war broke out, women have to walk for three or four hours to buy basic necessities such as food and medicines, over difficult terrain, and, at times, in life-threatening situations. Women must go through multiple checkpoints, bearing constant harassment. If the men go, they will be detained at the checkpoints. The women would rather risk getting harassed than having their men or relatives detained and forcefully disappear.

Amid this misery, women have not stopped their efforts to broker peace, especially at the community level, such as negotiating humanitarian access. Within the peace track negotiations, I am lobbying for greater involvement of women.

One of the main shortcomings of Resolution 2216 is that it didn't explicitly call for inclusion of women. You need to go out of your way to find an interpretation supporting women's participation. The Resolution limited women's participation to a dialogue process, not peace negotiations. However, it referred to the National Dialogue outcomes, which include a quota for women (30 per cent), youth (20 per cent), and Southerners (50 per cent). The Resolution also recalled another Yemen-related resolution that mentions the importance of respecting UNSC Resolution 2122 (2013), which is related to women, peace, and security, and mandates the UN Special Envoy to consult with women's groups regularly.

The Women's Solidarity Network demands no less than 30 per cent participation of women, as per the National Dialogue Conference outcomes document, which is considered a guide to the political process under Resolution 2216. It is crucial that the UN commit to taking women's political participation seriously. We consider the UN's failure in supporting a fair representation of women a failure to its own commitments, principles, and resolutions, and a continuation of the dominant patriarchal system.

## *from Yemen's peace process?*<sup>97</sup>

The peacebuilding diplomacy efforts operate on three tracks. Track I is the formal peace negotiation process facilitated by the UN. Track II refers to parallel consultations with wider groups. Track III consists of community-level initiatives to support community peacebuilding and local conflict resolution.

Yemeni women are leading in Track III. For example, an association called The Mothers of Abductees Association, which began in Houthi-held Sana'a, has proven to be a lifeline to families of forcibly disappeared persons and arbitrarily detained persons, who are trying to trace their whereabouts. Many members of the Women's Solidarity Network are active in peacebuilding at the community level. We have women working on resolving water and land armed disputes, women working on reopening schools, women negotiating to open humanitarian corridors, etc.

For Track II, the organization UN Women supported the establishment of the Yemeni Women's Pact

for Peace and Security (Tawafaq), which advocates for meaningful participation and leadership by political and social women's groups in Yemen's peace process. Tawafaq also aims to enhance gender equality perspectives in peacebuilding.

Track I has been disappointing, with less than a handful of women representing political actors, and no independent women's representation.

Yemeni women play multiple crucial roles, yet their efforts are sidelined. To help counter this, I am lobbying for an independent women's delegation to have a seat at the table in the peace negotiations. I have been told that international NGOs and the UN do not want to upset the Yemeni negotiating parties by doing this, and that Yemeni women are not ready or qualified. These experiences have made me realize that the international community can be disconnected to the ground realities of Yemen, and some personnel within UN and INGOs continue to have strong patriarchal mentalities, which are unhelpful to those of us in civil society that are advocating to bolster women's representation and voice.

Yemeni women are already contributing to the peace process: helping to identify and release detainees, acting as humanitarian coordinators, doing local conflict resolution.

**One of the main shortcomings of Resolution 2216 is that it didn't explicitly call for inclusion of women.**

## REGULATION OF ARMS EXPORTS



The UN Reports by the Panel of Experts from 2017 and 2018 both conclude that an “outright military victory” by any faction would not be possible and that Yemen’s war is not going to be won by any one side on the battlefield.

Yemen is the second most heavily armed country in the world. Before 2015, there were an estimated 55 guns per 100 civilians.<sup>98</sup> Since then, Yemen has been flooded with additional weapons. There are concerns that Yemen’s smuggling networks, which spread across the country and extend to Somalia and beyond, have been reinvigorated.<sup>99</sup> The diversion of arms to militias, terrorists, and others will have a profoundly negative effect on the entire region for years to come.<sup>100</sup>

Documenting conventional weapons at the point of use and tracking their sources back through the chains of supply are crucial tasks. Investigative organizations such as Conflict Armament Research are valuable in helping to trace the supply of conventional weapons, ammunition, and related military materiel into conflict-affected areas. This information can be used to map and better understand the landscape of illicit weapon flows and help mitigate the supply of arms to unauthorized users, including terrorist forces.



It can also be used to hold arms exporters accountable. After a visit to Syria in March 2018, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross called for “anyone selling weapons that could be used in violation of international humanitarian law to stop such sales. The responsibility for lawful battlefield behavior lies with fighters and commanders; but those who provide arms also bear responsibility.”<sup>101</sup>

Finally, such information is essential to develop effective weapons management and control, and bolster the effectiveness of the ATT, to better regulate and prevent irresponsible arms transfers that intensify and prolong conflict.<sup>102</sup>

Countries that profess their support for human rights and adherence to the ATT are, at the same time, selling hi-tech weaponry to the Saudi-led coalition. At a high-level pledging conference in Geneva to fund the UN’s 2018 humanitarian appeal for Yemen, which aimed to raise \$2.96-billion,<sup>103</sup> donors pledged approximately \$2-billion. As the table below indicates, most of the top pledges came from parties that are either exporters of arms to Yemen or active participants in the war.

Figure 9: Humanitarian response plan for Yemen, 2018<sup>104</sup>

| Source of pledge         | Funding (U.S.\$m) | % of response plan |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Saudi Arabia             | 490.0             | 33.7%              |
| United Arab Emirates     | 466.6             | 32.1%              |
| United States of America | 215.8             | 14.9%              |
| United Kingdom           | 54.4              | 3.7%               |
| Germany                  | 34.5              | 2.4%               |
| Canada                   | 24.3              | 1.7%               |
| European Commission      | 9.5               | 0.7%               |

In Yemen, aid and development efforts alone cannot resolve the humanitarian crisis that has been spawned by war. Also required is an inclusive political solution that encompasses peace negotiations with all Yemeni parties. Only a protracted peace process will end this war. Finding ways to cut back on the availability of arms is one essential component.

## THE PATH AHEAD AND THE UN

Yemen's war has reached a stalemate in which outright military victory by any side is impossible. An estimated 22.2-million Yemenis are now in need of humanitarian assistance or protection; 11.3 million of those are in acute need.<sup>105</sup>

What have we learned from examining the conflict in Yemen? First, the UN needs to take up its traditional role as the intergovernmental organization that coordinates and builds peace, rather than endorsing an externally developed process. Second, there must be vastly improved control and tracking of weapons.

Despite imperfections, the UN could be an objective, positive force for building peace. The UN is the main body capable of building agreement on a path to peace among the many internal factions and external actors. This work should be complemented, when the time is right, by UN-controlled peacekeeping and peacebuilding forces. The challenge for the UN is to find the necessary capacity to deliver.

Limiting access to weapons is particularly important in Yemen, where there is a weapons glut. And the wider lesson we can take from Yemen is the importance of improved international arms control, particularly for larger weapons that could challenge the authority of a modest UN peacebuilding force.

The original arms embargo on Yemen needs to be intensified and extended to encourage armed factions to come to the peace table.

Earlier this year, the UN Panel of Experts encouraged greater effort by the Yemeni government and Saudi forces to shut down the likely land routes for missiles identified in its report. The panel has also suggested that the UN improve the credibility of its Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen by anchoring a support vessel under UN auspices at the entrance to Hudaydah port.

Making the obtaining of weapons more difficult could encourage armed factions to agree on a peace process. Even where weapons are accessible, warring factions need supplies of ammunition and fuel; limiting access to missiles and other advanced weaponry limits the intensity of conflict and empowers UN peacebuilding forces.

Unfortunately, the mandate of the Panel of Experts extends only to the UN embargo on the Houthis. But there is good evidence that the Saudi-led coalition has used arms in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law and that the coalition is unwilling to stop these violations. No state that claims to seek peace should supply Saudi Arabia or other coalition members with weapons, including spare parts and ammunition, that could be used in Yemen.

## CONCLUSION

While each war is unique, there are lessons from other protracted civil wars that have experienced external interventions—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria, for example—that can apply to Yemen. The peacebuilding efforts in these countries offer a wealth of scholarship and analysis that can be used to help to create a tailored peace plan to prevent further escalation of the war.

If the war in Yemen cannot be ended, the recent histories of these civil wars provide a sobering view of Yemen's likely future. The resulting security vacuum and humanitarian crisis will be leveraged by terrorist organizations such as AQAP and the Islamic State.





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Page 2: Al-Mazraq camp houses about 5,000 people and was established in 2001 by the United Nations in Hajjah province to accommodate Yemenis displaced from the capital, Sana'a. *Annasofie Flamand/IRIN*

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