

William Rochelle

Booker T. Washington Magnet High School

Montgomery, Alabama

Yemen, Conflict

Yemen: No Peace in sight for Yemen

Yemen is currently labeled as "The World's worst humanitarian crisis." This small country located in Western Asia is dealing with many conflicts. One of the major problems is the ongoing war with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the number one contributor to the war. Its leaders became nervous when the Houthi president took control of Yemen. Houthi extremists had threatened Saudi Arabia in past encounters. When Yemen also became a Houthi State, the Saudis believed that it received help from other Houthi countries. Being surrounded by Houthi nations, Saudi Arabia felt that they should attack Yemen. Saudi forces targeted hospitals, schools, and Yemen's primary source of food and clean water. The war has led to Yemen struggling with the worst humanitarian crisis in the last hundred years. The Yemen Crisis consists of conflict, water scarcity, and much more.

Conflicts in Yemen began with the overthrow of president Hadi by the Houthi. The religion known as Houthi belongs to the Zaidi branch of Islam. This branch is a sect or religious group of Islam that is almost exclusively present in Yemen. Zaydis make up about one quarter of the population there. Author Bruce Riedel notes the Houthi extremists have adopted a slogan that best summarizes their goals, "God is great, death to the U.S., death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam," this group also officially called itself Ansar Allah, or supporters of God ("Who Are the Houthis, and Why Are We at War with Them?"). Yemen's Houthi rebels are an old resistance movement, born to oppose Saudi Arabia's religious influence. Sunnis make up a large percentage of Saudi Arabia's population. The Sunnis believe that Muhammad had no rightful heir and that a spiritual head should be elected through a vote among the Islamic community's people. They believe that Muhammad's followers chose Abu Bakr, Muhammad's close friend and advisor, as his successor. Saudi leaders did not like seeing Yemen turn from a Sunni to a Houthi state. Saudi Arabia was surrounded by Yemen, Iraq, and Iran, which were all Houthi.

Later in 2015, Saudi Arabia began a war against Yemen. According to Bethan McKernan, Saudi forces attacked "101 schools and hospitals in 2015 alone to frighten and prevent civilians and children from receiving health care and education. In that same year, Saudi Arabia blockaded the port from which about 70 percent of Yemen's food comes from. The port was later bombed nine times, and over 17 million people were faced with famine and disease" ("How the Destruction of One Port Could Send Millions into Famine"). The United States supplies Saudi Arabia with almost all of its weaponry. Without American weapons, Saudi Arabia will not be capable of continuing to fight Yemen. However, terrorist groups will persist. Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and Houthi Rebel Group are in Yemen to make their state.

Water scarcity in Yemen has always been a part of daily life. Rola Tassabehji claims, "But of all countries in the region, the one coming closest to running dry is Yemen. As reported by "Green Prophet" recently, the food situation has been exacerbated by months of fighting to overthrow the current president

Ali Abdullah Saleh.” (“Yemen Running Dry As Water Shortage Reaches Extreme Levels in Africa and the Middle East.”). The lack of water supply is one of the leading downfalls of agriculture in Yemen. In the article, other recent reports confirm, “19 out of the nation’s 21 aquifers are no longer being replenished. Consumption in the Yemeni capital exceeds by a factor of four the amount of water fed back into the underground reserves by local rainfall. Tap water is available only once every four days in Sanaa, a Capital of 2 million people, while in Taiz, a southern city, tap water is available only every 20 days” (Tassabehji).

Without the reservoir and government regulation, half of Yemen’s population lost access to clean water. The water infrastructure began to collapse, and cholera began to spread as sanitation dwindled. Wells offered no sanctuary, the amount of water withdrawn at a time decreased until it became unable to sustain a family. With such little water provided by the land, growing crops became harder to maintain and profit off. Hunger, famine, and conflict became widespread in Yemen. Trends have been staying at the same level since 2015. Millions are displaced by conflict and fighting. It is actively more difficult for people to grow crops in rural areas and urban areas. Food stores would close due to the lack of food, as the price of food and water has gone up due to mass famine. Food has become too expensive for the poverty-stricken poor to afford.

The crisis in Yemen has alarming consequences for the well-being of many children. Many children do not attend school because they are fighting Saudi Arabia. Most schools are unusable, many have been bombed, armed men took others, and none provide a safe environment. Besides not going to school, many eat only once a day. Dietary diseases began to pop up over time. In this, region children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Data and Analytics report that “Children ages six months to 5 years suffer from one or more micronutrient deficiency. Their bodies lack iron, iodine, vitamin A, folate, and zinc (“Malnutrition in Children”). Stunting is a common concern since it stems from malnutrition. Stunting can result in smaller children and decreased cognitive abilities.

It is difficult for foreign aid teams to get into Yemen and stay safe. The cities are the focus of most conflict in the most dangerous areas. There is also a lack of funding to help support the country’s economy. Simone Pott, who heads the communications team at Welthungerhilfe says, “there are many difficult aspects to supplying aid to Yemen. The aid takes the form of cash donations and food vouchers. Many working people in Yemen have not been paid for years and the aid money means they can at least obtain essentials”(Knipp, “Yemen's Humanitarian Workers Face Mounting Challenges as UN Appeals for Aid”). Billions of euros can be pledged to aid Yemen, but it is not sure when the money will be transferred. The Emergency Relief Coordinator for United Nations stated, “While \$4.2 billion is needed to address the suffering, only \$1.5 billion has been received, despite pledges made in Geneva in February. People are almost certainly already dying as a result of these funding gaps” (“United Nations Officials”). Yemen citizens will continue to suffer if the supply of aid does not increase. The most substantial sums of money come from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the USA. Although these countries are supporting assistance in Yemen, an undeniable paradox exists. The wealthy opponents in one of the most brutal of wars fought are also the largest suppliers of humanitarian aid.

Yemen is a developing country that left almost half of the population starving and hungry. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “The terrain itself is hard to grow crops on but not impossible, the average field is 1.1 hectares, for context the International Rugby Field is only 1 hectare”

(“SPECIAL REPORT.”). Plants could grow food but not until the water crisis has been solved. All of the wells will eventually run dry. Yemen civilians will need to find alternate ways of getting water. Importing water or purifying salt water on a stove could be promising ways of receiving water. With a secured water source now fields could produce little food. When food is secure, the corruption in the government should be weeded out and destroyed. A new government will allow the country to stabilize the economy. More jobs should be made by the government to restart the economy and a healthy nutrition system for the citizens. Saudi Arabia attacked because they were scared of the Houthis invading, the new president will need to be a Sunni and make peace with Saudi Arabia.

The lack of water sources has challenged sustainable agriculture in Yemen. The deeper holes dug have shown that Yemen has been drying up. Reports from “Nations Encyclopedia” states that “only 3% of its land area is arable, Yemen’s potential for agricultural self-sufficiency and independence are very remote” (“Yemen-Agriculture”). Yemen’s soil is capable of cultivating diverse crops, tropical and temperate fruits. An essential economic development in Yemen is the fishing industry. The waters of the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Eden are rich in a wide variety of fish and crustaceans.

Families with animals are mostly living off the animals produce. Cows, for example, do not provide much milk as they would generally because their owners cannot afford good feed for them. Animals suffer chronic under nutrition, which causes low production, weight loss, low fertility, and higher vulnerability to diseases. Vaccination and deworming campaigns have been organized to prevent further steps towards famine and disease. The distribution of animal fodder helped the animals avoid starvation and gain back lost body weight. Multi-nutrient feed blocks were being sent to feed the animals. Cows produced more milk, and their digestion system began improving because of the blocks.

In the article, "The True Cost of the war on Yemen," a study was produced by a non-partisan group. The report states, “over 56,000 people have been killed in Yemen since early 2016, and that number is increasing by 2,000 per month. According to an independent group, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, there have been inaccurate reports stating that there were 10,000 deaths in three-and-a-half years (Larison). Researchers with the group say the incorrect low death rate has given a misconception that the war is not as critical. They believe that because of this false shallow death rate report is why the Saudis and their allies evade the world knowing and causing a mass uproar over their fight with Yemen.

Although the Yemeni people experience several conflicts, there is still a solution to their crisis. The use of technology could be used to improve water management. Reusing water can benefit families and decrease the loss of water. Population control is necessary to ensure any positive change is permanent. Water has become scarce due to overpopulation in Yemen. Overpopulation can overcome with education and healthcare. The children will learn about how limited the water is and have fewer children of their own in the future. J. Craig believes a “2.2 fertility rate will stabilize the population growth” (“Replacement level fertility and future population growth”). Maintaining a 2.2 fertility rate will not complete the solution. The population must also find alternative sources of water, such as trade with neighboring countries. The government should invest in water management and education to control overpopulation.

Saudi forces have deployed blockades and bombings. They use this tactic as a method of thwarting the arrival of goods and people to keep humanitarian aid from reaching the war-torn country. Many aid groups have still found ways to enter the country by supplying aid to the thousands of poverty stricken citizens. Such charitable organizations such as Unicef work with local authorities and nongovernmental organizations to provide health screenings, vaccines, malnutrition treatment, water, and school supplies to Yemen. (Beirne, Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis). Half of Yemen's population may soon depend totally on humanitarian aid to survive.

There seems to be no end to the war between the Yemenis and Saudis in the near future nor the inhuman conditions of its innocent citizens. In my opinion, it is noble for groups and organizations to help Yemen; however, I believe there are other methods they can use to help themselves. For starters to help ease the suffering of their afflicted people, they need to improve their household purchasing power and lower the costs of their commodities. I believe these suggestions could help the Yemeni citizens regain their economy power.

Lastly, if nothing is done to help the Yemenis, they will not survive. This small country is running out of water supply and there is not enough to support plants for livestock nor the population. The United Nations are trying to raise money to ease the strain of the economy and people. However, if they do not deal with the war with Saudi Arabia as a priority, progress will be destroyed. They have made strategic strikes to weaken and break Yemen apart. Saudi Arabia is also not presently willing to talk about peace. The best way to stop their aggression against Yemen would be to cut their access to weapons of war. The U.S. must cease giving weapons to Saudi Arabia for continual progress. Yemen should import water from neighboring countries and fishing could produce a fair amount of food for people to eat. The population needs to receive health care. They have starved from the lack of food and proper vitamins. I believe there is a peaceful solution to the Yemen crisis. The economy will flourish when the United States stops selling weapons to Saudi Arabia. The Yemenis must purchase their food and water from neighboring countries, and all forces in the ongoing war must settle their dispute with Yemen. Saudi Arabia will continue to destroy the struggling nation and kill millions of civilians if the Yemenis do not implement these solutions.

Bibliography

Beirne, Aodhan. "Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis: How to Help." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 27 Oct. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/world/middleeast/yemen-how-to-help.html

Craig, J. "Replacement Level Fertility and Future Population Growth." *Population Trends*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1994, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7834459

"FAO Nutrient Block Technology Improves Animal Health and Milk Production in Yemen." *United Nations*, United Nations, 25 Aug. 2017, ye.one.un.org/content/unct/yemen/en/home/news-centre/news/Fao-nutrient-block-technology-improves-animal-health-and-milk-production-in-yemen.html

Feldman, Ross. "Atlantic Council." *Atlantic Council*, www.atlanticcouncil.org/.

"Food"Food,yemenfood.blogspot.com/p/food.html.

KelownaNow."Kelowna and Central Okanagan News & Information."
KelownaNow, www.kelowanow.com

Larison, Daniel. "The True Cost of the War on Yemen." *The American Conservative*, 28 Oct. 2018, www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-true-cost-of-the-war-on-yemen/.

"Malnutrition in Children." *UNICEF DATA*, data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/

McKernan, Bethan "How the Destruction of One Port Could Send Millions into Famine." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 30 May 2018, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/ramadan-yemen-war-latest-hodeidah-port-famine-houthi-imports-un-a8374811.html

Knipp, Kersten. "Yemen's Humanitarian Workers Face Mounting Challenges as UN Appeals for Aid: DW: 26.02.2019." *DW.COM*, www.dw.com/en/yemens-humanitarian-workers-face-mounting-challenges-as-un-appeals-for-aid/a-47684626-0.

Riedel, Bruce. "Who Are the Houthis, and Why Are We at War with Them?" *Brookings*, Brookings, 18 Dec. 2017, www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/.

"SPECIAL REPORT." *FAO GLOBAL INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE - WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME*, 9 Dec. 2009, www.fao.org/3/ak342e/ak342e00.htm.

Tassabehji, Rola. "Yemen Running Dry As Water Shortage Reaches Extreme Levels in Africa and the Middle East." *Green Prophet | Impact News for the Middle East*, 20 July 2011, www.greenprophet.com/2011/07/yemen-running-dry-as-water-shortage-reaches-extreme-levels-in-africa-and-the-middle-east

"UNICEF." Home Page www.unicef.org/.

"United Nations Officials Urge Parties in Yemen to Fulfil Stockholm, Hodeidah Agreements, amid Security Council Calls for Opening of Aid Corridors | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13845.doc.htm.

"Water Technology Innovation: 10 Market Opportunities." *EPA*, Environmental Protection Agency, 7 Sept. 2017, www.epa.gov/water-innovation-tech/water-technology-innovation-10-market-opportunities

Wenner, Manfred W., and Robert Burrowes. "Yemen." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 16 May 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Yemen/Agriculture-forestry-and-fishing.

Wintour, Patrick. "More than Half of \$2.6bn Aid to Yemen Pledged by Countries Involved in War." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 26 Feb. 2019, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/26/more-than-half-of-26bn-aid-to-yemen-pledged-by-countries-involved-in-war

"Yemen - Agriculture." *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Yemen-AGRICULTURE.html.