

Yemen: The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis  
Alexandra Magee  
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### **Yemen: The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis**

Yemen has been dubbed the “*world's worst humanitarian crisis*” due to the famine and human rights issues plaguing the land (unog.ch, 2018, para. 3). Currently, there is a civil war between the Yemen government and the Houthi - a religious rebel group. This war has been ongoing since 2015 and does not show signs of slowing down. Because of the Yemen Civil War, the population suffers from disease outbreaks, unemployment, medical aid deficiencies, food and water shortages, and loose bombings. Though the future seems bleak as conditions worsen, there are resolutions that could satiate both belligerents and save the citizens of Yemen.

Unquestionably, the Yemen War needs to end quickly, however, one simple solution will not solve a thousand-year-religion-land crisis. The country of Yemen is led with a mixture of tradition and politics that will not allow people to be easily subjected to change, therefore, I propose a 10-year plan that I have entitled *The Blitz Reconstruction* which includes multiple phases for the cessation of the Yemen Civil War and the reconstruction of society. Phase One would consist of a series of large-scale demonstrations that declare peace by an influential and respected member of Islam, such as Mirza Masroor Ahmad. Ahmad is the current spiritual leader of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community, which is a religious organization that spreads over 200 countries with a membership of millions (alislam.org, 2019). With a representative from a third-party organization, such as the United Nations present, Ahmad, President Hadi, and the Houthi leader could have open forum meetings to rationally negotiate the terms and conditions of a ceasefire. One segment of the terms of the ceasefire includes the demands of all parties. For example, in return for the assistance, the Ahmadiyyah could preach their interfaith and peaceful messages and set up hospitals, schools, and mosques in Yemen to help the people. Previously, a temporary ceasefire was arranged by the Yemen government and the Houthi rebels for the coastal city of Hodeida in November 2018 (Mckernan, 2018). This incident allows hope to be built that a permanent ceasefire can be organized.

Generally, the demands of both the Houthi and the Saudi-led Coalition are plausible. The Saudi-led coalition wants the Houthi militia to disarm, relinquish its heavy weaponry, and return the capital of Sanaa to President Abdu Mansour Hadi (Sharp, 2018). The Houthi demand that federal grants for fuel be reinstated, and they demand, presumably on behalf of the people, a more representative form of government. If the Houthi forfeit, the United Nations could oversee fair and just elections to implement new politicians with set and distinct terms. Phase Two establishes bureaus and committees to oversee different aspects of the rebuilding process. To ensure fairness, the people of Yemen could nominate and vote individuals to lead the committees, but qualified citizens could apply to work under these leading positions. For example, separate agencies could oversee progress in infrastructure progress, food and aid standards, health codes, and displaced family management. Understanding the components of the Yemen government is an important asset to rebuilding it.

Since 1990, the Republic of Yemen has been composed of two states: North Yemen and South Yemen. The entire country is located on the Arabian Peninsula that borders the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Sea. Yemen has various types of geographies: the Red Sea coastline is sandy and flat; the Gulf of Aden coastline is rocky; the land surrounding Saudi Arabia is a widespread

dessert; and a series of low rising mountains extending from the middle of the country to the east (Burrowes M. W., 2019). Encircled by the countries of Saudi Arabia and Oman, Yemen is about the size of Texas with a population of 27 million people (mylifeelsewhere.com, 2018). The political system - created in 1990 - established the Yemeni government as a multiparty representative democracy (Burrowes M. W., 2019). The latest constitution produced a president - head of state - a vice president, and a prime minister – head of government. In 2015, the Yemen Civil War caused the current president of Yemen, Abdrabbuh Mansor Hadi, to provide basic services and security through the government in exile (bbc.com, 2018). Though Aden is the recognized government city nationally, in March of 2018, reports circled that President Hadi had been detained in Saudi Arabia for protection and support (alaraby.co.uk, 2018). However, this alliance has proven detrimental for the citizens of Yemen.

According to the 2018 Political Geography Now map report, the Houthis and allies have control of north and western Yemeni cities while the Yemen government and allies' controls majority of the middle and eastern regions (worldview.stratfor.com, 2018). Composed of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the Saudi-led coalition – allies of the Yemen government– has led air campaigns to recapture the capital and protect other territories such as Aden (bbc.com, 2018). These airstrikes and bombings have killed over a thousand civilians and devastated homes, schools, water and sewer infrastructure, and mosques. One such instance killed over 40 male schoolchildren on a bus in Dahyan located in northern Yemen (bbc.com, 2018). Though in 2017, Saudi Arabia pledged to reduce civilian harm in attacks, the UN Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights offices reported that airstrikes remain “the leading cause of civilian casualties” (hrw.org, 2018, para. 10). Another tactic the Houthi rebels use is planting landmines in spots to obtain land; the Saudi-led coalition army has claimed to have diffused over tens of thousands of landmines in local and war territories. For example, in late 2018, a local Marib family returned after fleeing as the Houthi attempted to capture the city, experienced the unfairness of war when the son asked his mother to pass him a blanket causing an unknown landmine to detonate and suddenly killed everyone except the father (bbc.com, 2018). Similar instances have caused over 3 million civilians to flee their homes causing 2.3 million to be displaced with a majority living in tents and camps.

In brief, the conflict between the Houthi and the Yemen government began before 2015. In the 1980s, the Houthi, who are a minority in Yemen, created a peaceful movement to protect the marginalized Zaydi people from the government's efforts to suppress its religion and traditions (Laub, 2015). In the early 2000s, multiple battles allowed the rebels to build a great army and capture immense sections of Yemen (Renaud, 2018). In 2015, the rebels had over 100,000 supporters as the current Houthi leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, stated this in regards to the Yemen government, “*This government is a puppet in the hands of influential forces [including the United States], which are indifferent to the rightful and sincere demands of these people* (Batati, 2015, para. 5).” On September 20, 2018, Shi'ite Houthi supporters rallied in the streets to commemorate the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Houthi's capture of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa (Renaud, 2018).

Since the war began with the capture of Sanaa, disease outbreaks and unemployment has overwhelmed the nation. The most chronic and fatal domestic instances spur from the worst issue of

Yemen: water scarcity. Yemen's geography does not contain any rivers, and rainfall levels are low during the summer months which adds to its dry, desert climate (Bodetti, 2019). Phase Three of *Blitzer Reconstruction* has two parts: Part One is to obtain, clean, protect, and distribute clean water throughout the nation; Part Two is to find a new income for growers of the flowering stimulant plant because this drug requires a lot of water to successfully sustain (Heffez, 2013). For example, in 2016, explosions virtually destroyed a water desalination plant near Al-Mokha leaving a million people in the neighboring city of Taiz without a dependable source of water (Rogers, 2017). In addition to the war destroying Yemen's water and sanitation infrastructure, local water corporations experiencing fuel shortages caused the costs of commercial water to inflate leaving over 19.3 million Yemenis people without a way to clean water and sanitation (Suter, 2018). To begin Phase Three: Part One, I propose gathering a group of individuals who will create and enforce water protection laws while handling a specific budget for water. This team's duties would include pollution management, desalination plant supervision, and water supply distribution. Federal funds would be used to repair the war-stricken desalination plants and provide families with household filters. These federal funds - given by American benefactors - accumulate to about \$700 million pertaining to the relief and reconstruction efforts in Yemen and neighboring countries. (YEMEN - COMPLEX EMERGENCY, 2019). Desalination plants mass produce consumable water by chemically removing minerals from saline water. A new desalination plant would cost millions of dollars, so this team would oversee the investments and its products. Moreover, the Yemen Civil War is not the only reason water has been weaponized and exploited, Yemen's cash crop khat has literally been "*sucking Yemen dry*" by leaving several areas in Yemen without a reliable water supply (Butters, 2009). Part Two includes stopping the mass production of crops, especially the drug khat, and import most foods until the underground aquifers replenish after a few rain seasons. Unfortunately, this will leave many farmers out of work. In the meantime, private farmers could plant crops that have become adapted to droughts at a cellular level: tepary beans - "the most heat-tolerant crop grown in the world", black-eyed peas, snap beans, and pole beans (Myers, 2011).

Furthermore, a secure water system will decrease the epidemics of acute diseases. As previously stated, the Yemen War explosions have destroyed essential infrastructure such as sewage pipelines. With an average of 2,000 cases per week in some areas, the sewage instability adds to the rampant cholera outbreaks (Bodetti, 2019). The Center for Disease Control defines cholera as "an acute, diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with the toxigenic bacterium", and the symptoms include leg cramps, vomiting, water diarrhea, and rapid dehydration (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). With the cause of the cholera outbreak nonexistent, the current cases can be resolved by foreign aid specifically designed to treat the ailing victims. Among these are the International Medical Corps, the Zakat Foundation of America, and Islamic Relief USA (Charity Navigator, 2019).

In a similar way, food scarcity is the next extreme issue of Yemen. As the war rages, videos circulate showing children rummaging through garbage to find food. According to an analysis from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 53% of the population does not have food security despite the efforts of external assistance (IPC, 2018). Lost incomes and livelihoods have caused a 150% increase in basic food prices and commodities, and as the Yemen currency

depreciates, the import system of goods suffers. A shortage of local agricultures derives from rainfall shortages, high farming prices, limited access to fishing grounds (IPC, 2018). Currently, the humanitarian food assistance (HFA) is providing sustenance for over 8.4 million people; discrete regional data shows these targeted families with HFA have “less severe levels” acute malnutrition (IPC, 2018, para. 16). Though food insecurity worsens with the conflict, Yemen will need a more stable system of agriculture and import to feed the citizens.

Indeed, rebuilding countries require networking and transportation for people to go to work and communicate, this issue introduces Phase Four of *Blitzer Reconstruction*. The objective of Phase Four is to nationally modify infrastructure such as roads, bridges, trains, and other means of commute. According to the Borgen Project, a United States campaign that works in solving poverty crises, only 4,785 miles of the 41, 634 miles of roads in Yemen are paved (Rogers, 2017). The United Nations aided Yemen in 2017 by providing 2.1 billion dollars for the modification processes (Rogers, 2017). In *Blitzer Reconstruction*, the Yemen government could devote a percentage of the annual GDP to rebuilding infrastructure.

Typically, citizens lose trust in government when taxes are excessive, and scandals plague the news. Bribery and corruption overwhelm the systems of government, and resources become the more normal currency. In Yemen, years of this caused the government to become oppressive and unpopular, which led to revolutions, uprisings, and civil wars (Lewis, 2013). After this conflict is resolved, the nation needs to rebuild with prosperity and equality. Phase Five would not only educate the population through mandatory schooling until early adolescence, but, also, create a federal budget for the infrastructure and management of schools. The literacy rate of women over 15 years old in Yemen is 55 percent (indexmundi.com, 2018). Though Yemen currently has a free, mandatory education system for children ages 6 to 14 that provides meals, less than half the population of young girls attend school. Fortunately, partnered with UNICEF, in 2014, the United States granted Yemen with 76,600,000 US dollars devoted specifically to the education system (globalpartnership.org, 2018). Educating Yemeni women will ultimately level the gender roles in this country’s patriarchal societies. The average household has 6 to 7 people with women playing a secondary role by nurturing the children and assisting on the family farm. Traditionally, women tend to acquire social status by bearing male children (Burrowes M. W., 2019). Since the beginning of the war, abuse against women has increased by 63%; arranged marriage has increased while the age of married women has decreased. Also, pregnant women and new mothers make up a large percent of the malnourished population. Despite this, women have been playing a critical role in the fight for peace. For these reasons, the International Rescue Committee advocates for the global representation of women in the peace effort, and also, they have built safe spaces for female victims and provided mobile health services. (rescue.org, 2019)

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