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Yemen, Factor 14: Conflict Resolution
Yemen: A Country Faced with Extreme Famine

Yemen, located in the Middle East is home to over twenty-eight million people. The land borders the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea and is twice the size of Wyoming in the United States (Nationsencyclopedia.com, 2018). Yemen was once known by the Romans as Arabia Felix, which means Fertile Arabia (Nabataea.net, 2018). The country was compared to by its neighboring regions, Arabia Deserta (Desert Arabia) and Nabataea (Arabia ruled from Petra) for its riches in agricultural products and spices (Nabataea.net, 2018). Yemen is now considered one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and the world's worst humanitarian crisis with Yemenis (citizens of Yemen) being faced with extreme famine. Eight out of ten Yemenis are in need of humanitarian need according to the Norwegian Refugee Council, UN. Yemen is encountered with issues that have caused the country to become food insecure. For a country to have food security, the citizens need a sufficient amount of food and resources that are safe and nutritious. In this paper, I will discuss the cause of the food crisis in Yemen, the effect it's had on Yemenis and provide solutions.

According to Worldometers.info, the population in Yemen is mostly rural and thirty-five percent or roughly over nine million Yemenis are urban as of 2018. The urban population is projected to rise up to forty-seven percent by the year 2050 (Worldometers.info, 2018). The average family size in Yemen is relatively big ranging from five to seven people per household. It is custom for a man and their significant other to continue to live with the man's family after marriage (Ibnulyemen, 2017). This tradition contributes to the family size increasing in Yemen. With that, the diet for the families usually consists of lamb, chicken, and stews such as saltah served with rice, potatoes, and scrambled eggs. Another essential food in a Yemeni diet is flatbread. Due to the lack of food security in Yemen, the prices of foods such as flatbread have risen and the average family does not have the necessary funds and resources to provide for their family. This sudden inflation has caused one in three Yemeni households to have an extremely poor quantity diet consisting of bread, sugar, and oil (Wfp.org, 2018). In response to this, according to relief lab, traditionally men and boys eat first regardless of the circumstances (Reliefweb.int, 2018). Additionally, young girls in Yemen are often sold off to marriage to provide income for the rest of the family or to reduce the amount of food responsibility. Older women tend to skip meals or eat less (Humanitarianresponse.info, 2018). Customs such as these causes women and girls in Yemen to be more vulnerable to malnutrition. According to Food and Agriculture Organization, the country's gross domestic product has declined by forty-one percent since 2015. Furthermore, jobs have been nearly impossible for Yemenis to get due to the conflict. Many who owned shops or worked in factories are now displaced. Consequently, more than eighty percent of Yemenis are in debt ("Yemen Plan Of Action 2018-2020 : FAO In Emergencies"). With regards to this, there is also a lack of education and access to health care.

The attacks on schools and hospitals have made education and health care services more difficult for Yemenis to reach. During the unification of North and South Yemen, the education changed entirely. Yemenis were then exposed to curriculums and introduced to standardized testing. The new educational

system consists of nine years of primary education and three years of secondary school (Education.stateuniversity.com, 2018). The current situation in Yemen does not allow children to enjoy school with decent classrooms and books to read. Since the conflict began, nearly half of Yemeni children have dropped out. Unicef stated, “Meanwhile, almost three-quarters of public school teachers have not been paid their salaries in over a year, putting the education of an additional 4.5 million children at grave risk” (Unicef.org, 2018). The access to health care has had the same outcome as education in Yemen. According to the World Health Organization, the health system is on the verge of collapse (World Health Organization, 2018). Stated by Doctors without borders, some doctors were paid 20,000 Yemeni Riyals a month which is approximately one hundred dollars in U.S. currency (Doctors and Nurses in Yemen Struggle to Survive, 2018). In some hospitals in Yemen, the doctors have not been paid in nine to ten months which leads to doctors quitting or moving to different hospitals. As a result of this, many patients are left to suffer.

What has caused so many Yemenis to become food insecure? Crime and violence in Yemen have always posed a threat to the citizens but has intensified over the past four years. Yemen is currently in the state of a civil war that was rooted in their past President’s political transition in 2011 (BBC News, 2018). The previous President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in office for over thirty years, reportedly led the country into poverty which caused him to be forced out of government. During that time, some Yemenis established a group called the Houthis who are an Islamic religious-political-armed movement that demanded a new government. This eventually led the Houthis taking control of the capital Sanaa. The position was handed down to Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi who was the previous Vice President. They then held the new President under house arrest, which therefore led to his escape to another part of Yemen. The Houthis thus tried to take control of the entire country which alarmed their neighboring country, Saudi Arabia. The civil war had sparked on March 25, 2015, where the Houthis, were stricken by a Saudi-led coalition. Yemen is also home to well known rebel groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Not only does Saudi Arabia have a coalition involving the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Sudan and Egypt but also the United States of America, Britain and France. (contributing, 2018). Foreign involvement in the Yemeni civil war has highly contributed to the number of casualties in Yemen. The United States, a country with a strong military and stable economy is providing resources to Saudi Arabia. Although the US has not formally admitted to helping Saudi Arabia, they have provided military weapons, intelligence, mid-air refueling for the jets and American made bombs to the Saudi-led coalition (Washington Post, 2018).

The war has not only affected the government but has also affected millions of Yemenis throughout the country. It has led more than sixty percent of the country’s population to be in a food crisis. According to World Food Program, eighteen million people in Yemen are food insecure. It has also left many farmers with no hope because of the shortage of resources. Seeds are not available due to the blockade but when they are, it is too expensive to purchase (ReliefWeb, 2018). Before the incident in March 2015, almost half of Yemenis lived under the poverty percentage and almost sixteen million people were in need of some humanitarian services (Rotsky, 2018). However, the war has worsened the state of the country.

When there is a war, there are bombs and airstrikes that can kill or injure many people. The Yemeni civil war has done just that. The main reason many people are dying in Yemen is due to the lack of humanitarian resources. The conflict in Yemen has caused restrictions on other countries importing food and medicines. CNN stated, "In principle, the coalition says the purpose of the blockade is to stop Iranian weapons from entering Yemen to supply the Houthi rebels who are in control of much of the north, including the capital Sanaa" (Clarissa Ward, 2018). Due to the conflicts, many of the ports such as Ras Isa Petroleum Products Reception Facility and Balhaf LNG Terminal have been shut down in order to make an advance in the war. As of June 2018, a Red Sea port called Hodeidah Port guarded by the Houthis is being targeted by the Saudi-led coalition as a strategic plan to end the war (UN News, 2018). The port is responsible for seventy percent of foreign aid that reaches Yemen (UN News, 2018). It is a country that has always been dependent on receiving foods even before the war. It is said that if the port is stricken again, it could lead to an indomitable epidemic. The country's infrastructure such as main roads, airports, and water plants have been diminished due to bombings or are threatened daily. Both of these factors lead to an extreme humanitarian crisis.

The control of ports has caused a major barrier to exporting oil. Oil is a main source of income for the country. The war has left many Yemenis without clean drinking water and sanitation. As of 2017, there has been a Cholera outbreak. Cholera is a bacterial disease that causes extremely watery diarrhea that is contracted by contaminated food and water. This disease is due to the poor sanitation processes that are currently in place. It is a preventable disease but is considered one of the worst cholera outbreaks in history, which has surpassed over two thousand and fifty deaths as of 2018 (Aa.com.tr, 2018). The necessary medical supplies for hospitals have been restricted from coming into the country. Consequently, this has left many Yemenis sick and displaced due to lack of treatment and medications. Cholera is considered rare in the United States, but very common in Yemen.

Who has been affected the most by the war? The Yemeni civil war affects mostly children and makes the children to be the neediest of humanitarian care in Yemen. Currently over two million children are malnourished (Larison, 2018). It is also reported that a Yemeni child dies every ten minutes (Larison, 2018). This can be because of the airstrikes or most commonly malnutrition and disease. They are born into war which automatically leaves them with limited amounts of resources. Many children are stunted due to lack of nutrition and their growth rate has stopped or been majorly affected. Stunting can cause long term effects that can make them less resistance to infections and diseases ("Growing Up Hungry: Quick Facts About Malnutrition"). Since there is an absence of necessary resources such as milk and food, children are faced with a dim future. More than ever, children's mental state could be worsened by causing anxiety, fear and anger. This can make school very hard for the children.

The question pertaining to Yemen would be can the food crisis be resolved? As I did my research on Yemen, I realized that it will not only take help from other humanitarian countries but also the countries they are currently fighting. The demand to help Yemen increases every day as the war intensifies. Many Yemenis have been displaced from their households due to airstrikes which has left them fearful. Yemenis are being forced to flee to countries such as Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Oman. While it is very dangerous, it is the only option in saving their families. The airports should be opened which have been closed down or blocked off by the fighters. A challenge to this proposition creates issues with other

countries that are not as accepting. As an example, in June 2018, more than five hundred Yemenis arrived in Jeju Island, South Korea, a country that allows you to visit without a visa (South China Morning Post, 2018). However, this has sparked rage and concerns with the Koreans because of different customs and ideologies. Nevertheless, it could give Yemenis a chance to escape and start a new life until the war is over or possibly bring back money for their families. Once Yemenis have arrived in another country, they are faced with language and cultural barriers. They'd need help from local governments and organizations such as Refugees International who promote and advocate to the public for financial and vocal help. Interviews are a very vital part in allowing a refugee to stay in a certain country. Some questions asked would be; Why are you here? Also, is there a risk of you returning back to your country? There have also been reports about misinterpretations between incoming refugees and international workers who don't understand the language fully. It is important for those workers to comprehend the language for the sake of the refugee.

Another solution to the food crisis in Yemen would be to lift up the ban on ports or try to rebuild infrastructure. This is important because now food and other resources will be able to get into Yemen. However, this is a risky solution at hand due to the current state of the war and constant bombings on infrastructure. This is also a very strenuous process because regarding the economic standpoint, the solution will need a great amount of support from other countries to implement. It'll also need agreement from both parties of the war to build it. Countries such as the United States need to provide financial aid just as they do with weaponry. With this intention, there will be more aid coming into Yemen and by building infrastructure, it'll help people get to hospitals if needed. Also a huge contribution to the food crisis are the high prices on food. According to pbs.org, there is food available in big cities such as Aden and Sanaa however, the prices are overreaching. In order for people to buy that food, there needs to be a decrease in the prices.

The Yemen civil war is also referred to as the "forgotten war" because of the lack of media coverage on the issue (McGarry, 2018). One cause to this is because reporters are told not to enter the country for safety reasons. The twenty first century is a generation highly focused on media. A solution to help the food crisis in Yemen would be to spread the word via social media about the issue. As a result of this, people will be more educated on the issue people and maybe more willing to help Yemenis. Many people also organize protests in order to get the attention from the government and the world. This will help more people to get involved and make a difference. Additionally, It could possibly gain attention from higher authorities that can provide help.

I have also discovered many organizations that are trying to help the people in Yemen. One of the organizations is called Mercy Corps. Mercy Corps has been providing humanitarian services to Yemenis since 2010. Mercy Corps provides emergency responses, water, economic opportunities and agriculture and food to Yemenis. They work to rehabilitate water infrastructures, treat malnourished children and also distribute necessary needs. They provide hygiene supplies and food while also distributing food vouchers. An example of this is how they help sesame farmers increase their yields. Mercy Corps also provides income for Yemenis through cash transfer and vocational training. Another organization that also helps is the World Food Programme (WFP). Although there have been recent incidents with Yemen and the bombing of aid supplies, WFP is still trying to help Yemen. In October 2017, WFP provided food to more

than seven million people suffering from the extreme lack of food. The World Food Programme also has sanctions located in Yemen to help make the aid easily accessible for people in Yemen.

As of July 2018, the European Union and UNICEF is implementing a programme called the one and a half year programme. It will be placed in thirty districts across Yemen that'll help over 900,000 children under the age of five years old and over 200,000 pregnant women who want to breastfeed. This is a plan that'll help children and mothers who are most affected by the war. The one and a half year programme will likely prevent the cause of stunting in some children and the deaths of unborn babies. Also with the amount of help, it will decrease signs of malnutrition in those children and mothers.

Unfortunately, some organizations are not being funded correctly which is causing a lot of the supplies to go down. A solution to this would be to create petitions that ask local governments to not cut international aid towards Yemen. Also, another solution is for countries such as the United States, to fund organizations in order to keep providing aid for Yemen. Ways people at home can contribute to the crisis in Yemen is by donating to organizations as well. With programs such as Share the meal, you can donate fifteen dollars to feed a child for one month. I believe this is a great way for other people to get involved with the issue in Yemen without having to travel.

In the history of conflicts throughout the world, I have learned that stopping the wars are not always easy. Both sides will typically believe that they are right and the other is wrong. The Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition will have to come to a consensus and agree to a peace treaty. Organizations such as the United Nations have conducted talks with Houthis leaders and the Saudi-led coalition to discuss peace plans.

According to UN Web, "on September 25th 2015, many countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. For the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and people like you." In order for Yemen to move forward it would be necessary for the country to begin rebuilding by working on the infrastructure. The future can show improvement as long as the begin developing innovative ways to fight poverty and improve healthcare systems. Once those items are secured education can be focused on and the whole country can begin the healing process.

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