

## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

### MetMUNC XLVIII

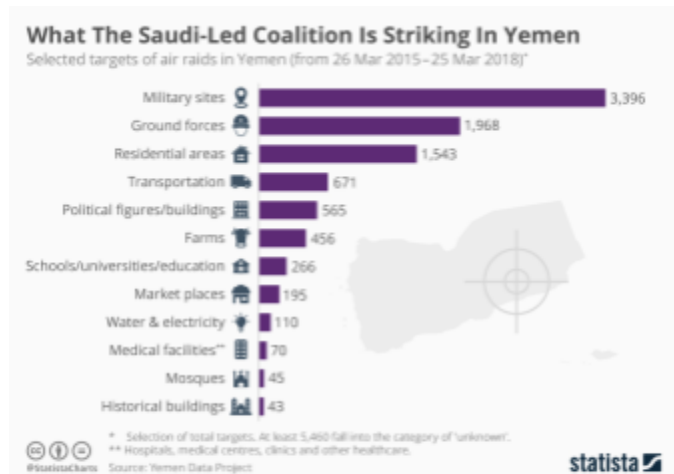
#### Topic: Yemen Famine

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Famine has caused millions of deaths in societies over time, and the United Nations recognizes the need to provide aid to any nation whose citizens are starving. This committee will focus on how best to address the ongoing famine in Yemen. Yemen has never been incredibly powerful or wealthy, but with a historically awful famine ravaging their country, they are truly in need of some kind of outside help.

Civil war has been a part of life in Yemen for decades, with Arab Spring protests calling for democracy and the end of Ali Abdullah Salleh's 33-year dictatorship. In 2011, a Shia rebel group known as the Houthis forced Salleh to hand over the presidency to Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. However, when Hadi failed to end insurgency in the region, the



The Saudis are known to strike many different military and civilian targets in Yemen.

Houthis revolted again, taking over the country and forcing Hadi to flee. Saudi Arabia and other Sunni nations, including the United Arab Emirates, in an attempt to restore Sunni rule to the area, began air bombings against Yemen and sent ground forces into the country, escalating the

issue from “ordinary” civil war to devastating conflict. Most western nations, including the U.S., U.K., and France, sided with Saudi Arabia, favoring a restoration of Hadi’s rule, and have sold arms to the Saudis.<sup>1</sup>

Before Saudi Arabia entered Yemen’s civil war, half of its population was already below the poverty line. Now, Saudi airstrikes are destroying vital infrastructure such as houses, schools, hospitals, and water tanks, making it nearly impossible for Yemen’s population to easily access food, water, and healthcare.<sup>2</sup> Many Saudi airstrikes are intentionally aimed at civilian areas; it’s

estimated that roughly 600 civilian buildings are destroyed each month by the bombings. 80% of Yemeni people are living in life-threatening conditions, and 4.3 million have been displaced by the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Yemen is a country that relies on imports to survive; 90% of its food is imported. But, blockades by



**Yemen has a dire need for humanitarian assistance, endangering its population.**

Saudi Arabia and its allies have slowed imports significantly, and at some times, stopped them completely. Airstrikes have also been targeting farms, limiting the remaining 10% of food that is produced domestically. The blockade also stops medicine from entering Yemen and stops flights from leaving the country, so citizens can not try and seek medical help in other nations. Yemen’s government has essentially collapsed, and no federal aid is being provided to the starving. Public servants like teachers or policemen have not been paid salaries in years. 3.7 million children are

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2019/why-yemen-is-the-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/yemen/quick-facts-what-you-need-know-about-crisis-yemen>

not able to attend school. The UN and other humanitarian bodies have attempted to aid Yemen, but this disaster is unprecedented. To make matters worse, the city of Hodeidah, an important port that the UN was using to deliver resources to Yemen, became a center of violence and conflict in June 2018, making it unusable.

In addition to famine, Yemeni citizens are also exposed to a dangerous amount of infectious diseases. The leading causes of death in third-world countries, in order of prevalence, include respiratory disease, diseases of

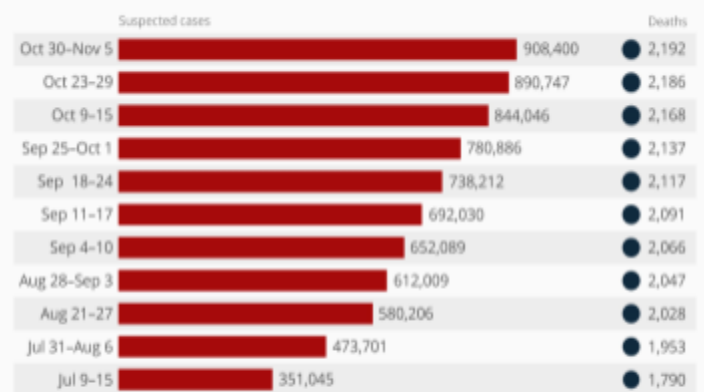
the circulatory system, low birth weight, diarrhea, measles, injuries, malnutrition, and cancer.<sup>4</sup> These conditions represent diseases of poverty; they are spread because of a lack of humane conditions. In Yemen, cholera is the most common epidemic, with 5,000 new cases appearing daily.<sup>5</sup>

Cholera is a severe infectious disease

that is spread through water. Symptoms of this terrible illness include diarrhea, dehydration, and death in extreme circumstances. Cholera is spread in Yemen mainly because of a contaminated drinking water supply and a lack of overall sanitation. Yemen is believed to have the largest cholera outbreak in history, and a lack of government resources leaves people with few options to defend themselves against it. Doctors in Yemen are no longer paid a salary, and 50% of

### Yemen's Cholera Outbreak Is Out Of Control

Cumulative number of suspected cholera cases and deaths in Yemen (Jul-Nov 2017)



#StatistaCharts Source: World Health Organization

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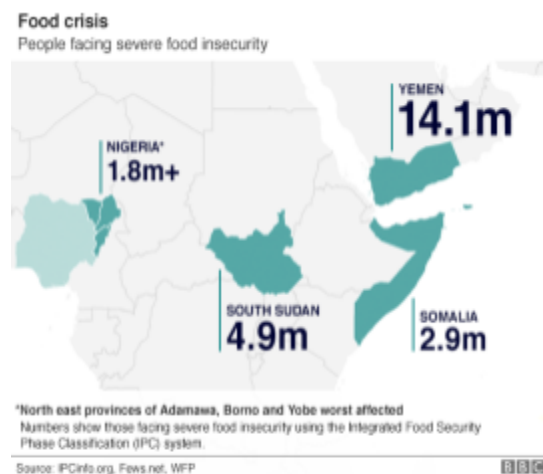
The number of cholera cases in Yemen rose in 2017

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2698079>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2017/06/yemens-cholera-outbreak-grows-5000-cases-day>

hospitals are closed. According to the New York Times, it is actually believed that Saudi Arabia is purposefully exacerbating the cholera outbreak by striking the water supplies of the Yemeni people.<sup>6</sup> Cholera seemed to be declining in 2018, but experienced a resurgence in March 2019, as spreading violence made it increasingly difficult for groups such as Doctors Without Borders to reach affected areas.

Despite the dire circumstances Yemen is facing, there have been some initiatives that have made a positive impact. The UN recognizes that Yemen is in the midst of “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis,” and has tried to act accordingly. The United Nations and its various bodies have distributed 100,000 tons of food a month, vaccinated 300,000 against cholera, and opened communication lines with the government concerning humanitarian efforts.<sup>7</sup> However, these efforts have obviously been insufficient, necessitating involvement by the UNDP, which aims to provide people with the resources they need to build a better life. The UNDP has created 7.1 million work days in Yemen, provided education, water, and/or improved roadways for 2.3 million people, and cleared over 1,000 acres of war-damaged land.<sup>8</sup>



Yemen's food crisis is much worse than those in nearby countries.

However, UN efforts have largely been characterized by one thing: a lack of funding. The Yemen crisis has not received much global attention, and many global powers with the ability to

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/14/health/cholera-outbreak-in-yemen.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/peace-human-rights-and-humanitarian-response/humanitarian-response-in-yemen/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/general/results-2018.html>

lead humanitarian efforts for the Yemenis are on Saudi Arabia's side of the conflict. Even if the UN is in favor of giving aid to those suffering from famine, they cannot do so without funding from UN members.<sup>9</sup> In February 2019, UN member states pledged \$2.6 billion to help the Yemeni people; however, less than half of that money was ever actually received. Because of that, 22 of 34 UN programs were forced to close, including vaccination efforts, irrigation systems, and nutritional centers.<sup>10</sup>

As delegates, it is your job to draft solutions that will allow nations to work together to help the citizens of Yemen. Yemen is obviously a unique circumstance for the UNDP: there is no completely functioning government to develop. **However, keep in mind that it is not UNDP's job to merely provide aid to those in poverty. This committee develops societies that can sustain themselves.** So, potential resolutions should focus on long-term solutions for the crisis in Yemen.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2016/02/11/why-does-no-one-care-about-yemen>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/08/1044681>

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Does or did your country contribute to the situation Yemen is in? If they did, was it direct or indirect?
2. Has your country been affected by this situation? If so, does your nation support the outside influence on Yemen's economy?
3. Does your country side with the Houthis, Saudi Arabia's coalition, or are they neutral?
4. If applicable, how has your country dealt with famines in the past or present?
5. How does your country deal with outbreaks of diseases like cholera or measles?

### **Helpful Links:**

- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035501>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/26/world/middleeast/yemen-famine-aid-donors.html>
- <https://www.wfpusa.org/stories/6-troubling-facts-about-the-looming-famine-in-yemen/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/12/05/yemens-looming-famine-has-been-a-long-time-coming/?noredirect=on>
- <https://www.oxfam.org/en/crisis-yemen/yemen-brink-conflict-pushing-millions-towards-famine>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/25/famine-in-yemen-could-become-one-of-worst-in-living-memory-un-says>

