



**Committee:** United Nations Security Council

**Committee Chairs:** Theo Dahan Hoffman, Matteo Muracciole

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## The security crisis in Yemen

### Committee Overview:

“The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.”

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the foundation of the global collective security system, as per the UN Charter designed in 1945. The Security Council is one of the six principal bodies of the United Nations responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Unlike the recommendations issued by other UN bodies, the Security Council’s decisions are binding on all 193 UN member states and reflect its unique authority.

The UNSC is responsible for ensuring the four core purposes of the United Nations, which are: maintaining peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, promoting social progress, better living standards, and human rights. When a threat to peace emerges, the UNSC stands as first responder and deploys a variable toolbox of preventive measures. It first attempts peaceful resolution by means of mediation, negotiation and sending special envoys to promote dialogue between conflicting parties. For instance, the Council has sent peacekeeping missions, put in place mechanisms to monitor ceasefires and mandated the Secretary-General to use diplomatic channels to defuse crises.

But upon the failure of peaceful methods, it grants the UNSC authority to take necessary enforcement measures. These may be economic sanctions, arms embargoes, travel bans and, if necessary, collective military action. The Council's power to authorize the use of force, as in the Korean War, the Gulf War, and recent interventions in Libya and Mali, highlights its unique status as the final arbiter of global security. But the UNSC is also cognizant of the humanitarian fallout from its actions, attempting to target those behind conflicts while also limiting collateral damage to civilian populations. The Security Council comprises 15 members, including five permanent members, known as the P5: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, who have veto power over certain decisions made by the Security Council; and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly. This structure represents not only continuity but also inclusion of various global perspectives.

## Introduction:

Yemen's ongoing crisis is one of the world's most complex and damaging conflicts. It features regional proxy wars, humanitarian disasters, and geopolitical rivalries. Since 2014, the country has been caught in a civil war between the Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) and the internationally recognized government, which has support from a Saudi-led coalition. The conflict has involved regional powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel, as well as global actors such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and China. The Red Sea is a key global trade route that has seen tensions rise due to Houthi attacks on commercial shipping. These actions have further complicated the crisis.

## Historical Background:

Between 1839 and 1967, North Yemen, part of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom, was ruled by Zaydi imams. The 1962 revolutions overthrew the regime and led to the Yemen Arab Republic. South Yemen, previously a British Protectorate between 1839 and 1967, became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a Marxist state aligned with the Soviet Union. Through the Cold War, North Yemen, backed by Saudi Arabia, was pitted against South Yemen, backed by the USSR and China, in true Cold War proxy style. The nation was unified in 1990 under President Ali Abdullah Saleh, however, tensions persisted.

In 1994, the Yemeni Civil War led to the destruction of a Southern secessionist movement, as Saleh consolidated power. Between 2004 and 2010, the Houthi movement, a Zaydi Shia group, rebelled against Saleh's government, citing religious discrimination. Supported

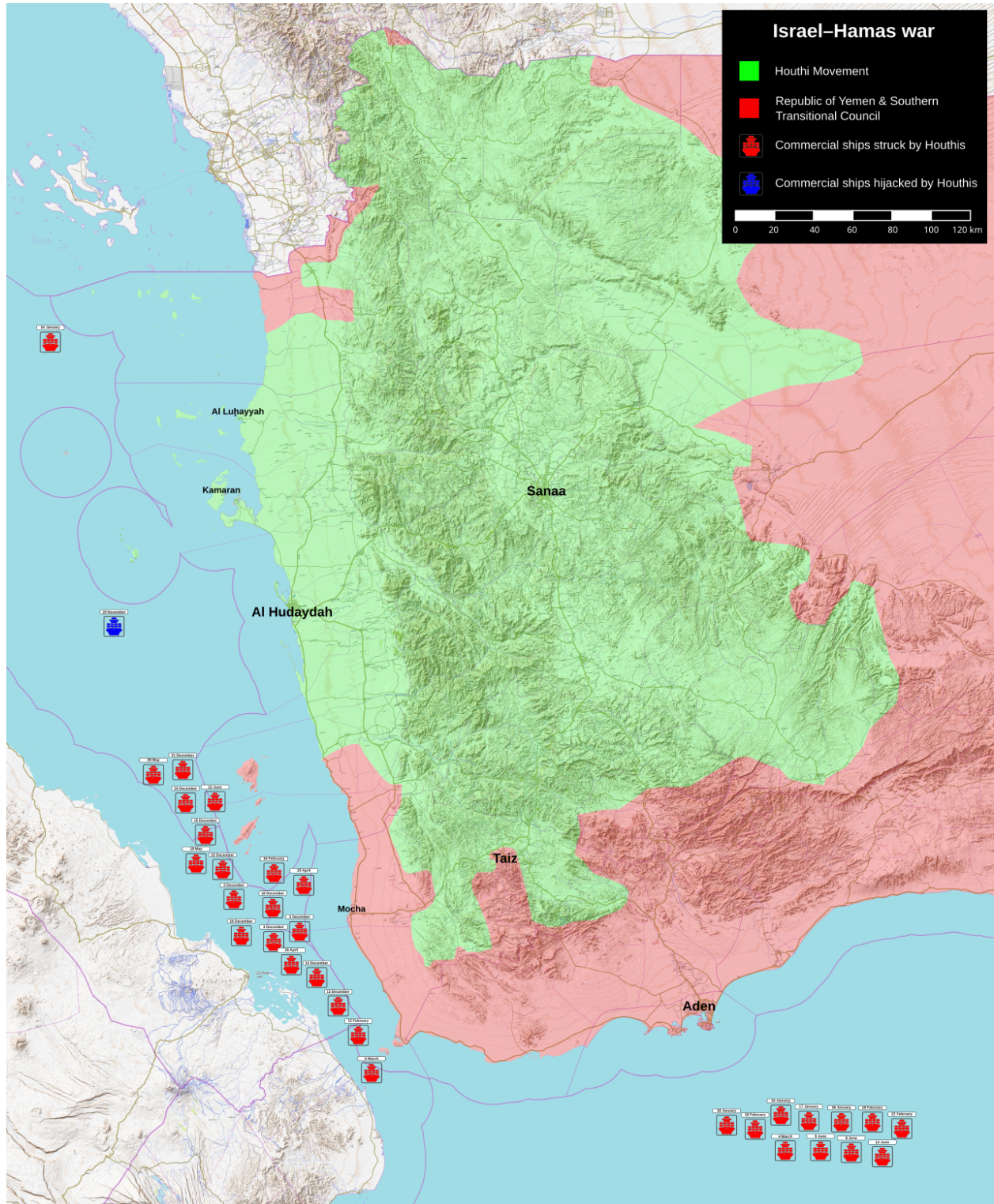
by Iran, the group rose to complete power during the Arab Spring and the collapse of Saleh's rule. Saleh was replaced in 2012 by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, but due to struggles with corruption, the government failed to resist the Houthis' takeover in 2014, and allied with Saleh, the Houthis seized Sana'a in September 2014, forcing Hadi to flee to Aden and later Saudi Arabia.

## Modern Crisis:

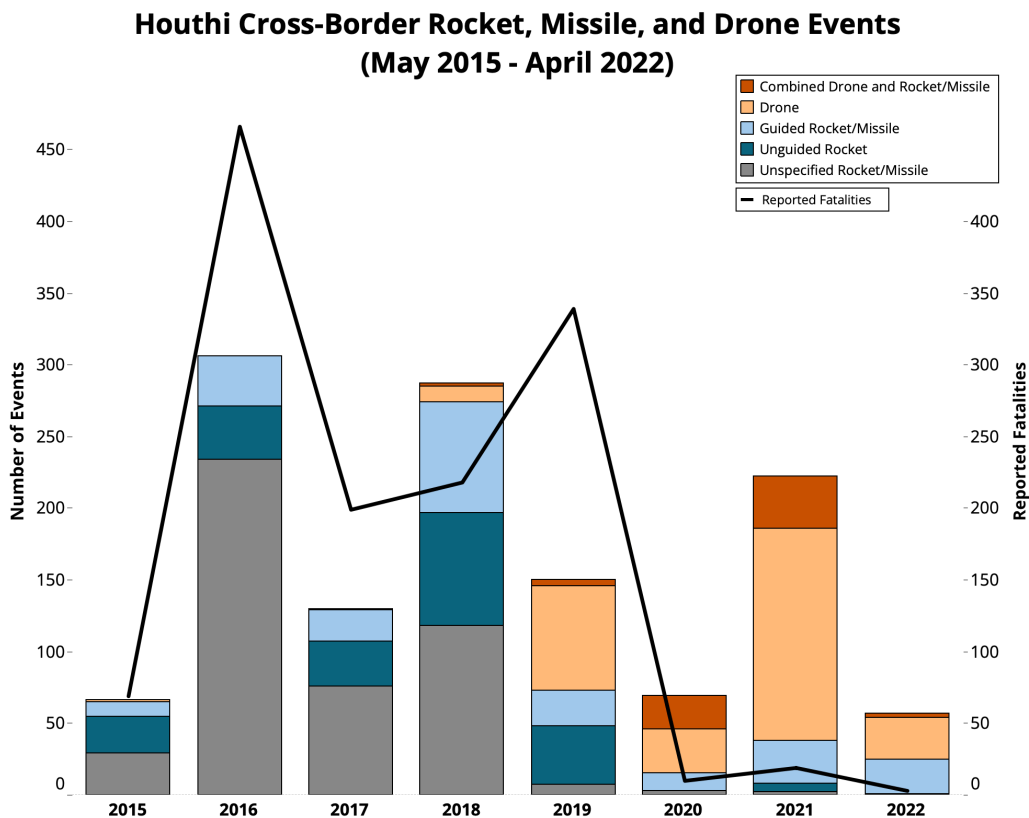
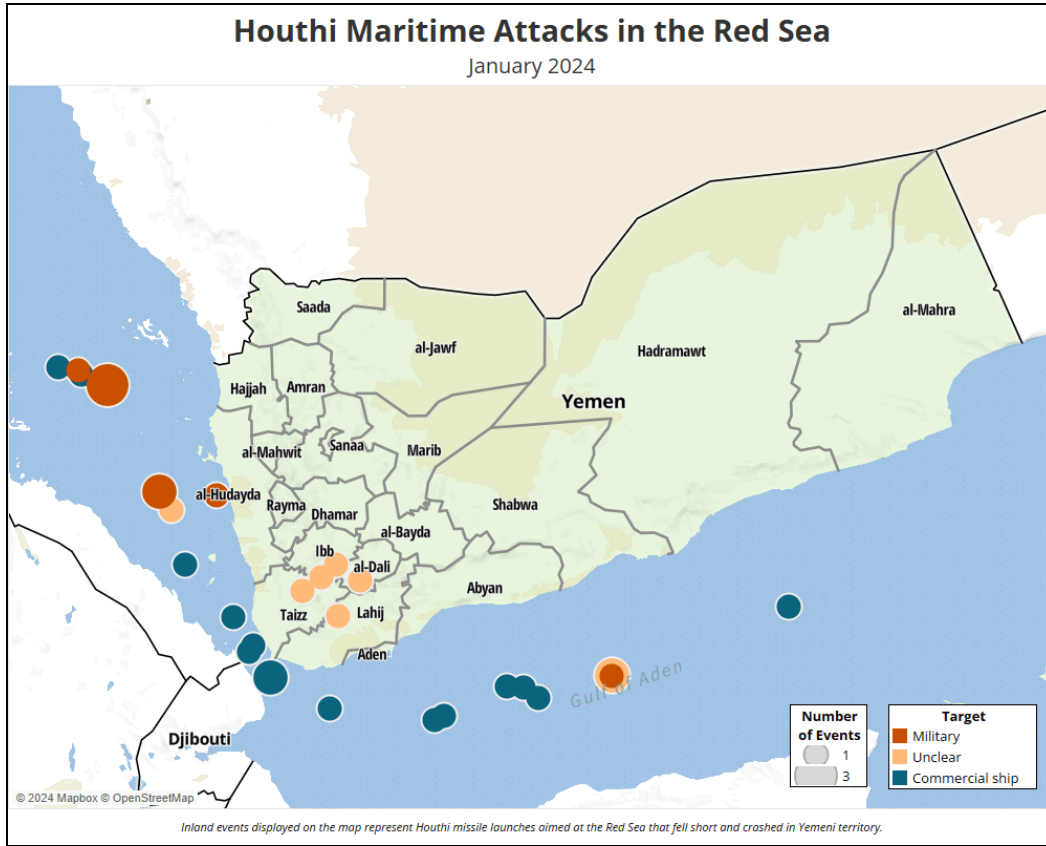
In March 2015, Saudi Arabia's action, assisted by the UAE, in "Operation Decisive Storm" aimed to restore Hadi's government. The war eventually became a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as a religious conflict between Sunni and Shia. This conflict has devastated Yemen's infrastructure and led to a humanitarian crisis as over 21.6 million Yemeni people are in need of aid: as of 2026, 4.8 million are internally displaced, and only 50% of healthcare facilities are operational, leading to outbreaks of cholera and other diseases.

Since October 2023 and the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Houthis have targeted commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea, citing solidarity with Hamas and the Palestinians. The Houthis have used missiles and drone strikes to attack Israeli, US, and UK ships as well as seizing trade vessels, such as Galaxy Leader in November 2023. Their blockades of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait has disrupted over 14% of global trade, causing shipping costs to triple.

The strikes and seizures have gained serious international responses such as arms embargos on Houthis and the demand for Houthi withdrawal from San'a (resolution 2216), financial sanctions (resolution 2266), and condemnation on Houthi attacks and calls for deescalation (resolution 2722 and 2812). The US and UK have led a series of airstrikes, through Operation Prosperity Guardian, in 2024, and Operation Rough Rider, through March and May 2025, targeting Houthi military sites and Yemeni ports. European member states have begun a significant naval mission to protect shipping, through Operation Aspiodes, beginning in 2025.



Map of Houthi activity near the Yemeni coast:



## Important Actors and Interests:

There are numerous economic and geopolitical interests tied to the Red Sea for regional and international actors, therefore making the Yemeni Crisis a very important situation to be followed and to influence. The main regional actors that are involved are Yemen, Iran, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Egypt. On the international level, the United States, European nations such as France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, China, and others have active interests in the region and therefore are likely to be interested in the evolution of the situation.

## Yemen:

### The Houthi Movement:

As the internationally recognized governing force within the nation, the Houthi movement evidently has an extreme stake in the matter. Currently, the Houthis exercise de facto control over northern Yemen, including the capital of the nation, Sana'a, as well as a majority of the Yemeni population. Supported by the Islamic Republic, its stated objectives include resisting foreign intervention, especially from the United States and Israel, supporting the Palestinian cause, and consolidating power over the totality of the country.

Since October 2023, the Houthis have launched numerous and repeated attacks on commercial and naval ships traversing the Red Sea, ostensibly in support of Hamas and Palestinians during the Israel-Hamas conflict, from October 7th, 2023. These attacks, targeting mostly vessels linked to Israel, the US, and the UK, have disrupted global trade and caused a sharp rise in shipping costs. Since over 14% of total maritime trade, as well as 30% containerized trade, transits through the Red Sea, most in direction for the Mediterranean and European States, this disrupts and affects European Nations heavily.

The Houthis use a variety of military capabilities to strike vessels, including drones, missiles, and naval mines to attack and seize trade ships. As a result of these attacks, the US and UK have conducted multiple airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, including military launch sites, radar systems, and drone factories. Yemen also suffers due to a blockade, initiated by Saudi Arabia, and while UN-mediated talks made some progress, it has overall worsened the humanitarian crisis within Yemen, as over 21.6 million people are in need of aid and over 5 million are at risk of famine.

## Iran:

Iran is the primary ally and backer of the Houthi movement, providing financial, military, and political support. In recent years, Iran has increased the supply of military drones, missiles, and offers training for Houthi forces. Iran sees the Houthis as a way to project power in the Arabian Peninsula and to counter Saudi and US influence. Iran also seeks to disrupt Western interests, therefore the disruption of maritime trade heading for Western powers aids Iran in their goal.

The Houthis are a part of Iran's "Axis of Resistance", alongside Hezbollah and Hamas, and in light of the recent rapid escalation between the US, Israel, Iran, and other regional actors, Iran will be looking towards the Houthis as a source of support in the now increasing conflict.

## The United States:

From behind the scenes, the United States has a strong influence over events in Yemen. Aligning itself alongside Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Washington extends help through military aid, data and security information cooperation, plus coordination backing air efforts targeting Houthi forces. Operating apart from that front, US units hunt militants resident within Yemen: AQAP and ISIS affiliates hiding within Yemen's collapse draw precision raids meant to disrupt plots before they lead to terrorist attacks against Western states.

Beyond troop actions, American attention sticks to maintaining sea routes open through the Red Sea, key for moving goods and fuel worldwide. Because Houthis have targeted cargo ships more often lately, Washington pulled together partner nations, forming efforts like Operation Prosperity Guardian to shield shipping lanes and discourage assaults. From embassy halls to global forums, officials push dialogue instead of war, backing United Nations negotiations while quietly adjusting ties with neighbors. Still, standing by Saudi Arabia's alliance draws heat as reports pile up about suffering inside Yemen - hunger, shortages, blocked aid - all deepening under fighting and restrictions at borders.

## China:

China focuses on Yemen largely because of its own economic goals and wider strategic plans, especially linked to the Belt and Road Initiative. Because it buys large amounts of oil and gas from the Middle East, smooth passage through the Red Sea matters deeply to China's

energy flow and commerce with Europe and Africa. Major projects in nearby countries - ports built in places like Djibouti and Sudan - are key parts of how China moves goods around the world. When fighting in Yemen grows worse, such as Houthi strikes on cargo ships, those efforts come under pressure, risking delays and higher expenses across vital supply routes.

China stays out of the fighting in Yemen but still talks to all of the actors through diplomacy and monetary ties. Since China has positive relations with Saudi Arabia and also works with Iran, it walks a careful line without jumping into conflicts directly. At UN meetings, Beijing keeps bringing up politics instead of war, backing decisions that help keep things calm nearby and business running smoothly. What matters most is keeping Chinese projects safe and ships moving freely through the Red Sea - not stepping forward as a peacemaker or peacekeeper.

## **The United Arab Emirates (UAE):**

The United Arab Emirates has taken on an important role in the Yemeni conflict, driven by security concerns and economic goals. Initially focused on countering the Houthi advance and restoring the internationally recognized government, the UAE's strategy has shifted toward cultivating local allies, such as the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks independence for southern Yemen. This approach shows the UAE's long-term interest in establishing its influence in the region, particularly in strategic ports like Aden and Socotra, which are vital for its maritime trade and military presence.

The UAE's involvement in Yemen is also connected to its wider competition with Iran and its desire to counter Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates. Economically, the UAE has invested in Yemen's infrastructure, energy, and logistics sectors, aiming to integrate these resources into its regional economic network. However, its military and political interventions have faced criticism for worsening the humanitarian crisis and fueling local conflicts. As the situation in Yemen evolves, the UAE continues to play a key role, balancing its security interests with its economic ambitions in the Red Sea and the broader Arabian Peninsula.

## **Israel:**

Israel's interest in the Yemeni crisis is mainly focused on security and preventing the Houthi movement from becoming a direct threat to its territory. The Houthis, with Iranian backing, have carried out several missile and drone attacks targeting Israel, especially within the

context of the larger regional conflict involving Hamas and Hezbollah. Israel views the Houthi threat as part of Iran's "Axis of Resistance," which aims to encircle Israel with hostile forces. In response, Israel has conducted airstrikes in Yemen, targeting Houthi military capabilities to reduce their ability to launch attacks.

In addition to military action, Israel is very concerned about the security of the Red Sea, a major trade route for its imports and exports. Disruptions in the Red Sea threaten Israel's economic interests and pose a broader strategic challenge, as they could encourage other Iranian-backed groups in the region. Israel's approach to the Yemeni crisis involves deterring Houthi aggression through military means and collaborating with international partners, especially the United States, to counter Iran's regional influence. As the conflict in Yemen continues to intertwine with broader Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Iranian tensions, Israel remains attentive to developments in the region.

## **The European Union (EU):**

The European Union's involvement in the Yemeni crisis is driven by economic, humanitarian, and security concerns. The Red Sea serves as a vital trade route for Europe, linking it to Asia and the Middle East, and any disruption to shipping can harm the EU's economic interests. The EU relies significantly on Middle Eastern oil and gas. Instability in the Red Sea could lead to spikes in energy prices and supply chain disruptions. In response, the EU has participated in naval missions, such as Operation Aspides, to protect commercial vessels from Houthi attacks and ensure safe passage for goods.

Humanitarian issues also play a major role in the EU's approach to Yemen. The EU is one of the largest providers of humanitarian aid to Yemen, funding initiatives that address food insecurity, healthcare, and displacement. The EU supports UN-led peace efforts and advocates for a political solution to the conflict, highlighting the need for inclusive dialogue and a Yemeni-led process. However, the EU's ability to influence the conflict is limited by its reliance on diplomatic and economic measures rather than military action.

## **Main issues and problems to solve:**

Nationwide Civil War between The Houthis (supported and supplied in weapons by Iran) and the internationally recognized Yemeni government, a Saudi Arabian military coalition and other military groups around the area. This war has been estimated by the UN to have killed more than 150,000 people in total

The Humanitarian Crisis in the region is also a very concerning factor in Yemen as 21.6 million out of 35 million Yemenis require aid and 17 million are experiencing high levels of food insecurity. The conflict has displaced approximately 4.8 million people, many of whom live in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic services. Yemen's healthcare system has largely collapsed, with only about half of medical facilities fully functioning and over 17 million people lacking adequate healthcare, contributing to major disease outbreaks such as Cholera. In addition, more than 16 million people lack access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation, increasing the spread of preventable illnesses and worsening living conditions for millions across the country.

Military tensions also surround this area as the conflict has created regional security risks, including missile and drone attacks connected to tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia and threats to international shipping routes in the Red Sea near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Blockage of the ship trade routes by Houthi militias can cause immense strain on the world market as they have seized and bombarded dozens of merchant and naval vessels that even caused the port of Eilat to go bankrupt and to close.

## Previous actions and resolutions from the UNSC:

### Resolutions:

- **14 November 2025** : This resolution renewed the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime, comprising targeted financial and travel ban measures, for another year, until 14 November 2026, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee until 15 December 2026. The resolution also requests the Panel of Experts to present two reports and advice to the Council by 15 April 2026: one on the flow of dual-use components and precursor chemicals to Yemen and another on improving information sharing and flag State capacity to prevent vessels suspected of violating the sanctions regime from entering Yemen.
- **21 October 2011 (res 2014)**: condemned violence in Yemen as a result of the Arab Spring protests that overthrew the Yemeni President Abdullah Saleh. This resolution also supports the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) transition plan to ensure an organized and peaceful reinstatement of a new president in order to preserve cohesion and avoid anarchy in the region.

- **26 February 2014 (res 2140)** : Imposes a travel ban and asset freeze for a period of one year from the date of the adoption of this resolution against individuals or entities designated by the Committee who engage in or provide support for acts that threaten the peace, security and stability of Yemen; and established for initial period of 13 months the Panel of Experts. The UNSC passed this resolution following the Houthi movement forcefully seizing the country's capital.
- **15 February 2015 (res 2201)**: this resolution condemned actions that undermined the country's political transition and called for the reinstatement of the legitimate government. The resolution demanded that the Houthis withdraw their forces from government institutions and normalise the security situation in the capital. It called on all parties to engage in UN-brokered negotiations facilitated by the United Nations Special Adviser on Yemen, Jamal Benomar. The Council urged member states to refrain from interference that might exacerbate tensions. This resolution was passed unanimously.
- **14 April 2015 (res 2216)**: this resolution demanded that the Houthi movement withdraw from seized territories and cease unilateral actions undermining Yemen's political transition. The resolution forms a central legal basis for international involvement in the Yemeni civil war. It should be important to note that all voted for except for Russia that decided to abstain.

#### **Security Council presidential statements:**

- **29 August 2019**: This was on developments in southern Yemen and efforts to resume comprehensive political negotiations.

#### **More General actions:**

- The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen and its commitment to working towards lasting peace and prosperity for the Yemeni people.
- The members are calling for de-escalation and encouraging enhanced diplomatic efforts by all parties and regional stakeholders
- Strong support for efforts toward a political settlement and ultimately ending the suffering of the Yemeni people
- Demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained by the Houthis and reiterated that all threats to those delivering humanitarian aid and assistance are unacceptable and worsen the dire humanitarian situation.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Proxy War:** A conflict where external powers (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Iran) avoid direct combat and instead support opposing local groups (e.g., Houthis, Yemeni government) to fight on their behalf.

**UN Security Council Veto Power:** The exclusive right of the five permanent UNSC members (US, UK, France, China, Russia) to reject any resolution, regardless of global consensus.

**Axis of Resistance:** An informal alliance of Iran-backed groups (Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas) united against US, Israeli, and Western influence in the Middle East.

**UN Sanctions Regime:** A framework of penalties (e.g., asset freezes, arms embargoes) imposed by the UN to coerce compliance with international law.

**Bab el-Mandeb Strait:** A strategic 20-mile-wide waterway linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, critical for global trade (14% of maritime traffic).

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