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Research Report for Munoh 2015

Forum: The Security Council

Question of: The issues of Yemen civil war

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Description of the issue

"Let's go overseas now and try to understand what is really happening in Yemen. What is certain is that the government collapsed. A rebel faction took over the capital. And last week, Saudi Arabia intervened, conducting airstrikes with support from allies, including the United States. Many people have seen Yemen's conflict as part of a regional war. It's seen as a grand struggle between Sunni and Shia Muslims, but Adam Baron does not see it that way at all. He says we're viewing the struggle the wrong way."

This began in 2011 as a very much a political conflict. A part of the uprisings in, the Arab spring. It was about who is going to rule Yemen in which way. It was about who's getting what - the Houthis wanting their seat at the table, other people not wanting to give up some of their power. It got out of control because; In short, after months of tightening their hold, the Houthis have formally seized power. In January, the group said it would dissolve parliament

and announced plans for a new interim assembly and five-member presidential council, which would rule for up to two years.

The move filled a political vacuum, which had existed since President Hadi, the prime minister and cabinet resigned earlier that month after the Houthis placed President Hadi under house arrest and detained other leading figures.

But the Houthis are minority Shia from the north, and their declaration has not been recognised by Sunni tribesmen and southern leaders, threatening Yemen with a further descent into chaos.

Now this has turned the conflict into a more faux-religious conflict. Saudi-Arabia has made their move along with the rest of the coalition and so has Iran with their allies. The conflict has, at the moment, taken the lives of over 2500 (1300 civilian).

UN's Work

Since the uprisings in early 2011 the Secretary-General has utilized his good offices to engage with Yemeni political leaders and civil society to promote a peaceful, orderly and inclusive political transition process. However, the confrontation between the Houthis (Ansar Allah) and Yemen's Government starting in early 2014 led to the Houthis advance on Sana'a in August 2014. Despite the signing of a UN-brokered agreement on 21 September 2014 aimed at getting the transition back on track, the Houthis continued to consolidate and expand their hold on power and territory, further escalating the situation. In January 2015, the President and Prime Minister tendered their resignations, precipitating a political crisis. On 6 February, the Houthis dissolved parliament and declared that a five-member presidential council would be formed and that a Supreme Revolutionary Committee would run the country temporarily.

In resolution 2201 of 15 February 2015, the Security Council, inter alia, "strongly deplored actions taken by the Houthis to dissolve parliament and take over Yemen's government institutions", "demanded that the Houthis immediately and unconditionally engage in good faith in the UN-brokered negotiations and that all parties in Yemen cease all armed hostilities", and "requested the Secretary-General to continue his good offices".

To find a consensual power-sharing solution and resolve the situation, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Yemen, Mr. Jamal Benomar, attempted to facilitate another round of inclusive negotiations amongst the Yemeni parties in Sana'a. However, the military confrontation between the Houthis and the Government of Yemen escalated further. In February 2015, President Hadi escaped to Aden and rescinded his resignation. At the request of the United Nations Security Council, Special Adviser Benomar subsequently consulted the Yemeni parties and regional countries on a new venue for the negotiations.

However, at President Hadi's request, a coalition of ten countries led by Saudi Arabia commenced a military operation, primarily through air strikes, against Houthi positions on 25 March, which led to a suspension of the negotiations and the temporary withdrawal of all international UN staff from Yemen.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon took note of the military operation calling on all parties and Member States to refrain from taking any actions that undermine the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen.

He also called for a cease-fire and reminded all parties involved of their obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians and of all humanitarian and United Nations and associated personnel, as well as of the rules and principles of international human rights law and refugee law.

The United Nations has repeatedly reiterated that there is no military solution to the Yemeni crises and has called for a return to peaceful negotiations.

On 14 April, the Security Council adopted resolution 2216 (2015), which, inter alia, demands that all Yemeni parties, in particular the Houthis, fully implement resolution 2201 and refrain from further unilateral actions. The resolution also “requests the Secretary-General to intensify his good offices role in order to enable a resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process.”

On 25 April, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed as his new Special Envoy for Yemen. Since his appointment, the Special Envoy has been engaging with the Yemeni parties, regional countries, Security Council members and other member states with the aim to prepare the ground for a cessation of hostilities by all parties and a resumption of the political transition process towards a more peaceful, stable and democratic country.

Inclusive consultations among Yemeni governmental and other actors were due to start on 28 May in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations. Nevertheless, on 26 May the Secretary-General asked his Special Envoy to Yemen to postpone the consultations in Geneva following a request from the Government of Yemen and other key stakeholders. The Secretary-General instructed his Special Envoy to redouble his efforts to consult with the Yemeni Government, Yemen’s political groupings and countries in the region with the aim of producing a comprehensive ceasefire and the resumption of peaceful dialogue and an orderly political transition.

The Geneva initiative, aimed at bringing together a broad range of Yemeni governmental and other actors, followed extensive consultations by the Special Envoy as well as strong expressions of support by various Security Council resolutions, including 2216 (2015), for a peaceful and Yemeni-led political transition process based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference.

As the conflict continued nearly half the population remained food insecure and without access to clean water and other basic services. A quarter of a million children were severely malnourished and at risk of dying. Thousands of youth suffered unemployment and investors face high-risk economic opportunities.

Background information

The Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests (both non-violent and violent), riots, and civil wars in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution, and spread throughout the countries of the Arab League and its surroundings. While the wave of initial revolutions and protests faded by mid-2012, some started to refer to the succeeding and still on-going large-scale discourse conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa as the Arab Winter. The most radical discourse from Arab Spring into the still on-going civil wars took place in Syria and Iraq as early as the second half of 2011.

By the end of February 2012, rulers had been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; civil uprisings had erupted in Bahrain and Syria; major protests had broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; and minor protests had occurred in Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara, and Palestine. Weapons and Tuareg fighters returning from the Libyan Civil War stoked a simmering conflict in Mali, which has been described as "fallout" from the Arab Spring in North Africa.

Why Yemen?

Yemen might be the poorest country in the Middle East, but it has great strategic importance for its neighbours. The country sits on the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a waterway linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, through which much of the world's oil shipments pass (Including Saudi Arabia's). If Iran were to control this waterway, it would give them a significant advantage in the flow of oil both countries export so heavily. Which could also be the reason for AQAP's interest in the conflict. Yemen also has a long border with Saudi Arabia, making the country important for Saudi national security. The country would also serve as an important symbolic victory as two powers fight for control of the region.



Who are the Houthis?

The Houthis are members of a rebel group, also known as Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), who adhere to a branch of Shia Islam known as Zaidism. Zaidis make up one-third of the population and ruled North Yemen under a system known as the imamate for almost 1,000 years until 1962. The Houthis take their name from Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi. He led the group's first uprising in 2004 in an effort to win greater autonomy for their heartland of Saada province, and also to protect Zaidi religious and cultural traditions from perceived encroachment by Sunni Islamists. After Houthi was killed by the Yemeni military in late 2004, his family took charge and led another five rebellions before a ceasefire was signed with the government in 2010. In 2011, the Houthis joined the protests against then President Saleh and took advantage of the power vacuum to expand their territorial control in Saada and neighbouring Amran province. They subsequently participated in a National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which led to President Hadi announcing plans in February 2014 for Yemen to become a federation of six regions. The Houthis however opposed the plan, which they said would leave them weakened.

Who are AQAP?

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, also known as Ansar al-Sharia in Yemen, is a militant Islamist organization, primarily active in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. It was named for al-Qaeda, and says it is subordinate to that group and its now-deceased leader Osama bin Laden, a Saudi citizen of Yemeni heritage. It is considered the most active of al-Qaeda's branches, or "franchises," that emerged due to weakening central leadership. The U.S government believes AQAP to be the most dangerous al-Qaeda branch due to its emphasis on attacking the far enemy and its reputation for plotting attacks on overseas targets. The group has been designated as a **terrorist organization by the United Nations**, Australia, Canada, Russia, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the European Union and the United States.

Countries/Parties involved

- Yemen (The Revolutionary Committee & the Hadi Government)
- Hezbollah
- Iran
- Eritrea
- AQAP
- Al-Shabaab
- ISIL

The Coalition:

- Saudi-Arabia
- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Morocco

- Qatar
- Senegal
- Sudan
- United Arab Emirates

The coalition is supported by:

- Pakistan
- Somalia
- The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United States of America

Relevant treaties/resolutions

- UN Charter chapter V & VII, all articles included.
- Resolution 2201
- Resolution 2216
- Yemen's constitution

Timeline of events(From BBC)

January 27, 2011: Protesters in Sanaa call for President Ali Abdullah Saleh to resign after three decades in power. Yemen's revolution kicks off.

Sept. 12, 2011: Saleh signs a document giving Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi special power to negotiate a transition of power with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Joint Meeting Parties, Yemen's political opposition parties.

December 2011: Saleh announces that he handed power over to his designated vice president, Hadi, under the terms of the GCC-brokered transition of power initiative.

January 2012: Saleh and several of his close allies and family members are given full immunity by parliament.

Feb. 21, 2012: Hadi is elected president of Yemen in a one-man election. His term is set for two years, during which he will oversee Yemen's institutional and political transition in keeping with the National Dialogue Conference resolutions.

January 2014: Members of the NDC reach a tentative agreement in the capital Sanaa. The terms of a draft constitution are finally ironed out so that Yemen can finalize its transition of power.

September 2014: The Houthis reach Sanaa following a blazing campaign against Islah in the highlands. Abdel Malik al-Houthi calls on Hadi to commit to the implementation of all NDC resolutions, per the January 2014 agreement. A deal is signed in Sanaa and a new coalition government is formed.

January 2015: Following months of political wrangling and rising tensions Hadi announces his resignation. His entire cabinet resigns. Hadi and several ministers are immediately put under house of arrest by the Houthis as Jamal Benomar, UN Special Envoy to Yemen, attempts to return all parties to the negotiating table.

February 2015: Hadi flees Sanaa for Aden, where he announces Aden as the new capital of Yemen, essentially splitting Yemen in two. Sanaa becomes a diplomatic ghost town

as all foreign embassies withdraw their diplomats from the city.

March 2015: The U.S. announces the [evacuation](#) of its troops from Al Anad airbase near Aden.

March 25, 2015: Saudi Arabia [unilaterally](#) launched an attack on Yemen with the backing of eight Arab countries — Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Qatar, Egypt, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan — and the support of the United States and European Union. Within days Pakistan joins the coalition, but as of Tuesday, continues to refuse to commit militarily.

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Sincerely yours,

Mads Møldrup

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Vice-President of the Security Council of Munch 2015