

# Advisory Panel on the Question of the Red Sea

The Red Sea Humanitarian Crisis



**Issue:** The Humanitarian Crisis

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**Position:** Deputy President

## Introduction

The Red Sea is one of the most vital pieces of the global trading network, having the Suez canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. However, due to several attacks in the past few months, the situation in neighbouring countries has taken a turn for the worse. The situations in such countries are not stable and due to the ongoing crisis in the Red Sea, dangers have become more dangerous for the citizens, the governments and third parties involved. This is why the Red Sea's prominence could lead to a detrimental mondial crisis if such parties continue their actions and influences.



*Figure 1: The geographical location of the Red Sea*



The humanitarian crisis in the Red Sea is a very complex situation and there are a number of formidable parties involved. This is why the Advisory Panel, consisting of the senior experts on fields such as international relations and global politics, will write a course of action to be sent to the Security Council, which will address the conflict with enhanced depth.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Arab Spring

This is a period of uprisings and protests across the Arab world in the early 2010's, which caused political changes in several countries

### Famine

Extreme scarcity of food. The consequences of a famine are usually widespread hunger and mass starvation. Famine is often caused by either a blockage of supplies or natural causes such as drought.

### Internally Displaced People (IDP's)

People who are forced to flee their homes by conflict or other causes, but remain within the border of their own country.

### Inflation

A general increase of prices and fall in the purchasing value of money. In other words, higher inflation and lower purchasing value.



### Proxy war

A conflict between two or more major powers that do not become directly involved.

### Shia-Sunni Divide

Islam has two major divisions: Shia's and Sunni's. The division between these two branches are the cause of many conflicts within the Middle East. For more clarification: Iran is the only Middle Eastern country with a Shia majority, while most other Islamic nations are a Sunni majority.

### Transitional Government

A temporary political body formed to manage a period of transition. This often follows a state collapse or a revolution.

## General Overview

### Advisory Panel description

The General Overview described the history and the current humanitarian situation in the Red Sea region. The Security Council will address the situation after the Advisory Panel has passed several pieces of advice concerning these situations. The main objective of the Advisory Panel is to conduct specialised research surrounding the Red Sea Conflict and then try and form a consensus to eventually help the Security Council address these issues further. Any and all clauses submitted by experts should be supported by research and facts.

### The Crisis

The Red Sea Crisis hasn't been ongoing for a long period of time. It began on 19 October 2023 when the Iranian government backed the Houthi movement in Yemen, a Shia movement



which opposes the Sunni Yemeni government. Iran supports this movement, since Iran itself is a Shia majority country that wants more control in the Middle East. The Iranian decision was shortly after Hamas' attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, henceforth the two situations are linked to each other.

## Houthis

The Houthis have had control of a formidable portion of Yemeni territory since the Yemeni Civil War in 2014, a conflict that is still ongoing. The Houthis are backed by other movements such as Hezbollah and Hamas. All of these movements are Islamic separatist movements with combined motives, for example, they all want a Palestinian State. That's why the Houthi movement has expressed their support towards a Palestinian state and threatened the United States to stop their shipment of supplies to Israel, in order to stop the attacks in the Red Sea.

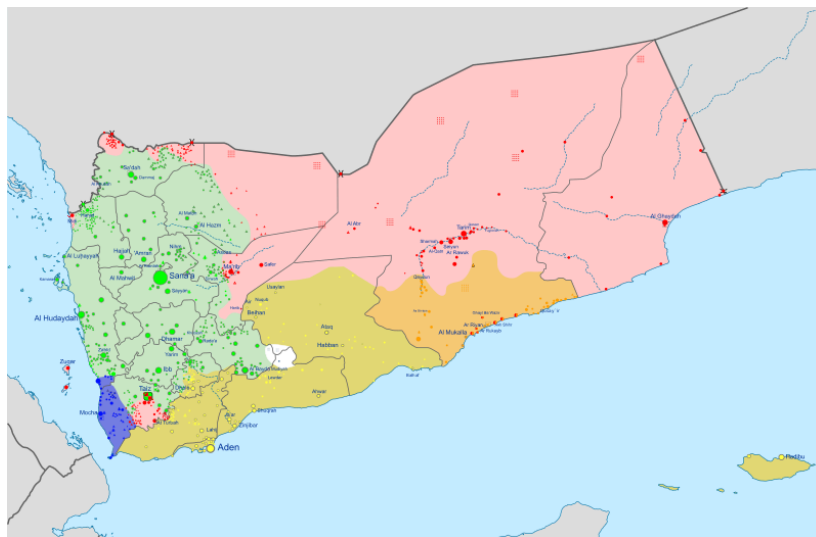


Figure 2: The division of Yemen. Green is the *Houthi* movement, red is the *current Yemeni government*, white is a combination of several terrorist organisations (including Al-Qaeda) and yellow is controlled territory of the *Southern Transitional Council*

## Proxy conflicts

There are several proxy wars in this region, of which Iran is involved the most in every



conflict. First of all the Iran-Saudi proxy conflict. This proxy war is mostly caused by the Shia-Sunni Division, since these are the two most influential nations with these branches of Islam, Saudi Arabia having the Sunni majority in the Middle East. Second of all there is the Iran-Israel proxy conflict, which directly links back to the Israel-Hamas war, since the Iranian government, along with the Houthis supports Hamas. Lastly, the Iran-United States proxy conflict, which directly links back to the Iranian revolution in 1979, after the United States installed their own government in Iran, against which several Iranian political movements revolted. The involvement of each nation or movement will be described in the **Major Parties Involved** section of the research report.

However, Yemen isn't the only country affected by these factors. As displayed in *Figure 1*, there are several countries bordering the Red Sea. The humanitarian situation in those countries will also be explained in the next paragraphs.

### Humanitarian Crisis

Because of various still-ongoing events, the humanitarian crisis in this region is regarded as one of the most severe crises in the world, most specifically the crisis in Yemen. This is because of various factors that play a role in this situation, which will be described in several subsections.

### Economy

The economies in several Red Sea countries are declining, because of the Houthi attacks around the Red Sea.

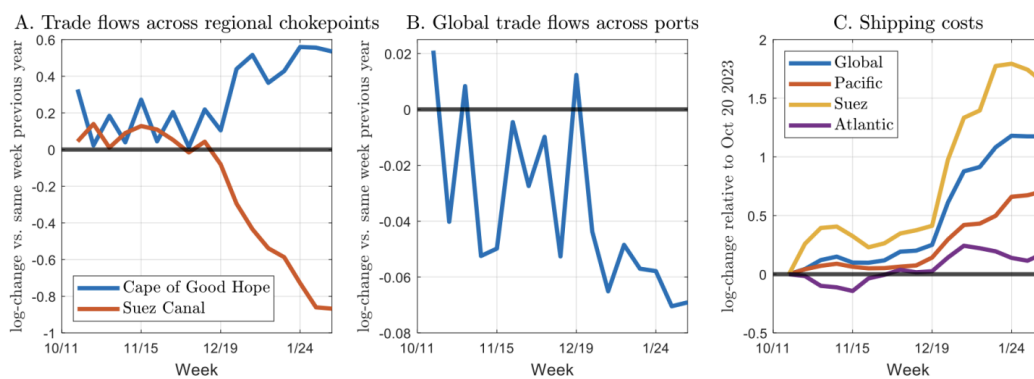


Figure 3: Graphs showing global trade flows at various key-ports in the world



The parts that must be assessed are the orange line in graph A and the yellow line in graph C, showing the statistics surrounding the Suez Canal, which is an important global trading checkpoint. Many of the Red Sea countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt and Sudan, use this checkpoint as a key to import and export goods. Saudi Arabia and Egypt's situations are good, because of the internal stability and secure infrastructure. However, Yemen and Sudan rely on this canal to import goods from the European Union, which is being negatively influenced by the Houthis who are carrying out attacks with drones on trading ships. This has several economic consequences, such as a decline of GDP per capita, which directly link back to other consequences, such as food insecurity and poverty. This is due to the fact that Yemen can't safely import goods, which the country relies on.

### *Healthcare*

Due to the events, Yemeni people lack a stable healthcare system. Because of a declining economy, the national education system is not strong, which has an impact on the availability of healthcare facilities. This is because physicians and nurses can not be educated due to a lack of educational opportunities. Due to these events, only 52% of current healthcare systems are able to operate within Yemeni territory, because of a lack of equipment, medicine and professional support workers. There have been several epidemics in Yemen, including cholera and diphtheria.

### *Sanitation and food*

Because of the various Houthi attacks, Yemen's infrastructure is not well-developed unlike its neighbours. This is why the country is currently experiencing one of the worst water crises in the world. This directly links back to the outbreaks of various diseases, which are mainly due to water impurities, which are not purified properly. In addition to this, the sewage systems in Yemen also are lacking in development, because of the economic decline and the civil war. Most people in Yemen are dying at this moment because of the fact that they are simply unable to access basic human necessities, sanitation being one of the most drastically lacking.

Most Yemeni people also do not have access to food, due to the economic crisis. To summarise this leads to: an economic decline causing general prices to go up because of inflation,



which causes higher food prices, which lead to people having a lower chance of affording food. In addition to this, the job sector in Yemen currently is unstable, because of constant threats of Houthi attacks. Due to this, people suffer from malnutrition and starvation, which cause a higher mortality rate across populations.

## Major Parties Involved

### Yemen

Yemen is in the centre of the Red Sea Crisis, being the most affected party out of all. The economic situation and the political stability in Yemen is one of the worst in the entire world, which is why Yemen is considered a Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC). Yemen is also a victim to many proxy conflicts around the world, the Iran-Saudi proxy conflict being the most recognisable ones. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is severe, as mentioned previously, being one of the worst in the entire world. On top of that, Yemen is one of the most unstable countries in the world, with an ongoing civil war with one party making an impact on global trade and stability in the Middle East. Therefore, the Advisory Panel should attempt to bring more stability within this country, passing on advice to the Security Council, which can take measures to get one step closer to resolving the crisis as a whole.

### Ansar Allah (Houthi movement)

The Houthi rebels are causing a variety of problems in the Red Sea, most of which impacting global trade. They have been attacking trading ships of various countries in the Suez Canal, one of the most important straits in global trading. The movement first started as a theological movement that preached like-mindedness to all Yemeni civilians, but it quickly escalated into becoming a rebellion movement against the Yemeni government. This is because of foreign intervention in several Middle Eastern conflicts, most notably the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Due to this, the Houthis began adopting anti-American and anti-Jewish slogans, which were chanted in the largest mosque





in Yemen after Friday Prayers. The Houthis are currently being alleged of several human rights violations, such as the usage of child soldiers, hostage taking and women abuse. Because of all these variables, the Houthis are considered one of the biggest threats for not only the Middle East, but also for the global economy.

### Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is currently leading a coalition against the Houthi movement, because of strategic reasons. First of all, the Houthi movement is a Shia movement, while Saudi Arabia is a Sunni country. If Saudi Arabia defeats the Houthis, they would be able to gain more influence over the Middle East to oppose Iran, the biggest Shia country. Secondly, Saudi Arabia wants to protect maritime trading routes, since it's the largest oil exporter in the world. Having the Red Sea blocked would have consequences for its economy. Therefore, Saudi Arabia actively fights against the Houthis to bring more stability in the Middle East in its own eyes.

### Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is the biggest Shia muslim nation in the entire world, but also the only country with a Shia majority. Since the Houthi movement is a Shia movement, Iran wants to try and gain more influence over the Middle East by actively supplying the Houthis with weapons, training and intelligence. This is also to decrease the influence Saudi Arabia has over the Middle East, since it's a well-supported regional power. On top of that, the founder of the Houthi rebellion was a Houthi student in Iran who later moved back to Yemen to engage in a civil war. However, Iran denies all the allegations of supporting the Houthis, since it would give a bad reputation to the country. It has been proven, however, that Iran is aiding the Houthis with various supplies.

### State of Israel

The Red Sea crisis all began when the Houthis launched drones at Israël to condemn their invasion of the Gaza strip. Since then, the Houthis have been an active threat against the Israëli



nation, while also advocating for the freedom of Palestine. Because of the crisis, several Israeli ports have closed due to bankruptcy, which has negative consequences for their economy. Therefore, Israel has launched several airstrikes in Yemen because of the aggression the Houthis are presenting them with.

### United States of America

The sole enemy of the Houthis is the United States since the 2003 Iraq invasion. There have been a large number of US ships struck down due to Houthi attacks, which caused the United States, along with the United Kingdom, to launch air strikes at Houthi bases. Their reason to strike the Houthis is to safeguard global trade in the Red Sea, but also to increase their presence in the Middle East, since the United States already has several bases in this region. Another reason is the proxy war with Iran, which the United States has been carrying since the Iranian revolution against the democratic government. The United States also actively supports the Saudi Coalition, which supports the current Yemeni government. On top of that, the United States is the largest supplier of Humanitarian Aid to Yemen, having given around \$6 billion in aid.

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is a UN mandated agency, with its main goal being to aid and protect refugees, stateless people and forcibly displaced communities. They are actively trying to assist people in need, of which there are a lot in Yemen. The UNHCR has carried out several human development projects, such as flood preventive measures, food supplies and sanitation assistance. They are also actively encouraging the global population to donate to Yemen, which they use to invest in protecting conditions and access to basic rights for the Yemeni people.



## Timeline of Key Events

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011: Protests erupt in Yemen as part of the Arab Spring

September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014: Houthis seize control of the Yemeni capital Sana'a

March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015: Saudi Arabia launches Operation Decisive Storm, which leads to a Saudi-led coalition fighting against the Houthi rebellion in Yemen

April 2015 The Saudi-led coalition imposes a naval blockade on Yemen ports, which restricts the flow of humanitarian aid

October 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2016: The US Navy destroyer USS Mason comes under missile attack by Houthis while patrolling the Red Sea

October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016: United States responds with its own missiles aimed at the Houthis

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017: Former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh is killed by Houthi forces

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018: The Stockholm Agreement is signed between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels

July 2020: The FSO Safer oil tanker off the coast of Yemen becomes a major environmental concern, because of the oil leaks

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023: The Saudi-led coalition and Houthi rebels agree to a temporary truce

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Resolution 2215, 14-04-2016
- Resolution 2722, 10-01-2024



## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

There have been several resolutions passed in the Security Council concerning this matter, but there have been no active attempts to resolve the humanitarian crisis other than other parties sending aid to Yemen and several temporary ceasefires. The United States, European Union and UNHCR are actively supporting the Yemeni civilians with food and clean drinking water, while also trying to aid rebuilding infrastructure. Other than that, there have been no attempts to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Yemen

Resolution 2722 urged the Houthis to stop their warfare in Yemen, but ultimately the Houthis didn't follow the resolution's request so they're continuing their active rampage on Yemeni land.

However, in the past there have been ceasefires between the Saudi Coalition and the Houthis to primarily focus on the development of the region and to attempt to take care of the humanitarian situation. But this wasn't an attempt to solve the issue, since the ceasefire wasn't intended to be permanent.

## Possible Solutions

Since this report focuses on the humanitarian crises, the possible solutions that follow will maintain the same focus.

### Diplomatic Engagement

Since a permanent ceasefire isn't a very likely solution, the Advisory Panel could encourage the Security Council into engaging with the Houthis in a diplomatic way. This could be done during a temporary ceasefire, which will be primarily focused on enhancing the living conditions of refugees and to send aid to Yemen without severe consequences. Urging Houthi diplomats to encourage their government to refrain from blocking food and water supplies would be a viable option, since it



would address one of the biggest problems in the conflict without unrealistic expectations to engage in a permanent ceasefire. This is the most safe option in solving this issue, since it wouldn't require a lot of military pressure and it would benefit both sides of the war. This could also help stabilise the regional economies more if Houthis would stop the blockade on the Suez Canal for ships specifically for sending food and water supplies.

### Education

One of the biggest problems in the Red Sea Crisis is education, since it causes a lack of physicians in crisis areas. Encouraging the funding of several educational institutions within Yemen or possible countries which host Yemeni refugees would increase awareness of the severity of the crisis, while also educating possible doctors, nurses and other medicinal staff. This would help to resolve the medicinal issue of the crisis, since there would be more physicians available to refugees. For people within Yemeni territory, the UN could fund educational movements within areas to help educate young Yemeni civilians.

### Maritime Security

Since the Houthis are blocking the Suez Canal and other ports in the Red Sea, there should be a bigger security presence in the region as a whole. This is to prevent further illegal weapon trading and to support ships who are currently giving aid to Yemen civilians, while also being under fire. This must be supported by both parties, since the primary goal is to ensure the safety of trading ships and supplies. If there's no agreement, there will be questions raised regarding the guarantee that the security measures aren't a way to give one side of the conflict the upper hand.

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