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Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention

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Summary

This report provides information on the ongoing crisis in Yemen. Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and members of a coalition it established have been engaged in military operations against an alliance composed of the Houthi movement and loyalists of the previous President, Ali Abdullah Saleh. In early December 2017, the Houthi-Saleh alliance unraveled, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4, 2017. The killing of Saleh and the end of his forces' alliance with the Houthis may have changed the dynamic of the war. In the coming months, it is possible that on-the-ground fighting may escalate, as the Saudi-led coalition and remnants of Saleh's allies join forces to isolate the Houthis.

Health facilities in Yemen reported 8,757 conflict-related deaths and over 50,000 injuries from the start of hostilities in March 2015 through October 2017. However, due to the high number of nonfunctional health facilities in Yemen as a result of the war, the United Nations estimates that the death toll in Yemen is significantly underreported. The actual number of casualties is likely much higher, with more than 2,200 Yemeni deaths associated with a cholera outbreak alone in 2017.

On November 4, 2017, the Houthis fired a ballistic missile into Saudi Arabia. In response, the Saudi-led coalition accused Iran of supplying more sophisticated missile technology to the Houthis, and said in a statement that the attack "could rise to be considered as an act of war" by Iran. The coalition then announced that it was temporarily closing all Yemeni ports, including the main commercial port of Hodeida, on November 6, 2017. Many humanitarian agencies decried the closing of all ports of entry into Yemen, asserting that the Saudi-led coalition was violating international law by using starvation as a weapon. The total closure of all Yemeni ports lasted until November 24, 2017, when the Saudi-led coalition announced that it would begin allowing humanitarian aid to resume entering Hodeida port. The Saudi-led coalition did lift its blockade on select humanitarian deliveries as of early December 2017, but it is unclear whether the coalition is permitting commercial goods to be imported.

The Trump Administration welcomed the coalition's actions while further stating, "We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need.... All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority. We remain committed to supporting Saudi Arabia and all our Gulf partners against the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' aggression and blatant violations of international law."

Since March 2015, the United States has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. In FY2017, the United States provided over \$635 million in humanitarian aid from multilateral accounts in response to Yemen's humanitarian crisis.

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Conflict Overview

In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and members of a coalition it established (hereinafter referred to as the Saudi-led coalition or the coalition) launched a military operation aimed at restoring the rule of Yemen's internationally recognized president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.¹ Prior to the start of hostilities, Hadi's government had been gradually supplanted by an alliance composed of the Iran-supported Houthi movement² and loyalists of the previous President, Ali Abdullah Saleh (hereinafter referred to as Houthi-Saleh forces). In early December 2017, the Houthi-Saleh alliance unraveled, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4, 2017.

Despite multiple attempts by the United Nations to broker a peace agreement, all sides have remained deadlocked, as battle lines had become static and the conflict itself stalemated.³ Saleh's death and the fraying of his forces' alliance with the Houthis may have changed the dynamic of the war. In the coming months, it is possible that on-the-ground fighting may escalate, as the Saudi-led coalition and remnants of Saleh's allies join forces to isolate the Houthis.

As of late November 2017, the United Nations had not revised a January 2017 death toll estimate of 10,000 people killed since the start of hostilities (March 2015). The actual number of casualties is likely much higher, with more than 2,200 Yemeni deaths from a 2017 cholera outbreak alone.

On November 6, 2017, after a Houthi missile strike on Saudi soil near King Khalid international airport in Riyadh, Saudi forces imposed a full closure of air and sea access to Yemen. The United Nations warned that total restrictions on aid deliveries could produce famine, especially in northern Yemen. The total blockade was partially lifted on November 24, and the White House responded, stating, "We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need. The magnitude of suffering in Yemen requires all parties to this conflict to focus on assistance to those in need. All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority."⁴

¹ The coalition includes Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Senegal. The Saudi-led coalition also relies on local Yemeni forces to carry out most ground operations. These allied units comprise a mix of Yemeni army units, tribal forces, Islamist militias, and southern separatists opposed to Houthi rule.

² The Houthi movement (also known as *Ansar Allah* or Partisans of God) is a predominantly Zaydi Shiite revivalist political and insurgent movement. Yemen's Zaydis take their name from their fifth Imam, Zayd ibn Ali, grandson of Husayn. Zayd revolted against the Umayyad Caliphate in 740, believing it to be corrupt, and to this day, Zaydis believe that their imam (ruler of the community) should be both a descendent of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad) and one who makes it his religious duty to rebel against unjust rulers and corruption. A Zaydi state (or Imamate) was founded in northern Yemen in 893 and lasted in various forms until the republican revolution of 1962. Yemen's modern imams kept their state in the Yemeni highlands in extreme isolation, as foreign visitors required the ruler's permission to enter the kingdom. Although Zaydism is an offshoot of Shia Islam, its legal traditions and religious practices are similar to Sunni Islam. Moreover, it is doctrinally distinct from "Twelver Shiism," the dominant branch of Shi'a Islam in Iran and Lebanon. The Houthi movement was formed in the northern Yemeni province of Sa'da in 2004 under the leadership of members of the Houthi family. It originally sought an end to what it viewed as efforts to marginalize Zaydi communities and beliefs, but its goals grew in scope and ambition in the wake of the 2011 uprising and government collapse to embrace a broader populist, antiestablishment message. Skeptics highlight the movement's ideological roots, its alleged cooperation with Iran, and the slogans prominently displayed on its banners: "God is great! Death to America! Death to Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory to Islam!"

³ "Deep in Yemen War, Saudi Fight against Iran Faltering," *Reuters*, November 9, 2017.

⁴ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement from the Press Secretary on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, November 24, 2017.

Figure I. Map of Yemen



Source: European Council on Foreign Relations, Mapping the Yemen Conflict.

Prelude to the War

Central governance in Yemen, embodied by the decades-long rule of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, began to unravel in 2011, when political unrest broke out throughout the Arab world. Popular youth protests in Yemen were gradually supplanted by political elites jockeying to replace then-President Saleh. Ultimately, infighting among various centers of Yemeni political power broke out in the capital, and government authority throughout the country eroded. Soon, militias associated with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula seized territory in one southern province.

Concerned that the political unrest and resulting security vacuum were strengthening terrorist elements, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other members of the international community attempted to broker a political compromise. A transition plan was brokered, and in 2012 former Vice President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi became president.

With the support of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Nations Security Council, President Hadi attempted to reform Yemen's political system. Throughout 2013, key players convened a National Dialogue Conference aimed at reaching broad national consensus on a new political order. However, in January 2014 it ended without agreement.

One antigovernment group in particular, the northern Yemeni Houthi movement, sought to use military force to reshape the political order. Within weeks of the National Dialogue Conference concluding, the Houthis launched a military offensive against various tribal allies of President Hadi. The Houthis were joined by the forces still loyal to former President Saleh, creating an alliance of convenience that was a formidable opponent to President Hadi and his allies.

In 2014, Houthi militants took over the capital and violated several power-sharing arrangements. In 2015, Houthi militants placed President Hadi under house arrest. Although he was able to escape to Aden in southern Yemen, his position became untenable, as Houthi forces advanced from the capital all the way to Aden. In March 2015, after President Hadi, who had fled to Saudi Arabia, appealed for international intervention, Saudi Arabia and a hastily assembled international coalition launched a military offensive aimed at restoring Hadi's rule and evicting Houthi fighters from the capital and other major cities.

The Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes in response to a specific request from President Hadi. In a letter to the heads of state of the Gulf Cooperation Council on March 24, 2017, President Hadi wrote: "I urge you, in accordance with the right of self-defence set forth in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and with the Charter of the League of Arab States and the Treaty on Joint Defence, to provide immediate support in every form and take the necessary measures, including military intervention, to protect Yemen and its people from the ongoing Houthi aggression, repel the attack that is expected at any moment on Aden and the other cities of the South, and help Yemen to confront Al-Qaida and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant."⁵

There are a number of reasons as to why Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen, not all of which are mutually exclusive. Some suggest that the Saudis launched military operations out of fear that Yemen, under Houthi-Saleh rule, would fall under Iranian influence.⁶ Others charge that Saudi fears of expanding Iranian regional influence are overblown and that the kingdom intervened to secure its southern border.⁷ Some reports suggest that the Saudis viewed this military campaign as an opportunity to burnish the credentials of the young and then-newly appointed Defense Minister (and now Crown Prince) Prince Mohammed bin Salman.⁸

Latest Developments

Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh Killed by Houthis

The Houthi-Saleh partnership, which had been under strain for months, ended abruptly in early December 2017, culminating in the killing of former President Saleh on December 4. The Houthi-Saleh split had been brewing since spring 2017, when rumors of secret talks between Saleh and

⁵ United Nations Security Council, S/2015/217, March 27, 2015.

⁶ "Yemen War Turns Two, *Al Monitor*, March 12, 2017.

⁷ "Yemen's Humanitarian Nightmare, The Real Roots of the Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2017.

⁸ "Rise of Saudi Prince Shatters Decades of Royal Tradition," *New York Times*, October 15, 2016.

the Saudi-led coalition began circulating. The Houthis publicly accused Saleh of treason in August 2017,⁹ leading to violent exchanges between Houthis and Saleh loyalists.

Intra-alliance fighting resumed in late November 2017 and, on December 2, 2017, Saleh gave a speech in which he called for the Saudi-led coalition to ease its blockade of Yemen, promising in return to “turn a new page by virtue of our neighborliness.”¹⁰ The Saudi-led coalition welcomed Saleh’s remarks, and even began conducting air strikes against Houthi positions around the capital Sana’a. In response, the Houthis moved against Saleh’s forces in the political district of the capital. On December 3, 2017, Saleh formally annulled his alliance with the Houthis. A day later, former President Saleh was killed while trying to escape the capital after days of violent confrontation between his loyalists and his former Houthi partners.

Saleh’s death and the end of the Houthi-Saleh partnership may change the Yemen war in numerous ways. In the short term, it could set back the Saudi-led coalition’s attempt to gain advantage in the conflict; it now faces a more ideologically determined enemy, who may be less willing to negotiate an immediate political settlement. According to one expert, “If Saudi Arabia wanted a negotiated exit, that opportunity seems lost for now.”¹¹ In the weeks and months ahead, it appears that the Houthis may attempt to consolidate control over geographic areas previously held by Saleh loyalists.

However, even if the Houthis succeed in consolidating control over most of northern Yemen, in the long term, their forces may be stretched thin, as it also appears that Saleh’s son, Ahmed Ali Saleh, who had been in the UAE (first as Yemen’s ambassador there and then under “house arrest”), may seek to return to Yemen and lead his father’s forces against the Houthis. Ahmed Ali has reportedly traveled from the UAE to Riyadh to lead a new ground offensive against the Houthis.¹² On December 5, Ahmed Ali was quoted on Saudi television stating, “I will lead the battle until the last Houthi is thrown out of Yemen.”¹³

The end of the Houthi-Saleh alliance also raises the possibility that the Saudi-led coalition may increase its efforts to capture key Yemeni cities, such as Taiz, Sana’a, and Hodeida. According to one analysis by *Jane’s*,

The collapse of the alliance is now presenting Saudi Arabia with an exit strategy from the Yemeni conflict as the coalition can now build a single front against the Houthi-dominated government in Sana’a by co-opting Saleh’s Republican Guards, Special Forces, and Sunni tribal militias who can attack the Houthis in the north, around Sana’a and in Taiz. Even if the Houthis are successful in defeating Saleh loyalists in Sana’a, they will not be able to prevent coalition-backed forces from surrounding the capital, or of resisting a prolonged siege. Although the increasing isolation of the Houthis might force the movement to sit down at a negotiating table, in the meantime the collapse of the alliance signifies a sudden escalation of the Yemen civil war.¹⁴

⁹ “Yemen war: Cracks emerge in Houthis-Saleh alliance,” *The National* (UAE), August 20, 2017.

¹⁰ “Yemen’s Saleh says ready for ‘new page’ with Saudi-led coalition,” *Reuters*, December 2, 2017.

¹¹ “Yemen’s Ex-President Killed as Mayhem Convulses Capital,” *New York Times*, December 4, 2017.

¹² “What’s Ahead for Yemen Now That Saleh’s Gone?” *Stratfor*, December 5, 2017.

¹³ “Son of Slain Yemen Leader Is Said to Vow Revenge,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2017.

¹⁴ “Yemen,” *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, December 4, 2017.

Houthi Missile Attack and Port Closure

Infighting between Houthi and Saleh forces was preceded by a weeks-long Saudi-led coalition closure of the main commercial port of Hodeida, which the coalition fully blockaded after the Houthis fired a ballistic missile deep into Saudi territory on November 4. While Saudi Arabia claims to have intercepted the missile using U.S.-supplied Patriot missile batteries, according to one account, “the missile’s warhead flew unimpeded over Saudi defenses and nearly hit its target, Riyadh’s airport [King Khalid International Airport].”¹⁵ In response to the missile attack, the coalition then announced that it was temporarily closing all Yemeni ports, including the main commercial port of Hodeida, on November 6, 2017. A week later, the Saudi-led coalition did permit ports in allied government-controlled territory to open (Aden), though all northern Yemeni ports remained closed.

It is unclear what, if any, negative political or economic effects the blockade placed on Houthi-Saleh forces, but humanitarian officials and advocates warned of the blockade’s effects on Yemeni citizens. In the days and weeks following the November 4 closure, food and fuel supplied in northern Yemen dwindled, and gas and water prices skyrocketed, leading international aid agencies to warn of impending famine. On November 20, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (Fews Net) issued an alert, warning that “if all ports remain closed, or re-open but are unable to support large-scale imports of essential goods, Famine is likely in many areas of the country within three to four months. In less accessible areas with the most severe current food insecurity, Famine could emerge even more quickly.”¹⁶ During the blockade, aid agencies announced that five cities had run out of clean water (Sa’ada, Taiz, Hodeida, Sana’a and al Bayda).¹⁷ Humanitarian agencies decried the closures, asserting that the Saudi-led coalition was violating international law by using starvation as a weapon.¹⁸ However, the Saudi-led coalition claimed that it was acting legally, citing Paragraph 14 of UNSCR 2216 (see below), which calls on states to take measures to prevent the supply of military goods to the Houthis.¹⁹

The total closure of all Yemeni ports lasted until November 24, 2017, when the Saudi-led coalition announced that it would begin allowing humanitarian aid to resume entering Hodeida port. The White House responded by issuing a press statement welcoming the coalition’s actions while further stating, “We look forward to additional steps that will facilitate the unfettered flow of humanitarian and commercial goods from all ports of entry to the points of need.... All sides must support a political process with facilitating humanitarian relief as the top priority. We remain committed to supporting Saudi Arabia and all our Gulf partners against the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ aggression and blatant violations of international law.”²⁰ However, while the Saudi-led coalition lifted its blockade on select humanitarian deliveries, as of early December 2017, it is unclear whether the coalition is permitting commercial goods to be

¹⁵ “Did American Missile Defense Fail in Saudi Arabia?” *New York Times*, December 4, 2017.

¹⁶ “Alert: Famine (IPC Phase 5) likely in Yemen if Key Ports remain Closed,” The Famine Early Warning Systems Network, November 20, 2017.

¹⁷ “1-2.5 million Yemenis now lack access to clean water - Red Cross,” *Reuters*, November 21, 2017.

¹⁸ “Saudi Claims to Ease Yemen Blockade a Cruel Fiction,” Human Rights Watch, November 13, 2017.

¹⁹ “Confidential U.N. Document Questions the Saudi Arabian Blockade that’s Starving Yemen,” *The Intercept*, November 16, 2017.

²⁰ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement from the Press Secretary on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, November 24, 2017.

imported.²¹ The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has called for the urgent resumption of all commercial imports.

On December 6, 2017, President Trump issued a statement calling on Saudi Arabia to “completely allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it. This must be done for humanitarian reasons immediately.”²² A day earlier, USAID Administrator Mark Green stated that “all parties must enable the unfettered and increased flow of commercial goods and fuel from all ports of entry to reach nearly 21 million people in need.”²³

Alleged Iranian Supply of Missiles to the Houthis

The degree of Iran’s military role in Yemen has long been a subject of much debate. Iran has been caught on multiple occasions attempting to smuggle weapons to the Houthis.²⁴ In repeated public statements by high level Saudi officials, Saudi Arabia has cited Iran’s illicit support for the Houthis as proof that Iran is to blame for the Yemen conflict. Iranian support to the Houthis provides the clerical regime with a relatively low-cost way of countering Saudi influence in Yemen. Saudi officials frequently justify their intervention in Yemen as a defensive action in order to prevent Yemen from being taken over by the Houthis.

Recent Houthi missile launches against Saudi Arabia and the UAE have once again raised questions over possible Iranian direct supply of armaments or missile technology know-how to the Houthis. After the November 4 missile attack against King Khalid International Airport in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi-led coalition released photographs of what it said were remnants of an Iranian Qiam missile that had been launched from northern Yemen, an accusation reiterated by U.S. officials.²⁵ On November 24, 2017, the U.N. Panel of Experts supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee released an update of their assessment of the attack, concluding that the missile debris from the November 4 attack was consistent with Iranian-designed and manufactured missiles.²⁶

The Saudi-led coalition accuses Iran of supplying more sophisticated missile technology to the Houthis, and said in a statement that the November attack “could rise to be considered as an act of war” by Iran.²⁷ The White House issued a statement following the November missile strike condemning Iran and standing with “Saudi Arabia and all our Gulf partners against the Iranian regime’s aggression and blatant violations of international law. These missile systems were not present in Yemen before the conflict, and we call upon the United Nations to conduct a thorough examination of evidence that the Iranian regime is perpetuating the war in Yemen to advance its regional ambitions.”²⁸ On December 2, the Houthis claimed to have fired a missile at a nuclear power plant (al Barakah nuclear power plant) under construction in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE denied that a missile had been fired at their territory.²⁹ In a Houthi video depicting the missile launch, experts suggest that the missile depicted in the video resembles Iran’s Soumar cruise missile, which is based on the Soviet-era KH-55, which Iran obtained from the Ukraine.³⁰ Yemenis could have acquired the Soumar either on the black market or directly from Iran.

²¹ “Yemenis fear Starving to Death as Saudi Siege Bites,” *Middle East Eye*, November 30, 2017.

²² The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Yemen, December 6, 2017.

²³ USAID, Office of Press Relations, Statement from USAID Administrator Mark Green on Yemen, December 5, 2017.

²⁴ See “Maritime Interdictions of Weapon Supplies to Somalia and Yemen: Deciphering a Link to Iran,” *Conflict Armament Research*, November 2016.

²⁵ “U.S. Air Force Official: Missile Targeting Saudis Was Iranian,” *Associated Press*, November 10, 2017.

²⁶ “Yemen: Briefing and Consultations,” *What’s in Blue*, December 4, 2017.

²⁷ “Yemen: Humanitarian Briefing in Consultations,” *What’s in Blue*, November 7, 2017.

²⁸ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, White House Statement on Iranian-Supported Missile Attacks Against Saudi Arabia, November 08, 2017.

²⁹ “U.A.E. Denies Yemen Rebels Fired Missile at Abu Dhabi Nuclear Plant,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2017.

³⁰ “Yemeni Rebels claim Cruise Missile Attack on UAE,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, December 4, 2017.

Yemen at the United Nations

As the war in Yemen approaches its fourth year, it has steadily evolved from a contest between competing local elites to a complex conflict involving a combination of Yemeni and foreign forces waging war in an increasingly fragmented landscape. While the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya seem to have garnered more media attention than Yemen, the Yemen war has been a major focus of various United Nations entities and deliberative bodies since the Saudi coalition's intervention in March 2015.

From the start of hostilities, Saudi Arabia was able to secure the support of the United Nations Security Council, a key development in providing the Saudi-led coalition with international approval for its intervention. On April 14, 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2216, which imposed sanctions on individuals undermining the stability of Yemen and authorized an arms embargo against the Houthi-Saleh forces. It also demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all areas seized during the current conflict, relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions, cease all actions falling exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen, and fully implement previous council resolutions.

One of the key aspects of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2216 is that it authorizes member states to prevent the transfer or sale of arms to the Houthis or to former President Saleh and also allows Yemen's neighbors to inspect cargo suspected of carrying arms to Houthi fighters. To implement this authority in UNSCR 2216, some member states (the European Union, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States) formed the U.N. Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), a U.N.-led operation designed to inspect incoming sea cargo to Yemen for illicit weapons. UNVIM can inspect cargo, while also ensuring that humanitarian aid is delivered in a timely manner.

Beyond the Security Council, the U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed is one of the primary officials responsible for trying to broker a political settlement to the conflict. On humanitarian side, Mark Lowcock is the current head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA categorizes Yemen as one of the most complex of humanitarian emergencies worldwide. Recent notable U.N. activities include the following:

- In October 2017, the United Nations Secretary General released its 2016 report on children and armed conflict. The report noted that a total of at least 1,340 children were killed or maimed in the Yemen conflict in 2016.³¹
- In September 2017, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that, among other things, condemned ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen. It required that the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights establish a group of experts to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen. Some members of the council had called for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry, which was not adopted.³²

³¹ United Nations, Promotion and protection of the rights of children: Children and armed conflict, A/72/361–S/2017/821, August 24, 2017.

³² “In a Compromise, U.N. Rights Experts Will Examine Abuses in Yemen's War,” *New York Times*, September 29, 2017

- In June 2017, the Security Council issued a presidential statement on Yemen that, among other things, called on all parties to engage in peace negotiations, comply with international humanitarian law, and allow access for humanitarian supplies. The statement also sought an increase in commercial and humanitarian shipments through the main northern port of Hodeida.³³
- In April 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland, the United Nations sponsored an international donors' conference to secure \$2.1 billion in funds to meet the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. At the conference, donors pledged \$1.1 billion.

Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis and U.S. Response

Yemen is consistently described as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. According to UN OCHA, out of a total population estimated at 29 million, 22.2 million Yemenis are in need of assistance and 11.3 million are in acute need. The United Nations often describes Yemen as "the world's largest man-made food security crisis."³⁴ Whereas food is available in markets across the country, the war has hampered distribution networks and 1.25 million public employees have gone nearly a year without receiving salaries, which has contributed to a liquidity crisis in the banking sector. Aid agencies estimate that 17.8 million people are now food insecure.

With millions of Yemenis lacking access to basic health care and clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, the country is experiencing the world's largest ongoing cholera outbreak. As of November 5, 2017, more than 900,000 suspected cholera cases and 2,200 associated Yemeni deaths were reported.

Hodeida Port and Humanitarian Access

The surrounding maritime space around Hodeida port remains under the control of the Saudi-led coalition, and even before its total closure on November 4, humanitarian access was challenging, as ships often have to undergo a clearance process involving inspections from both UNVIM and Saudi-led coalition forces. Hodeida port has been damaged, and there are a lack of berthing spaces and staffing shortages. Electricity availability also is sporadic. Shipping insurance costs also are higher for carriers destined for Hodeida. However, many international aid organizations would prefer to use Hodeida port, as shipping through Aden adds additional costs owing to the movement of aid overland through the current battle lines of control. In 2016, the United States took steps to repair the port of Hodeida by providing the World Food Program with funds to purchase four cranes to replace those damaged in previous Saudi-led coalition airstrikes. However, the cranes have not been delivered to Yemen and are being stored in Dubai. According to one account, the World Food Program received permission from the Saudi-led coalition to deliver the cranes to Hodeida in early 2017, but permission was eventually revoked due to concern over ongoing military operations in the area.³⁵

Since March 2015, the United States has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. Funds were provided to international aid organizations from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), USAID's Food for Peace (FFP), and the U.S. Department of State's

³³ United Nations Security Council, Security Council Issues Presidential Statement Calling on Parties in Yemen to Engage Constructively in Good-Faith Effort for Conflict Resolution, 7974th Meeting, SC/12873, June 15, 2017.

³⁴ UN OCHA, Yemen: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017.

³⁵ "U.S. Plan to help Yemenis obtain Humanitarian Aid Falts, amid Growing Food Crisis," *Washington Post*, March 15, 2017.

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM). Overall, the United Nations Yemen 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan is 57% funded with \$1.3 billion funded of the \$2.3 billion requested.

Table I. U.S. Humanitarian Response to the Complex Crisis in Yemen

(in millions of dollars)

Account	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
IDA (USAID/OFDA)	19.946	45.087	61.819	49.858	76.844	81.528	227.996
FFP (USAID/FFP)	20.013	54.803	50.208	55.000	56.672	196.988	369.629
MRA (State/PRM)	22.500	19.738	18.886	8.900	45.300	48.950	38.125
Total	62.459	119.628	130.913	113.758	178.816	327.466	635.750

Source: Yemen, Complex Emergency—USAID Factsheets.

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