

The Ursuline School Model United Nations Conference

Yemen Crisis

Background Guide

Meet Crisis

Dear Delegates,

Welcome delegates to TUSMUNC III's Yemen committee! We are so excited to have all of you, even under these strange circumstances with the Coronavirus and social distancing. Everyone on Ursuline's Model UN team has worked for hours tirelessly to make sure that this conference, though completely online, will not lack any of our normal MUN excitement and experiences.

My name is Morgan Adamson and I am a sophomore at Ursuline. Some returning delegates might know me from TUSMUNC II, when I was working in the Thomas Sankara committee. This is my second year on Ursuline's Model UN team and I have learned countless skills here, such as public speaking, debating, how to research properly, and gaining more confidence. I hope that you, too, can learn and enhance these skills during our conference. When I'm not doing Model UN activities, I am writing newspaper articles for the school paper *Unison*, acting in Ursuline's play and musicals, helping in Ursulines Athletic club, leading my local youth group, *Challenge*, playing with my golden retriever Bella, or watching *The 100*.

This committee is based on real events that are happening in our world as we speak: the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Between wars, political instability, famine, and much more, Yemen has been deemed one of the worst humanitarian crises, and your job during this committee is to try your best to solve it. This background guide provides baseline information that is necessary for this committee, so I hope you read this over thoroughly, but also recommend that you do your own research. I can't wait to "see" all of you resolve this problem via zoom and

hope you all have a fun, educational, and exciting time during our committee. Please feel free to reach out if you have any further questions!

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Dear Delegates,

I am so glad to welcome you to The Ursuline School's third annual TUSMUNC! I wish we could all see each other in person, but unfortunately, as the George Orwell saying goes, "The best laid plans of mice and men do often go awry." Nevertheless, I am positive that you're all going to have a ton of fun!

My name is Madeline Donovan, and I am a sophomore here at Ursuline, and this is my second year in Model UN. I joined last year because of how much fun I had at our practice conference and because I wanted to enhance my public-speaking abilities. I have met so many amazing people, and being a member of MUN has definitely been an extremely rewarding experience. In addition to MUN, I am a member of TUS's Honors Choir, the school newspaper *The Unison*, and the Diversity Alliance Club, and I have been a dancer outside of school for a little over nine years! I have a Jack Russell mix named Rhett who loves treats and meeting new people.

I cannot wait to see how you all work together to solve this upsetting crisis. I encourage you to read the background guide and to conduct a bit of your own research to further your knowledge of this present-day issue, and I look forward to seeing how you execute that

knowledge to help the suffering Yemini population. I am confident that TUSMUNC III will be an amazingly educational, exciting, and fun experience for everyone, despite our ever-changing world.

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Background

Nestled in the crux of the Middle East, sweeping the Gulf of Aden and the coast of the Arabian Sea, lies a country known by many names. *Hamavaran—Arabia Felix—Yamnat*—these all tell the story of Yemen, the focus of this committee. The rich history of Yemen involves trade relationships, religious movements, valued resources, and a unique and treasured personality. It's a central location in the foundation of Islam. It's seen entire empires rise and fall—and now is crumbling as its former friends and allies stand by, look the other way, even aid in its destruction. And now, delegates, its future lies in your hands.

The conflict today centers around the nation's system of government. Its structure is similar to America's bicameral legislature, meaning there are two different departments of lawmakers, like our Senate and House of Representatives: they are called the Shura Council and the Assembly of Representatives. The Shura Council's members are all appointed by the President and focus on advising his decisions; the Assembly holds all of the legislative power and have not had an election since 2003. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, first known as President of North Yemen since 1978, was ousted in 2011 following unrest at his decades-long rule. This coincided with the series of uprisings known as the Arab Spring, in which other Middle Eastern countries such as Libya and Egypt saw citizens voice their anger at the low quality of life and government censorship.

Rebellion in Yemen specifically at this time was led by a group known as the Houthi rebels, named so for the Houthi tribe of origin. They are officially named Ansar Allah, which means "Supporters of G-d" in Arabic. Houthis oppose the governments of Saudi Arabia, the United States and Israel. Since those countries have invested wealth and manpower in Yemen's

role as an oil supplier, they want the government to return to normal, which is basically the antithesis of the Houthis' goals. The Houthis cite Yemeni nationalism and their shared Zaidi faith as their driving purpose.

Crisis: Human Rights

Yemen is currently experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with 24 million people - 80% of its overall population - in need of major assistance. Of course, the challenge presented by this is further complicated when one examines all the different types of aid required by different segments of the population. Arguably the most pressing among these needed forms of aid is access to food. Roughly 12 million people - constituting 40% of Yemen's overall population - are on the brink of starvation. The rate of child malnutrition is one of the highest in the world; the average Yemeni family includes six children, and parents struggle to feed that many. The notoriety of Yemeni children's treatment is well documented: one may be familiar with viral photos of an emaciated seven-year-old circulated in 2018, displaying the perils of war in the Middle East and international apathy. The majority of these people reside in Houthi-controlled areas, where the World Food Program (WFP) is being denied access to those in need. The Houthis oppose WFP assistance because they view international aid as the work of conspiratory spies and suspect nutritional packages to contain weaponry or pro-West propaganda. The UN nearly withdrew aid due to the rebels continually attacking and tracking food shipments. The United Nations reported that at least 11,205 people have been left injured and 7,070 killed since conflict began, proceeding the oust of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Another form of aid needed in Yemen that requires immediate attention is access to clean water and sanitation supplies. This has been an issue throughout most of the war, but the need has been heightened with the recent coronavirus pandemic.

Also affected by these recent events has been children's access to education. As schools have not been accessible, roughly 7.8 million children have been left without the ability to gain

an education. They have public schools, and the schools provide free meals to impoverished families, but only around half of Yemeni girls receive an education and two-thirds of Yemeni women are illiterate. Not being able to read Arabic means women also suffer from a lack of job opportunity, legal knowledge, and government positions. Schools range from basic to secondary to college education; basic education is free to all Yemeni children of 6-14 years. Before the 1960s, education was almost entirely based around boys' religious learning and all schools were connected to mosques; only around 5% of the population could attend the wealthier, more socially acceptable schools. Secular, or non-religious, schools began to gain traction in the 1970s and 80s following the overthrow of Imam Ahmad and introduced specific studies such as medicinal sciences. Even before coronavirus, classrooms barely had enough room for students to sit; with new safety protocols regarding social distancing, the lack of space makes it even more dangerous to attend school. Water's scarcity is even more pronounced and means many children cannot properly wash their hands or sanitize. Hunger, too, makes learning difficult: no food means no concentration or energy to work. Putting starvation and the coronavirus together has only made the situation worse, for it is possible tens of thousands of children will develop life-threatening acute malnutrition over the upcoming months.

Crisis: Anarchy

Yemen's government is going through a time of major political instability. This problem is largely due to the Houthis who were originally a youth oriented pro-Zaidism, a traditional sect of Shia Islam, revivalist movement formed in the 1990's. The Houthi's began to be more powerful in the 2000's and more driven to defend themselves and allies from President Ali Abdullah Saleh, primarily in the northern governorate of Saada. During the 2011 Arab Spring, the group was very openly for the protest of Saleh and once Hadi's interim government started to stall, they began to attack Northern Yemen, leading to their takeover of Sanaa in 2014. Ever since the Houthi rebels overtook Sanaa, there has been a continuing war in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE,) and the Yemeni government against the Houthi. Modern day Houthi's are mainly financially supported by Iran, who is using this as a proxy war to indirectly attack Saudi Arabia, who is a supporter of current "President" Hadi.

Before Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi's presidency, Hadi was the field marshal of the Yemeni Armed Forces. Shortly after Ali Abdullah Saleh was removed from power, Hadi was instituted for what was supposed to be a two year transitional period. This period was then extended another year, but once the now three year period had elapsed, according to SABA (a pro-Houthi news organization), Hadi refused to relinquish power. Soon after, on the 22nd of January 2015, he was forced to resign and put on house arrest during the Houthi takeover, though later on he rescinded his resignation and fled. Currently, Hadi and his regime are being supported mainly by Saudi Arabia, and though Hadi is internationally recognized as President, nationally he does hold any true power and is not even currently in the country. Saudi Arabia has shown

their support to the President by protecting him in their country, funding the ongoing war, and by sending several attacks against his enemy, the Houthis.

These constant and continuous attacks from both sides have left the Yemeni people without any faith in the central government or hope in the Houthi and Yemeni government negotiating, as almost all past ones have failed. Some of the most notable attempts were during September 2019, after the Houthis attacked one of the largest oil installations in Saudi Arabia, the 2015 ceasefires, which broke after four days, to provide humanitarian aid and the 2020 ceasefires due to COVID-19. These peace talks and ceasefires were not fully followed or eventually broken due to the amount of instability, violence, and difference in ideals between these groups. The Houthi rebels wish for “government accountability and the end of corruption and the end of western influence,” while both Saudi Arabia and the UAE want the Yemeni government, especially Hadi, to have full power of Yemen again. Both of these opposing sides are willing to do almost anything to retain power and reach their goal, even force children to fight, use missiles to attack their enemy close to large cities with many innocent civilians, and debatably commit war crimes. As of 2018, over 1,000 Yemeni children have been forced to fight in this continuous war. This war seems to be everlasting to the Yemeni, and has caused so much death and destruction, if the war continues at this rate the next casualty will be Yemen itself.

Questions to Consider

1. How can your position's powers impact the crises the most? Do you have wealth, a military, grassroots support, loyal followers? Which connections do you have to other leaders/countries?
2. What is your position's relationship to the Houthis - do you care more about the Yemeni people's welfare, do you care more about disintegrating all rebel groups, do you care more about instituting your own rule in Yemen?
3. How can your unique perspective mold the outcome of this committee? What does your specific position have that others do not?
4. How will you provide economic security and a safety net for Yemenis? Even if you can dismantle the Houthis, how will you return prosperity to the people?
5. Depending on your position's views, would you prefer to gain the trust of the Yemeni people, or would you rather intimidate them? What will be the international repercussions of this?

Positions

Khalifa bin Zayed

President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Richest head of state in the world.

Suffered a stroke in 2014 and has decreased his power over the nation and given more to his half brother, Mohammed. He holds assets in Seychelles, Great Britain, and the United States, and gets most of his wealth from the oil trade, as president of the Supreme Petroleum Council.

Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ)

Half brother to Khalifa. Has taken more control over the UAE as of late due to his brother's deteriorating health. Spent his youth in the military and has amassed an impressive amount of foreign diplomacy; he regards world powers like the US and Russia to be his greatest allies. Promotes theocracies based on Islam, i.e. Saudi Arabia, and is responsible for much of the UAE's world-famous tourism and education industries. Has been called a champion of women's rights--however, an investigation was filed against him by the French magistrate, for Yemeni people accusing him of torture and human rights abuses.

Ali Mohsen

General in the Yemeni Army. Created the nationalist political party General People's Congress (GPC). Once worked with Ali Abdullah Saleh, but holds more radical beliefs from the Salafi movement. Rumored to have supported the terrorist organizations that would eventually merge into present-day al-Qaeda. Appointed as Vice President of Yemen by Hadi in 2016. Engages in peace talks with the US, UK, and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Prince Mohammed bin Salman

Crown Prince and de facto leader of Saudi Arabia. Colloquially referenced as “MBS.” Brought Saudi Arabia to the forefront of conflict in Yemen by launching attacks against the Houthis who captured Sanaa in 2015. Won some favor in the Western hemisphere for certain progressive actions, including lifting a ban against women driving. Often credited with instigating the divides that have torn apart the GCC. Plans to cut economic dependence on oil.

Faisal bin Farhan

Minister of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia. Assumed current position after his predecessor was brutally murdered in 2018, reportedly by rogue government agents. Has defended the incarceration of various women’s rights activists, citing charges of severe crimes. Stated publicly, despite refutation, that Saudi violence against Yemeni rebels never aims to target civilians. Blames Iran for drawing out violence in Yemen.

Aidarus al-Zoubaidi

De facto leader of Yemeni separatist movement al-Hirak. Dismissed by Hadi in 2017. Announced self-rule in Aden, a port city in Yemen; this angered the Yemeni government and Saudi forces launched an airstrike in retaliation. He feels that Southern Yemen has been neglected for too long and should gain independence from all other Arab influences--the Houthis, Saudis, Yemeni government, everyone.

Sadeq Ameen Abu Rass

Chairperson of Yemen's GPC. Former agriculture minister. Holds an extremely anti-Saudi perspective and will never concede or agree to any Saudi terms.

Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh

Houthi military official. Son of Ali Abdullah Saleh, former president of Yemen. Held the position of commander of the Republic Guard under his father's rule. Has been known to facilitate arms deals in favor of Houthi forces.

Haitham bin Tariq

Sultan of Oman. Assumed power in early 2020 following the death of his predecessor, who had ruled for fifty years. Faces immense loan debts to China. Recently established a Cyber Defense Center within the national government. Is engaged in treaties that allow the navies of the U.S., U.K., and India to dock in its ports.

Tariq Afash

Nephew of Ahmed Saleh. Began his own faction of the GPC which is pro-Saudi, pro-UAE, and commands his own private army.

Martin Griffiths

British diplomat, currently serving as the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen at the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen since February of 2018.

Dominic Raab

British First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs. Decided to not end a relationship with Saudi Arabia after the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Ali Khamenei

Supreme Leader of Iran. Longest serving head of state in the Middle East. Condemned Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Approved a nuclear arms agreement between Iran and the UN Security Council in 2015. He has survived an assassination attempt and is currently 81 years old; following the 2020 killing of Irani general and presumed second-in-command Qassim Soleimani, Khamenei threatened the US with revenge, and a possible nuclear war loomed throughout January.

Abdullah II

King of Jordan. Served in the armed forces of Great Britain and Jordan. Supported U.S. retaliation against Iraq after 9/11 and has since allowed the U.S. to maintain army bases within the borders of Jordan (to the dismay of its citizens). Has become heavily burdened by large influxes of refugees in the past decade.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan

President of Turkey. He regularly incites controversy with his input in each European or West Asian country's every action--he thrives in debates and takes every chance to suppress any dissenting opinion in Turkey. Election fraud is highly suspected by the US. He's made enemies out of the Kurdish people, Armenians, and now Saudi Arabia for their involvement in Yemen. Erdogan aims to restore the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the Middle East and take over the Saudi influence on Yemen.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad

Emir of Qatar. Assumed authority after his father abdicated in 2013. Has shown firm support for the growth of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf Region, provoking such neighbors as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain into an embargo against Qatar. Replaced various close staff members in early 2020 in an effort to emphasize merit and experience in government advisory.

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo

President of Somalia, one of the world's poorest and least-stable territories. Began living full-time in the US in 1988 after applying for asylum while working in Washington DC as secretary at the Somali embassy. Elected as president in ___ on an anti-corruption platform, which is rumored to have been tainted with bribery. Has outwardly condemned terrorism and hopes to work with the US in combatting it. Established a goal of bringing democratic governance and values to Somalia. Became overwhelmed by the waves of Yemeni refugees that

started flooding Somalia in 2014 and has sought resources from the international community to sustain humanitarian efforts to support refugees.

Portfolio powers will be given the day of the conference. Make sure to study your position carefully, know who your allies are, and feel free to email the chairs for any questions. Position papers are strongly advised, as delegates will not be eligible for awards without them. Please submit position papers to tusmunc@ursulinenewrochelle.org.

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