

**Forum:** Security Council  
**Issue:** The civil war in Yemen  
**Student Officer:** Sofia Kopsacheili  
**Position:** President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Sofia Kopsacheili and I feel really honored to have been appointed President in the Security Council. I've also attended the 6<sup>th</sup> conference of PS MUN as a Deputy President in the Security Council and 5<sup>th</sup> one as a Deputy President in the ECOSOC and since these were my most thrilling MUN experiences I am really looking forward to this one.

I am a student of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the German School of Athens and the reason I feel challenged by this upcoming attendance to the conference, is because I believe that this is the time to expand our views, our knowledge. If not now, then when? So, I strongly think that in this particular committee we all have a lot to win, learn, take, but also give.

As your President, I am here to help you through your preparation for the conference and also to guide you through the conference. I hope that my first task is completed with this study guide and it provides you the maximum help it should provide you with. But you should not base your preparation only on this study guide, because you get more general information about the topic and it does not focus on your country's policy. Additionally, new incidents concerning this topic may happen at any moment and you should be informed about them. That is your task to fulfill with your research, through which you can always use the web pages (the links are in the Bibliography) I've used through mine. I am always open to answer any questions you may have, in order to achieve the better possible preparation for the conference.

I am really looking forward to meet with all of you in the conference,

Best Regards,

Sofia Kopsacheili

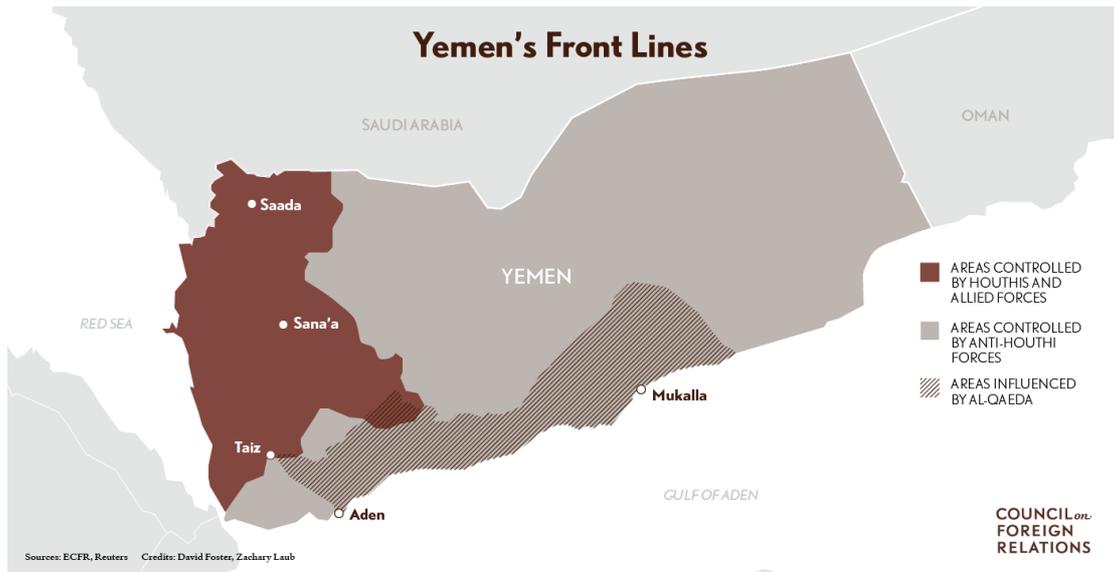
## INTRODUCING TOPIC

The civil war in Yemen is one of the most crucial political conflicts in the Middle East. The country experiences one of the biggest conflicts in decades, since the Iran-fed movement, the Houthis, overthrew Yemenis government. The consequences of this conflict are devastating, since they expand in both humanitarian and political level. The war theoretically started in 2014, when the Houthis tried to seize power, but in reality long-lasting conflicts and divisions in the nation have come up to this.

The situation is really complicated in the area. The one of the two main sides in the conflict are the Houthis. The Houthis are a Shia representative group, what has been active for decades. Their original goal and purpose is to support and protect the Shias in Yemen, because of their belief that they have been marginalized and attacked throughout the history. They have started being intensively politically active, since the Arab Spring that almost all Middle East countries experienced, because of the government reformation that took place at the time. They have always kept a revolutionary position against the government, mainly against the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who gave up office in 2011. So during the political transition from President Saleh to his former deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, the Houthis invaded Sanaa, the capital of the country and took control over it.

They are now fighting against the dissolved government of President Hadi that is trying to take control over the country again. However, it is obvious that this are not the only forces involved in the dispute. As mentioned above, the Houthis have the support of Iran that has repeatedly provided them with weapons, while Saudi Arabia, USA and partially France and UK support the efforts of President Hadi to get back to office. In the meantime the former President Saleh still command some military forces in Yemen and the General Peoples' Congress (GPC) and his "alliance" with the Houthis is based on the opposition against the government of Hadi. However this is not the only challenge Yemen is called to face. Al-Qaeda found the ideal opportunity during the conflict to spread in the South of the country and gain control over it. So the question is how can Yemen overcome the dispute with three open battlefields against the Houthis, al-Qaeda and of course ISIS?

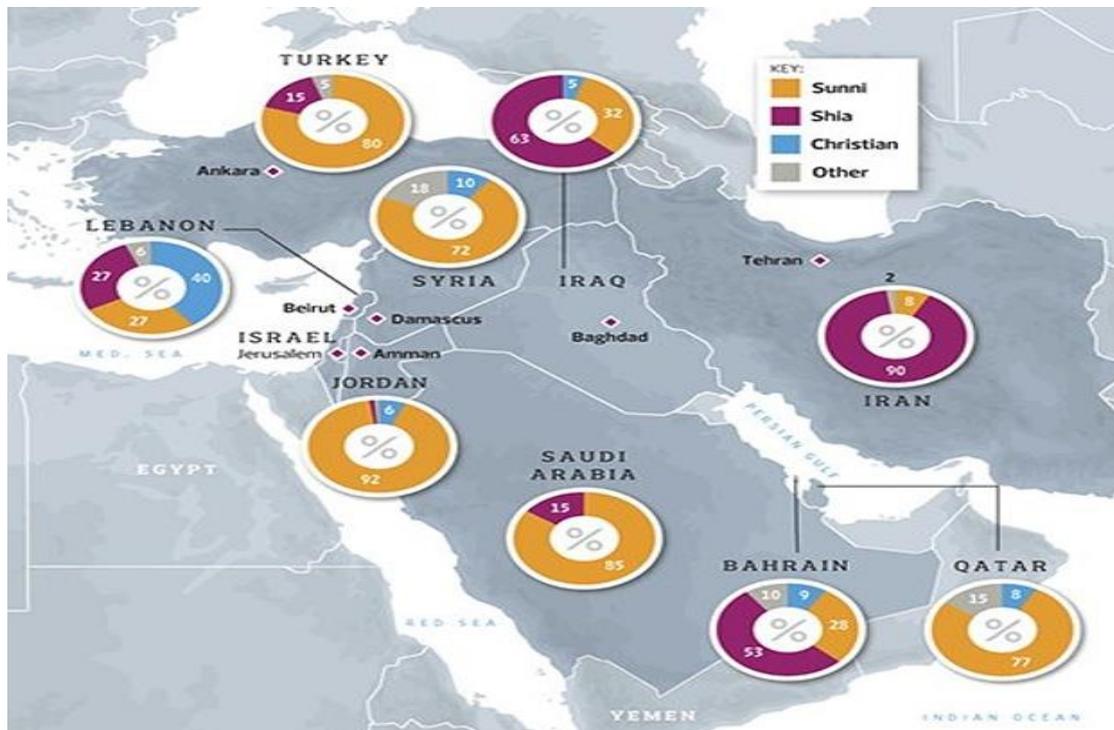
Despite the Security Council resolution concerning the topic and the efforts of the United Nations to bring President Hadi and the Houthis around the table the terror continues. However, it is not unique, is it? A country trying to influence another country through a terrorist group, in order to stop the third one from taking it on its side... Why does it sound so familiar? Maybe because of Afghanistan, of Bahrain and so many other countries in the Middle East. So how can we still wonder why a widespread terror matters to the rest of the world?



## KEY TERMS

### SHIA and SUNNI

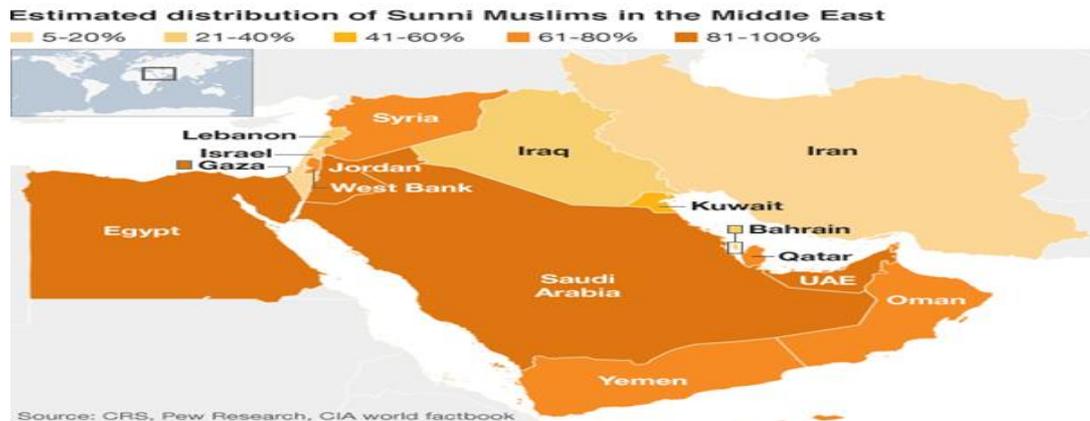
Shia and Sunni are the two sects of Islam, as the orthodox and the catholic one of Christianity. They have many common beliefs and practices, but they differ in doctrine, ritual, law, theology and religious organization.



### Sunni

Sunnis regard themselves as the orthodox branch of Islam. The name "Sunni" is derived from the phrase "Ahl al-Sunnah", or "People of the Tradition". The tradition in

this case refers to practices based on what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, agreed to or condemned. All Muslims are guided by the Sunnah, but Sunnis stresses its primacy. Shia is also guided by the wisdom of Muhammad's descendants through his son-in-law and cousin, Ali. They also compose the 56% of the world in the Middle East.



### Shia

In early Islamic history, the Shia was a movement - literally "Shiat Ali" or the "Party of Ali". They claimed that Ali was the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad as leader (imam) of the Muslim community following his death in 632.



\* <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>

### Geneva Convention

The Geneva Convention concerns the protection of civilians during times of war. It covers all aspects of humanitarian issues during a war, including the sick and wounded soldiers, prisoners of war and the civilians even in occupied territories.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

To begin with, it is important to understand what kind of movement the Houthis are. They first appeared in the 1980s in order to protect Zaydi religious traditions, which are a part of Shia Islam. Zaydis have been politically excluded and marginalized in the society. The time when they became politically active was under the leadership of Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi during the invasion of US in Iraq in 2003. President Saleh seemed to support the invasion and since al-Houthis resistance was inconvenient for him he prosecuted him and that led to continuous armed conflicts between the supporters of the two. That led alter to the Houthis standing against President Saleh during the uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011.

During the same year President Saleh gets injured by a drone and therefore agrees to have his deputy Hadi take over his position. This action caused protests by the people who were opposed to the current government and many members of the government have faced assassination efforts. Because of that the United Nations tried to intervene and bring all of the groups, both the government and the opposition, as well as the Houthis, in order to agree upon the new constitution. The decision of the government was to separate Yemen in six regions in the terms of a political transition. However after some other incidents President Hadi increased the fuel price causing many protests, where the Houthis were involved of course.

After many other armed conflicts the Houthis took over the capital Sanaa and seized power over the region. Of course the government did many efforts to come to a compromise by creating many draft constitutions, but the Houthis rejected them all. While President Hadi fled to the South in order to be able to “rebuild” his government the Houthis appointed a council to take over his position. Sadly these were not the only conflicts Yemen has faced. In March the Islamic State attacks Yemen by causing the death of hundreds of people, spreading the terror.

In the meantime the Houthis started attacking the southern part of the country, where Hadi has fled there causing him to flee to Saudi Arabia and at the same time the forces of Saudi Arabia launched air strikes against the Houthis by causing many casualties. Because of the unstable situation al-Qaeda spread throughout the country. However in 2015 the leader of al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula gets killed during an air-strike in Yemen. After a while President Hadi returns to the country after the Soudi Arabian forces recaptured a part of the city. In 2016 the United Nations made an effort once again to bring President Hadi and the Houthis around the table, which eventually was not a constructive talk. The situation now in Yemen is really unstable making it hard to understand who is in power.

However the Houthis have achieved something the government has not: many defeats of the AQAP. Because of that the AQAP tries to present the conflict as a Sunni-Shia conflict, although it has never been very intense in Yemen. The reason for that is the power the Houthis are gaining and the threat that they may manage to defeat the AQAP. Therefore al-Qaeda experiences a form of recruitment in some areas, where the

Houthis are not perceived as liberators, but as invaders. In such areas it is high likely that the local tribes will align with al-Qaeda in order to resist to the Houthis.

So there are mainly four reasons for the crisis:

- The military had been divided since the presidency of Saleh. He wanted to appoint his son as a military leader, which led him to conflict with the military leader Al Ahmar and of course to a divided military. Therefore, the military was not united and functional when the uprisings of the Arab Spring began and were not able to prevent the political instability that followed.
- The takeover of the Houthis has caused great instability. Their rebellious stands and unwillingness to enter piece-talks is the main reason of the crisis.
- President Hadi increased rapidly the fuel price in 2014. The Houthis that had gained a lot of support until that point organized mass protests against the transition process led by the UN, demanding lower fuel process.
- The strong intervention of Saudi Arabia in the country, while President Hadi was in the exile, had tremendous effects. While they were trying to regain the area for Hadi, they launched air strikes that have been the reason for thousands of deaths.

The most important factor that had drawn the “concern” of the global community is the cruel humanitarian situation, which the people of Yemen are forced to face. Whether Sunnis or Shias people live in a State of terror, where children have to play “1,2,3, bombing” and the amounts of malnutrition are rising terrifyingly fast. Yemen has a poverty rate of around 50%, ranking the country to one of the poorest ones. Up to 3.000 civilians have been killed during the conflict and 22 million are in need of humanitarian aid. Yemen relies mainly on imports for food and fuel, but because of the ongoing fighting, many organizations could not provide the country with food and medicine, causing multiple problems. The most important and frustrating aspect is that 60% of the deaths of civilians have been caused by air strikes targeting hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure from both sides. In fact Saudi Arabia has declared the entire city of Sanaa as a military target and that of course had disastrous effects. Most of the hospitals in the city run by the international relief organization Doctors Without Borders have been bombed leaving all the people injured by airstrikes and with malnutrition with no humanitarian aid. Because of these violations both sides are accused of breaking the Geneva Convention for protection of human rights, while the Houthi forces are accused of repeatedly committing war crimes.



## COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

### *Iran*

Iran is the known backer of the Houthis and has repeatedly provided them with military support. Their alliance is based upon their common geopolitical interests, since Iran wishes to challenge the power of Saudi Arabia and US in the region and the Houthis have always been opposed to the intervention of US and additionally are currently fighting against the government.

### *Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia has launched many airstrikes and has led the effort of trying to restore the government of President Hadi. Their actual interest over the region comes from the concern that a Houthi-led Yemen would mean a hostile country threatening their borders at any time, so Yemen is considered a contest with Iran over power in the area. Losing the control over Yemen would be a great loss for Saudi Arabia, mainly because of the many allies of Iran in the region, such as Baghdad, Beirut and Damascus. So according to many the strategy of Saudi Arabia is to keep Yemen weak in order to have control over it, but simultaneously not too weak to the point of creating a migrant flow to Saudi Arabia.

### *United States of America*

The United States has supported Saudi Arabia during their intervention in Yemen, because it wants to maintain stability in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia. Only that way can it ensure its use of the free passage in the Bab al-Mandeb between the Arabian and

Red Seas, which is used for the transportation for oil. It has also provided Saudi Arabia with a huge amount of weapons, however realizes that the bombings are drawing a negative international attention and therefore wants Saudi Arabia to restrain.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<b>2008</b> November	Police forces open warning fire at Common Forum rally in Sanaa. Protesters ask for political and fresh polls. At least five protesters and two police officers injured.
<b>2009</b> August	The army of Yemen goes against Shia rebels in the northern Saada province. Tens of thousands of people forced to leave their homes by the conflict
<b>2009</b> November	Saudi Arabia says it has taken back a territory seized by Yemeni rebels in a cross-border incursion.
<b>2010</b> February	Government signs ceasefire with Houthi northern rebels, which fails months later.
<b>2010</b> October	Packages with explosives originating in Yemen are intercepted on planes bound for the US.
<b>2011</b> June	After a period of severe demonstrations, President Saleh is injured in rocket attack and moved to Saudi Arabia
<b>2014</b> January	National Dialogue Conference agrees upon a document on which the new constitution of Yemen will be based.
<b>2014</b> February	Presidential panel approves for Yemen to become a federation of six regions as transitional political decision
<b>2014</b> July	Tribesmen destroy the country's biggest oil pipeline along with supplies from the interior to a Red Sea export terminal.
<b>2014</b> August	President Hadi overturns a controversial fuel price rise leading to two weeks of anti-government protests in which Houthi rebels are strongly involved.
<b>2014</b> September	Houthi seize most of capital Sanaa

<b>2015</b> February	Houthis appoint presidential council to replace President Hadi, who goes to Aden.
<b>2015</b> March	ISIS moves on with its first huge attacks in Yemen - two suicide bombings targeting Shia mosques in Sanaa in which 137 people lose their lives
<b>2015</b> September	President Hadi returns to Aden after Saudi-backed government forces retake control the port city from Houthi rebels and launch advance on Aden
<b>2016</b> April	Beginning of UN-backed talks between the government on one side and Houthis and former President Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) on the other
<b>2016</b> May-June	Islamic State group claims to be responsible for a number of attacks, including a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 army recruits in Aden.
<b>2016</b> October	Airstrike by Saudi-led coalition hits a crowded funeral in Sanaa, killing 140 people and injuring 500

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- It is obvious that the Houthis and the government of President Hadi should come around the table and negotiate about the distribution of power. However since many efforts have been with no useful outcome, it would be beneficial if all the parties and the civil society participated in the negotiations.
- Acknowledging that the main forces causing the dispute are Iran and Saudi Arabia it is essential for the international community to intervene and put an end to the war as an effect of the dispute between the two.
- However, as previously mentioned, the civil war in Yemen does not only have political, but also humanitarian aspects. Therefore it is UNs' role to create a council or work with the ones existing in order to provide humanitarian aid, such as medicine and food to the civilians.

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