



# Yemen

## *The Continuing Tragedy*

A report by the **All Party  
Parliamentary Group for Yemen**  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018



## Yemen: The Continuing Tragedy - 22 May, 2018

A report by the **All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen**

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## 1. Introduction from chair

For over three years now, the conflict in Yemen has caused unbearable humanitarian misery.

The United Nations estimates that 10,000 people have died from fighting; however, in reality the number is much higher. Over 40,000 have been mutilated and according to some estimates 130 Yemeni children are dying every day from preventable causes. Over 22 million of Yemen's 27 million citizens are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis and the longer that this conflict continues, the worse it will get. Once the jewel in Arabia's crown, Yemen is now an object of shame for all of the world.

The United Kingdom has unique influence over international affairs because of its position on the United Nations Security Council. As the pen holder on Yemen, the UK has a duty to do all that it can to bring this conflict to an end.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen launched its report into UK policy towards Yemen on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 at the second annual Yemen Day event at Westminster.

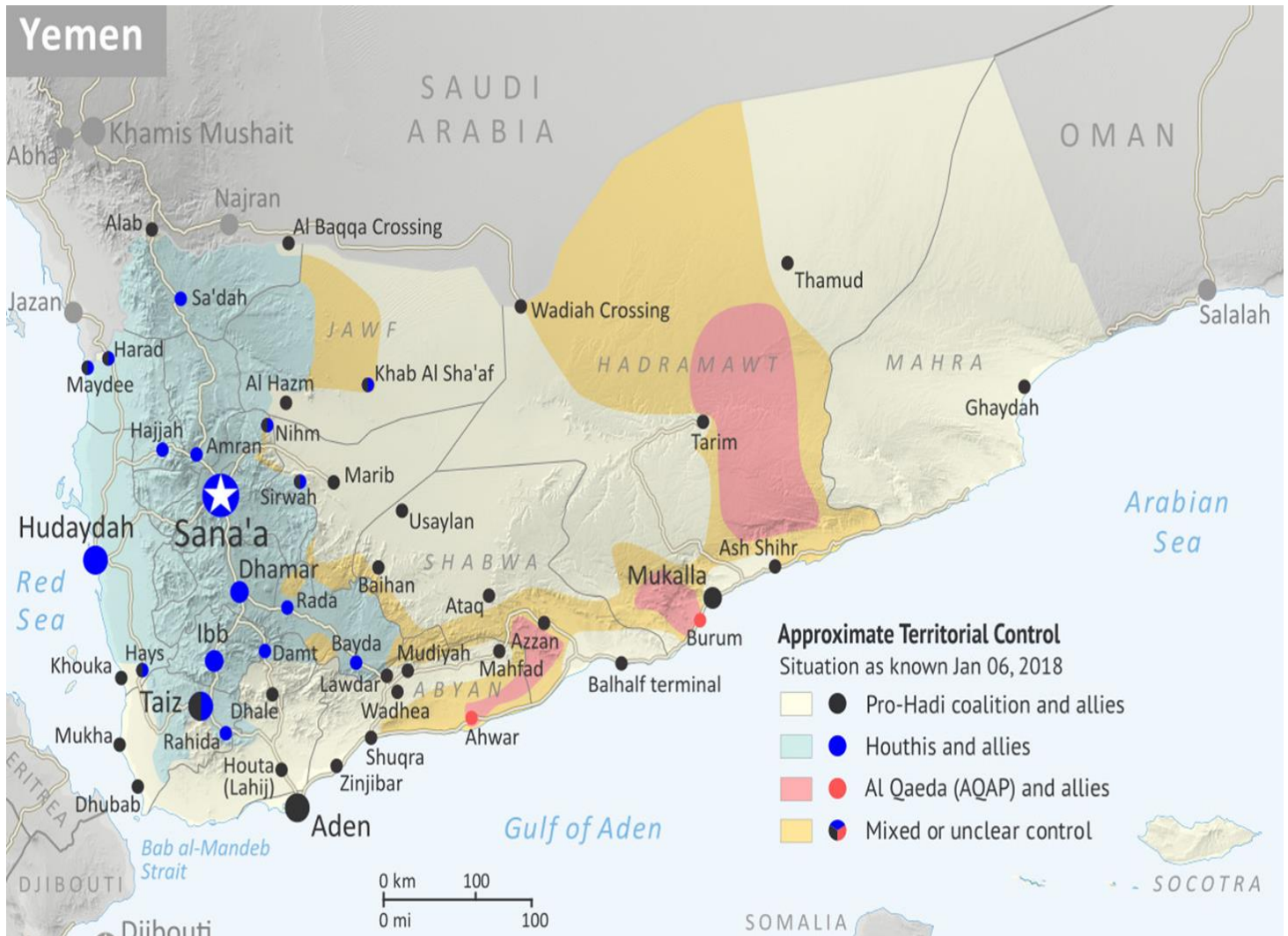
The aim of this report is not to provide a comprehensive history of the conflict, or to provide exhaustive detail of the events on the ground in Yemen. For such publications I would urge those who are interested to read the work of, among others, Helen Lackner and Peter Salisbury and also to follow the work of journalist Iona Craig. This report will give an overview of the Yemen in 2018, while providing policy recommendations for the UK Government to follow.

The Group is incredibly thankful to all that attended its evidence submission sessions, in particular those that gave oral and written evidence.

As I wrote recently to the Prime Minister, *"just as politicians of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are judged on their responses to humanitarian crises in Rwanda, Kosovo and Sierra Leone, we will be judged on our response to Yemen. So far we are failing."* The United Kingdom must do more.

With Best wishes  
for success  
Katie O'22

**Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP**  
**Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen**



**Map 1: Yemen - areas of approximate territorial control in January 2018. Source: Political Geography Now <http://www.polgeonow.com/2018/01/who-rules-yemen-map-houthis-control.html>**

## Background

Yemen is a low-income country located in the Middle East, sharing land borders with Saudi Arabia in the north and Oman in the northeast, while its coastline borders the Red Sea to the west and the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to the south. With a land area of 527,970 square kilometres, Yemen is the second-largest country in the Arabian Peninsula, with a population estimated to be 27.58 million as of 2016. Sana'a is the largest city in Yemen and the constitutionally recognised capital of the country, though Aden – its second-largest city and largest port – has served as the provisional capital since March 2015, when Sana'a fell to Houthi rebels.

The modern-day Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990 at the conclusion of an agreement to unify North and South Yemen. Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had served as President of North Yemen since 1978, became President of the Republic of Yemen. In 2011, Yemen was caught up in the wave of Arab Spring revolutions, with the Yemeni population demonstrating against the rule of President Saleh's and his government. His administration was widely regarded as corrupt, reluctant to reform and abusive of human rights. There were also fears that Saleh was grooming his son to succeed him. Dozens of protestors were killed during their campaign to overthrow the government.

On 23 November 2011, President Saleh signed the Gulf Cooperation Council Plan for political transition, agreeing to transfer powers held by his office to his deputy, Vice-President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.<sup>1</sup> This followed a lengthy process of negotiations, brokered between April and May 2011, with assistance from Saudi Arabia, the US, the UK and the EU. The agreement provided a basic framework for early presidential elections followed by constitutional revisions, a constitutional referendum and, eventually, new parliamentary elections.

Nearly a month after Yemen held its 21 February 2012 presidential elections, then International Development minister Alan Duncan referred to a “Yemen Paradox”, since no real changes took place after Saleh's departure, despite there being a new government.<sup>2</sup> Tobias Thiel, an analyst at the LSE, said that the “deal granted former President [Saleh] immunity in exchange for his resignation”, and that it contained a “fatal flaw: it retired Saleh from the presidency, but not politics”. Saleh remained the chairperson of the General People's Congress and continued playing what Mr Thiel described as

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<sup>1</sup> 'President Saleh signs Gulf-brokered power deal ending 33 years in office'. *Al Arabia News*, 23 November 2011  
Available at <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/23/178702.html> [accessed 7 October 2017]

<sup>2</sup> A. Duncan, Speech to Global Strategy Forum. House of Lords, 14 March 2012.



“a poisonous role in sabotaging the transition”.<sup>3</sup>

In September 2012, following a meeting of donors in Saudi Arabia, led by the British government, a \$6.4 billion package of support was finalised. The intent was, as Alan Duncan noted, to “underpin the Yemeni economy, direct funds into infrastructure, and urgently address Yemenis' basic needs, such as healthcare, education and access to sanitation”.<sup>4</sup> Having pledged \$3.2 billion, Saudi Arabia was the largest donor, while the UK pledged to contribute \$311 million (£196 million) between 2012 and 2015. At the time, this commitment – and the UK’s leadership role in negotiating the package – was welcomed by aid agencies such as Oxfam, as it was to make a real and significant difference to the lives of the 10 million Yemenis most affected by the hunger crisis.<sup>5</sup>

While reiterating that the UK would remain committed to strengthening government systems by working alongside them, Duncan also emphasised that the primary purpose of every pound spent was to tangibly improve the lives of poor Yemenis. He stated in *The Guardian*: “No British money is channelled through the government; it is all managed by trusted partners, whether UN agencies, international NGOs or Yemeni civil society organisations. We are clear that it would be wrong to punish people for having a weak government by withholding aid – and foolhardy not to address the lack of development that can foster a sense of injustice which can exacerbate conflict.”<sup>6</sup>

In response to continued humanitarian and economic problems in the country, a “Friends of Yemen” conference was held at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London on 7 March 2013, co-hosted by the then British Foreign Minister, William Hague; his Yemeni counterpart, Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi; and Nizar bin Obaid Madani, the Saudi Foreign Minister. The UK pledged £70m to Yemen over the next two years, including £4.4 million to support constitutional reform.

The commitments to supporting Yemen were not wholly altruistic. Even before the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 terrorist attacks, Yemen was a hotbed of Islamic extremism – as witnessed by the Al Qaeda

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<sup>3</sup> T. Thiel, ‘Yemen’s Negotiated Transition between the Elite and the Street’. *LSE Middle East Centre Blog*, 3 March 2014. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2014/03/03/yemens-negotiated-transition-between-the-elite-and-the-street/> [accessed 3 October 2017].

<sup>4</sup> A. Kelly, ‘Donors pledge \$6.4bn to address Yemen's humanitarian crisis’. *The Guardian*, 6 September 2012. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/sep/06/money-yemen-humanitarian-crisis> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> A. Duncan, ‘Why UK aid for Yemen will save lives and promote stability’. *The Guardian*, 28 September 2012. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/sep/28/uk-aid-yemen-saves-lives-promote-stability> [accessed 7 October 2017].



attack on the USS Cole in Aden harbour in October 2000. This threat was later underscored by the 2008 bombing of the US Embassy in Sana'a. Yemen's position adjacent to one of the world's busiest shipping lanes has also presented opportunities for Yemen-based terrorists, as demonstrated by the October 2002 attack on the tanker Limburg in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>7</sup> Externally, an increasing number of terrorist attacks are being plotted from Yemen, particularly following the formation of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009. Notably, in October 2010, two bomb-laden cargo planes travelling from Yemen to the US were intercepted – one at East Midlands Airport and the other in Dubai – prior to reaching their targets, with AQAP later claiming responsibility for the attempted attack.<sup>8</sup>

In parallel to this, both Yemeni authorities and the West have been carrying out a counterterrorism campaign in Yemen. Notable examples of the latter have included multiple drone strikes that have killed hundreds of AQAP members.<sup>9</sup> However, such interventions have been unpopular and perceived by many Yemeni citizens as a symptom of a weak government. It is, therefore, in the interest of the West to help build a strong Yemen that commands both popular support and the means to independently sustain security.

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<sup>7</sup> BBC News 'Yemen says tanker blast was terrorism'. *BBC News website*, 16 October 2002. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/2334865.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2334865.stm) [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>8</sup> G. Rayner, G. and D. Gardham, 'Cargo plane bomb plot: ink cartridge bomb 'timed to blow up over US''. *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 2010. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8124226/Cargo-plane-bomb-plot-ink-cartridge-bomb-timed-to-blow-up-over-US.html> [accessed] 6 October 2017.

<sup>9</sup> J. Schwedler, *Is the U.S. drone program in Yemen working?* Brookings Institute, 28 September 2015. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/09/28/is-the-u-s-drone-program-in-yemen-working/> (accessed 6 October 2017).

## 2. Summary of the Current Crisis

The current conflict can trace its beginnings back to 2004, when cleric Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi led his followers in a rebellion against the government of President Saleh in the north of Yemen. The uprising met with limited success. Al-Houthi was killed by Yemeni forces in September 2004, with the group agreeing a ceasefire with the government in 2010. The Houthis, who took their name from their leader on his death, represent a minority of the Yemeni population and generally belong to the Zaydi strain of Shi'a Islam.

During the 2011 revolution, the Houthis supported calls to oust President Saleh. They subsequently benefitted from the post-revolutionary chaos. Despite being part of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) of 2013-2014, the Houthis used this period to consolidate their power in the areas that they controlled.

Faced with a weak central government and security forces, they gradually expanded their territorial control. The Houthis had gained a positive reputation in the country as a movement committed to social justice and as the most prominent opponent of President Hadi's government, having withdrawn from the NDC process as it left Yemen's transitional government in place. Further inflaming matters was the fact that two Houthi representatives were assassinated during the conference's proceedings. The government's decision to lift fuel subsidies in July 2014 angered the Yemeni public and sparked massive street protests by Houthi supporters and others, who demanded that the government step down. The Houthis proceeded to take over Sana'a in September, forcing the government to flee.

The Houthis were assisted in their advance by former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was overthrown by protests in 2011, and his supporters. After the Houthi attempted to compel the Yemeni government to implement a "Peace and National Partnership Agreement", President Hadi resigned and was placed under house arrest. In January 2015, he escaped detention and rescinded his resignation. On 20 January 2015, the UN Security Council confirmed that it still considers him to be the legitimate president of Yemen.

Despite previous animosity, former President Saleh was a significant player in the success of the Houthis.<sup>10</sup> In July 2016, Saleh signed an agreement with the Houthis to jointly run the country

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<sup>10</sup> P. Salisbury, 'Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh behind Houthis' rise. *The Financial Times*, 26 March

through a Supreme Political Council. This move was criticised by the UN, and the body is not recognised internationally.<sup>11</sup>

Yemen watchers have long predicted a split between Saleh and the GPC and the Houthis, and in the summer of 2017, tensions began to spike. On 29 November 2017, armed Houthi supporters clashed with Saleh supporters in and around the al-Saleh mosque in Sana'a. The latter incident sparked a five-day street war that led to the collapse of the Houthi-Saleh alliance and the death of the former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Yemen's civil war also has an important international component to it. Following the Houthi takeover of Sana'a in 2014, a coalition was formed to counter them. This was led by Saudi Arabia and included the Gulf States of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE; together with Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco and Senegal. On 26 March 2015, the Coalition responded to the ousted Yemeni President's request for intervention by launching airstrikes targeted at the Houthis. Saudi Arabia's aim for the aerial campaign was to restore stability to Yemen by crippling the Houthis, whom they see as an instrument of Iranian influence, and ultimately facilitate returning President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi back to power.<sup>12</sup> Five days after the Coalition began its aerial campaign against the Houthi rebels, Saudi-led naval forces imposed a de facto blockade on ports in Yemen.<sup>13</sup> Clashes along the Saudi-Yemen border also commenced in March. Later, a ground force was deployed to Yemen to support the defence of Aden and the training of anti-Houthi forces.<sup>14</sup>

Initial reaction to the military operation was mixed. The United States praised the Saudi-led campaign, with then Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken stating that US approval of the operation was "sending a strong message to the Houthis and their allies that they cannot overrun

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2015. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/dbbc1ddc-d3c2-11e4-99bd-00144feab7de?mhq5j=e5> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>11</sup> 'Yemen: Houthi, Saleh council formation criticised by UN'. *Al Jazeera English*, 29 July 2016. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/yemen-houthi-saleh-council-formation-criticised-160728194157722.html> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>12</sup> K. Fahim and N. Bruce-Cummings, 'Expedited Weapons Deliveries to Saudi Arabia Signal Deepening U.S. Involvement' *New York Times*, 7 April 2015. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/world/middleeast/yemen-houthis.htm> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>13</sup> A. Almasmari and A. Omran, A. 'Saudi-Led Forces Blockade Yemen'. *Wall Street Journal*, 30 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/airstrikes-hit-yemen-refugee-camp-says-doctors-without-borders-1427739278> [accessed 6 October].

<sup>14</sup> M. Horton, *The Battle for Yemen: A Quagmire for Saudi Arabia and the UAE*. The Jamestown Foundation, 19 May 2017. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/battle-yemen-quagmire-saudi-arabia-uae> [accessed 6 October].

Yemen by force”.<sup>15</sup> The US subsequently announced that it would expedite the delivery of weapons to aid in the offensive. Naril Elaraby, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, and Iyad Ameen Madani, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, both stated that the actions of Houthi militias had rendered the international intervention necessary. Turkey, Canada, France and the UK also supported the Saudi-led operation. Noting that recent Houthi actions and expansion were “a further signal of their disregard for the political process” and that “any action taken should be in accordance with international law”, the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated in a press release in March 2015 that it supported the intervention.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Iran, which views the civil war as key to a regional power struggle between itself and Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia, sent a naval destroyer to waters near Yemen on 8 April 2015, while Iranian President Hassan Rouhani criticised the Saudi-led airstrikes as being “wrong” and a “mistake”. Russia also opposed the intervention, while the EU warned that military intervention could have serious regional repercussions.

Iran’s stance against the war must be judged in the context of their desire to undermine Western and Saudi influence in Yemen. To this end, Iran has long provided support to the group.<sup>17</sup> Mirroring this, Iran’s influence and support of the Houthis can be seen as a leading motivator in Saudi Arabia’s desire to intervene against them.

In the time that has elapsed since the commencement of the intervention, scepticism over the operation has risen as the cost to the population of Yemen has become clear. Even early in the war, it was evident that the air and naval blockade was preventing the import of food and medical supplies. In 2018, Yemen suffers from food shortages and rampant cholera, with most of the functions of the Yemeni state crippled and the country’s infrastructure in ruins as the result of

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<sup>15</sup> ‘US speeds up arms to Saudi-led coalition against Yemen’s Houthis’. *Reuters*, 7 April 2015. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-usa-blinken/u-s-speeds-up-arms-to-saudi-led-coalition-against-yemens-houthis-idUSKBN0MY1IJ20150407> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>16</sup> ‘The current situation in Yemen’. FCO Press Release, 25 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/UKinYemen/posts/862677167104003> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>17</sup> O. Dorell, ‘Iranian support for Yemen’s Houthis goes back years’. *USA Today*, 20 April 2015. Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/04/20/iran-support-for-yemen-houthis-goes-back-years/26095101/> [accessed 12 October 2017].

bombing.<sup>18</sup> Millions of people are now without access to clean water or sanitation,<sup>19</sup> and the Saudi-led de facto blockade is preventing the importation of fuel to power hospital generators.<sup>20</sup> The head of three United Nations agencies – UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) – have judged the situation to be “the world’s largest humanitarian crisis”.<sup>21</sup>

The front lines of the conflict have remained largely stagnant. However, the conflict has been prone to moments of escalation. On 4 November 2017, the Houthis launched a ballistic missile at Riyadh airport that was destroyed by a Saudi military Patriot missile defence unit. On 17 December, another ballistic missile was intercepted in Riyadh – this time allegedly targeting the al-Yamamah Royal Palace in the city’s western suburbs. On 25 March 2018, 7 missiles were reportedly fired into Saudi Arabia by Houthi rebels, with one civilian being killed in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia alleges it has been targeted by some 90 ballistic missiles launched by Houthi rebels and their allies.<sup>22</sup> The United Nations Panel of Experts has verified Iranian involvement in Yemen in a 2018 Panel of Experts report. The Panel has identified missile remnants, related military equipment and military unmanned aerial vehicles that are of Iranian origin and were brought into Yemen after the imposition of the targeted arms embargo. As a result, the Panel finds that the Islamic Republic of Iran is in non-compliance with paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015).<sup>23</sup>

There has been increasing international pressure on the Saudis by the International Community. Having been briefly blacklisted in 2016 by the United Nations for their actions in Yemen, increasing international attention has turned to the actions of the Saudi led coalition in Yemen. Germany no

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<sup>18</sup> S. Almosawa, B. Hubbard, and T. Griggs ‘It’s a Slow Death’: The World’s Worst Humanitarian Crisis’. *The New York Times*, 23 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/23/world/middleeast/yemen-cholera-humanitarian-crisis.html> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>19</sup> DEC, *Crisis Briefing: Delivering Aid Against the Odds in Yemen*. 6 September 2017. available at: <https://www.dec.org.uk/article/crisis-briefing-%E2%80%93-delivering-aid-against-the-odds-in-yemen> [accessed 5 October 2017].

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Yemen: Coalition’s Blocking Aid, Fuel Endangers Civilians*. 27 September 2017. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/yemen-coalitions-blocking-aid-fuel-endangers-civilians> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>21</sup> *Statement by UNICEF Executive Director, Anthony Lake, WFP Executive Director, David Beasley and WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, following their joint visit to Yemen*. Reliefweb, 26 June 2017. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/statement-unicef-executive-director-anthony-lake-wfp-executive-director-david-beasley> [accessed 7 October]

<sup>22</sup> ‘Did the Saudis really intercept missiles from Yemen?’ *CBS News*, 26 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saudi-arabia-yemen-houthi-ballistic-missiles-intercepted-videos-patriot/> [accessed 6 May]

<sup>23</sup> A. Himmiche; F.R. Carvajal; D.R. Gunaratne; J.G. Johnsen and A. Wilkinson, A, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen*, 26 January 2-18. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports> [accessed 6 May 2018].



longer sells weapons to the Saudis, and Norway has stopped its arms sales to the United Arab Emirates. In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party recently came out in favour of stopping UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia, joining the Scottish National Party and the Green Party who have also committed to this position.

In the United States, senators Bernie Sanders, Mike Lee and Chris Murphy introduced a bipartisan joint resolution to remove US Armed Forces from hostilities between the Saudi-led Coalition and the Houthis in Yemen pursuant to the War Powers Resolution. The Bill was defeated 55-44 in the Senate.

Making matters worse have been the benefits the conflict has gifted AQAP. The group has gained considerable strength by taking advantage of the chaos. In Hadramawt to the east, AQAP, through a carefully calibrated agreement with local leaders, became – for a time – the de facto power in the south of the province. However, it is now past its peak territorial control of early 2016, with Coalition-backed forces having pushed it out of key cities.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, throughout 2017, AQAP averaged slightly more than one attack in Yemen every two days. The Islamic State established a branch in Yemen in 2014 and has carried out multiple attacks against civilians, but has met with limited overall success.<sup>25</sup>

In Yemen's south, clashes between pro-southern independence groups and Hadi supporters during the 2018 'Battle of Aden' have added a new dimension to any potential peace deal. Separatists calling for the independence of southern Yemen under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) have recently become more united and organised with support from the United Arab Emirates. This recently culminated with the STC establishing themselves as the predominant power in Aden in January.<sup>26</sup> Their wishes and actions will now have a huge bearing on peace in the country. The clashes between government supporting troops backed by Saudi Arabia and the STC supported by the United Arab Emirates could indicate a fissure that may eventually split the Coalition.

In the West, much criticism has been focused on the role of the US and UK in enabling the operation to continue. The US has provided logistical and intelligence support, including through the provision

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<sup>24</sup> S. Al-Batati and E. Schmitt, 'Thousands of Yemeni Forces Target Qaeda Stronghold'. *New York Times*, 6 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/06/world/middleeast/yemen-qaeda-shabwa-province.html> [accessed 7 October].

<sup>25</sup> M. Horton, M. *Why Islamic State Has Failed to Expand in Yemen*. The Jamestown Foundation, 24 March 2017. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/islamic-state-failed-expand-yemen/> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>26</sup> 'Yemen separatists capture most of Aden, residents say'. *BBC News*, 30 January 2018. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-42877851> [accessed 6 May 2018].

of in-flight refuelling tankers and surveillance assets. The UK's contribution has primarily centred on weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. However, neither government appears likely to reduce its support. The UK has committed £139 million in aid to Yemen in 2017/18<sup>27</sup> and has urged foreign donors to follow its lead, but has faced charges of hypocrisy due to its role in the war.

Parliament has seen a significant amount of activity around the Yemen conflict. Along with the work of the APPG on Yemen, a report from the Committees on Arms Export Controls has called for the UK to suspend the issuing of further export licences for the sale of weapons that could be used in Yemen to Saudi Arabia until allegations into violations of International Humanitarian Law has been had been investigated by the UN.<sup>28</sup> There has also been an inquiry by the Select Committee on International Development, multiple parliamentary debates, and dozens of questions asked by peers and MPs. Nevertheless, the Government has continued with arms sales and has continued to cite UN resolution 2216, the legitimacy of the Hadi regime and Saudi right to self-defence as guidance for their actions. It must be noted that the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia was supported by a High Court judgment which allows the UK Government to continue to export arms to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen. This verdict was taken to the Court of Appeal by the Campaign Against Arms Trade, and in May 2018, a judge granted them an appeal.<sup>29</sup>

Despite all this, minimal progress has been made in efforts to dislodge the Houthis from the areas they occupy, or conclude the conflict by diplomatic means. The war is now a stalemate, with neither side in a position to win major victories on the ground. However, a lack of political pressure to resolve the conflict and Saudi Arabia's fixation on the threat posed by Iran's role in Yemen leaves little scope for an end to the war. Elites on both sides of the conflict continue to benefit from ongoing fighting. The Houthis, meanwhile, are more powerful now than at any point of their recent history. Whether they are looking to maximise their power or if they have designs on ruling Yemen like their Hashemite predecessors is unclear, but the incentives to negotiate are not yet present. Without a functional central government, tribal leaders across the country are able to enrich themselves and

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<sup>27</sup> K. Hodal, 'Yemen: aid offers 'only hope of survival' in cholera epidemic, says Priti Patel'. *The Guardian*, 11 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/aug/11/yemen-aid-offers-only-hope-of-survival-in-cholera-epidemic-says-priti-patel> (accessed 5 October 2017)

<sup>28</sup> Committees on Arms Export Controls *The use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen*. 15 September 2017, HC668. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcaff/688/688.pdf> [accessed 8 October 2018].

<sup>29</sup> P. Beaumont, 'Judges grant appeal against decision to allow UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia'. *The Guardian*, 4 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/may/04/judges-grant-appeal-against-decision-to-allow-uk-arms-exports-to-saudi-arabia> [accessed 6 May 2018].





control tax within their regions.

The victims of this crime are Yemen's civilians, who are now in the midst of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The phrase 'man made crisis' is frequently used by commentators when describing the current situation in Yemen. This is because the huge levels of suffering are avoidable. Diseases like cholera and the spread of diphtheria have been brought on by the conflict and lack of access to clean water and medical supplies. To end the suffering of the Yemeni people, a peace deal is required. While the war continues, Yemenis will continue to die by the thousand.

### 3. Humanitarian Situation

Relentless suffering is devouring innocent people by the hour in Yemen, a situation which has been described by the UN as the "largest humanitarian crisis in the world".<sup>30</sup> Since March 2015, the United Nations estimates that 10,000 people have been killed and 40,000 have been maimed. However, as a result of poor reporting these numbers are inaccurate. The true casualty numbers are likely to be significantly higher.

As of early 2018, Yemenis are facing multiple crises, including armed conflict, displacement, risk of famine and the outbreaks of diseases including cholera and diphtheria. 22.2 million people are in need of humanitarian protection and immediate assistance, including over 11 million children. Some 3.1 million people have been displaced since the outbreak of the civil war and 2,014,026 people are currently internally displaced.<sup>31</sup> 89% of those who are internally displaced have been displaced for more than one year.<sup>32</sup>

In a letter sent to the UN in August 2017 by the International Commission for Human Rights in Yemen, the organisation warned that "civilians are being targeted by indiscriminate shelling, direct sniping, many fall victims from anti-personnel mines, and assassinations continue".<sup>33</sup> They further noted that "children are systematically recruited as fighters and pushed to the front lines. Civilians are targeted by airstrikes in their homes, markets, schools, hospitals, during weddings and funerals".<sup>34</sup>

This section of the report will address the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, outlining the major areas of need for Yemen's population.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Amid Humanitarian Funding Gap, 20 Million People across Africa, Yemen at Risk of Starvation, Emergency Relief Chief Warns Security Council'. UN Press Release, 10 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12748.doc.htm> accessed 15 October 2017].

<sup>31</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Yemen UNHCR Update'. 15-31 January 2018. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-update-15-31-january-2018> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>32</sup> UN, 'Refugees and Migrants, more than 3 million displaced in Yemen'. Joint UN agency report. Available at: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/more-3-million-displaced-yemen-%E2%80%93-joint-un-agency-report> [accessed 15 October 2017].

<sup>33</sup> International Commission for Human Rights in Yemen, *Letter to UN – 2017*

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

## Food Insecurity

The war and its economic effects are driving the largest food security emergency in the world. Stephen O'Brien, the then UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in a statement in March 2017 that “two-thirds of the population – 18.8 million people – need assistance”.<sup>35</sup> According to the World Food Programme, over 18 million people (over 65% of the population) are food insecure, with 6.8 million people severely food insecure and in need of urgent life-saving emergency food support.<sup>36</sup> The Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, released a statement in December 2017 stating that there are: “8.4 million Yemenis who are a step away from famine”.<sup>37</sup>

Between 2017 and 2018, the number of citizens who are food insecure rose by 24%. Approximately 4 in every 10 children under five years old are acutely malnourished. Yemen now has some of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world.<sup>38</sup>

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a standardised tool that looks to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries, ranges from Minimal (IPC 1) to Famine (IPC 5). In Yemen, seven governorates (24% of the population) are in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) – Lahej, Taiz, Abyan, Sa'adah, Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, and Shabwa. Three governorates (36% of the population) are in IPC Phase 3! (IPC 3! would be IPC 4 if there was no assistance) - Al Jawf, Al-Dale'e, and Al Bayda.<sup>39</sup>

A further ten governorates are in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) - Aden, Amran, Dhamar, Sana'a governorate, Sana'a city, Ibb, Marib, Raymah, Al Mahwit and Hadramout. This includes over 3.3 million children and women in Yemen who are acutely malnourished and require urgent treatment.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> S. O'Brien, 'Statement to the Security Council on Missions to Yemen'. Relief Web, 10 March 2017. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/usgerc-stephen-o-brien-statement-security-council-missions-yemen-south-sudan-somalia> [accessed 15 October 2017].

<sup>36</sup> World Food Programme, '2017 Yemen Facts and Figures'. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/2017-yemen-factsheets> [accessed 6 May 2018].

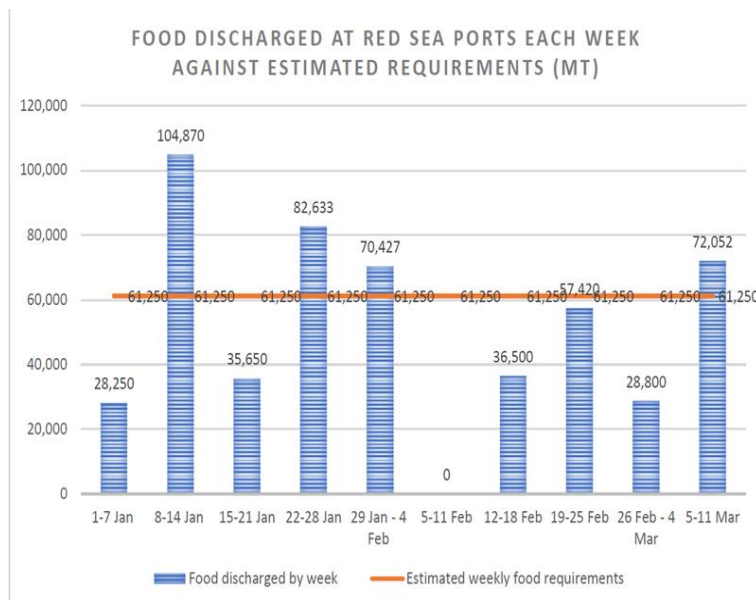
<sup>37</sup> 'Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, Calling on Parties to Facilitate Unimpeded Aid Delivery'. Relief Web, 11 December 2017. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/statement-humanitarian-coordinator-yemen-jamie-mcgoldrick-calling-parties-facilitate> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>38</sup> World Food Programme, '2017 Yemen Facts and Figures'. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/2017-yemen-factsheets> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

As shown in the below table, even after the end of the November-December 2017 blockade, commercial food imports through Yemen’s Red Sea Ports remain insufficient, confirming a trend of slow processing times and inadequate deliveries. A fifth of the way through 2018, the quantity of food discharged at the ports falls short of meeting overall estimated requirements for this period by



15%.<sup>41</sup>

Poor access to food has led to a deteriorating nutritional situation. A recent survey showed that almost one-third of families have gaps in their diets, and hardly ever consume foods like pulses, vegetables, fruit, dairy products or meat.<sup>42</sup>

Instability and conflict have devastated Yemen’s economy. In a country that imports 90% of its food, this has

**Graph 1 (Evidence Submitted by the Norwegian Refugee Council)**

sharply increased commodity prices, making many essential staple food items out of reach for the vulnerable population. More than 3 million pregnant and nursing women and children under five need support to prevent or cure malnutrition.<sup>43</sup> Half of all families in Yemen are buying food on credit, up by almost 50% compared to pre-crisis levels.

Compared with pre-crisis prices, import prices by December 2017 had increased by 34% for wheat, 37% for wheat flour, 83% for rice, 60% for cooking oil and 46% for sugar. As of November, the food stocks in the country were only sufficient to meet needs until the end of January 2018.<sup>44</sup> Oxfam believes that food prices in Yemen have increased by 40% since the conflict’s beginning.<sup>45</sup> And while the increase in humanitarian food imports following the partial reopening of sea ports in January 2018 has seen improved food stocks and availability in local markets, the levels of available food are

<sup>41</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, Evidence Submission to APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, *Yemen - Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan*, March 2017. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/846339> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>43</sup> World Food Programme, *Yemen Facts and Figures 2017*. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/content/2017-yemen-factsheets> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>44</sup> Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, *Yemen - Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan*, March 2017. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/846339> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>45</sup> Oxfam, Written Evidence Submission to APPG Yemen – 2018.

inadequate to support Yemen's population.<sup>46</sup>

## Water Insecurity

The United Nations describes water as a basic need and fundamental human right. In Yemen, more people than any other place in the world lack access to safe and usable water. As one of the most water stressed countries in the world, some hydrology experts have warned that it could become the first modern country to run out of usable water.<sup>47</sup>

Yemen's systemic water troubles are massively exacerbated by the country's ongoing civil war, particularly in the impact on people's everyday lives. Estimates vary on the amount of those lacking water in Yemen, with the OCHA saying that over 16 million Yemenis lack access to safe drinking water and/or adequate sanitation.<sup>48</sup> Unsafe water puts Yemen's population at risk for communicable diseases like cholera and dysentery (see next section).

In Yemen, water has become a weapon of war. Millions rely upon humanitarian aid to meet their basic water needs. For many communities, fuel shortages make it impossible to pump water and treat raw sewage. Instead, residents are forced to rely on water truck deliveries. Fighting and sieges delay or restrict water deliveries. The UN Panel of Experts report alleged that all parties in the conflict have targeted humanitarian shipments, including trucks carrying water and food aid.

During the height of the blockade in November 2017, three cities in Yemen ran out of clean water because of cuts to fuel imports needed for pumping and sanitation.<sup>49</sup> The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was forced to buy fuel supplies in order to mitigate this.<sup>50</sup>

Exhaustion of Yemen's water supplies may have longer-term consequences for the country and the region. In the long run there is a danger that areas of the country could become completely uninhabitable. This would not only destabilise Yemen and create more Internally Displaced People,

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<sup>46</sup> Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, *Yemen - Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/846339> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>47</sup> J. Evans, 'Yemen could become first nation to run out of water'. *The Times*, 21 October 2010. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/yemen-could-become-first-nation-to-run-out-of-water-6jvzddjrl0v> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>48</sup> OCHA Yemen, 'About OCHA Yemen'. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen> [accessed 13 April 2018].

<sup>49</sup> 'Three Yemen cities run out of clean water due to lack of fuel for pumps: ICRC'. *Reuters*, 17 November. 2017 Available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-blockade/three-yemen-cities-run-out-of-clean-water-due-to-lack-of-fuel-for-pumps-icrc-idUKKBN1DH1Q2> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>50</sup> ICRC, Evidence Submission to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

but could also lead to an increase of climate and political refugees to neighbouring countries. Solving the country's water security issues could be a logical starting point for peace talks in Yemen.

### **Cholera and Diphtheria**

The restrictions on imports of fuel – essential for maintaining the water supply – combined with damage to infrastructure and Yemen's systemic water problems (described above), has left 16 million Yemenis with no access to safe drinking water or sanitation. Consequently, people have been forced to get their water supplies from unprotected wells, exposing them to life-threatening illnesses. Cholera swept over Yemen in 2017, and future outbreaks of the disease remain likely. Cholera is an infection of the small intestine that causes acute watery diarrhoea and can lead to rapid dehydration and death if untreated. It is caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholera* (faecal-oral transmission). Treatment requires oral rehydration, and in the most severe cases intravenous infusion and antibiotics.

The cumulative total of suspected cholera cases reported since April 2017 to 17 March 2018, is 1,080,422 with 2,266 associated deaths across the country.<sup>51</sup> Yemen now has the worst cholera crisis ever recorded, overtaking the total of 754,373 cases recorded in the aftermath of Haiti's 2010 earthquake. At its peak in 2017, it was estimated that cholera was infecting one child every 35 seconds.<sup>52</sup>

As the rainy season approaches there is fear of cholera once again hitting Yemen's most vulnerable. According to UNICEF's Geert Cappelaere this April, "In a few weeks from now the rainy season will start again and without a huge and immediate investment, cholera will again hit Yemeni children."<sup>53</sup>

The collapse of the health system in Yemen has also led to an outbreak of diphtheria. Diphtheria is a vaccine-preventable disease caused by toxin-producing corynebacterium diphtheria, transmitted from person to person through close physical and respiratory contact. Respiratory diphtheria is fatal in 5–10% of cases, with a higher mortality rate in young children. As of 17 March 2018, the local

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<sup>51</sup> World Health Organization/Government of Yemen, *Yemen: Cholera & Diphtheria Response - Emergency Operations Center - Situation Report No. 26*, 17 March 2018. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-cholera-diphtheria-response-emergency-operations-center-situation-report-no-26-17> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>52</sup> Save the Children, Evidence submitted to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>53</sup> B. McKernan, 'Yemen hit by new cholera outbreak warning on eve of conflict's third anniversary'. *The Independent*, 26 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-cholera-civil-war-saudi-arabia-houthis-health-epidemic-outbreak-who-a8274311.html> [accessed 6 May 2018].

health authorities reported a total of 1,368 suspected diphtheria cases, including 76 associated deaths.<sup>54</sup> The diphtheria outbreak has affected 179 districts from 20 governorates. Ibb and Al-Hudaydah governorates are the most affected. Children under the age of 5 represent 20% of probable diphtheria cases and 41% of associated deaths. 80% of cases are found in under 25 year olds and the most affected age group is 5-15 years old, representing 45% of the cases.<sup>55</sup>

## Children

The primary victims of the conflict in Yemen are children. During the height of the cholera outbreak and the blockade it has been estimated that 130 children were dying per day in Yemen.<sup>56</sup> Since the beginning of the conflict at least 6,000 children have been killed or injured.<sup>57</sup> Save the Children have previously reported that one child in Yemen dies every 10 minutes from preventable causes.<sup>58</sup>

An estimated 2 million of Yemen's children are currently out of school and more than 1,650 schools are currently unfit for use due to damage, presence of displaced people or occupation by militants.<sup>59</sup> Yemen has the lowest education rate in the Arab world. Military attacks, non-payment of teacher salaries and local insecurity have all contributed to the collapse of Yemen's education system. This has created an explosion of child exploitation: expressed as child marriage, child labour and military recruitment have all risen.

Houthi forces, government and pro-government forces, and other armed groups have all used child soldiers. By August 2017, the UN had documented 1,702 cases of child recruitment since March 2015, 67% of which were attributable to Houthi-Saleh forces. About 100 were younger than 15 years old. New data suggests that the 2,419 child soldiers have been recruited since the start of the conflict.<sup>60</sup>

Under Yemeni law, 18 years old is the minimum age for military service. In 2014, Yemen signed a UN action plan to end the use of child soldiers. Due to the conflict and without an effective government

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<sup>54</sup> World Health Organization/Government of Yemen, *Yemen: Cholera & Diphtheria Response - Emergency Operations Center - Situation Report No. 26*, 17 March 2018. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-cholera-diphtheria-response-emergency-operations-center-situation-report-no-26-17> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>55</sup> Save the Children, Evidence submitted to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> UNICEF (2018) *If Not in School: The Paths Children Cross in Yemen*. March 2018. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/if-not-school> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

in place, the action plan has not been implemented.<sup>61</sup>

### Women and Girls Rights

Violence against women has increased 63% since the conflict escalated according to UNFPA.<sup>62</sup> 3 million women and girls currently find themselves at risk of gender-based violence.<sup>63</sup> The number of documented cases of women being killed and injured reached 2,447 by July 2017.<sup>64</sup>

The war has seen an increase in the number of female-headed households, which are particularly vulnerable to poverty, early marriage and the recruitment of child soldiers.<sup>65</sup>

Legal practice in Yemen discriminates against women as they are not afforded the same protections on rights to divorce, inheritance and child custody in comparison to men. Child marriage has also increased by 66% with families using it as a coping mechanism to address the deprivation of economic opportunities.<sup>66</sup> With a lack of legal protections and economic strains on families, women are left exposed to domestic and sexual violence.

Prior to the civil war, Yemen already had one of the highest maternal death rates in the Middle East. According to the UNFPA 3.25 million people in Yemen are of childbearing age and their health has also been significantly harmed as a consequence of the conflict.<sup>67</sup> The disastrous humanitarian situation is putting the lives of 1.1 million pregnant women at risk.<sup>68</sup>

Only 45% of births in Yemen between 2006 and 2015 were attended by a qualified medical

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<sup>61</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Yemen: Events of 2017*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>62</sup> UNFPA Response in Yemen. *Monthly Situation Report #03*. April 2018. Available at: <http://yemen.unfpa.org/en/publications/monthly-situation-report-03-%E2%80%93-march-2018> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> World Health Organization, *Snap Shot of Health Facilities based Reported Deaths and Injuries*. 15 July 2017. Available at: [http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/yemen/Snap\\_Shot\\_of\\_Health\\_Facilities\\_based\\_Reported\\_Deaths\\_and\\_Injuries-15\\_July\\_2017.pdf?ua=1](http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/yemen/Snap_Shot_of_Health_Facilities_based_Reported_Deaths_and_Injuries-15_July_2017.pdf?ua=1) [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>65</sup> Oxfam, Evidence submitted to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen - 2018

<sup>66</sup> UN, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018*. 4 December 2017. Available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/yemen\\_humanitarian\\_needs\\_overview\\_hno\\_2018\\_20171204\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/yemen_humanitarian_needs_overview_hno_2018_20171204_0.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> UNFPA Response in Yemen; *Monthly Situation Report #03*. April 2018. Available at: <http://yemen.unfpa.org/en/publications/monthly-situation-report-03-%E2%80%93-march-2018> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

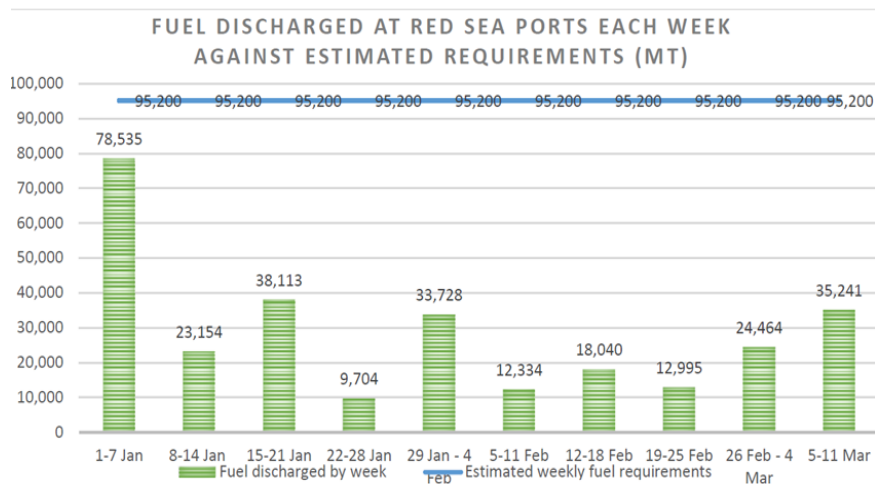


professional.<sup>69</sup> This will have decreased further as the fighting in Yemen has escalated and public sector salaries have been withheld.

Women in Yemen participated effectively during the National Dialogue Conference, and secured 30% representation in all political processes as part of the conference’s outcomes. Any peace deal must take into account the views of women across Yemen, in line with UN Resolution 1325 (2000). Some political activism has been possible in Yemen despite the conflict. The ‘Mothers of Abductees Association’, raises opposition to oppression and injustice. A group of Yemeni women under the name ‘Yemeni Women Peace Pact’ supported by UN Women has been working since 2015 to enforce women's inclusion in peace talks. Yemeni civil society leaders, including women, were participants at the Geneva donor conference and have exchanged views with the United Nations Special Envoy.<sup>70</sup>

### Civil Society and Infrastructure

Restrictions on commercial imports of fuel to Yemen have sparked critical shortages and price hikes across the country, severely impacting access to safe water and other vital services including health care and sanitation. Fuel price rises have an important footprint on this conflict, with price rises after IMF-inspired subsidy cuts triggering large Houthi inspired protests prior to their seizing of Sana’a in



Graph 2 (Evidence from the Norwegian Refugee Council)

2014. Since the conflict began, fuel prices in Yemen have been extremely volatile due to availability. While minor to moderate weekly fluctuations are to be expected, as shown in Graph 2, the quantity of fuel delivered each week has thus far exceeded 40% of estimated requirements only once this year.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Open letter to the UN envoy to Yemen from Yemeni Women*. 8 March 2018. Available at: <https://yemenwomenvoices.wordpress.com> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>71</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, Written Evidence Submission to the APPG – 2018.

At the current rate of fuel imports, the quantity required to meet needs as of 11 March will not reach Yemen until August, indicating a probability of prolonged inflation, increased dependence on aid and an inevitable deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

Restrictions on fuel were most extreme during the November-December 2017 blockade, and NGO's such as the ICRC were forced to buy 'stopgap' fuel in order to stop two cities in war-torn Yemen from completely running out of drinking water. Prices of commercially trucked water – a main source for one-fifth of Yemen's population – have fluctuated, and during the blockade at the end of 2017 it skyrocketed. In some locations they increased six-fold. For over two-thirds of Yemenis living in extreme poverty, safe water is now completely unaffordable.

There are approximately 1.2 million civil servants in Yemen, virtually all of whom have not received payment or received it only intermittently since August 2016.<sup>72</sup> This is by far the single biggest factor currently hindering the delivery of crucial public services. According to a joint statement by several NGOs the "additional costs are passed on to patients in hospitals at a time when average prices for food and other essential commodities are already up by as much as 30%, livelihoods are stagnating, preventable diseases like cholera are rampant, and many people are left to choose between food and medicine".<sup>73</sup> Saudi Arabia has not at the time of writing dispersed a promised \$2bn contribution to Yemen's central bank or set out a plan to ensure that the money promised is not siphoned off by corruption.<sup>74</sup> The Yemeni Central Bank recently announced that it is closing due to a shortage of funds.<sup>75</sup>

The healthcare system in Yemen has been on the verge of collapse for the last two years and is being propped up by the work of NGOs. Estimates have varied, but data suggests that over 50% of hospitals and medical facilities in Yemen have either closed or are only partly functioning.<sup>76</sup> Those affected by

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<sup>72</sup> Oxfam, Written Evidence Submission to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>73</sup> Joint NGO position on non-payment of public sector salaries and erosion of public service provision in Yemen, Evidence to APPG Yemen – 2017.

<sup>74</sup> A. Fitch, 'Saudi Arabia Pledges \$2 Billion to Stabilize Yemen's War-Torn Economy'. *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 January 2018. Available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-pledges-2-billion-to-stabilize-yemens-war-torn-economy-1516215404> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>75</sup> H. Hoexter, 'Yemen's central bank closes over shortage of funds'. *Al Jazeera*, 22 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/yemens-central-bank-closes-fund-shortage-180322185657444.html> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>76</sup> World Health Organization, 'Survey reveals extent of damage to Yemen's health system'. Press release, 6 November 2016. Available at: <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/survey-reveals-extent-of-damage-to-yemens-health-system.html> [accessed 7 May 2018].

the outbreak of cholera, and the wider conflict, have struggled to get medical help. According to the UN OCHA Jan 2017 UN Humanitarian Response Plan “an estimated 14.8 million people lack access to basic healthcare, including 8.8 million living in severely underserved areas. Medical materials are in chronically short supply, and under 45% of health facilities are functioning.”<sup>77</sup>

The war has destroyed much of Yemen’s infrastructure and this is having a devastating impact on the population. The Yemen Data Project has found that one-third of coalition airstrikes has been on non-military targets. Between March 2015 and March 2018, 26 airstrikes hit hospitals in Yemen.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile the de facto blockade on Yemen has led to severe restrictions on medical supplies reaching the country. Ships with medical supplies that have been cleared by the United Nations to enter Yemen have been delayed. The northern ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef are vital arteries for aid in Yemen, importing 80% of the country’s humanitarian and commercial supplies, including food, fuel and medicine.

However, the importance of infrastructure vital to support humanitarian operations has not resulted in it being safe from attack. Coalition airstrikes on Al-Hudaydah Port in 2015 disabled the 5 gantry cranes, which had a drastic impact on the levels of medical aid that was able to reach Yemen’s civilians. Over two-and-a-half-years later in January 2018, 4 mobile US-purchased cranes were delivered. While this delivery was welcomed by humanitarian groups, the new cranes do not have the same capability as the old ones.

"The cranes destroyed in 2015 could transport 30 containers each hour," according to Suze Van der Meegan of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "The four mobile cranes delivered by the US will help with offloading very small quantities of cargo."

Inside Yemen, both sides have imposed checkpoints that delay aid being delivered to the needy. The Houthis in the north have obstructed the distribution of humanitarian assistance and prevented humanitarian access.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> UN OCHA, *UN Humanitarian Response Plan* (2017). January 2017. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/oxfam-aid-being-flown-out-worlds-worst-cholera-outbreak-yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>78</sup> Yemen Data Project, Available at: <http://yemendataproject.org> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>79</sup> Save the Children, *Written Evidence to the APPG Yemen – 2018*.

## Operational and Security Challenges for Aid Organisations

More than 70 humanitarian organisations have been working to help ease the suffering in the war-stricken country. However, access constraints, damaged infrastructure and unreliable access to fuel, together with a shortage in funding, have severely undermined their performance.

The de facto blockade, which continues to be enforced by the Coalition, is one of the immediate issues to be addressed to ensure aid agencies are able to manage the growing humanitarian crisis. Only a small number of aid ships have been allowed to unload over the past year, with many having been turned away or have had to wait for long periods until they could be searched for weapons.

Yemen's main airport in Sana'a has been shut down by the Saudi-led coalition. Prior to the conflict, 7,000 Yemenis were reportedly using commercial flights each year to access critical medical treatment abroad (predominantly in Cairo and Amman), as many facilities and procedures were not available in Yemen. The escalation of Yemen's conflict and concurrent deterioration in health services saw a surge in the number of Yemenis travelling for critical medical treatment. Four months after the closure of the airport, in December 2015, OCHA reported that 20,000 Yemenis were unable to access critical medical treatment as a direct result of their lack of access to commercial flights from Sana'a. This closure has caused the deaths of thousands of Yemenis who needed overseas medical treatment.<sup>80</sup> The airport is also a vital artery for international aid to enter the country. The UN Panel of Experts Report released in early 2018, concluded that there was no military reason for the airport to be closed.<sup>81</sup>

In contrast to the complete blocking of Al-Hudaydah Port in November-December 2017, access has recently improved due to mounting pressure on the coalition. However, as shown in the Food Insecurity and Civil Society and Infrastructure sections of this report, the supplies that are making it through to Yemen are still insufficient. Food and cholera treatment kits continue to be blocked and will be for the foreseeable future.<sup>82</sup> Aid agencies struggle to predict what percentage of their

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<sup>80</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, 'Yemen airport closure killed more people than airstrikes'. 9 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.nrc.no/news/2017/august/yemen-airport-closure-killed-more-people-than-airstrikes/> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>81</sup> A. Himmiche; F.R. Carvajal; D.R. Gunaratne; J.G. Johnsen and A. Wilkinson, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen*, 26 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>82</sup> Save the Children, *Written Evidence to the APPG Yemen – 2018*.

supplies will enter Yemen.

The Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO), launched by the Saudis, presents another danger to aid organisations. All aid organisations who have submitted evidence stress the importance of Al-Hudaydah and Salif. The YCHO relief programme commits to restricting the flow of cargo that comes through the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Salif.<sup>83</sup>

Certain governates have been particularly challenging for aid agencies to access. The governates of Marib, Shabwa, Al Bayda, Hajja and Sa'ada are difficult due to a lack of data, assessments and insecurity. Taiz, given its status as a key battlefield city, is also extremely challenging.<sup>84</sup>

The UK has worked on solutions to ease the de facto blockade. In collaboration with other donors, the UK has supported the establishment of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), which became operational on 5 May, 2016. According to the House of Commons International Development Committee, the arrangement “should speed up the clearance process for ships and improve commercial confidence, in turn aiming to reduce the price of basic goods”.<sup>85</sup>

An increased flow of humanitarian aid and commercial imports should also be viewed as in the interest of the entire Coalition, both to end any speculation that starvation is being used as a military strategy, as well as to avoid a famine and economic disaster, which Saudi Arabia would not want to occur on its doorstep.

For their part, the Houthis have been blocking humanitarian access internally through sieges and checkpoints and this has prevented humanitarian workers from serving parts of the population in Houthi controlled areas.

Securing visas to enter Yemen is challenging as both Houthi and Coalition authorities must approve visas before they are authorised. The speed of authorisation – or whether authorisation is received at all – depends on the nationality of those applying. Work visas for Pakistani and Sudanese nationals, who make up a large portion of the international workforce, are currently blocked.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Written Evidence to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Mercy Corps, Evidence to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>85</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, *Crisis in Yemen: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2015*. 14 July 2015, HC557. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmintdev/557/557.pdf> [accessed 15 October 2017].

<sup>86</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Written Evidence submitted to the Yemen APPG – 2018.

There is also a lack of coordination between different areas of governance in Houthi-controlled areas and this directly impacts the ability of aid organisations to act. Projects may get approval from one administrative body but the same project may be denied approval by another.

Staff restrictions are also imposed on organisations by the United Nations.<sup>87</sup> The cap on international staff that an organisation can have in Yemen is currently set at 15 people.<sup>88</sup> With the cap in place, organisations are having to base staff abroad, commonly in Djibouti, as opposed to being based in Yemen. This restricts the ability of organisations to rotate staff or attend training courses.

The operating environment in Yemen is getting more difficult for organisations as the situation on the ground deteriorates. Commodity prices have skyrocketed and the Riyal has collapsed. The resulting liquidity has decreased the value of donor funds.<sup>89</sup>

Staff of aid organisations face a clear danger on the ground in Yemen. Offices, properties and depots have been damaged in fighting and through bombing by the Saudi-led Coalition. Notably, two ICRC staff members were shot dead on 2 September, 2015, in the Amran Governorate.<sup>90</sup> On 28 September, two volunteers working with the Yemeni Red Crescent Society were killed along with other civilians during an airstrike in the Al-Swaida area of Taiz.<sup>91</sup> On 10 January, 2016, an MSF hospital was bombed by the Coalition, injuring three staff and six four other people.<sup>92</sup> In February 2016, Saudi Arabia asked that aid workers withdraw from rebel-held areas – a request the UN rejected. However, in August 2016, MSF announced that it was to withdraw its staff from six hospitals after a Saudi air raid killed 19 people.<sup>93</sup> Recently, in April 2018, Hanna Lahoud, a Lebanese national, was in charge of the ICRC's detention programme in Yemen. He was on his way to visit a prison that morning when the ICRC vehicle he was travelling in was attacked by unknown armed men on the

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<sup>87</sup> Save the Children, Written Evidence submitted to the Yemen APPG – 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Saferworld, Written Evidence submitted to the Yemen APPG – 2018.

<sup>90</sup> 'Yemen crisis: Red Cross staff shot dead in Amran', *BBC News*, 2 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34128539> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>91</sup> IFRC, 'Yemen: Two volunteers of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement killed in airstrike'. 30 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/press-releases/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/yemen-two-volunteers-of-the-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement-killed-in-airstrike> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>92</sup> MSF, 'MSF-supported hospital bombed in Yemen: death toll rises to six'. 10 January 2016. Available at: <http://www.msf.org/en/article/msf-supported-hospital-bombed-yemen-death-toll-rises-six> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>93</sup> 'Yemen conflict: MSF to withdraw staff from northern hospitals' *BBC News*, 18 August 2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-37123924> [accessed 13 May 2018].



outskirts of Taiz. He died later that day in hospital.<sup>94</sup> These are just a number of examples of the perils that face aid organisations and their workers on the ground in Yemen.

NGOs and charities require safe, predictable, and unimpeded access to people across Yemen, and distribution free from interference or threats to staff. Parties to the conflict must allow unconditional and safe access for humanitarian agencies to facilitate timely, lifesaving assistance. Humanitarian aid must be delivered across frontlines, and in particular into 'cut off' areas under heavy fighting. Furthermore, humanitarian organisations must be allowed to carry out their activities in an independent and impartial manner without excessive hurdles, lengthy administrative procedures or political interference.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The UK has committed £170 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the financial year 2018/2019. This is on top of £139 million in 2017/2018, £112 million in 2016/17 and £90 million in 2015/16. These contributions make the UK the third largest aid donor to Yemen. The UK must continue to lead with its contributions to Yemen, providing emergency assistance to the civilian population. Alongside aid provision, the UK Government should continue to unequivocally condemn ongoing obstructions by parties to access for humanitarian goods and workers and continue to demand that all parties immediately implement the demands set out in UN Security Council Presidential statements of 15 March 2018 and 15 June 2017 which remain largely unimplemented
- Recalling the strong relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia, the UK should impress upon the Saudis, publicly and privately, the need to fully and unconditionally lift the de facto blockade on Yemen's ports. The UK should remind all the parties to the conflict of their legal obligation to open transport routes for civilians in accordance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, allowing unfettered access to all Yemen's ports – including Al Hudaydah and all Red Sea ports – is necessary to securing the rapid delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as commercial supplies of food, fuel and medical goods necessary to address cholera and prevent famine. All messages in this respect should be underpinned

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<sup>94</sup> ICRC, 'ICRC staff member shot and killed in Taiz'. 21 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/yemen-icrc-staff-member-shot-and-killed-taiz> [accessed 7 May 2018].



by a humanitarian footing with a focus on the challenges faced by civilians.

- The UK can support a speedy empowerment of UNVIM through improving financial contributions to the fund and could provide more personnel. Vessels that have been cleared by UNVIM have to be allowed speedy access to Yemen's population. The United Kingdom must call for an end to lengthy duplicate inspections by the Saudi-led Coalition on commercial ships. The UK should track imports via Red Sea ports and call on all parties to cease additional obstructions, and to report on any inspections carried out to the UNSC Sanctions Committee, in accordance with their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2216. Any efforts by any side in the conflict to slow delivery should be recognised by the Government as a willful obstruction aimed at collectively punishing Yemen's civilians.
- The non-payment of public sector salaries is a key cause of the spread of disease and hunger in Yemen. It is in the UK's interests to ensure that public sector salaries are restored, and in this view the UK should seek to renew its existing efforts to bring key parties together to find a pragmatic solution to ensure that public sector salary payments are resumed by the legitimate Yemeni government across the country, irrespective of the political or military circumstances ongoing.
- The recent UN donor conference for Yemen received pledges of £1.2bn in April 2018. This was £379 million less than had been hoped. Last year's Yemen appeal for \$2.5bn was 73% funded. As a significant donor of aid to Yemen the UK should seek to leverage its influence to ensure that to the 2018 appeal is fully funded by the international community.
- The United Nations Panel of Experts confirmed in January 2018, that there is no military reason for the closure of Sana'a airport. Its closure has a direct impact on the work of aid organisations and on levels of access to appropriate medical help for Yemeni citizens. The recent announcement of an air corridor for medical evacuations from Sana'a to Cairo is welcome, but insufficient. The UK Government must unconditionally push for the operational reopening of Sana'a airport to commercial and humanitarian flights.



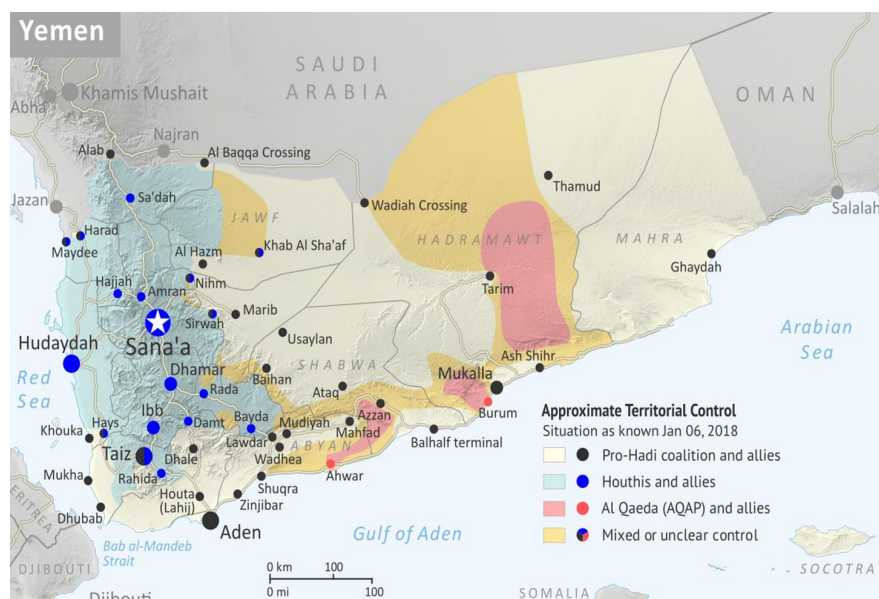
## 4. Security Situation

### Status on the Ground in 2018

For over three years now, fighting in Yemen has led to destruction and misery for the population and caused the humanitarian crisis outlined above. Yemen's civil war is extremely complicated and significantly more complex than the dichotomous affair between the Iranian-backed Houthis and the Coalition-supported Hadi government that is frequently alluded to.

Explaining the nuances of Yemen's political and tribal system and its importance in producing a fair and sustainable peace is, however, beyond the scope of this report. But this does not diminish the vital role all the actors involved in Yemen in the fighting and in the political process will play in any future peace deal.

In 2018, fighting in Yemen has settled into what Peter Salisbury of Chatham House describes as a "pragmatic, if economically destructive stalemate".<sup>95</sup> As Salisbury suggests in the Chatham House 'National Chaos, Local Order' report, Yemen's big war between the Houthis and the Coalition-



**Map 2: Source: Yemen - areas of approximate territorial control in January 2018. Source: Political Geography Now <http://www.polgeonow.com/2018/01/who-rules-yemen-map-houthis-control.html>**

supported Hadi government has now disintegrated into a series of small wars and localised conflicts.<sup>96</sup>

The majority of frontlines of this conflict are mainly static and scattered across the country. Established frontlines exist between the Houthis and government, or government supporting forces in, Al Bayda, Sirwah, Nihm and Al Jawf. There are

<sup>95</sup> P. Salisbury, *Yemen: National Chaos, Local Order*. 20 December 2017. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/yemen-national-chaos-local-order> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

also clashes between sides in Taiz (although the Houthis have lost ground here recently) Dant, Mukayras and Kirsh.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project calculated that between January 2017 and March 2018, there had been 23,000 people killed from the fighting (both combatant and non-combatant fatalities).<sup>97</sup>

Since 2015, the Houthis have advanced their asymmetrical weapons capabilities, including radio-controlled improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and this has slowed the advances of Coalition forces on the ground. All sides remain wedded to a military solution to the conflict.

The exceptions to these frozen frontlines are UAE-supported advances on Yemen's Red Sea coast under Brigadier General Tariq Saleh. The Houthis have suffered some other losses since December 2017 in locations such as Tihama, a small enclave in Shabwa, and a part of the city of Taiz. However, generally, the front lines between sides in Yemen are, and have been holding. The Coalition's aerial monopoly has had devastating consequences for Yemen's population, but its efforts have not been translated into the widespread territorial rollback of the Houthis that was hoped for at its conception in 2015. Despite territorial gains, it remains the case that the Houthis control the capital, most government institutions and, according to a United Nations Report, still have access to 60-70% of the country's military resources.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the claims of the Hadi government in exile, resistance to the Houthis does not occur under one united government flag by Hadi loyalists. This narrative is not reflective of the situation on the ground. In reality, loyalty to Yemen's internationally recognised government fluctuates depending on the region. In some regions like Mareb and Jawf, successful efforts have been made to enlist those fighting into new government and security forces. In other provinces, like Al Bayda, less of an effort has been made to integrate fighters into the government force.

Islah, which has links to the Muslim Brotherhood (although it officially distanced itself in December 2017), remains the largest political institution of the liberated areas in Yemen. Islah forces are also the main fighting element in the Mareb area and forces affiliated to Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar are also

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<sup>97</sup> Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) data. Available at: <https://www.acleddata.com/data/> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>98</sup> P. Salisbury, *Yemen: National Chaos, Local Order*. 20 December 2017. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/yemen-national-chaos-local-order> [accessed 7 May 2018].

the primary fighting force in Al Jawf, Nihm and Sirwah. The UAE has sought to undermine Islah's role in Yemen, and this explains clashes between UAE supported forces and Islah (see next section).

Other forces like the Southern Resistance, Tilhama Resistance, Tribes from Al Bayda, Sudanese backed rapid response units and mercenaries from across the world - in particular Columbia - are all involved in fighting in different theatres across the country.

Despite largely frozen frontlines, the conflict in Yemen has shown it is still prone to sharp developments and escalations. The most recent example of this was the disintegration of the Houthi-Saleh alliance, beginning in the summer of 2017 and culminating in clashes at the al-Saleh mosque in Sana'a, a five day street fight for control of the capital, and the death of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In the battles aftermath, it was speculated that the Houthis would be seriously militarily degraded. However, this has not proved to be the case. The fragmentation of the former Yemeni president's political party has weakened the effect of the split on the Houthis. Three GPC factions have emerged following Saleh's death. The first remained as part of the Sana'a based Houthi alliance. The second faction is reorganising with the assistance of Saudi Arabia and the final faction is, with the help of the UAE, coalescing around Saleh's son Ahmed Ali and nephew, Tariq Ahmed Ali.<sup>99</sup>

Among the major recent developments in the conflict has been the rise to prominence of the Southern Transition Council (STC) in Yemen's South.<sup>100</sup> The STC is a separatist organisation in Yemen and has clashed with pro-government forces. In January 2018, following fighting in Yemen, the STC issued an ultimatum threatening to topple the internationally recognised Yemeni government in one week unless President Hadi dismissed his cabinet. The STC cited the failure of Hadi's government to deliver basic services, especially in Aden, as cause and also announced the formal constitution of the Southern Resistance Forces as the security force for South Yemen. Yemen's civil war has pushed pro-secessionist parties together and while not completely united, the fighting in Aden demonstrated their coherence. The STC, externally backed by the United Arab Emirates, have increased their political voice in Yemen during the civil war. They will have a role in any peace talks

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<sup>99</sup> Critical Threats, *Yemen Situation Report*. 24 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-situation-report/2018-yemen-crisis-situation-report-january-24> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>100</sup> M. Muhashaf, 'Southern Yemen separatists want Saudi-backed government overthrown'. *Reuters*, 21 January 2018. Available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-security-southerners/southern-yemen-separatists-want-saudi-backed-government-overthrown-idUKKBN1FA0WT> [accessed 7 May 2018].

and agreement in the future.

Recent developments in the conflict have seen UAE-backed Yemeni forces consolidating and advancing their position along the Red Sea coast. Military operations have begun in Western Mokha to gain control of the Khalid bin al Walid military camp. These advances have convinced some Yemen observers that an attempt is being made to prepare forces to retake the Al-Hudaydah province and Al-Hudaydah port. It has been stressed by NGOs and aid agencies that this would cause a humanitarian catastrophe, preventing support reaching people in Yemen. An attack on Hays could see the displacement of around 70,000 people with the potential to rise to 120,000 people. An advance on Al-Hudaydah city itself could displace 600,000 people.<sup>101</sup>

At time of writing the UAE supported forces have launched 'Operation Red Thunder' alongside their military operations on Yemen's west coast. This operation began with an amphibious assault on a Houthi- controlled command centre in the Al Faza region in Yemen's Al-Hudaydah Province. Since April 2018, the UAE backed fighters have made advances to the south of Al-Hudaydah port in al-Jarahni and Al-Khoukha (75 miles from Hudyadah port.) The Coalition backed off making military advances on the populous province last year amid strong pressure from the United Nations and the international community. As noted above the humanitarian consequences of an attack on Yemen's major Red Sea ports would be catastrophic.

Another major escalation has been increasing Houthi capabilities which have seen them develop the ability to strike deep into Saudi Arabia from within Yemen. While initially only in possession of munitions captured from the Yemeni Army, they have since acquired additional systems. It is widely held that Iranian support has enabled the Houthis to launch such strikes and drastically improve their military capabilities, with debris from missiles allegedly supplied from Iran being recovered in the wake of strikes against Saudi Arabia.<sup>102</sup>

It was the firing of a Houthi missile at Riyadh Airport on 4 November, 2017, that lead to the recent tightening of the blockade of Yemen's ports. In 2018, the Houthis have increased their ballistic missile attacks against Saudi targets. In late March 2018, a Houthi missile attack on Riyadh killed one

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<sup>101</sup> Oxfam, Written Evidence submitted to the APPG Yemen – 2018.

<sup>102</sup> J. Borger and P. Wintour, 'US gives evidence Iran supplied missiles that Yemen rebels fired at Saudi Arabia'. *The Guardian*, 14 December 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/14/us-gives-evidence-iran-supplied-missiles-that-yemen-rebels-fired-at-saudi-arabia> [accessed 6 May 2018].

Saudi citizen.<sup>103</sup> On 22 April and 23 April, two ballistic missiles were launched at Najran city in Saudi Arabia and two short-range Badr 1 ballistic missiles at the Saudi ARAMCO facility in Jizan city. Badr 1 missiles have been targeted at the ARAMCO facility on 11 April, 12 April, 18 April and 20 April. Missiles were fired at the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on 11 April and Najran on 16 April. UAE military positions have also been targeted in Mokha in Yemen, with two of these missiles being intercepted on 15 April.<sup>104</sup> The escalation of the conflict by the coalition has been mirrored by an escalation of Houthi missile attacks.

### **The Coalition's War**

The Saudi-led intervention started on 26 March, 2015, when Saudi Arabia began a bombing campaign to force a Houthi withdrawal from key areas in Yemen, spearheading the Coalition of (mostly Arab, Sunni) countries. The operation, codenamed 'Operation Decisive Storm', was a countrywide air campaign against Houthis and allied military units loyal to former President Saleh.

On 21 April, 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the end of 'Decisive Storm', having successfully "eliminated the threat", and announced the next phase of their intervention, 'Operation Renewal of Hope', which would focus more on the political process, but retain objectives from 'Decisive Storm' such as "confronting terrorism" and "preventing any moves by the Houthi militias and their allies to acquire or use weapons seized from the Yemeni armed forces or abroad".

Despite this announcement, the no-fly zone, airstrikes and arms embargo have continued. Coalition forces were also deployed on the ground, with Saudi and UAE units assisting local forces in pushing the Houthi out of Aden – and in doing so securing the only major allied success against the group. There were also clashes along the Yemen-Saudi border, with raids and exchanges of artillery fire taking place. This quickly escalated to include the firing of captured missiles at Saudi Arabia by rebel forces.

For the past three years serious questions have been raised about the Coalition's targeting policy. Civilian casualties from bombing have escalated sharply since the breakdown of the August 2016

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<sup>103</sup> 'Saudi Arabia shoots down missiles from Yemen; one dead from debris'. *Reuters*, 25 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-security/saudi-arabia-shoots-down-missiles-from-yemen-one-dead-from-debris-idUSKBN1H10YB> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>104</sup> Critical Threats, *Yemeni Situation Report*. 24 April. Available at: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-situation-report/2018-yemen-crisis-situation-report-april-24> [accessed 7 May 2018].

ceasefire. The primary thrust of the Saudi military campaign in Yemen has come through relentless bombing by its air force. The Yemen Data Project has been logging attacks by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen from March 2015. This data shows that since ‘Operation Decisive Storm’ was launched the Coalition has carried out on average 15 air raids per day. A total of 16,749 air raids were recorded from 26 March, 2015 to 25 March, 2018. The data also shows that nearly one-third of all air raids (31%) targeted non-military sites.<sup>105</sup> The United Nations found that Saudi coalition airstrikes caused 97% of civilian deaths between December 2017 and January 2018.<sup>106</sup>

Coalition air raids have repeatedly targeted infrastructure and sites relevant to healthcare, food and water. From 26 March, 2015 to 25 March, 2018, 456 air raids targeted farms, 195 air raids targeted market places, 110 air raids targeted water and electricity sites, 70 air raids targeted healthcare sites, 63 air raids targeted food storage sites.<sup>107</sup>

March 2018 has seen a doubling down of Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen. The month of March saw the highest number of bombings by the Saudi coalition so far this year, with 423 air raids recorded - up 23% on February. The number of air raids (75) targeting Al-Hudaydah were the highest in the coastal governorate since the Saudi-led bombing campaign began three years ago, and a 23% rise on the December 2017 spike that coincided with anti-Houthi ground forces launching a new offensive into the governorate.<sup>108</sup> These developments add fuel to concerns that the Coalition will be looking to undertake a military operation to retake the port.

The UAE is an active member of the Coalition with a large footprint in the south of Yemen. There, the UAE backs a number of groups including Salafists and southern separatist groups, and also conducts large-scale anti-terror operations with US backing in the east of the country. One of the primary concerns of the UAE in Yemen is the rise of political Islam through Islah. Preventing Islah gaining power in Yemen is a key aim of the UAE and this explains why they have clashed with Ali Mohsen’s forces in certain parts of the country. Recently, the UAE has expanded its presence on sea and airports on the remote island of Socotra. The island, seen as being strategically important, was

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<sup>105</sup> Yemen Data Project, Available at: <http://yemendataproject.org> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>106</sup> Protection Cluster Yemen. *Civilian Impact Monitoring Report*. February 2018. Available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cimp\\_bi-monthly\\_report\\_dec\\_2017\\_-\\_jan\\_2018.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cimp_bi-monthly_report_dec_2017_-_jan_2018.pdf) [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>107</sup> Yemen Data Project, Available at: <http://yemendataproject.org> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

recently leased by the UAE for 99 years.<sup>109</sup> As with Saudi Arabia, the UAE as a leading member of the coalition has been accused of widespread human rights abuses in Yemen.<sup>110</sup>

Given that military action is not having the desired effect for the Coalition's forces, whose primary desire for the intervention was a stable Yemen headed by the government in exile, the stagnating conflict should be seen as an opportunity for the UK and other international partners to offer the Coalition a 'way out'.

The Coalition has now invested significant domestic, military and diplomatic capital into defeating the Houthis. Failure will certainly have severe implications for the region, including from refugee flows and the growth of extremist groups. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, who has led the Saudi efforts since March 2015, has staked much of his credibility on the conflict in Yemen.

The Coalition has no desire for an indefinite conflict, to pay the political price for a war that is not progressing well, or for further destabilisation in Yemen. Therefore, a diplomatic solution is by far the most expedient and positive route to end the current crisis.

But as UAE-backed Yemeni forces make advances along the Red Sea Coast towards Al-Hudaydah and with the death of Saleh al-Sammad – the Houthis' political leader – in a Saudi airstrike, the Coalition appears to be committed to a military solution.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The stagnating military situation is an opportunity for an international actor with a long-standing and positive relationship with Saudi Arabia to push for a diplomatic solution. The UK must continue to insist that there is no military solution to the conflict and that all parties must engage in talks in good faith and without preconditions. The UK should encourage Coalition members to 'save face' by ceasing military operations under the premise of stopping the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. This can be promoted as a way of allowing the coalition to recover lost moral and diplomatic capital internationally.

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<sup>109</sup> 'UAE forces 'occupy' sea and airports on Yemen's Socotra'. *Al Jazeera*, 4 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/uae-forces-occupy-sea-airports-yemen-socotra-180504181423573.html> [accessed 15 May 2018]

<sup>110</sup> Human Rights Watch, *United Arab Emirates: Events of 2017*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/united-arab-emirates> [accessed 7 May 2018].

- Military escalation on Al Hudaydah Port would be a catastrophe for the population of Yemen. This would severely limit and even halt the assistance that is able to come through the port. Offensives on the port region would also have devastating implications for peace talks. According to the UN Special Envoy it would “in a stroke, take peace off the table.” The UK must continue to urge the coalition publicly and privately not to attack this area, reinforce that there can be no military solution, and instead insist that all parties engage in good faith in peace talks towards a political solution.

## Terrorism

AQAP is the most capable branch of Al-Qaeda in the world, and is particularly feared for its bomb-making skills that have been deployed against the West on a number of occasions. In addition to the attacks outlined in the background section of this paper, other notable incidents involving AQAP have included the attempted downing of a US airliner in 2009 by a bomb sewn into a terrorist’s underwear<sup>111</sup> and the 2015 attack on the offices of French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*.<sup>112</sup> Within Yemen, the group has carried out numerous terrorist attacks – including on the US, British and Italian embassies in Sana’a – and has a conventional strength of several thousand fighters. The ultimate aim of AQAP is to replace the Saudi and Yemeni governments with fundamentalist regimes purged of Western influence.<sup>113</sup> AQAP has a decentralised hierarchical structure, which makes the group incredibly flexible and elusive.

The current conflict in Yemen has allowed AQAP to benefit from the resultant security vacuum. The distraction of the civil war has eased the pressure from government security forces, allowing increased militant presence in the country. Notably, Yemen’s limited water resources have also allowed them to fill the void of the central government in regions south and east of Sana’a by providing villages with water, wells, and other important water infrastructure.<sup>114</sup> However, as a Sunni

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<sup>111</sup> ‘Al-Qaeda wing claims Christmas Day US flight bomb plot’. *BBC News*, 28 December 2009. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/8433151.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8433151.stm)

<sup>112</sup> A. Yuhas, ‘How Yemen spawned the Charlie Hebdo attacks’. *The Guardian*, 14 January 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/14/yemen-aqap-civil-war-extremism> [accessed 10 October 2017]

<sup>113</sup> *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*. Council on Foreign Relations, 19 June 2015. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/background/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap> [accessed 10 October 2017]

<sup>114</sup> F. Whitehead, ‘Water scarcity in Yemen: the country’s forgotten conflict’. *The Guardian*, 2 April 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/apr/02/water-scarcity-yemen-conflict> [accessed 10 October 2010].



group, AQAP also opposes the Houthi rebels, and clashes between the two groups are frequent.

The Islamic State has a presence in Yemen. In March 2015, extremists affiliated to the group carried out suicide bombings on two Shi'a mosques in the capital of Sana'a. At least 137 people were killed.<sup>115</sup> It was the first attack attributed to Islamic State since the group gained a foothold in the country. On 2 September, a double suicide bomb attack in Sana'a killed at least 20 people in a mosque.<sup>116</sup> Just days later, during the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday, two suicide bombers attacked another Shi'a mosque, killing at least 25 people and leaving many more wounded.<sup>117</sup>

Prior to the civil war, the US worked with the Yemeni authorities in targeting terrorist groups operating in the country. Drone strikes against terrorists are ongoing despite the Coalition campaign. Notably, the long-time leader of AQAP, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, was killed in a US strike in June 2015. Al-Wuhayshi was Al-Qaeda's second-in-command and the highest-ranking leader to be killed since Osama Bin Laden in 2011.

Since the coming to power of the Trump administration, strikes against AQAP in Yemen have escalated dramatically, with US commanders reportedly given increased independence to conduct strikes on their own initiative.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, in January 2017, the US carried out a Special Forces raid in the country as part of an attempt to capture or kill AQAP leader leadership targets. The mission failed and resulted both in a number of civilian deaths and in the withdrawal by the Yemeni government of permission for such raids.<sup>119</sup>

More success has, however, been had against AQAP's conventional forces in Yemen. Initially, the group had a wave of advances in the midst of the chaos of the conflict. Most notably, in April 2015, AQAP fighters captured the coastal city of Mukalla. However, Yemeni government forces recaptured

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<sup>115</sup> 'Yemen: over 100 dead in suicide bombings at Houthi mosques in Sana'a'. *The Guardian*, 20 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/20/yemen-suicide-bombings-sanaa-mosques-shia-huthi-muslims-scores-dead> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>116</sup> 'Yemen crisis: Sana'a mosque bombings kill at least 20, officials say'. *BBC News*, 2 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34134450> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>117</sup> 'Yemen mosque blasts: Sana'a medics report multiple casualties'. *The Guardian*, 24 September 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/24/yemen-suicide-bomb-blast-mosque-prayers> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>118</sup> K. Watkins and J. Tseng, 'US strikes Yemen more in a few weeks than it did all last year'. *CNN*, 4 April 2017. Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/04/politics/yemen-strikes-us-involvement/index.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>119</sup> D.E. Sanger and E. Schmitt, 'Yemen Withdraws Permission for US anti-terror Ground Missions'. *New York Times*, 7 February 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/world/middleeast/yemen-special-operations-missions.html> [accessed 10 October 2017]

the city in April 2016, and in the summer of 2017 were engaged in operations to clear fighters from many of their remaining strongholds.<sup>120</sup>

In comparison to AQAP, the Islamic State has struggled to capitalise on Yemen's chaos. Lacking AQAP's political sophistication, it instead relies on brutality and direct governance to attempt to establish its dominance. However, this approach has been poorly received by Yemeni society. The sectarian tensions which the Islamic State sought to exploit also proved less deep than expected.<sup>121</sup> On 16 October, 2017, the US conducted its first air strikes against Islamic State fighters in Yemen, killing dozens through the bombing of two training camps.

The UAE has supported a number of clearing operations to dismantle AQAP in its strongholds in eastern Yemen in 2018. Operation Faisal, launched on 16 February, was aimed at clearing AQAP from the Masini valley, roughly 100 kilometres west of Yemen's third largest port city, al Mukalla city.<sup>122</sup> Other recent operations include operation Sweeping Torrent, in Al Maahfad and Wadi Hamara districts in March 2018.

Despite the setbacks both AQAP and the Islamic State have recently received, these organisations are a direct threat to the entire region and to Western states. AQAP have continued to claim attacks across Yemen and ISIS have adopted similar tactics in the country to AQAP, using vehicle borne improvised devices in attacks in Aden in March 2018.

The re-establishment of a central security apparatus and dedicated counter-terrorism efforts can only happen after the civil war has ended. This factor should provide an impetus to the international community to increase the pressure on both parties to negotiate.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The growth of terrorist groups in Yemen must be viewed with greater concern by the international community and identified as an additional motivating factor for a resolution of

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<sup>120</sup> S. Al-Batati and E. Schmitt, 'Thousands of Yemeni Forces Target Qaeda Stronghold'. *New York Times*, 6 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/06/world/middleeast/yemen-qaeda-shabwa-province.html> [accessed 7 October].

<sup>121</sup> Horton, M. *Why Islamic State Has Failed to Expand in Yemen*. *The Jamestown Foundation*, 24 March 2017. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/islamic-state-failed-expand-yemen/> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>122</sup> 'Arab coalition launches offensive to drive out Al Qaeda in Yemen'. *The National*, 17 February 2018. Available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/arab-coalition-launches-offensive-to-drive-out-al-qaeda-in-yemen-1.705380> [accessed 7 May 2018].

the conflict. None of the leading parties in the war have a vested interest in either AQAP or the Islamic State maintaining their presence in the country, and their removal could form a component of a peace settlement. The UK must be clear that addressing Yemen's broadly ungoverned spaces is essential to the longer-term stability of the country and as such, the UK should seek to ensure that a solution to counter AQAP/Islamic State forms a component of any future peace settlement.

### Human Rights in Yemen

The United Kingdom must take all allegations of human rights abuses seriously. It is imperative that the UK vocally condemn the perpetrators of human rights abuses and that it mobilise all of its diplomatic muscle to ensure that violations are not allowed to continue. Upholding international norms, laws and human rights across the world should be an undisputed central pillar of UK foreign policy.

All sides involved in the conflict have been accused of human rights violations in Yemen. According to Human Rights Watch, both factions are unlawfully impeding the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid.<sup>123</sup> The Coalition has used cluster munitions, while Houthi-Saleh forces have used antipersonnel landmines—both weapons are banned by international treaties.<sup>124</sup> On 29 September 2017, the UN responded to pleas for an international inquiry into the widespread violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution to establish a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts.

Accusations of human rights abuses have been levelled against the Saudi led Coalition since they began their air campaign in March 2015. Human Rights Watch has documented 85 apparently unlawful Coalition airstrikes, which have killed nearly 1,000 civilians and hit homes, markets, hospitals, schools, and mosques.<sup>125</sup> The Yemen Data Project suggests that over one-third of Coalition strikes have hit none military targets.<sup>126</sup> In April 2018, the Coalition bombed a wedding party that left 20 people dead including the bride.<sup>127</sup> The most deadly attack by the Coalition was on a funeral

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<sup>123</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Country Chapter: Yemen*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 30th April 2018]

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Yemen Data Project, Available at: <http://yemendataproject.org> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>127</sup> J. Watt, 'Government says UK's 'heart goes out' to wedding guests killed by Saudi bombs, but won't stop selling

in Saana in 2016. Over 140 people were reported to have been killed by the strike with 600 more injured. The Joint Incidents Team (JIT) admitted responsibility for the operation and blamed faulty information.<sup>128</sup>

Saudi Arabia previously pledged in 2017 to reduce civilian harm in Coalition attacks. Since then, Human Rights Watch documented six Coalition attacks that killed 55 civilians, including 33 children; one killed 14 members of the same family.<sup>129</sup> The UN Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) office reported in September that coalition airstrikes remain “the leading cause of civilian casualties”.<sup>130</sup> The legality of Coalition airstrikes was also raised by the UN Panel of Experts report released to the UN Security Council in January 2018. The Panel reviewed 10 Saudi airstrikes and the conclusions that they drew were that “even if the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition had targeted legitimate military objective it is highly unlikely that the principles in international humanitarian law of proportionality and precautions in attack were respected”.<sup>131</sup>

Saudi Arabia is not party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions which bans the weapon. Between March 2015 and December 2016, Saudi Arabia used British made BL-755 Cluster Munitions. Then Defence Secretary Michael Fallon confirmed that this had been the case stating that a “limited number” of BL755 cluster munitions exported from the UK in the 1980s had been dropped by the Arab coalition.<sup>132</sup> In December 2016, the Coalition announced it would stop using British-made cluster munitions, but has continued to use Brazilian-made cluster munitions.<sup>133</sup> Human Rights Watch documented at least 18 coalition attacks using cluster munitions, which killed or wounded

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country arms’. *The Independent*, 24 April. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-saudi-arabia-arms-deals-wedding-yemen-deaths-air-strikes-harriet-baldwin-a8320006.html> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>128</sup> ‘Saudi-led coalition admits to bombing Yemen funeral’. *The Guardian*, 15 October 2016. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/15/saudi-led-coalition-admits-to-bombing-yemen-funeral> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>129</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Country Chapter: Yemen*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> A. Himiche; F.R. Carvajal; D.R. Gunaratne; J.G. Johnsen and A. Wilkinson, A. *Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen*, 26 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports> [accessed 6 May 2018].

<sup>132</sup> A. Cowburn, British manufactured cluster bombs have been used in Yemen by Saudi Arabia, Michael Fallon admits. *The Independent*, 19 December 2016. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-fallon-confirms-british-made-cluster-bombs-have-been-used-by-saudis-in-yemen-conflict-a7485106.html> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>133</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Country Chapter: Yemen*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

dozens of civilians.<sup>134</sup>

The Houthis have also been accused of breaching international law. Artillery attacks have been described as indiscriminate in Yemen's cities and are known to have caused civilian casualties. Over three days in May 2017, artillery attacks in Taizz, most of them carried out by Houthi-Saleh forces, killed at least 12 civilians, including 4 children.<sup>135</sup> The OHCHR has referred to the shelling of Taizz by the Houthis as "unrelenting". Increasing military capability has enabled the Houthis to fire missiles deep into Saudi Arabia. The targeting of King Salman airport on 4 November, 2017, was called by the UN Panel of Experts a "violation IHL, in that it targeted a civilian airport, constituting a threat to peace, security and stability of Yemen".<sup>136</sup>

Both sides have wilfully impeded humanitarian aid entering the country. The decision by the Coalition to enforce a blockade on Yemen following the 4 November missile attacks has been alleged by some to be a war crime. A blockade is allowed as a means of war. However, it cannot be used as a collective punishment of a population. This is specified in Article 33 of the Geneva Convention. Houthi forces have blocked and confiscated food and medical supplies and denied access to populations in need. They have imposed onerous restrictions on aid workers and interfered with aid delivery. Aid groups have ceased working in some areas due to these restrictions. The cumulative impact of Houthi obstruction and interference with humanitarian assistance has significantly harmed the civilian population.

Landmines are present across Yemen and if left unchecked will be a major part of the legacy of this conflict. Hundreds of people have been killed and maimed so far and civilian life has been greatly impacted in affected areas. Houthi forces are reported to have used landmines in at least six governorates. Establishing where these minefields are so that they can be cleared is imperative in any rebuilding effort following the conflict.

All sides in the conflict have been accused of arbitrarily detaining people, including children, abusing detainees and holding them in poor conditions. Forcible disappearance of political opponents has

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> 'Yemen: Cluster Munitions Wound Children' (2017) Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/17/yemen-cluster-munitions-wound-children> [accessed 7 May 2018]

<sup>136</sup> A. Himiche; F.R. Carvajal; D.R. Gunaratne; J.G. Johnsen and A. Wilkinson, A. *Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen*, 26 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports> [accessed 6 May 2018].

become common place now in Yemen.<sup>137</sup> Houthi forces have cracked down on dissent, closing several dozen NGOs, carrying out enforced disappearances, torturing detainees, and arbitrarily detaining numerous activists, journalists, tribal leaders, political opponents, and members of the Baha'i community. Hamed bin Haydara a Baha'i man was sentenced to death in January 2018, causing international outrage.<sup>138</sup> In the south of Yemen in areas nominally under government control, UAE-backed security forces have allegedly detained individuals. Human Rights Watch claims that the UAE runs at least two informal detention facilities, where they have continued to detain people despite release orders and have reportedly moved high-profile detainees outside the country.<sup>139</sup> The Associated Press has claimed to have identified at least 18 clandestine sites run by the United Arab Emirates or by Yemeni forces created and trained by the Gulf nation.<sup>140</sup>

Whilst all parties dispute any allegations that they have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, the political reality is that any damage, intentional or unintentional, to the civilian population will undermine legitimacy in their cause.

Attacks on civilians violate Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions and many of the airstrikes by the coalition appear to fail to meet the standards of precaution and proportionality in attack. Moreover, the use of indiscriminate and imprecise weapons is a violation of international customary international humanitarian law. To evidence the potential for accountability for similar violations, Stanislav Galic was sentenced to 20 years in life by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for his actions as a commander overseeing the campaign of shelling and sniping against civilians at the siege of Sarajevo. War crimes prosecutions can be brought before a variety of domestic and international courts, subject to jurisdiction.

Presently, Yemen is not a party to International Criminal Court (ICC), and the United Nations Security Council has not referred the situation to the ICC. However, certain States such as the UK are parties to the ICC, and therefore actions by nationals of these states can be subject to the jurisdiction of the

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<sup>137</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Country Chapter: Yemen*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>138</sup> R. Sanchez, 'Yemen's Houthi rebels intensify persecution of Baha'i minority'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/19/yemens-houthi-rebels-intensify-persecution-bahai-minority/> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>139</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Country Chapter: Yemen*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>140</sup> M. Michael, 'In Yemen's secret prisons, UAE tortures and US interrogates'. *AP News*, 22 June 2017. Available at: <https://www.apnews.com/4925f7f0fa654853bd6f2f57174179fe> [accessed 13 May 2018].

court. Furthermore, specialised international tribunals have been set up in the past after the wars in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, to punish the perpetrators of war crimes and war criminals are increasingly being prosecuted before domestic courts. Parties to the conflict should therefore ensure that International Law is complied with throughout the conduct of hostilities, or face the threat of prosecution.

### **Recommendations:**

- The United Kingdom must make it unambiguously clear that it would consider a return to November-December 2017 blockade conditions a war crime. A blockade is a legal means of war. However, if it is specifically targeted to cause the collective punishment of civilians it is a war crime as specified in Article 33 of the Geneva Convention. The UN Panel of Experts Report found that the Saudi-led Coalition was using the threat of starvation as a means of war. A condition of UN Resolution 2216 is that sanctions can be employed on actors who block humanitarian aid. The UK must continue to monitor the situation and, in the event of a return to pre-Christmas conditions lead the call for sanctioning
- All parties should take immediate measures to prevent any damage to the civilian population and infrastructure, and stop any and all potential breaches of international humanitarian law. As a champion of the rules-based international order, it is imperative that the UK government uses its leverage with its allies to demand compliance with international law, and that it continues to champion British values of fairness, justice and human rights in all aspects of its foreign policy. In this light, the UK must maintain support for international inquiry mechanisms including the OHCHR Eminent Experts to undertake independent investigations of potential breaches. The UK should continually review the actions of all parties to the conflict and must condemn breaches of international humanitarian law as and when they occur irrespective of the actor. Potential examples of such breaches include the 10 coalition bombing raids listed by the UN Panel of Experts, and the recent airstrike on a wedding party, as well as ongoing cross-border shelling by the Houthis. It is important that the UK is, and is seen to be, fair, transparent and balanced on such pivotal issues.

## The role of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly been accused by Yemen's internationally recognised government and the Western-backed Coalition of aiding the Houthi insurgency in the country.<sup>141</sup> Before war broke out in Yemen in 2011, concerns over a Houthi-Iranian alliance seem to have been overblown, and backed up only by scant evidence. The Houthis were not characterised in sectarian language by the local population, nor had they any significant ties to Tehran. The Houthis do not follow Shi'a Twelver Islam, the dominant denomination in Iran, but instead adhere to the school of Zaidi Islam, which bears similarities to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>142</sup> However, circumstances have since changed. Iran's hand in the civil war in Yemen and its attempt to project power on the Arabian Peninsula can no longer be denied, and as the war drags on, continues to grow.<sup>143</sup>

Cooperation with non-state actors is an integral part of Iran's foreign policy through which the Islamic Republic seeks to consolidate power across a region dominated by Sunni Islam. Iran's links to the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah and Iranian militia fighting in Syria and Iraq are examples of this strategy.

Several illicit arms shipments from Iran to Yemen have been confiscated by international patrols, despite a UN embargo on arms transfers from Iran, which constitute a direct violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.<sup>144</sup> One of the most notable incidents saw a stateless fishing vessel intercepted off the coast of Oman in March 2016, by the HMAS Darwin, an Australian navy ship operating under the Combined Task Force 150. The Unit is responsible for counterterrorism operations in the Middle East. The Australian crew discovered on board of the vessel a large cache of weapons, including 1,989 AK-47 rifles, 100-rocket propelled grenades, and 49 PKM general

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<sup>141</sup> I.J. Griffiths, 'John Kerry warns Iran over support for Houthis in Yemen'. *The Guardian*, 9 April 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/08/us-arms-deliveries-saudi-coalition-yemen-aden> [accessed 12 October 2015].

<sup>142</sup> B. Riedel, 'Who are the Houthis, and why are we at war with them?'. Brookings Institute, 18 December 2017. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>143</sup> J. Saul, P. Hafezi and M. Georgy 'Exclusive: Iran steps up support for Houthis in Yemen's war – sources'. *Reuters*, 21 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-iran-houthis/exclusive-iran-steps-up-support-for-houthis-in-yemens-war-sources-idUSKBN16S22R> [accessed 21 October 2017].

<sup>144</sup> United Nations Security Council (2015) *Resolution 2231*. United Nations. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/2231/> [accessed 12 October 2017].



purpose machine guns, that appeared to have been manufactured in Iran.<sup>145</sup>

The incident marked one of four interdictions of Iranian smuggling vessels from September 2015 through to March 2016. According to data released by the US Navy, they yielded in total 80 antitank guided missiles, 5,000 AK-47 rifles, as well as machine guns and sniper rifles.<sup>146</sup> Based on interrogations of crew members and examinations of GPS data, the Navy concluded that the weapons shipments had originated in Iran.

The UK Government has expressed its worries over Iran's involvement in Yemen. Tobias Ellwood MP, then a foreign minister, told parliament in October 2015 that Britain was "concerned by Iranian support to the Houthis, including reports that Iran has transferred weapons to Yemen which would be contrary to UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and the Security Council's embargo on the export of weapons by Iran".<sup>147</sup> After the findings of the UN Panel of Experts UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson called on Iran to "cease activity which risks escalating the conflict and to support a political solution to the conflict in Yemen". He also called on "...all parties to the conflict to abide fully by applicable international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law".

In April 2017, US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis spoke of Washington's concern over Iran's destabilising influence in the country. "We will have to overcome Iran's efforts to destabilise yet another country and create another militia in their image of Lebanese Hezbollah, but the bottom line is we are on the right path for it," he told reporters during a press conference in Saudi Arabia.<sup>148</sup>

Recently, it emerged that the Islamic Republic's Revolutionary Guard Corps is shipping arms to Houthi rebels through a new route across the Gulf. In the past, Iran had shipped military supplies and personnel either directly to Yemen or via Somalia. However, over the last six months, Iranian

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<sup>145</sup> Combined Maritime Force (2016). *HMS Darwin seizes large weapons cache*. CMF, 6 March 2016. Available at: <https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2016/03/06/hmas-darwin-seizes-large-weapons-cache/> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>146</sup> C.J. Chivers and E. Schmitt, 'Arms Seized Off Coast of Yemen Appear to Have Been Made in Iran'. *New York Times*, 10 January 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/world/middleeast/yemen-iran-weapons-houthis.html> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>147</sup> Parliamentary Question 12492W, 26 October 2015.

<sup>148</sup> I. Ali, 'U.S. defense secretary: must overcome Iran's destabilization efforts to help Yemen'. *Reuters*, 19 April 2017. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-mattis-iran/us-usa-defense-secretary-must-overcome-irans-destabilization-efforts-to-help-yemen-idUSKBN17L230> [accessed 13 October 2017].

transhipments have taken place in Kuwaiti waters to avoid international patrols.<sup>149</sup>

The United Nations Panel of Experts Report of January 2018 identified missile remnants, related military equipment and military unmanned aerial vehicles that are of Iranian origin and were brought into Yemen after the imposition of the targeted arms embargo. As a result, the Panel finds that the Islamic Republic of Iran is in non-compliance with paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015).<sup>150</sup>

As the UK Government has said, Saudi Arabia does have a right to defend itself against these missile attacks against its territory. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman accused Iran of “direct military aggression” following the missile attack on Riyadh airport on 4 November, 2017. Working to ensure that Iran cannot exert undue influence in Yemen after the conflicts conclusion is key to bringing the Saudis to the peace table.

#### **Recommendation:**

- A ceasefire and eventual peace deal should incorporate confidence building measures to ensure that Iran is unable to exert undue influence on, or materially empower, Houthi forces. The United Kingdom must look to impress upon both Iran and the Coalition not only the humanitarian cost of the conflict, and their obligations under international law, but that prolonging the military conflict, the humanitarian disaster and resulting destabilisation of the region serves none of their strategic aims.

#### **Maritime Security**

An additional issue resulting from the civil war are the consequences for maritime security. Yemen's coastline is strategically critical for trade, with the Gulf of Aden serving as one of the world's most important shipping routes – a gateway between Europe, the Middle East and Africa. With 20% of global trade and almost 7% of oil and fuel cargoes passing through the Gulf of Aden, any threat to this route has serious economic implications for the wider international community.

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<sup>149</sup> J. Saul, ‘Exclusive: Iran Revolutionary Guards find new route to arm Yemen rebels’. *Reuters*, 1 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-kuwait-iran-exclusive/exclusive-iran-revolutionary-guards-find-new-route-to-arm-yemen-rebels-idUSKBN1AH4I4> [accessed 13 October 2017].

<sup>150</sup> A. Himmiche; F.R. Carvajal; D.R. Gunaratne; J.G. Johnsen and A. Wilkinson, A. *Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen*, 26 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports> [accessed 6 May 2018].

The maritime security threat in and around Yemen has escalated since 2015. Notable incidents include the October 2016 missile attack on a vessel under the control of the UAE by the Houthi<sup>151</sup> and a January 2017 attack on a Saudi warship.<sup>152</sup> It was also reported that in March 2017, a Yemen coast guard ship hit a mine.<sup>153</sup> It is feared that these attacks will combine with the Coalition blockade to keep aid delivery ships away from Yemen.

In March 2017, the US Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) warned merchant ships of the dangers of mines that were set in Bab al-Mandeb near the Mokha port entrance by Houthis and militias allied to former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.<sup>154</sup> In April of 2018, a Saudi merchant ship was targeted by Houthi forces.<sup>155</sup>

In the longer term, political instability in Yemen threatens to render the vast coastline a new home for piracy, akin to that witnessed off the coast of Somalia. The Saudi-led Coalition cited piracy as a key reason for the blockade in April 2015, whilst Iran also sent two warships to the Gulf of Aden under the justification of protecting Iranian ships from piracy. Given the extreme humanitarian situation in the country, with dwindling supplies of food, water and fuel, there is a significant risk of increased piracy, which could have serious consequences for the region and the European Union.

### Recommendations:

- The serious risk to vessels around the Yemeni coast must be viewed by the international community as both a component of the country's humanitarian crisis and a threat to free passage of shipping. A new strategy to mitigate this threat must be devised – possibly incorporating an extension of the EU's Operation Atalanta anti-piracy effort.

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<sup>151</sup> L. Tomlinson, 'US warships sent to area where Iran-backed rebels attacked Saudi-led coalition ship'. *Fox News*, 23 October 2016. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/10/03/us-warships-sent-to-area-where-iran-backed-rebels-attacked-saudi-led-coalition-ship.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>152</sup> 'Two killed in attack on Saudi warship off Yemen'. *Reuters*, 30 January 2017. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/yemen-security-saudi/two-killed-in-attack-on-saudi-warship-off-yemen-idUSL5N1FK5UC> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>153</sup> 'Yemeni Coast Guard Vessel Strikes Mine Near Mokha'. *The Maritime Executive*, 16 March 2017. Available at: <http://maritime-executive.com/article/yemeni-coast-guard-vessel-strikes-mine-near-mokha> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>154</sup> 'Saudi Forces Find More Naval Mines Off Yemen'. *The Maritime Executive*, 9 May 2017. Available at: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/saudi-forces-find-more-naval-mines-off-yemen#gs.z2lBQZ0> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>155</sup> S. Aboudi and S. Nebehay (2018) 'Saudi oil tanker hit in Houthi attack off Yemen – coalition'. *Reuters*, 3 April 2018. Available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-security-attack/saudi-oil-tanker-hit-in-houthi-attack-off-yemen-coalition-idUKKCN1HA1SH> [accessed 5 May 2018].



- The United Kingdom may consider committing naval resources to policing the Bab Al Mandeb Strait as the threat of disruption to shipping lanes increases.

## 5. Political Situation

This section of the report will examine the hurdles that must be overcome to produce a ceasefire and a peace deal and the options for the United Kingdom to bring about an end to the conflict.

A peaceful resolution to the conflict with an immediate cessation of hostilities is the primary outcome the international community should pursue. Multiple peace talks held by the UN have been the primary avenue for negotiations so far, but positive outcomes of these talks – temporary ceasefires – have so far been broken and short-lived.

As a result of negotiations so far, airstrikes paused for a 5-day humanitarian ceasefire between 12 and 17 May, 2015.<sup>156</sup> On 9 July, 2015, the UN announced an unconditional truce for Ramadan 10-17 July. However, fighting continued on both sides and both called for the UN to monitor each other's violations of the ceasefire.<sup>157</sup> A similar ceasefire announced in mid-December also collapsed within weeks after the failure of peace talks in Switzerland.<sup>158</sup> Further peace attempts were also seen in 2016, with a ceasefire instigated on 10 April and followed by meetings between Coalition/Government of Yemen and Houthi representatives in Kuwait, which ended without agreement the following August.<sup>159</sup> Brief ceasefires in October and November 2016 quickly concluded in the face of violations.<sup>160</sup> Little progress towards ending the fighting has been made since this point, despite a June 2017 UK-drafted call from the UN Security Council for both sides to observe a ceasefire to help to halt the spread of cholera.<sup>161</sup> The UK also led on the UN Security Council statement that was issued on Yemen in March 2018. This statement called on all parties to the conflict to “abandon preconditions and engage in good faith with the United Nations-led process

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<sup>156</sup> ‘Saudi Arabia-led coalition calls ceasefire in Yemen after air strike kills 120 people’, *The Guardian*, 26 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/26/saudi-arabia-led-Coalition-calls-ceasefire-yemen-120-die-airstrike> [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>157</sup> ‘UN announces humanitarian truce in Yemen’. *Al Jazeera English*, 10 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/announces-humanitarian-truce-yemen-150709161417747.html> [accessed 7 October].

<sup>158</sup> Yemen conflict: Saudi-led coalition ends ceasefire. *BBC News*, 2 January 2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-35214099> [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>159</sup> R. Nordland, ‘Talks to End War in Yemen Are Suspended’. *New York Times*, 6 August 2016. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/07/world/middleeast/yemen-peace-talks-cease-fire.html> [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>160</sup> ‘Yemen ceasefire ends without extension’. *The National*, 21 November 2016. Available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/yemen-ceasefire-ends-without-extension-1.205001> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>161</sup> E.M. Lederer, ‘UN urges cease-fire, open ports in Yemen to help confront spread of cholera. *The Globe and Mail*, 15 June 2015. Available at: <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/un-urges-cease-fire-open-ports-in-yemen-to-help-confront-spread-of-cholera/article35323774/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&> [accessed 6 October 2017].

in order to reach a political solution”.<sup>162</sup>

In March 2018, reports emerged that secret peace talks between the Houthis and the Coalition took place in Oman. Speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, two diplomats and two Yemeni officials said the Houthi spokesman, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, had been in direct communication with Saudi officials in Oman on a comprehensive solution to the conflict. These same reports suggested that the internationally recognised Yemeni government did not have representatives present.<sup>163</sup>

The stagnant military situation on the ground makes it clear that there is no alternative but to bring about a political solution – a need that is made all the more urgent by the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding. However, all sides in the conflict remain committed to a military solution.

Martin Griffiths assumed the role of UN Special Envoy on 11 March 2018. In his address to the United Nations Security Council in April 2018, Griffiths said of a peace settlement that “building peace will be a larger task, based on different precedents and a broader participation. The National Dialogue, with its impressive record of inclusion and of civic participation will be a decisive precedent.”<sup>164</sup> Griffiths committed to bringing a new framework for peace to the UN Security Council in two months. Griffiths’ arrival in Yemen provides hope that he can spark renewed peace talks that stalled under his predecessor Ismail Ahmed Sheikh who served in the role between April 2015 and February 2018. As a prerequisite to peace talks, Griffiths echoed the UK drafted Presidential Statement made by the UN Security Council in 2018 stating that “...all parties to abandon preconditions to talks and grant my office unhindered, unconditional access to all relevant stakeholders.”<sup>165</sup>

The primary issues facing the pursuance of a negotiated solution are:

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<sup>162</sup> United Nations, ‘Amid Deteriorating Conditions in Yemen, Security Council Presidential Statement Calls for Humanitarian Access, Strict Adherence to Embargo’. Press release, 15 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13250.doc.htm> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>163</sup> M. Ghobari and N. Browning ‘Yemen's Houthis and Saudi Arabia in secret talks to end war – sources’. *Reuters*, 15 March 2018. Available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-security-saudi-talks/yemens-houthis-and-saudi-arabia-in-secret-talks-to-end-war-sources-idUKKCN1GR281> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>164</sup> Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, 17 April 2018. Available at:

<https://osesgy.unmissions.org/martin-griffiths-special-envoy-yemen-makes-his-first-briefing-security-council>

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

### Limited international pressure

The international community, including the UK, has not put significant pressure on the warring parties to end the conflict diplomatically. Fundamentally, there is currently little inclination for either the US or UK to exert genuine political influence to end the war. Whilst both nations have always wished to maintain good relations with the Gulf States, this tendency has taken a more extreme turn over the last 18 months. The US is now led by an administration prioritising action against Iranian proxies over humanitarian concerns, and the UK is keen to avoid alienating allies in the Middle East due to its need for favourable post-Brexit relations. Additionally, the conflict in Yemen has not received public attention on the scale of the conflict in Syria or Iraq, limiting the scope for popular demands for action. There has, however, been increasing movement from states to stop selling arms to Coalition members. Germany, Holland and Norway have limited arms sales to the Coalition because of their actions in Yemen.

### Saudi-Iran relations

A fear of increasing Iranian influence on the Arabian Peninsula and beyond has led to a number of military and quasi-military actions led by the Riyadh government. In March 2011, Saudi-led forces entered Bahrain to end anti-government protests in part out of concern over Iranian involvement in the uprising.<sup>166</sup> Qatar's relations with Iran are also a factor in the diplomatic crisis between the former country and a number of other Arab and North African states.<sup>167</sup> The intervention in Yemen, however, is the most extreme and direct example of action to contain Tehran. Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran are further hampered by Riyadh's severing of diplomatic relations with Tehran following the January 2016 storming of the Saudi embassy by protestors. As already highlighted, Saudi concerns that Iran is supporting the Houthi are increasingly supported by available evidence.<sup>168</sup> However, this does not detract from the suffering caused by the continuation of the war.

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<sup>166</sup> M. Slackman, 'The Proxy Battle in Bahrain'. *The New York Times*, 19 March 2011. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/weekinreview/20proxy.html> [accessed 5 October 2017].

<sup>167</sup> P. Wintour, P. 'Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia'. *The Guardian*, 23 June 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/close-al-jazeera-saudi-arabia-issues-qatar-with-13-demands-to-end-blockade> [Accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>168</sup> J. Saul, P. Hafezi, M. Georgy 'Exclusive: Iran steps up its support for Houthis in Yemen War' – sources. *Reuters*, 21 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-iran-houthis/exclusive-iran-steps-up-support-for-houthis-in-yemens-war-sources-idUSKBN16S22R> [accessed 5 October 2017].

## Elites profiteering from the conflict

Chatham Houses Peter Salisbury's article 'Yemen and the Business of War' provides an excellent account of the profiteering that still occurs among Yemen's elite as a result of the war.<sup>169</sup> The fundamental point that Salisbury makes is that despite the humanitarian crisis, Yemen's status quo suits most parties. There is evidence of quiet and knowing cooperation with one another. Fuel imported to Mukalla is transported knowingly to Sana'a. Guns provided to anti-Houthi-Saleh fighters on the ground are sold to the other side.<sup>170</sup> Local tribes and groups are able to control taxation and rents in the areas under their control. In Marib, in central Yemen, the governor, an important tribal leader, has been able to fund services by selling bottled gas produced at an oilfield in the province.<sup>171</sup> Finding a way to bring all of these sides to the table is essential for any peace process that is initiated. However, so long as the leaders of groups are able to continue enriching themselves as a result of the conflict, the imperatives driving them towards a peace deal that will require compromise are limited.

## UN Resolution 2216

One factor which has also had an impact on negotiations is UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (passed in April 2015), which Oxfam International describes as a "stumbling block to a peaceful resolution of the conflict", as it penalises and sets conditions for the Houthis alone.<sup>172</sup> Most notably, it demands the withdrawal of Houthi forces from the areas they have taken since the start of the war and that they surrender the weapons they have captured. As a result, it has been used as a political instrument by both the Coalition/government of Yemen and the Houthis to justify non-participation in peace talks. The Resolution has also been used to continue the de facto blockade, as it includes an arms embargo on the Houthis.

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<sup>169</sup> P. Salisbury. *P Yemen and The Business of War*. Chatham House 28 July 2017 [accessed 2 May 2018]

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Evidence submitted by Oxfam to the APPG Yemen – 2015.



**Recommendations:**

- It is increasingly clear that UN Security Council Resolution 2216 is outdated and will continue to serve as a block to a negotiated solution. As the penholder on Yemen in the United Nations Security Council, the United Kingdom should table a new resolution demanding - among other conditions- an immediate ceasefire, end to the conflict and an end to any prevention of the passage of emergency humanitarian supplies. Such a resolution should set out an inclusive peace process in which all major actors and representatives of diverse civil society – including women, youth and representation of different regional, tribal, cultural and religious groups – are included.
- The UK must ensure that it is a lead supporter of the work of Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy in Yemen, and help to facilitate the roadmap for peace that Mr Griffiths lays out later this year.
- All parties should take immediate measures to prevent any damage to the civilian population and infrastructure, and stop any and all potential breaches of international humanitarian law. International actors such as the UK should monitor and condemn breaches by all sides. The growing international and diplomatic pressure should be used to show both sides that an immediate ceasefire is necessary.

## 6. Role of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a privileged position in International affairs and in international institutions, stemming from its founding role in many of them. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) the UK has both an opportunity and an obligation to deal with global issues. The UK is valued for its past experiences as a major global power, its administrative competency and its reputation for balanced and pragmatic analysis. The Department for International Development (DFID) is also renowned globally for its work in tackling the global challenges of time including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict.

In the Middle East in particular, the UK has ties that make its voice important. When it comes to Yemen, the UK has the ability to shape and influence events. As the penholder on Yemen in the Security Council, the UK is in charge of drafting resolutions and statements on issues relating to Yemen. The UK drafted the Security Council's Presidential statement in March and had a draft resolution vetoed by the Russian Federation in February, that would have spotlighted specific non-compliance by Iran identified by the expert panel mandated to monitor those measures. However, it has not fully utilised its position as the penholder. As outlined in the previous section, the All Party Parliamentary Group recommends that the United Kingdom table a new UN resolution calling for a ceasefire, a start to negotiations and an end to the humanitarian crisis.

This section will examine the United Kingdom's current role in the conflict in Yemen with a focus on aid, the UK government's position on the issue and on UK arms trade with Saudi Arabia.

### International Aid

The UK has recognised the urgency of the humanitarian situation in Yemen and the funding that has been provided by DFID has undoubtedly saved countless lives. DFID funding goes through 10 multilateral funds to Yemen, each targeting areas of need for Yemen's population.<sup>173</sup>

For the financial year 2017/18, Britain has committed £139 million in aid.<sup>174</sup> This is on top of £90 million in 2015/16 and £112 million in 2016/17. This year, at the Yemen pledging event in Geneva

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<sup>173</sup> DFID, Yemen Development Tracker. Available at: <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/YE/projects> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>174</sup> K. Hodal 'Yemen: aid offers 'only hope of survival' in cholera epidemic, says Priti Patel. *The Guardian*, 11th August 2017'. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/aug/11/yemen-aid-offers-only-hope-of-survival-in-cholera-epidemic-says-priti-patel> [accessed 5 October 2017].



on 3 April, Alistair Burt, the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa, announced that the UK would be providing £170 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the financial year 2018/2019.<sup>175</sup> This funding will meet immediate food needs for 2.5 million Yemenis, and comes on top of over £400 million in bilateral support since the conflict.

An example of targeted DFID projects is spending focused on food security. In the financial year 2018/19, DFID has provisionally allocated £87 million towards three programmes with a focus on food security: the World Food Programme's Emergency Operations in Yemen; the multisector Humanitarian Response Programme supporting 10 NGOs to deliver activities to avert famine in remote and inaccessible areas; and the Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund, which awards grants to NGOs and UN agencies to increase food security.<sup>176</sup>

DFID funding has also targeted cholera in Yemen. £8 million has been sent in targeted support to UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration. These organisations provide medical supplies to half a million people, safe access to chlorinated water to 300,000 people, and rehabilitating medical facilities used by 250,000 people.<sup>177</sup> The Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund, to which the UK is contributing £40 million in 2017/8, tackles cholera through providing medical treatment for vulnerable women and children, training health workers, and establishing oral rehydration centres.<sup>178</sup>

The UK was the largest 2017 donor, with a £76 million contribution, to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, which is used to support emergency vaccination programmes, including in Yemen.<sup>179</sup> Cholera prevention has also been targeted with DFID supporting chlorination campaigns in more than half the country's governorates, as well as public awareness sessions on how the disease is spread. The United Kingdom has recently announced that it is funding a cholera response programme that aims to vaccinate 1.1 million people against the disease.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> DFID, 'UK gives more emergency food for Yemen as number at risk of starvation reaches all time high of 8 million' Press release, 3 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-gives-more-emergency-food-for-yemen> [accessed 8 May 2018].

<sup>176</sup> Parliamentary Question 136719 17 April 2018.

<sup>177</sup> Parliamentary Question 129603 26 February 2018.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> R. Merrick, 'UK announces £170m Yemen aid package as millions face starvation'. *The Independent*, 3 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-yemen-aid-package-starvation-civil-war-houthis-saudi-arabia-food-supplies-un-a8286711.html> [accessed 8 May 2018].

DFID spending supports the education of children in Yemen through two multilateral funds: Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education. DFID provides 32% (\$4.8 million) of Education Cannot Wait's funding of \$15 million in Yemen over 2017-19. This is alongside the 15% (\$10.89 million) of the GPE's funding of \$72.6 million in Yemen over 2014-19 that DFID contributes. DFID has also provided £108 million in funding to Yemen's Social Fund for Development over 2010-17, including £30 million towards education.<sup>181</sup>

The impact of DFID funding in Yemen has been pronounced and the continued commitment of the United Kingdom to provide aid to Yemen's civilians is welcome. The United Kingdom is a leader in providing emergency aid and has doubtless saved many lives in Yemen as a result of this commitment. Financial pressure on UK aid funding going forward should not limit the long-term commitment that the United Kingdom needs to make to Yemen after the conflict has ended. Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe has been caused by the conflict but it will not end with the introduction of a ceasefire. As has been shown throughout the report, the situation in Yemen clearly does impact the United Kingdom.

Despite leading global efforts in providing emergency aid, the UK is capable of playing a more visible and active role in pushing for a diplomatic solution to the crisis and an immediate cessation of hostilities which is sustained on the ground. The contradiction between DFID spending and UK support for the combatants is outlined in the below Arms Shipments and International Law section.

### **Government statements – UK cooperation with the Coalition**

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the actions of the Saudi-led coalition and UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia have been raised numerous times in the chamber since the Saudi-led Coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015. The Government has, and continues, to be vociferous in its defence of UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia and their legitimate grievances in the conflict.

In a November 2017 debate on Yemen, Alistair Burt, Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa, said: "On the arms control issue, the House knows that this matter is extensively trawled over by the Department and that we have a rigorous arms control regime in place. Every request for support is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The Government were recently successful in the legal

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<sup>181</sup> Parliamentary Question 136725 19 April 2018.



action in relation to that, but that does not stop us being very careful about any supplies.”<sup>182</sup>

In an urgent debate on Yemen on 17 January 2018, Alistair Burt said: “We will continue our support for the coalition, which is fighting a serious insurgency and armed support from outside Yemen directed against it, but we will be firm in our determination to see an end to the conflict, which is the only thing that will resolve the humanitarian crisis.”<sup>183</sup>

Similar statements have been made in the House of Lords. Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmed stated on 17 September, 2017, that: “Our defence exports to Saudi Arabia are kept under careful and continual review to ensure they meet the rigorous standards of the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.” He added: “We welcomed the High Court’s ruling in July this year that UK Government decisions on arms export licensing to Saudi Arabia are lawful. The judgment stated the Government was rationally entitled to conclude that Saudi Arabia has been, and remains, genuinely committed to compliance with international humanitarian law. We note the application to appeal and will continue to defend the decisions challenged.”<sup>184</sup>

Also commenting on the July 2017 ruling, International Trade Secretary Liam Fox noted in a statement to the House of Commons that: “The judgment recognises the rigorous and robust processes that we have in place across Government to ensure that UK defence exports are licensed consistently with the Government’s consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria.” Quoting the judgement itself, he noted that the ruling had determined that the current licencing system had “all the hallmarks of a rigorous and robust, multi-layered process of analysis carried out by numerous expert Government and military personnel, upon which the Secretary of State could properly rely.”<sup>185</sup>

In the 7 March edition of PMQs immediately prior to the visit of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn inquired if the Government would halt weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Theresa May did not answer directly, saying that: “their (Saudi) involvement in Yemen came at the request of the legitimate government of Yemen. It is backed by

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<sup>182</sup> HC Debate 7 November 2017 c1361.

<sup>183</sup> HC Debate 17 January 2018 c868.

<sup>184</sup> Parliamentary Question HL1542 12 September 2017.

<sup>185</sup> HC Debate 10 July 2017 c46.

the United Nations Security Council, and as such we support it.”<sup>186</sup>

Outside of Parliament, ministers have reportedly lobbied for the continuation of the supply of arms to Saudi Arabia. In February 2017, *The Guardian* reported that Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson lobbied the International Trade Secretary to allow for the continued export of weapons after 140 people died in an air strike which hit a funeral. The Foreign Secretary stated that: “The issue is extremely finely balanced, but I judge at present that the Saudis appear committed both to improving processes and to taking action to address failures/individual incidents.” Dr Fox agreed, but stipulated that he be regularly updated on the situation.<sup>187</sup>

The UK has led the call for unhindered humanitarian and commercial access to Yemen, including through the UK co-ordinated Security Council statement of 15 March, Penny Mordaunt the International Development Secretary’s visit to Riyadh in December and lobbying from the Prime Minister. DFID is also providing expertise and funding to UN shipping inspectors to facilitate import flows into Yemen.

Mr Burt further commented on the humanitarian issue in an answer to a parliamentary question on 18 April 2018, stating that: “UK has led the call for unhindered humanitarian and commercial access to Yemen, including through the UK co-ordinated Security Council statement of 15 March, the Secretary of State’s visit to Riyadh in December and lobbying from the Prime Minister. DFID is also providing expertise and funding to UN shipping inspectors to facilitate import flows into Yemen.”<sup>188</sup>

The UK is not involved militarily in operations however, as Minister Burt explained in the November 30<sup>th</sup> debate, “Royal Air Force and Royal Navy liaison officers monitor Saudi-led coalition operations in Yemen and provide information to the UK Ministry of Defence. The liaison officers are not embedded personnel taking part in Saudi-led operations, they are not involved in carrying out strikes and they do not direct or conduct operations in Yemen. They are not involved in the Saudi-led coalition targeting decision-making process. They remain under UK command and control.”<sup>189</sup>

There is some debate as to whether UK military personnel should be present in the command

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<sup>186</sup> HC Debate 7 March 2018 c299

<sup>187</sup> A. Ross, ‘Boris Johnson urged UK to continue Saudi arms sales after funeral bombing’. *The Guardian*, 10 February 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/10/boris-johnson-urged-uk-to-continue-saudi-arms-sales-after-funeral-bombing> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>188</sup> HC Debate 18 April 2018 c303-304.

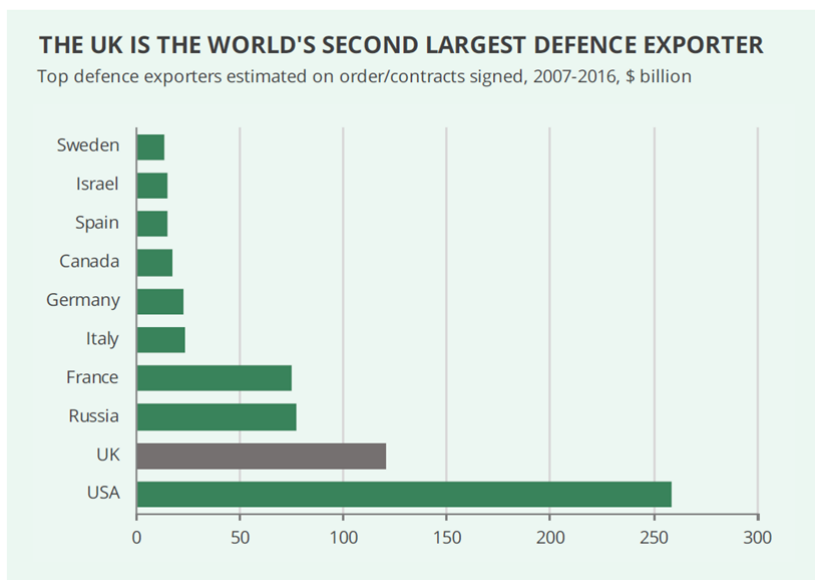
<sup>189</sup> HC Debate 30 November 2017 c525.

centres of the Saudi air force. In PMQ's on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 Leader of the Opposition Jeremy Corbyn claimed that "British military advisers are directing the war.<sup>190</sup>" Given the continuing civilian casualties it is questionable as to the impact that UK military personnel are having on Saudi conduct.

As a potential 'honest broker' close to Saudi Arabia and Yemen's exiled government, the UK is in a unique position to push for changes in policy which can allow improved humanitarian access and prevent further damage to civilian infrastructure.

### UK Arms Sales

Arms sales are an important part of the United Kingdom's export market. As shown in the table below, as of 2016, the United Kingdom was the second largest arms exporter in the world, behind only the United States. In 2016 alone the UK won defence orders worth £5.9 billion.<sup>191</sup> The UK share



Graph 3: Source – House of Commons Library

of the global defence export market was estimated to be at 9% in 2016, with the largest markets in the Middle East, North America and Europe.

Saudi Arabia has historically been a client of the United Kingdom's arms exports. In 1965 for example, the United Kingdom played a major part in the first big arms shipment from the West. It was to supply British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) Lightning and Strikemaster aircraft, with radar and

other equipment, for \$280m.<sup>192</sup>

In contemporary times, Saudi Arabia remains a major market for UK arms. Multiple observers have noted that Britain is one of the leading arms suppliers to Saudi Arabia. Many Saudi aircraft being

<sup>190</sup> HC Debate 7th March 2018 c299.

<sup>191</sup> Department for International Trade/Defence and Security Organisation, 'UK defence and security export statistics for 2016'. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-defence-and-security-export-figures-2016/uk-defence-and-security-export-statistics-for-2016> [accessed 8 May 2018].

<sup>192</sup> C. Hirst, *The Arabian Connection: The UK Arms Trade to Saudi Arabia*. 2000. Available at: <https://www.caat.org.uk/resources/countries/saudi-arabia/arabian-connection#section7> [accessed 5 May 2018].

used in Yemen, including the Panavia Tornado and Eurofighter Typhoon, were supplied by the UK. In March 2018 a provisional agreement was signed with Saudi Arabia to provide 48 additional Typhoon jet fighters<sup>193</sup>. Additionally, large quantities of munitions, including Storm Shadow cruise missiles, ALARM anti-radar missiles and Paveway IV bombs, have been supplied by the UK.<sup>194</sup> Cluster bombs – now illegal for Britain to possess and manufacture – have also been supplied in the past and used in the Yemeni conflict. Since the war began, as of November 2017 over £4.6 billion worth of weapons had been sold to Saudi Arabia, reportedly a 500% rise since the conflicts beginning.<sup>195</sup>

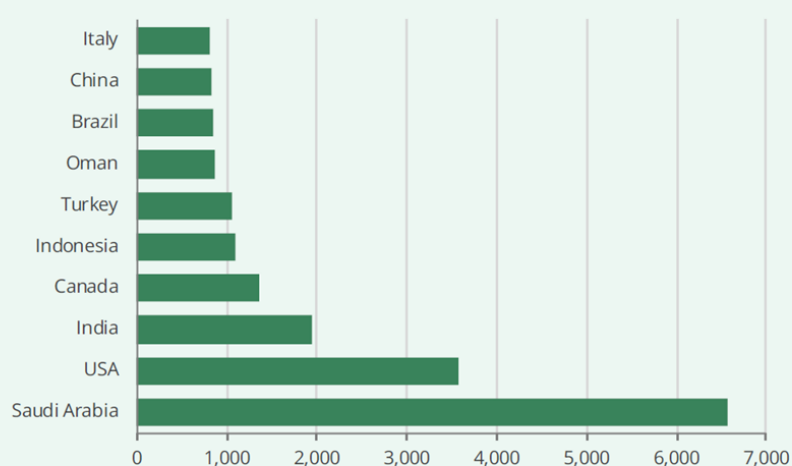
Naturally, the supply of weapons by the UK whilst it also calls for a peaceful settlement has created

criticism. Both Labour and the Scottish National Party have called for an end of UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

The high level of civilian casualties resulting from the air strikes of the Saudi-led Coalition has been an even greater source of tension. The Yemen Data Project has logged over one-third of Coalition airstrikes hitting non-military sites.

#### SAUDI ARABIA HAS RECEIVED MOST OF THE UK'S ARMS EXPORTS

Top ten recipients of UK arms transfers by TIV volume between 1996-2016, TIV millions



Graph 4: Source – House of Commons Library

The UK has obligations under national legislation and the EU Common Position and the Arms Trade Treaty to ensure that no weapons are transferred where there is a risk of them being used to violate International Humanitarian Law (IHL). As with Yemen diplomacy, there have been claims that assessing the harm done to civilians have been left to others. The Coalition runs a Joint Incidents

<sup>193</sup> I. Watts, 'Saudi Arabia moving towards purchase of 48 Typhoon fighter jets from UK after Crown Prince visit'. *The Independent*, 9 March. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/saudi-arabia-uk-typhoon-jets-defence-mohammad-bin-salman-yemen-visit-williamson-a8247971.html> [accessed 13 May 2018].

<sup>194</sup> A. Chuter, 'UK-Supplied Precision Weapons Prove Popular in Saudi-Led Yemen Campaign'. *Defence News*, 17 October 2016. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/2016/10/17/uk-supplied-precision-weapons-prove-popular-in-saudi-led-yemen-campaign/> [accessed 12 October].

<sup>195</sup> L. Dearden, 'UK sales of bombs and missiles to Saudi Arabia increase by almost 500% since start of Yemen war'. *The Independent*, 8 November 2017. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-british-weapons-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-yemen-war-increase-500-civilians-war-crimes-export-a8042871.html> [accessed 8 May 2018].



Assessment Team (JIAT) to investigate allegations of IHL violations. However, in all instances, they have cleared themselves of significant wrongdoing.<sup>196</sup> The UK Government has claimed to be reliant on the Collation alone to investigate incidents. When asked in September 2017, how many allegations of IHL violations by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen the MoD was investigating, then Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said that “The Saudi-led Coalition is best placed to investigate alleged IHL violations. It has publicly stated that it is doing so and that lessons will be acted upon.”<sup>197</sup>

In February 2016, the Committees on Arms Export Controls – a joint meeting of four select committees of the House of Commons – Business, Innovation and Skills; Defence; Foreign Affairs; and International Development – launched an inquiry into the use of UK-manufactured weapons in Yemen. Ultimately, it recommended that arms sales to Saudi Arabia of weapons that might be used in Yemen be suspended “until such time as the UN-led inquiry can provide evidence that the risk that such exports might be used in the commission of serious violations of IHL has subsided”. However, the Government rejected this recommendation on the grounds that no clear risk had been proven.<sup>198</sup>

As briefly outlined in the section on Human Rights, there is increasing evidence that the Saudi led coalition has been using weapons on non-military targets. The UN Panel of Experts Report released this January suggested that they have monitored 10 Saudi airstrikes that were likely to have been regarded as breaches of International Humanitarian Law.

These claims do great damage to the prestige of the United Kingdom globally. The United Kingdom has led efforts to secure an Arms Trade Treaty from 2006 and was one of seven states to co-author the original UN Resolution calling for the creation of the Treaty.<sup>199</sup> However, there has been concern documented about the conduct of Saudi Arabia and its compliance with IHL in Yemen. Legal attempts have been made to halt UK arms sales to the region. Most notably, Campaign Against Arms Trade was granted a judicial review of the Government’s decision to continue granting weapons-export

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<sup>196</sup> ‘Saudi coalition investigates own air strikes, clears itself’. *Reuters*, 12 September 2017. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-investigation/saudi-coalition-investigates-own-air-strikes-clears-itself-idUSKCN1BN2O6> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>197</sup> Parliamentary Question 8059W 4 September 2017.

<sup>198</sup> Secretaries of State for International Trade, Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and International Development. *Report Response: The use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen.*, 14 November, p.14 Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/568301/57524\\_Cm\\_9349\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/568301/57524_Cm_9349_Web_Accessible.pdf) [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>199</sup> FCO, ‘Arms Trade Treaty enters into force’. Press release, 24 December 2014. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/arms-trade-treaty-enters-into-force> [accessed 8 May 2018].

licences to Saudi Arabia. However, in July 2017, the High Court ruled that such exports could continue.<sup>200</sup> As previously noted, the decision has been appealed and approval has been granted for a further hearing.

Internationally, there has increasingly been a precedent set by other European countries to stop selling arms to members of the Coalition. In 2016, Members of the European Parliament voted for a European Union-wide arms embargo against Saudi Arabia in protest of the heavy bombing campaign in Yemen.<sup>201</sup> This was reaffirmed in a motion that took place on the 30 November, 2017, by a margin of 539 votes to 13, with 81 abstentions.<sup>202</sup> This vote was not binding for member governments, but some countries have since followed suit. In 2016, the Dutch Parliament voted to stop selling weapons to Saudi Arabia as a result of the actions of the Coalition in Yemen.<sup>203</sup> In January 2018, the German government announced it would halt all arms exports to countries involved in the ongoing war in Yemen, and legislation is now being brought forward to implement this.<sup>204</sup> Between 2013 and 2017, Saudi Arabia spent £870m on arms deals with Germany. In early 2018, Norway suspended its arms sales to the UAE as a precaution based on its assessment of the current situation in Yemen.

France, another major exporter of arms to Saudi Arabia has continued to support sending weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. President Macron reaffirmed this commitment in April 2018. The UK Government has also continued to commit to selling arms to Saudi Arabia. The strict controls that are present on UK arms sales has been cited as the reason for the confidence in Saudi compliance with IHL. On the opposition benches there is now increasing consensus that arms sales should be stopped or suspended. While the UK is rightly praised for its humanitarian actions in Yemen, there is a clear contradiction given their arming of the Coalition.

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<sup>200</sup> A. Ross (2017) UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia can continue, high court rules. *The Guardian*, 10 July 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/10/uk-arms-exports-to-saudi-arabia-can-continue-high-court-rules> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>201</sup> J. Rankin, J 'EU parliament votes for embargo on arms sales to Saudi Arabia'. *The Guardian*, 25 February 2016. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/25/eu-parliament-votes-for-embargo-on-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia> [accessed 8 May 2018].

<sup>202</sup> European Parliament, 'Yemen: MEPs renew their call for an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia'. Press release 30 November 2017. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20171127IPR88940/yemen-meps-renew-their-call-for-an-eu-arms-embargo-against-saudi-arabia> [accessed 8 May 2018].

<sup>203</sup> D. Withnall, 'Netherlands votes to ban weapons exports to Saudi Arabia'. *The Independent*, 16 March 2016. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/netherlands-votes-to-ban-weapons-exports-to-saudi-arabia-a6933996.html> [accessed 8 May 2018].

<sup>204</sup> 'Germany set to ban arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Turkey amid fear of human rights abuses'. *The Independent*, 28 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-ban-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-turkey-uae-human-rights-abuses-a8327036.html> [accessed 8 May 2018].

**Recommendations:**

- A ceasefire should be the immediate priority of British foreign policy in Yemen. This should be reflected in public statements and a visible effort to support the UN in bringing all parties to the negotiating table. This should be done at the highest diplomatic level, and the UK should be prepared to publicly pressure the Coalition towards negotiations.
- As a supplier of arms to Saudi Arabia, the UK Government has a further responsibility to push for an urgent cessation of hostilities and a long-term diplomatic solution. The UK should continue to raise any concerns relating to UK-supplied weapons and International Humanitarian Law to guarantee their use is compliant with the UK's domestic and international obligations. Supporting the ongoing work of the OHCHR Eminent Experts is critical in this respect as it provides a neutral opportunity to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.
- Until the investigation and the findings of the OHCHR Eminent Experts have been completed and presented, the UK should, based on current available evidence, immediately suspend arms sales to all parties that have been accused of breaching international law. This is appropriate and necessary in view of the UK's ethical obligations.

## 7. Summary of Recommendations

- The UK has committed £170 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the financial year 2018/2019. This is on top of £139 million in 2017/2018, £112 million in 2016/17 and £90 million in 2015/16. These contributions make the UK the third largest aid donor to Yemen. The UK must continue to lead with its contributions to Yemen, providing emergency assistance to the civilian population. Alongside aid provision, the UK Government should continue to unequivocally condemn ongoing obstructions by parties to access for humanitarian goods and workers and continue to demand that all parties immediately implement the demands set out in UN Security Council Presidential statements of 15 March 2018 and 15 June 2017 which remain largely unimplemented.
- Recalling the strong relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia, the UK should impress upon the Saudis, publicly and privately, the need to fully and unconditionally lift the de facto blockade on Yemen's ports. The UK should remind all the parties to the conflict of their legal obligation to open transport routes for civilians in accordance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, allowing unfettered access to all Yemen's ports – including Al Hudaydah and all Red Sea ports – is necessary to securing the rapid delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as commercial supplies of food, fuel and medical goods necessary to address cholera and prevent famine. All messages in this respect should be underpinned by a humanitarian footing with a focus on the challenges faced by civilians.
- The UK can support a speedy empowerment of UNVIM through improving financial contributions to the fund and could provide more personnel. Vessels that have been cleared by UNVIM have to be allowed speedy access to Yemen's population. The United Kingdom must call for an end to lengthy duplicate inspections by the Saudi-led Coalition on commercial ships. The UK should track imports via Red Sea ports and call on all parties to cease additional obstructions, and to report on any inspections carried out to the UNSC Sanctions Committee, in accordance with their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2216. Any efforts by any side in the conflict to slow delivery should be recognised by the Government as a wilful obstruction aimed at collectively punishing Yemen's civilians.
- The non-payment of public sector salaries is a key cause of the spread of disease and hunger



in Yemen. It is in the UK's interests to ensure that public sector salaries are restored, and in this view the UK should seek to renew its existing efforts to bring key parties together to find a pragmatic solution to ensure that public sector salary payments are resumed by the legitimate Yemeni government across the country, irrespective of the political or military circumstances ongoing.

- The recent UN donor conference for Yemen received pledges of £1.2bn in April 2018. This was £379 million less than had been hoped. Last year's Yemen appeal for \$2.5bn was 73% funded. As a significant donor of aid to Yemen the UK should seek to leverage its influence to ensure that to the 2018 appeal is fully funded by the international community.
- The United Nations Panel of Experts confirmed in January 2018, that there is no military reason for the closure of Sana'a airport. Its closure has a direct impact on the work of aid organisations and on levels of access to appropriate medical help for Yemeni citizens. The recent announcement of an air corridor for medical evacuations from Sana'a to Cairo is welcome, but insufficient. The UK Government must unconditionally push for the operational reopening of Sana'a airport to commercial and humanitarian flights.
- The stagnating military situation is an opportunity for an international actor with a long-standing and positive relationship with Saudi Arabia to push for a diplomatic solution. The UK must continue to insist that there is no military solution to the conflict and that all parties must engage in talks in good faith and without preconditions. The UK should encourage Coalition members to 'save face' by ceasing military operations under the premise of stopping the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. This can be promoted as a way of allowing the Coalition to recover lost moral and diplomatic capital internationally.
- Military escalation on Al Hudaydah Port would be a catastrophe for the population of Yemen. This would severely limit and even halt the assistance that is able to come through the port. Offensives on the port region would also have devastating implications for peace talks. According to the UN Special Envoy it would "in a stroke, take peace off the table." The UK must continue to urge the coalition publicly and privately not to attack this area, reinforce that there can be no military solution, and instead insist that all parties engage in good faith in peace talks towards a political solution.



- The growth of terrorist groups in Yemen must be viewed with greater concern by the international community and identified as an additional motivating factor for a resolution of the conflict. None of the leading parties in the war have a vested interest in either AQAP or the Islamic State maintaining their presence in the country, and their removal could form a component of a peace settlement. The UK must be clear that addressing Yemen's broadly ungoverned spaces is essential to the longer-term stability of the country and as such, the UK should seek to ensure that a solution to counter AQAP/Islamic State forms a component of any future peace settlement.
- The United Kingdom must make it unambiguously clear that it would consider a return to November-December 2017 blockade conditions a war crime. A blockade is a legal means of war. However, if it is specifically targeted to cause the collective punishment of civilians it is a war crime as specified in Article 33 of the Geneva Convention. The UN Panel of Experts Report found that the Saudi-led Coalition was using the threat of starvation as a means of war. A condition of UN Resolution 2216 is that sanctions can be employed on actors who block humanitarian aid. The UK must continue to monitor the situation and, in the event of a return to pre-Christmas conditions lead the call for sanctioning.
- All parties should take immediate measures to prevent any damage to the civilian population and infrastructure, and stop any and all potential breaches of international humanitarian law. As a champion of the rules-based international order, it is imperative that the UK government uses its leverage with its allies to demand compliance with international law, and that it continues to champion British values of fairness, justice and human rights in all aspects of its foreign policy. In this light, the UK must maintain support for international inquiry mechanisms including the OHCHR Eminent Experts to undertake independent investigations of potential breaches. The UK should continually review the actions of all parties to the conflict and must condemn breaches of international humanitarian law as and when they occur irrespective of the actor. Potential examples of such breaches include the 10 coalition bombing raids listed by the UN Panel of Experts, and the recent airstrike on a wedding party, as well as ongoing cross-border shelling by the Houthis. It is important that the UK is, and is seen to be, fair, transparent and balanced on such pivotal issues.
- A ceasefire and eventual peace deal should incorporate confidence building measures to



ensure that Iran is unable to exert undue influence on, or materially empower, Houthi forces. The United Kingdom must look to impress upon both Iran and the Coalition not only the humanitarian cost of the conflict, and their obligations under international law, but that prolonging the military conflict, the humanitarian disaster and resulting destabilisation of the region serves none of their strategic aims.

- The serious risk to vessels around the Yemeni coast must be viewed by the international community as both a component of the country's humanitarian crisis and a threat to free passage of shipping. A new strategy to mitigate this threat must be devised – possibly incorporating an extension of the EU's Operation Atalanta anti-piracy effort.
- The United Kingdom may consider committing naval resources to policing the Bab Al Mandeb Strait as the threat of disruption to shipping lanes increases.
- It is increasingly clear that UN Security Council Resolution 2216 is outdated and will continue to serve as a block to a negotiated solution. As the penholder on Yemen in the United Nations Security Council the United Kingdom should table a new resolution demanding among other conditions an immediate ceasefire, end to the conflict and an end to any prevention of the passage of emergency humanitarian supplies. Such a resolution should set out an inclusive peace process in which all major actors and representatives of diverse civil society – including women, youth and representation of different regional, tribal, cultural and religious groups – are included.
- The UK must ensure that it is a lead supporter of the work of Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy in Yemen, and help to facilitate the roadmap for peace that Mr Griffiths lays out later this year.
- All parties should take immediate measures to prevent any damage to the civilian population and infrastructure, and stop any and all potential breaches of international humanitarian law. International actors including the UK should monitor and publicly condemn breaches by all sides. The growing international and diplomatic pressure should be used to push both sides towards an immediate de-escalation and negotiated ceasefire.
- A ceasefire should be the immediate priority of British foreign policy in Yemen. This should

be reflected in public statements and a visible effort to support the UN in bringing all parties to the negotiating table. This should be done at the highest diplomatic level, and the UK should be prepared to publically pressure the Coalition towards negotiations.

- As a supplier of arms to Saudi Arabia, the UK Government has a further responsibility to push for an urgent cessation of hostilities and a long-term diplomatic solution. The UK should continue to raise any concerns relating to UK-supplied weapons and International Humanitarian Law to guarantee their use is compliant with the UK's domestic and international obligations. Supporting the ongoing work of the OHCHR Eminent Experts is critical in this respect as it provides a neutral opportunity to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.
- Until the investigation and the findings of the OHCHR Eminent Experts have been completed and presented, the UK should, based on current available evidence, immediately suspend arms sales to all parties that have been accused of breaching international law. This is appropriate and necessary in view of the UK's ethical and legal obligations.

#### **Additional Recommendations for Parliamentarians:**

- Request Parliamentary debates, Westminster Hall Debates, Backbench Business Debates and Urgent Questions on issues relating to Yemen.
- Seek a joint meeting with the Foreign Secretary & the Yemen All-Party Parliamentary Group.
- Submit regular Parliamentary Questions to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Business Secretary and Development Secretary.
- Work alongside actors outside of the UK government to highlight the ongoing crisis in Yemen and pressure administrations to take a leading role in resolving the crisis.
- Parliamentarians must seek to engage the UK Government in promoting the UK's interests in Yemen's post-conflict civil society activities (in particular focusing on the rule of law in Yemen), including the provision of essential funds to support civil society and good governance projects that will contribute towards Yemen's longer-term stability.





## Appendices

### Open Letter from Chair, Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP to UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres

Antonio Guterres  
United Nations General Secretary  
405 East 42nd Street,  
New York,  
NY 10017

20th September 2017

Dear Secretary General Guterres,

We are writing today concerning the ongoing crisis in Yemen. As I am sure you are aware, we face a generational catastrophe in Yemen and all current efforts are insufficient in providing help to the Yemeni people. 19 million Yemenis are in need of urgent humanitarian aid. However, as a result of the conflict, this has been difficult for aid agencies to provide.

According to UNICEF, a child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen from preventable causes, 3 million people have been displaced and 6.8 million are one step away from famine. Cholera cases will reach 500,000 by September and have already caused the deaths of over 2,000 Yemeni citizens. It is the children who are hit especially hard by this with 40% of new cases occurring in children under the age of 15.

Public service salaries in Yemen ceased being paid 9 months ago. Not only has this worsened conditions for ordinary Yemenis, but it has created an economy where one of the few well paid jobs is taking up arms on one of the sides. Humanitarian abuses have occurred on both sides, with war crimes and attacks on civilians.

Despite the UN fundraising that raised \$2.1billion, the only way in which we can abate the suffering of the Yemeni people is to push for a ceasefire through the United Nations. I have attached a list of Parliamentary Signatures from the UK supporting adding Yemen and its conflict to the agenda at the next UN General Assembly. Only placing Yemen on the UN's agenda at the General Assembly and the Security Council and working collaboratively to end the conflict will save the people of Yemen.

*With Best wishes  
Jas Saeed  
Kooze*

**Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP Chair, APPG for Yemen**



## Parliamentarians who signed the Open Letter to UN General Secretary

Keith Vaz MP (Leicester East) Chair APPG for Yemen  
Alison Thewliss MP (Glasgow Central) Secretary APPG Yemen  
Graham Jones MP (Hyndburn) Treasurer APPG  
Jim Shannon MP (Strangford)  
Diane Abbott MP (Hackney and North Stoke Newington)  
George Adam MSP (Paisley)  
Rushanara Ali MP (Bethnal Green and Bow)  
Rosena Allin-Khan MP (Tooting)  
Jon Ashworth MP (Leicester South)  
Colin Beattie MSP (Midlothian North and Musselburgh)  
Hillary Benn MP (Leeds Central)  
Tracey Brabin MP (Batley and Spen)  
Tom Brake MP (Carshalton and Wallington)  
Alan Brown MP (Kilmarnock)  
Karen Buck MP (Regents Park and Kensington)  
Richard Burgon MP (Leeds East)  
Lisa Cameron MP (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)  
Ronnie Campbell MP (Blyth Valley)  
Dan Carden MP (Liverpool Walton)  
Douglas Chapman MP (Dunfermline and West Fife)  
Joanna Cherry MP (Edinburgh South West)  
Ann Clwyd MP (Cynon Valley)  
Rosie Cooper MP (West Lancashire)  
John Cryer MP (Leyton and Wanstead)  
Nick Dakin MP (Scunthorpe)  
Sir Edward Davey MP (Kingston and Surbiton)  
Bob Doris MSP (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn)  
Thangam Debbonaire MP (Bristol West)  
Ash Denham MSP (Edinburgh Eastern)  
Tan Dhesi MP (Slough)  
Oliver Dowden MP (Hertsmere)  
Caroline Flint MP (Don Valley)  
James Frith MP (Bury North)  
Gill Furniss MP (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough)  
Mike Gapes MP (Ilford South)  
Ruth George MP (High Peak)  
Stephen Gethins MP (North East Fife)  
Kenneth Gibson MSP (Cunninghame North)  
Preet Gill MP (Birmingham Edgbaston)  
Jenny Gilruth MSP (Mid Fife and Glenrothes)  
Mary Glindon MP (North Tyneside)  
Kate Green MP (Stretford and Urmston)  
Ross Greer MSP (West Scotland)  
John Grogan MP (Keighley)  
Andrew Gwynne MP (Denton and Reddish)  
Harriet Harman MP (Camberwell and Peckham)  
Clare Haughey MSP (Rutherglen)  
Lord Hylton  
Richard Lyle MSP (Uddingston and Bellshill)  
Alison Johnson MSP (Lothian)  
Peter Kyle MP (Hove)  
Ben Lake MP (Ceredigion)  
David Lammy MP (Tottenham)  
Jeremy Lefroy MP (Stafford)  
Monica Lennon MSP (Central Scotland)  
David Linden MP (Glasgow East)  
Tony Lloyd MP (Rochdale)  
Rebecca Long Bailey MP (Salford and Eccles)  
Caroline Lucas MP (Brighton Pavillion)  
Rona Mackay MSP (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)  
Justin Madders MP (Ellesmere Port and Neston)  
Sandy Martin MP (Ipswich)  
Rachel Maskell MP (York Central)  
John Mason MSP (Glasgow Shettleston)  
Chris Matheson MP (City of Chester)  
Stuart McDonald MP (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)  
Andy McDonald MP (Middlesbrough)  
Fulton MacGregor MSP (Coatbridge and Chryston)  
Stuart McMillan MSP (Greenock and Inverclyde)  
Angus McNeil MP (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)  
Ben Macpherson MSP (Edinburgh Northern and Leith)  
Carol Monaghan MP (Glasgow North West)  
Layla Moran MP (Oxford West and Abingdon)  
Grahame Morris MP (Easington)  
Ian Murray MP (Edinburgh South)  
Madeline Noon MP (Bridgend)  
Brendan O'Hara MP (Argyll and Bute)  
Kate Osamor MP (Edmonton)  
Laura Pidcock MP (North West Durham)  
Lord Raj Loomba  
Angela Rayner MP (Ashton under Lyne)  
Ellie Reeves MP (Lewisham West and Penge)  
Jonathan Reynolds MP (Stalybridge and Hyde)  
Marie Rimmer MP (St Helens South and Whiston)  
Gail Ross MSP (Caithness Sutherland and Ross)  
Naz Shah MP (Bradford West)  
Tulip Siddiq MP (Hampstead and Kilburn)  
Andy Slaughter MP (Hammersmith)  
Jeff Smith MP (Manchester Withington)  
Angela Smith MP (Penistone and Stockbridge)  
Elaine Smith MSP (Central Scotland)  
Gareth Thomas MP (Harrow West)  
David Torrance MSP (Kirkcaldy)  
Anna Turley MP (Redcar)  
Valarie Vaz MP (Walsall South)  
Tom Watson MP (West Bromwich)  
Thelma Walker MP (Colne Valley)  
Catherine West MP (Hornsey and Wood Green)  
Admiral Lord West  
Phillipa Whitford MP (Central Ayrshire)  
Chris Williamson MP (Derby North)  
Sammy Wilson MP (East Antrim)  
Daniel Zeichner MP (Cambridge)



**Letter from Chair, Keith Vaz to Prime Minister Theresa May Ahead of the visit of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in March 2018.**

Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

6th March 2018

Dear Theresa,

**Visit of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman of Saudi Arabia**

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen ahead of the visit of the Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman tomorrow.

I know that you understand the need for peace in Yemen and are aware of the horrific conditions that are currently present in the country. In Yemen over 22 million people need humanitarian aid urgently. A further 8 million are at risk of famine and malnutrition, cholera and diphtheria are rife countrywide.

The United Kingdom is a huge aid donor to Yemen, but we must do more politically to end this conflict. In your meeting with the Crown Prince, I hope that you will be able to cover the following points.

Firstly, to call for all of Yemen's Ports to be opened duly to both commercial and also humanitarian aid. The lifting of an embargo before Christmas was welcome but restrictions still exist on the ports of Saleef and Hodeidah, where 80% of Yemen's imports pass through.

Secondly, with regards to arms sales it is important to let the Crown Prince know that we are aware of the security dilemmas that the Kingdom faces. We support Saudi Arabia in its efforts to protect their national security. However, UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia cannot continue if their current conduct in the war does not change. If civilians continue to die in Saudi strikes there is no way that the UK can continue to sell them weapons.

Finally, it is important to restart the peace process in Yemen once again. We must look to set a date to convene a meeting of all parties involved in the conflict and look to build a lasting peace deal. Getting the Crown Prince to support the work of the new UN Special Envoy Martin Griffith, a former UK diplomat, is critical if we are to get a peace deal soon.

This is a tremendous opportunity to galvanise the peace process in Yemen and work with the Saudis to end the conflict.

I apologise for not being able to sign this letter by hand but I was in Leicester today  
With Best Wishes

**Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen**

**Yemen Debates in Parliament March 2015- April 2018****2015**

21 July: Luciana Berger (Liverpool Wavertree) Petition 'Humanitarian Situation in Yemen'.

21 July: Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op) Petition 'Humanitarian Situation in Yemen'.

22 October 2015: Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP (Leicester East) Westminster Hall Debate on 'Yemen'.

**2016**

4 February: Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP) 'Yemen'.

22 March: Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP) 'War in Yemen: First Anniversary'.

8 June 2016: Margaret Ferrier (SNP) Motion 'That this House has considered human rights and the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia'. Motion lapsed.

18 October 2016: Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP (Leicester East) Adjournment Debate 'Yemen' Answering Department for International Development

26 October 2016: Rt Hon Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab) Tenth opposition day debate (part two). 'That this House supports efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities and provide humanitarian relief in Yemen, and notes that the country is now on the brink of famine; condemns the reported bombings of civilian areas that have exacerbated this crisis; and calls on the Government to continue to support the UN Special Envoy in his ongoing efforts to achieve a political solution to bring sustainable peace to Yemen' Closure motion. Agreed to on question. Main question negative on division (193 to 283).

12 December 2016: Rt Hon Keith Vaz (Leicester East) Urgent Question 'To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement to clarify the United Kingdom's policy on the conflict in Yemen.'

**2017**

12 January 2017: Stephen Twigg (Liverpool West Derby) Unallotted backbench debate (part one).

28 March 2017: Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP Backbench debate. House of Commons.

5 July 2017: Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South) Yemen: Political and Humanitarian Situation Westminster Hall Debate.

29 November 2017: Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) Yemen Motion under Standing Order No.



24. Allowed by Speaker.

30 November 2017: Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) Emergency Debate: Motion that this House has considered the current situation in Yemen.

**2018**

24 April 2018: Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op)(Urgent Question): 'To ask the Minister of State for International Development to update the House on the humanitarian situation in Yemen.'

## Yemen's War Key Facts

- **22.2 million** People need urgent humanitarian assistance including 11 million children
- **3.1 million** People have been displaced since the start of the war. 2,014,026 people are currently internally displaced
- **16 million** Yemenis are water insecure
- **1,080,422** cholera cases have been recorded countrywide (The worst reported cholera epidemic in history)
- **1,368** suspected Diphtheria cases countrywide
- **6000+** children killed or injured since March 2015
- Violence against women up **63%** since the beginning of the conflict
- **1.1 million** pregnant women at risk countywide
- Under **45%** of births attended by a qualified medical professional
- Child Marriage increased by **66%** since 2015
- **1.2 million** civil servants have not been paid in full since August 2016
- Over **20,000** Yemenis don't have access to critical medical treatment
- **14.8 million** people lack access to basic healthcare
- Fuel exports in 2018 represent only **40%** of the calculated requirements
- Food prices have risen **40%** since the conflicts beginning
- Price of wheat has risen **34%**, wheat flower **37%**, cooking oil **60%**, sugar **46%**
- Under **45%** of health facilities countrywide are running
- **10** Coalition airstrikes cited by the UN Eminent experts as 'likely war crimes'
- **£139 million** pledged by the United Kingdom in aid to Yemen in the financial year 2017-2018
- **£4.6bn** reported worth of arms sales to Saudi Arabia by the United Kingdom since 2015