

Civil War in Yemen: Aftermath of the Arab Spring

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The civil war in Yemen has had devastating humanitarian consequences; 4,000 people have been killed, 2.4 million have been internally displaced, and 80 percent of the country is in dire need of aid. The war began in early 2015 and is between Houthi rebels and anti-Houthi rebels. The Houthi rebels support former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, while anti-Houthis support the current president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Saleh stepped down as president in 2011 in response to the Arab Spring and handed power over to his vice president, Hadi. This change in political leadership sparked the current civil war. All parties involved in the war, which includes Saudi Arabia, have broken international humanitarian and human rights laws and yet barely any effort has been made by the international community to stop the violations. This paper examines the history of Yemen prior to this war and what the human rights consequences have been for Yemen since the Arab Spring.

Yemen is an Arab country bordered by Saudi Arabia and Oman that has been in the midst of an ongoing civil war that started in early 2015. The war is between Houthi militias (who are against the current president, but support the former one) and anti-Houthi armed groups (who support the current president and are supported by a Saudi-Arabia led military coalition). This ongoing conflict has had devastating effects on innocent Yemeni civilians. Saudi Arabia-led airstrikes and ground attacks have killed and injured hundreds of women and children, showing little to no regard for international humanitarian and human rights law. Yemen has been increasingly unstable since the Arab Spring and a closer look is required in order to fully understand the current political situation. This paper will try and

answer the question: What have the human rights consequences been for Yemen since the Arab Spring and what human rights issues need immediate international attention?

Many issues in Yemen are in direct violation of international humanitarian and human rights norms. Yemen is a state party of the main international humanitarian law instrument, the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their three additional protocols of 1977 are international treaties that outline the laws that must be followed during times of war. The Conventions cover the treatment of wounded soldiers, civilians, aid workers, vulnerable people (such as the sick and children), and prisoners of war (POWs). The Geneva Conventions are universally applicable treaties that are signed and ratified by 194 parties. The basic principle and most fundamental rule that must be abided by during war and conflict is: "The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants. Attacks may only be directed against combatants. Attacks must not be directed against civilians." This law is the core of all international humanitarian law. Article 48 of Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions also states that parties of an armed conflict should always distinguish between combatants and civilians (see: International Committee of the Red Cross, n.d.). Yemen and Saudi Arabia are blatantly disregarding these laws, however, because they have been committing indiscriminate ground and air attacks, usually killing civilians rather than specific targets (Amnesty International, 2015a). Yemen is also legally bound by international human rights law because the country has signed three key treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Countries are legally bound to international human rights law in times of war and peace.

The 2010 Arab Spring was an uprising of people throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region who were opposed to their countries' leadership. The events that occurred during the

Arab Spring are directly related to the events that are occurring currently in Yemen. The president of Yemen was overthrown due to the uprisings, but never officially stepped down. The current civil war has a direct relationship with the Arab Spring because the war was caused by the shift in political power that the revolts produced; the country has been unstable ever since. Each side in the conflict is fighting for a particular president; the Houthis are fighting for former president Ali Abdullah Saleh while the anti-Houthis are fighting for current president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Human rights abuses have been committed by both parties in the conflict and serious investigations are required to determine what violations have happened and who is responsible. This paper will examine the current civil war in Yemen and the reasons behind it, which includes a discussion of the Arab Spring in Yemen and how the Arab uprisings influenced the current Yemeni war. These events will be linked to human rights issues and recommendations for future action.

Arab Spring Overview

Yemen has been frequently unstable for the past 200 years (Habeeb, 2012), but due to the Arab Spring Yemen has undergone drastic changes in recent years. A change in political structure has severely impacted the country, and uncertainty and instability are at an all-time high (Özekin, 2014). Yemen's current civil war is between Houthi militias and anti-Houthi armed groups; Houthis are a Zaydi Shia-led group, which is a sector of Shia Islam. The anti-Houthi groups are abetted by a Saudi-led military coalition (Amnesty International, 2015a). Since Saudi Arabia and Yemen share the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia is and has always been concerned with Yemeni affairs, often intervening whenever Yemen seemed unstable out of fear that the Saudi Arabian kingdom would be jeopardized.

The entire region was transformed in 2010 with the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring began in one crucial moment on December 18, 2010, when a 24-year-old Tunisian street vendor, Mohamed Bouzazi, lit himself on fire in the streets of Tunisia. Bouzazi, like many Arab youths, had been having a difficult

time finding a job, and as a result started selling fruits and vegetables on the street to earn a living. Tunisian officers accused him of not having a permit to sell, so they confiscated his cart and allegedly beat and insulted him. Bouzazi then went to the governor's office to complain about the incident, but was denied a meeting with the official. In response, he lit himself on fire. During that time, 40 percent of the Arab world lived in poverty and over half of the unemployed were youths. The Tunisian people rose up in solidarity with Bouzazi; they too were fed up the lack of employment and services resulting from ineffective government. Ben Ali, the 23-year ruler of Tunisia, stepped down less than a month later in response to the uprisings. This inspired people all over the Arab world to also revolt against their careless and oppressive governments. Less than a year later, revolutions in Egypt and Libya led to the downfall of their regimes, as well. On February 11, 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak ended his 30 years in office when he resigned only a short 18 days after the protests had begun. Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi was killed in October 2011 by the National Transitional Council's army (Amnesty International, 2011).

Reasons for the uprisings were similar throughout the MENA region: authoritarian leaders, human rights violations, government corruption, economic instability, unemployment, extreme poverty, and a large portion of educated yet unemployed and dissatisfied youths (Ogbonnaya, 2013). Financial issues were on the top of every list of causes (Salih & Kamal, 2013). In Yemen, specifically, the country's declining economy was a key reason for the uprisings (Ogbonnaya, 2013), due in large part to the impacts of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs are economic programs designed for developing countries by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The World Bank gives loans to these countries on the basis that they adjust the structure of their economy (World Health Organization, 2016). During the 1980s, the IMF and the World Bank pressured a majority of Arab nations to reform their economies using SAPs. There are many critics of the SAPs due to the financial instabilities these programs have caused. Specifically in the Middle East, adoption of SAPs led to reduction of

government jobs, basic essential commodities were cancelled, and taxes were increased for civilians – but local and foreign investors were exempt (Salih, 2013). The economic consequences of these programs were mainly felt by citizens. A majority of people were economically impoverished and both food prices and unemployment rates were at an all-time high. The youth was hit the hardest, making up over half the unemployed, and an estimated 65 percent of the total population. The youth were well educated, and as a result they were more politically aware and increasingly demanding; one in two people leading up to the Arab Spring in the MENA region was unemployed (Özekin, 2014). The youth saw how corrupt the elite was because, for the first time, uncensored news allowed them to witness their leaders' lavish lifestyles and compare them to their own deprived ones (Al-Saleh, 2015). The youth population of the Arab world was extremely frustrated with the corruption and impoverished conditions in which they were living in – results of the SAPs and deeply rooted socio-economic problems that were aided by the IMF and the World Bank (Salih, 2013; Özekin, 2014).

Authoritarian rulers and limited freedoms were also major factors related to the Arab Spring. Many rulers were reluctant to give up power, including the ability to do whatever they pleased without facing accountability in their home countries. In many cases, repressive regimes violated human rights and enjoyed lavish lifestyles while their citizens suffered financially. Leaders often ruled with absolute power, given the ability to commit crimes like torture, disappearances, unwarranted arrests, and unlawful killing of citizens. Authoritarian leaders can often accomplish this by bending laws to their will, such as declaring states of emergency in which they can claim innocent people as terrorists (Salih, 2013). These actions lead to human rights consequences such as violated freedom of expression/press and the inability to participate in politics. Although many Arab states had adopted human rights norms, they often blatantly disregarded them. Yemen was among the worst Arab countries when it came to not allowing citizens to voice their opinions, which is known as “voice accountability”. The MENA region in general scored the lowest globally on voice accountability in the 12 years leading up to the Arab Spring

(Özekin, 2014). To control information, many regimes focused on controlling the media; in some cases, journalists who reported information contrary to the government would get severe prison sentences following unfair trials. They would also lose their jobs and face vicious harassment – particularly in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Bahrain, and Yemen (Salih, 2013).

The Arab Spring was similar to other revolutions because it consisted of numerous people going out and marching, holding demonstrations, and conducting strikes – but it was unique due to the use of social media. Social media, such as Facebook, was used to organize, communicate, and warn protestors of potential attacks and danger. The Arab Spring has been referred to as the “Facebook Revolutions,” due to the impact and importance of social media during the uprisings. There is concrete evidence suggesting that the use of social media is correlated with vivid social changes in Tunisia and Egypt. Communication related to relevant politics were found on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook immediately prior to major protests and rallies, showing how social media was used as a means of organization and communication to carry out protests. In countries that had heavy media censorship, such as Tunisia, activists gave their material to journalists to use in their tweets and articles. However, the debate on whether social media aided in the Arab Spring and to what extent technology plays in civil uprisings has not been conclusive and is still an ongoing issue. Activists in Egypt and Tunisia used social media the most during the uprisings and there is evidence that suggests it helped activists form networks, build social capital, and to organize protest action. McGarty et al. (2014) conducted extensive research on this subject and concluded that although social media was not the reason for the key successes in the Arab Spring, such as the fall of regimes in Egypt and Libya, it was very helpful in gaining mass support for street protests that produced change in weeks rather than in years or decades. Social media helped produce change faster than in previous uprisings that did not have the technological advances we have today (McGarty et al., 2014).

Yemen Prior to Arab Spring

Yemen had already been an unstable country prior to the Arab Spring, plagued by economic instability and ongoing internal conflicts. Unlike other countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, Yemen's revolution during the Arab Spring was not a surprise to the international community due to the country's long history of unrest (Habeb, 2012). Yemen's history is complex and rooted in tribal wars and differences of political ideologies. Internal conflict, economic troubles, and political turmoil were all reasons and motives for the uprising. Internal conflict in Yemen can be traced back to a few causes: Zaydi rebels, tribal wars, and the divide between the North and South. Zaydism is a form of Shiite Islam that is practiced in Yemen. The northern part of Yemen had been ruled for 1,000 years by a Zaydi royal family until a military coup occurred in 1962 and ended its reign. After 1962, a new government was set up in North Yemen, causing great unhappiness and resentment amongst Zaydi people. Zaydi rebels known as Houthis started a decade-long civil war against the government in support of the old Zaydi monarch regime. Conflict within the Zaydi community continued when the Northern Yemeni government killed a prominent Zaydi figure, which led to another civil war in 2004. The government ruined entire rebel villages and internally displaced an estimated 130,000 civilians, leading to an even greater animosity towards the government. The government employed other tribal groups to fight the Houthis, intensifying old rivalries between tribes and making the conflict bigger. The war lasted until 2010, ending in a cease fire agreement and a total of 250,000 internally displaced people (Habeb, 2012).

Yemen was not a unified state for the majority of its history, becoming one only in 1990. There are many reasons why this is problematic and why it has led to a great deal of tensions. A dominant political structure that is agreed upon throughout the newly-unified state is non-existent; tribalism and

family networks are looked upon to guide politics and society more than any institution of state. North Yemen had been under Ottoman rule since the 16th century, but had ultimately gained independence once the Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I. South Yemen had not been created until 1839, when the British occupied and colonized the city of Aden and a created a buffer zone around it, thus establishing South Yemen. South Yemen gained its independence from Great Britain in 1967 as a result of armed conflict between British soldiers and Yemeni resistance fighters. Once South Yemen had gained independence from their colonizers, a socialist state modeled after the Soviet Union was created and the Yemeni Socialist Party was born. Consequently, a Soviet navy was present in the port of Aden, South Yemen's capital, leading to a border war with North Yemen; already both countries had vastly different political ideologies and models that created tension between them – tensions that would noticeably get worse once they were unified (Habeeb, 2012).

The unification of South and North Yemen was not an amicable decision, but one that was necessary to keep South Yemen from falling apart. Several things were occurring in South Yemen that led to the unification: The Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) was plagued with internal fights, economic burdens were tearing the country apart, and their Russian ally was facing its own financial woes. In 1989, South Yemen agreed to unify with its northern neighbor, creating a new Yemen under the rule of North Yemen's leader, Ali Abdullah Saleh. This felt like an enormous blow to South Yemenis, who felt like they were being occupied by the north; the tension erupted into a civil war in 1994 when troops loyal to Saleh attacked Aden in an attempt to eradicate the YSP. The civil war was fueled not only by unification tensions, but also by the frailty of Yemen's economic system. Finances took an enormous blow when the United States stopped giving Yemen international aid and Saudi Arabia expelled about a million Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to punish Yemen for their decision to remain neutral in the war against Saddam Hussein (Habeeb, 2012). The unification of the North and South would be a root cause of many problems yet to come.

Southern Yemenis never truly embraced the unification and showed their dissatisfaction in a series of protests in 2007. Civilians demanded to be freed from the North, even waving the flag of South Yemen, and they wanted higher pension payments for former South Yemeni army officers. Their anger towards the Saleh government was a result of feelings of neglect; the former South Yemeni civilians did not feel as important as the North Yemeni citizens because the leader of the unified state was the former leader of North Yemen. They also felt as though they were not receiving equal benefits from the country's oil resources, most of which are located in old South Yemen. Many southerners claim that the Saleh regime exploits their land and is corrupt, targeting oil and gas industries for personal gain at the expense of the country (Colton, 2010). Violent attacks against government institutions resulted from this anger; citizens of the South attacked police stations and military checkpoints. In an attempt to stop these attacks, the Yemeni interior ministry put a ban on street protests in Aden. Experts say that this only intensified feelings of hatred towards the government and reinforced secession desires in the South. The secessionist movement, called the Hirak movement, strongly affected the unification of Yemen by weakening the government and leading Yemen into a failed state territory (Habeeb, 2012).

Adding to these problems is the fact that Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East. Economic instability is a major reason for the country's decline and its current state. A 2008 study revealed that Yemen struggles with 27 percent inflation, 40 percent unemployment, and 46 percent malnutrition. According to Habeeb (2012), "half of its 22 million citizens are under sixteen and the population is set to double by 2035. Seven million people live in poverty and the country is heavily dependent on food imports, making it especially vulnerable to global price shocks. Reserves of groundwater and oil are rapidly diminishing" (p. 209). Yemeni citizens used to have hope for a brighter economic future during a time of prosperity in the 1980s, however. During that time, unskilled workers worked in the Gulf and sent money back home, creating a sense of economic security in families and a feeling of stability in the Yemeni economy. Unfortunately in the 1990s that hope disappeared in Yemen

as workers were sent home by Gulf States who no longer needed them, severely diminishing the income of families that were dependent on that money (Colton, 2010).

The reasons behind the economic instability in Yemen boil down to a few circumstances: The Gulf Crisis, the unification of North and South, and the SAPs that were implemented improperly. The Gulf Crisis of 1990 left many migrant workers unemployed, causing a shift in economic development to oil revenues instead of migration. This shift changed the focus to a few individuals in government, who were associated with the oil resources that impacted the general population (Colton, 2010). The 1990 unification of North and South Yemen did not produce economic growth like the countries had hoped for. Tens of thousands of migrants returned from the Gulf around the same time, overwhelming the country and raising the unemployment rate. In just a few months, about 880,000 workers returned to Yemen. The migrant workers had been economically relied upon, but now they had limited or no employment prospects once they returned home. Many of the returnees were not accepted back into their families' homes without the income they were providing, or they had lost touch with family members after living abroad for so long. Many tried to return to Saudi Arabia, but were not accepted back due to a conflict between Yemen and the Gulf State. Economic aid from the United States was cut off and oil prices took a major hit. Then, the civil war of 1994 between the North and South occurred and cost the state even more money that they barely had; having no other options, Yemen asked the IMF for assistance in 1995. The IMF implemented SAPs that were supposed to stabilize the economy by raising the price of oil and discharging government employees. However, due to improper implementation of some phases of the SAPs, Yemen's economy only got worse, with unemployment and poverty rates continuing to rise (Colton, 2010).

Yemen during the Arab Spring

Yemeni protesters began going out onto the streets of Sana and other cities in February 2011,

after witnessing Egypt's success in forcing President Mubarak to step down (Juneau, 2013). Anti-regime protesters occupied a square across the street from a university where pro-regime supporters were located, naming it the Taghir, meaning "change". Taghir Square became the center site of the anti-regime movement. Like in other Arab countries during the uprisings, Yemen too saw a powerful rise in youth protesters – a key characteristic of the Arab uprisings. The youth movement in Yemen was composed of young pro-democracy activists who did not affiliate themselves with any of the traditional political systems. As the Arab Spring progressed, the youth movement (which consisted of four main groups) formed an umbrella group named the Civil Coalition of Revolutionary Youth. Established political groups, such as the Joint Meeting Parties, had been quiet up until February 20, when they decided that they would not continue dialogue with the regime as long as it was attacking protesters. Instead, established groups called on their supporters to join the other protesters. The anti-regime protesters had the support of the Houthi movement of the North and the Hirak secessionist movement of the South, creating a supportive relationship between North and South protesters for the first time (Durac, 2012).

The Saleh regime responded to the protests in several ways, all rooted in the president's determination to stay in power. Repression, violence, and economic concessions were all used to stop the protests. Economic concessions included: pay raises, free food and gas for military and security personnel, higher wages for civil servants, reduction of income tax, and extensions of social welfare assistance to families. However, the economic concessions did not stop the regime from being brutally violent towards activists. On February 27, police killed a 17-year-old boy who was protesting. On March 18, pro-regime supporters fired gun shots from a rooftop, killing 52 protesters who were leaving Friday prayer (Juneau, 2013). The violent nature of the regime towards the protesters had vast consequences for the ruling party. The anti-regime movement declared that they were not going to negotiate with the regime and many people from the ruling party deserted the government; about half of the country's

ambassadors resigned. Possibly the biggest blow to the Saleh regime was the defection of General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who was the president's cousin and the commander of the North West Military Region. He was also described as "the second most powerful man in the country" (Durac, 2012, p. 167). General Ali joined the protestors in Taghir Square along with military personal and promised to protect the demonstrators (Durac, 2012).

Saleh negotiated a deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), led by Saudi Arabia and supported by the United States, to hand over power to his vice-president Abd Rabbu Mansur al-Hadi in exchange for immunity for him and his family. Saleh never signed the agreement, however, even after he had promised to do so multiple times. Protestors did not believe he would ever transfer power over to the vice-president and demanded that he step down immediately. Since Saleh avoided signing the proposal, violence continued and protestors did not give up on their quest for a new president. On June 3, tensions erupted when a bomb was thrown by protestors into a mosque on the president's compound, leaving Saleh with serious injuries (Juneau, 2013). Saleh was flown to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, but his inner circle (consisting of his son and nephews) remained in control of the government. Sadly, after Saleh returned to Yemen in good health he remained in power for a few months, but was ultimately backed into a wall by Yemen's main supporters (the U.S. and Saudi Arabia) to sign the GCC proposal. Signing the GCC proposal meant that Saleh would not be running for office in the 2012 presidential election. Instead Vice President Hadi would be the only candidate in the election and would be chosen for a two year transitional period as president. Even though tensions had decreased substantially after Saleh stepped down, Hadi has been facing many challenges that were inherited from Saleh's regime, including a very fragmented political system and then a civil war (Juneau, 2013).

Yemen's Current Civil War

The current civil war in Yemen is about political power and concession. Houthis have wanted to be a political party for a long time in Yemen, wanting a voice to represent their beliefs. Unfortunately they have used violence to try and achieve this goal. Houthis are members of the Shia sector of Islam, making them a minority in a largely Sunni Yemen. They believe that there is no political representative for them and have made it their mission to have a say in the government. In September 2014, Houthis took over the capital and demanded that President Hadi change the government to allow Houthis to be represented. Hadi partially obliged, but war broke out on March 25, 2015, when a Saudi-led airstrike aimed to kill Houthi rebels (Al Jazeera, 2014). Chaos broke out shortly after this attack and the violence has not stopped. The war has resulted in 4,000 deaths (mostly civilian casualties), the rebels have taken over residential neighborhoods leading to 2.4 million internally displaced people, and humanitarian aid is desperately needed; 83 percent of the population is in dire need of food, water, shelter, fuel, and sanitation aid. The conflict is occurring in 20 out of the 22 governorates in Yemen. Ground and air attacks by both sides have killed hundreds of women and children in indiscriminate occurrences, in violation of international law (Amnesty International, 2015a, 2015c, 2015d).

Civilian attacks and lack of aid are major human rights challenges in Yemen. Residential neighborhoods have been used as locations of attacks. Houthi and anti-Houthi fighters have battled for control in the residential neighborhoods of Aden and Taiz, using imprecise weapons that cannot be controlled to aim at specific targets, thus killing many civilians and blatantly disregarding international law. Indiscriminate attacks have been the cause of most innocent casualties, especially air strikes that deliberately fail to distinguish between military targets and civilians. Land mines laid out by both sides have also killed and injured innocent people returning home to Aden. Women and children have been killed while sleeping in their homes or going about their regular activities, and civilians have even been killed in places where they sought refuge after being displaced from their homes (Amnesty

International, 2015a). Humanitarian aid is desperately needed due to the conflict and the resulting internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Entire neighborhoods have been abandoned because of safety concerns or from infrastructure being destroyed, leading to the loss of water and electricity. Civilians have even moved into abandoned homes, but are still vulnerable to attack; many civilians do not have a safe place to hide out. The intrusion of the conflict into neighborhoods has truly left civilians with nowhere to go. The sick and wounded have had a difficult time accessing medical care due to shortages and inability to travel freely within Yemen because of armed checkpoints, and humanitarian aid has been severely diminished because each group tends to block the delivery of aid into areas controlled by the other side (Amnesty International, 2015d).

Amnesty International (2016b) argues that Houthi rebels and their allies had been denying medical supplies and food to civilians, in direct violation of international humanitarian law. Houthis have stopped civilians at checkpoints from bringing in fruit, vegetables, meat, clothes, gas cylinders for cooking, and oxygen cylinders for hospitals. The rebels not only deny access to people bringing these items in at checkpoints, but they also confiscate the goods sometimes. Samar Ameen described how Houthis blocked a delivery of 34 oxygen tanks from coming into Taiz. They held the driver for three days and interrogated him even though he pleaded that the oxygen was for the hospitals and not their opposition, the anti-Houthis. Oxygen cylinders are desperately needed in all hospitals. Doctors have told Amnesty that at least 18 people have died due to lack of oxygen in the few remaining hospitals in Taiz. The director of al-Rawdha Hospital said that oxygen cylinders are needed for intensive care units and prenatal incubators, and that the hospital could no longer take in patients that are in critical condition because of the oxygen shortage. Before the conflict broke out, hospitals required around 200-250 oxygen cylinders per day, but now are sharing 20-30 cylinders that are smuggled in by donkeys; the price of those cylinders has gone up from \$20 to \$70 USD, and prices have soared for almost every necessity. Almost all shops have closed and basic goods cost three to five times more than the normal rate. Many

people are basically trapped because routes leading in and out of cities such as Taiz have been closed or heavily restricted, shutting down essential resources such as hospitals (Amnesty International, 2016b).

Human rights challenges also affect soldiers and aid workers, who are partly endangered by support from the international community. Houthi forces have captured Southern fighters and held them in harsh conditions, and they have also captured aid workers on their way to delivery resources to civilians. Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions specifically prohibits mistreatment of captured soldiers and civilians during times of conflict and requires aid for the sick and wounded. Executions by Southerners (anti-Houthis) have been documented by organizations such as Human Rights Watch, which reported a brutal incident that happened when anti-Houthis brought captured Houthis to the port of Aden and blew it up while filming the incident. Another incident happened at a checkpoint where Houthi militias stopped aid workers with medical supplies and denied them access to a clinic in Muaala; the aid workers were detained and their whereabouts are still unknown (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Much of this violence is perpetuated, in part, by international assistance. The Houthi rebels are allied with supporters of Saleh while the opposition is an anti-Houthi coalition who have the support of Saudi Arabia and are devotees of the current president, Hadi. The anti-Houthi coalition includes the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Jordan, and Sudan. According to Amnesty International (2015b), the United States and the United Kingdom have given logistical and intelligence support, while Somalia has made air space, territorial waters, and military bases available to the Hadi coalition. It is a battle between allies of opposing political rulers, but the majority of casualties are innocent civilians (Amnesty International, 2015c and 2015d).

Recommendations and Conclusions

Tending to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen needs to be the first priority of the international community. In 2015, the United Nations gave the humanitarian crisis in a Yemen a 3, which is the

highest and most severe rating (Amnesty International, 2015d), but since then things have gotten even worse. Allowing full access to humanitarian aid provisions and workers is vital, which includes instructing soldiers to allow the transport of aid to garner safe passage. To accomplish this, international actors such as the UN and the United States must use their relationships with leaders on both sides to negotiate the provision of aid. Those who do not comply must face financial sanctions and other penalties for violating international norms.

To gain this kind of support, the war in Yemen must be more visible. Amnesty International has reported that the Yemeni civil war is a forgotten one, which the world has turned its back on despite ongoing armed conflict (Amnesty International, 2015a and 2015c). This needs to be changed if the civilians in Yemen are going to receive any help. There needs to be more media reporting on the human rights violations that are occurring; the mainstream media needs to report on the dire situation in Yemen in order to get the attention of the international community. Al Jazeera (2015) argues that many media organizations are hesitant to report on Yemen because of political interests, with both Western and Arab countries not wanting to report on human rights abuses because of alliances with various sides in the war. Al Jazeera (2015) also states that it is difficult to travel outside the capital city, Sanaa, making reporting extremely difficult. Allowing safe access to journalists would help address the limited media coverage; although guarantees of safety aren't always possible, journalists should have permissions to travel and support from local authorities. NGOs should also urge the media to report on the war from a human rights perspective, rather than simply covering the war in its traditional sense. People need to know about the human rights abuses that Yemen and Saudi Arabia are committing in order for possible change to occur.

Foreign states that are supporting the armed conflict must stop immediately. Any state that is giving weapons to the parties of the war must stop to ensure the safety of civilians and to uphold

international law. The Control Arms Coalition released a report in February 2016 naming the countries that are exporting weapons to Saudi Arabia that are being used to kill civilians. Those countries are: France, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the U.K., and the U.S. All of these countries happen to be parties or signatories to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) a legally binding treaty that is supposed to limit the international transfer of weapons in order to minimize suffering. The ATT forbids the transferring of weapons that may be used to commit war crimes (Amnesty International, 2016a). Yet this is precisely what the weapons sold to Saudi Arabia are being used for. Recent estimates contend that arms transfer sales to Saudi Arabia were more than \$25 billion USD in 2015; of this, state parties to the ATT accounted for over \$4.9 billion USD. Italy exported arms from January to November 2015 that were worth \$39.7 million USD and the United Kingdom made \$4.16 billion in exports of military equipment to Saudi Arabia (Amnesty International, 2016a). These countries are profiting off of Yemeni civilians by selling and transferring weapons to Saudi Arabia. Countries that have clearly broken the ATT Treat must face consequences, which includes serious investigation of these matters immediately. Amnesty International (2015) also urged U.S. President Barack Obama to end his \$1.29 billion USD arms deal with Saudi Arabia, which goes against his own policy on arms sales (Amnesty International, 2015a). It is important that people urge their governments to stop transferring weapons that support the anti-Houthi coalition.

Finally, the United Nations must set up an international commission of inquiry to investigate the human rights abuses being committed in Yemen and to ensure that those who have committed abuses and war crimes are brought to justice. The UN must recognize the crimes that have been committed by all parties involved and publicly publish the findings of the investigation. Reparation must be given to the families affected through means of compensation, rehabilitation, and restitution. The international community should urge both parties involved to respect and abide by international law and publically condemn them unless they do so. The International Criminal Court (ICC) needs to set up an

international criminal tribunal in Yemen to help bring the criminals to justice and to fully investigate the abuses that have occurred during the course of this civil war. War crimes seem to be happening, but a tribunal must be set up to determine the actual scope of the crimes.

Yemen's civil war has had severe humanitarian consequences following the Arab Spring, but it also has deeper roots in tribal conflict, economic instability, and conflicting political ideologies. Yemen's history as an unstable state is the main reason why the country is breaking international law and violating human rights treaties. The Arab Spring directly caused this civil war because of the demise of Saleh's regime, which set the stage for the conflict, but human rights abuses are ultimately happening as part of a long history of instability. The international community must step up and acknowledge the human rights abuses that are occurring in Yemen.

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