Yemeni Civil War
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Hello and welcome to PMUNC 2017! My name is Natalie Fahlberg, and I am thrilled to be your chair for the Yemeni Civil War Cabinet. First, let me tell you a little bit about myself. I grew up in McLean, VA, and did high school Model UN at Langley High School. MUN helped me overcome my fear of public speaking when I joined. It was incredibly rewarding being able to participate as Langley’s Under-Secretary General of the team and Secretary-General of VIMUNC my senior year, and I am so excited to have my final chairing experience as a senior at Princeton.

I competed mostly as a crisis delegate in high school – I really could not stand GA’s. I just finished my second year as a captain of Princeton’s Model UN team, and I still compete as a crisis delegate. It has been rewarding to continue my high school passion on the college circuit. That being said, MUN isn’t the only thing I do. I study in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. I play the violin, am involved with political activity here on campus, and am a cadet in Princeton’s Army ROTC program.

I quickly want to touch upon some qualities that I value in a delegate.

• A Balance of Personal and Committee Action - make sure that you strike a balance between sending in secret portfolio power directives (that only your position can do) and being a sponsor of committee directives, communiqués, and press releases.

• A Plan - we will be impressed if you have an overall arc that you would like the committee to take.

• Creativity! - Think about it this way. If you send in creative and intelligent directives, we will be impressed.
• Research – I cannot emphasize this enough! Please make sure that you know about the crisis situation. Obviously, read the background guide – you’re already off to a great start if you’re reading this letter! – and maybe look up recent news articles to make sure you know what's going on in the region.

• Leadership - obviously, we will be looking for who is the leader in committee. Who makes eloquent speeches, leads in un-mods, etc. This relates to the second point above, about having a plan and combining that with being a leader.

Finally, I want everyone to have fun. I am not planning on being super tough on parliamentary procedure, so if this is your first time in a crisis committee, do not worry. I remember being nervous the first time I did crisis. Please email me if you have any concerns or questions at fahlberg@princeton.edu and I will respond as soon as possible. I’m very excited to see you all in November!

Best,

Natalie Fahlberg
Welcome, delegates, to Princeton Model United Nations Conference 2017! Throughout this committee, you will be transported to the Middle East, where you will be challenged with the religious, tribal, and cultural tensions of the region. Delegates, welcome to Yemen!

Yemen, one of the Arab world's poorest countries, has been devastated by a war between forces loyal to the internationally-recognised government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement. More than 7,600 people have been killed and 42,000 injured since March 2015, the majority in air strikes by a Saudi-led multinational coalition that backs the president. The conflict and a blockade imposed by the coalition have also triggered a humanitarian disaster, leaving 70% of the population in need of aid.

This committee will be happening live. Meaning, the start date of the conference is the start date of committee. Because of the changing tides of politics in the Middle East, be sure to read the news prior to the conference. Throughout the conference, you will be challenged with crisis updates, where a team of crisis staffers will update you with real-time events and news updates (to which you are expected to respond).

You can respond to such updates multilaterally – as a committee – or unilaterally – as individuals. Each member of the committee will have portfolio powers based on his or her cabinet position. The challenge of this committee is to utilize the power of directives, press releases, and communiqués to address the conflicts within Yemen. Best of luck, delegates.
History of the Topic

Yemen as a modern state has its roots in the 1970s, but has been a presence in the region for millennia. Yemen is the closest point in the Middle East to sub-saharan Africa, a long-term major caravan route for trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, connecting multiple continents. For hundreds of years, Yemen was controlled both by tribes as well as the Ottoman Empire. Following the dissolution of Ottoman rule in 1917, Zaidi leader Imam Yahya took power and declared the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Immediately following his rise to power, opposition arose and continued throughout the reset of the 20th century.

The current crisis in Yemen has its roots in June 2004, when Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, leader of the Zaidi Shia sect, launched an uprising against what he and his followers saw as oppression of the Shia minority by the incumbent Sunni government in Yemen. Your tasks as delegates will be to balance the current geopolitical situation that has stemmed from various uprisings since 2004.

The government saw this rebellion as a direct threat and quickly retaliated. Fighting quickly escalated, though it was mostly contained to the Sa’dah Governorate in northwestern Yemen. When the Houthi conflict began to spread to the province of Jizan in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government began to back Yemeni forces against the Houthi rebels. In August 2009, the Yemeni government launched a new offensive, code-named Operation Scorched Earth. The Houthis accused both the American and Saudi Arabian governments of assisting with covert shipments of cash and weapons. From this conflict emerged a new national hero, Ali Mohsen al Ahmar, a general of the Yemeni army against the Houthi insurgency.

In 2011, protests erupted throughout the Middle East after the Arab Spring, and were no stranger to Yemen. Originally about unemployment and corruption, the protests over time evolved to also include complaints about government resistance to changing the constitution. More uprisings were fueled by the supposedly “peaceful” transition of power between former authoritarian president Ali Abdullah Saleh to now-President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and his internationally recognized government.

The current conflict has its roots in the failure of the political transition to actually bring stability to Yemen. In the beginning of his presidency, President Hadi “struggled to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by al-Qaeda, a separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of many military officers to Mr Saleh, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity.”

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2 “Yemen History.”
4 Ibid.
Current Situation

In the February 2012 elections, Vice President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi ran unopposed and was elected as the first new president of Yemen in over 23 years. However, despite the formation of a new constitution, the new Yemeni government failed to address the systematic inequalities, economic issues, and tribal war prevalent in Yemeni society. The citizens, dissatisfied and disillusioned, began to look for new populist groups through which to voice their growing frustrations and were increasingly drawn to the radical agenda of the Houthi movement.\(^5\) Al-Houthi seized this opportunity, and the Houthi movement expanded at an alarming rate, prompting lawmakers in Sana’a to seek to reach an agreement with the rebels.

The Houthi movement currently controls a great deal of the western region. Terrorist groups rock the area, and Al-Qaeda has become prevalent in recent years. It is your duty as a committee to re-gain control over the area you have lost. As the map indicates, there are multiple contested cities, and full-scare war is possible if not probable.\(^6\)

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\(^5\) “Yemen Crisis: Who is Fighting Whom?”
\(^6\) Ibid.
Overall, it is important to consider the role of international organizations and international governments in the conflict. In 2015, Saudi Arabia and Iran began a proxy war in Yemen, with Saudi Arabia beginning a military campaign to go against the Iranian-backed Houthi movement. The 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 worsened relations in the region, with Saudi Arabia claiming that Iran was not to be trusted (citing Iranian involvement in Yemen as evidence). Yemen has become a battlefield for both Iran and Saudi Arabia to work out their differences.

In 2014, Houthi rebels, allied with troops who were loyal to former President Saleh, captured most of the country. The ground captured included even the capital at Sanaa. An international coalition, led by Saudia Arabia and supported by the United States, quickly began a campaign by air against the rebels in support of President Hadi. According to the United Nations, “the conflict has killed more than 10,000 people, forced millions from their homes and pushed the impoverished country to the brink of famine.” Ultimately, the air campaign has been unsuccessful in actually regaining lost ground from the rebels, although it has been successful in destroying major weapons caches and rebel outposts. This “man-made food crisis” is something that must be addressed by the committee, as UNICEF estimates that hundreds of thousands of children are acutely malnourished throughout the state.

In recent weeks and months, offensive efforts against terrorist groups and the rebels have increased. In July 2017, Houthi forces claimed to have struck a Saudi-led coalition warship off of the western coast of the country, and Hadi government forces responded days later by capturing a major

8 Ibid.
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Houthi outpost in the south. In August, United States–led forces fought against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which has increased its operations in the south of Yemen (a map of which is pictured below). Members of the committee must deal with complex issues such as terrorism throughout the state. Not only is AQAP an issue, but Islamic State militants have also been seen operating in central Yemen throughout the summer months of 2017.

The Yemeni cabinet should analyze whether it wishes to continue with U.S. and Emirati special operations forces working within Yemen. A possible solution would be for the cabinet to push for the securing of major population centers as well as infrastructure, to protect against Houthi and AQAP control. Ultimately, the controllers of major cities and power lines will win this conflict. The Yemeni military could do that through working with the U.S. on operations through “surveillance, aerial refueling, close air support, and forces on the ground.” Additionally, the cabinet should consider whether it wishes to directly engage in peace talks with the Houthis. Or will peace and violence be your only options?

Country Policy and People Policy

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11 Ibid.

12 Farrukh, Ozias, and Parker.
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There are many issues in the surrounding region that make Yemen’s situation difficult. In 2016, following the execution of Nimr al Nimr and the resulting protests, Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran, giving Iranian diplomats only 48 hours to leave the country, and saying that the restoration of diplomatic relations would be contingent upon Tehran stopping its meddling in other countries’ internal affairs. Following Saudi lead, Sudan, Kuwait and Bahrain cut ties with Iran a few days later. The Iranian government, citing the previous year’s events, institutes a ban on its citizens performing the Hajj.

When Rouhani won the Iranian presidency in 2013, he did so on a basis of improving Iran’s economy and status on the world stage – seeing as it currently has a negative role in the international community, Iran will likely become a player in the region in this committee. The 2015 nuclear deal was an important step in achieving these goals, but international tensions have arisen for Iran through its connections in the crises in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. In Yemen, frequently denied Iranian support for the Houthi rebels is not as established as its support for Hezbollah or the Assad regime, although Riyadh has cited its support as a reason for why Saudi intervention in Yemen is and was necessary. Its support for the Assad regime in Syria has lead to the formation of a Riyadh-Ankara-Doha axis, pitting Iran against its neighbors in yet another proxy war. Rouhani supports improving relations with other states in the Gulf, but much of his political bargaining power was spent concluding the nuclear deal and Ayatollah Khameini appears to be less interested in political rapprochement. As Iran-Saudi tensions remain high due to recent inflammatory rhetoric from both parties, another problem arises for Iran in the form of growing support for Sunni extremist groups, such as ISIS, that threaten Iran and Iranian interests in the region. The US and international groups have urged Saudi Arabia and Iran to not let their rivalry impede the Syrian peace process, and warned against escalations that could further destabilize an already fractured region.
Because oil is such a large commodity in the region, the Yemeni Cabinet should consider what would occur if the other gulf countries, or the Gulf Cooperation Council, would become involved in the conflict. Internal instability opens the doors for even more instability in Yemen in the future, which this cabinet cannot compromise. In all, this cabinet of ministers must consider whether it wishes to create a more peaceful, democratic nation that includes all people, or whether it wishes to squash rebellion and maintain the status quo. The power is in your hands!

Questions to Consider
Here are a few brief questions to consider when conducting research and carrying out your plans in committee:

- Should the Yemeni cabinet work with other countries?
- Should the Yemeni cabinet negotiate with the rebels?
- Are United States forces to be trusted?
- How will regional issues with Saudi Arabia come into play?
- Should religious freedom be increasingly tolerated in Yemen?
- What will you, as delegates, do if inra-committee tensions arise?
- What internal factions could you see forming in the Hadi cabinet?
- What kinds of directives and press releases could you see yourselves forming, as individuals and as a committee?
- What would a stable Yemeni state look like?
- Will regional powers be able to have a proxy war in Yemen?
- Is international intervention a good method of stabilizing the state?

For more information on the current situation, please see the following resources:

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- http://www.ecfr.eu/nea/yemen

Key Words

- **Sectarian** – this type of conflict has arisen between different groups and sects, both religious and cultural and tribal, throughout Yemen
- **Zaidi** – a member of an Islamic sect of Yemen that constitutes one of the three major branches of Shi‘a
- **Sunni** – one of the two main branches of Islam, commonly described as orthodox, and differing from Shia in its understanding of the Sunna and in its acceptance of the first three caliphs.
- **Shi‘a** – one of the two main branches of Islam, followed especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad's first true successor.
- **Sanaa** – the largest city in Yemen and the centre of Sana'a Governorate
- **Houthi** – a Zaidi predominantly Shia-led religious-political movement that emerged in Yemen in the late 1990s
- **President Hadi** – a current Yemeni politician and former Yemen Armed Forces field marshal; he has been the president of Yemen since February 2012.
- **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** – a militant terrorist organization, considered by many to be the most dangerous branch of Al Qaeda.
You will be assigned a character for the duration of this committee of advisors to the President. The President himself, President Hadi, will not be present in the room. And instead, the chair will coordinate the committee on behalf of Hadi.

Below are the characters who will be present in committee. You will be responsible for carrying out your own independent research into your characters.

- **Minister of Electricity - Abdullah Mohsen al-Akwa**
  - Born 18 April 1961, Abdullah Mohsen al-Akwa is a Yemeni politician who was acting Prime Minister of Yemen from 24 September 2014 to 9 November 2014. He is one of the founding member of the Islah political party and served in Ministry of Electricity and Water the same year.

- **Minister of Interior – Hussein Arab**
  - Hussein Arab has been the Interior minister of Yemen since 1 December 2015. With this role, he has a lot of influential power over the inner workings and logistics of the nation. Additionally, Hussein has access to important resources in his country.

- **Minister of Information – Muammar al-Iryani**
  - As the minister of information, Muammar al Iryani can obtain and seek out highly important and confidential information that refers to workings within and outside the scope of his country. He also has access to foreign intelligence agents who work under him.

- **Minister of Foreign Affairs - Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi**
  - Abdulmalik Abduljalil Al-Mekhlafi is a Yemeni politician. As of 2016 he was Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. At age fifteen he joined the Nasserist Unionist People's Organisation of Yemen. He quickly rose the ranks of the organization and
became their leader. He was a founding member of the Arab National Conference in 1990 and was repeatedly elected to the Secretariat and the Executive Committee of the National Conference.

- **Minister of Sana’a Secretariat - Abdelghani Jamil**
  - As the minister of Sana’s Secretariat, Abdelghani Jamil is in charge of administrative and legislative affairs within the group. He is close to many key officials in the secretariat and as such can access resources and information easily.

- **Minister of Defense – Mahmoud al-Subaihi**
  - Major general Mahmoud al-Subaihi is a Yemeni military officer. He serves in the cabinet of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi as defence minister. In the Yemen Army, he holds the rank of major general. He was appointed to head the Ministry of Defence by Prime Minister Khaled Bahah in November 2014.

- **Minister of Health – Nasser Ba'aom**
  - Nasser Ba'aom, a surgeon and former undersecretary of health, also is the minister of health and population in Yemen. His role primarily consists of ensuring the health and wellbeing of Yemeni citizens, and also ensuring that good health practices are carried out within the nation.

- **Minister of Justice – Nahal al-Awlaqi**
  - Nihal Naj Ali Al-Awlaqi was appointed in January 2016 as Yemen’s Minister of Legal Affairs. Before that she was a member of the Constitutional Drafting Committee, and as such supported women's rights. She also served as a legal advisor to the Women’s Center for Training at the University of Aden, and was one of the women’s representatives in the National Dialogue Conference.

- **Minister of Public works and Infrastructures – Abdelmalek Saeed**
Dr. Moeen Abdelmalek Saeed was appointed as minister of public works and infrastructures. This means that he is focused on solely improving the infrastructure of Yemen. He works mainly on improving the quality of life for the citizens of Yemen.

- Minister of Social Affairs and Labour – Abtihaj Al-Kamal
  - Dr. Abtihaj Al-Kamal is the recent minister of social affairs and labor. He has an entire department dedicated to fostering positive social affairs in Yemen and regulating the Labour market in the country.

- Minister of Petroleum and Minerals – Saif Mouhssin Aboud al-Sharif
  - As an Oil rich nation, Yemen prides itself on its dedication to improve its nation by mining Petroleum products and minerals. Thus, it is this minister’s job to oversee this is carried out efficiently and profitably.

- Minister of Religious Endowments and Guidance – Ahmed Zoubayen Attiah
  - An arab country, Yemen prides itself in its religious history. As such, Ahmed Zoubayen Attiah has a crucial job in promoting religious endowments and guidance within Yemen, and must focus on ensuring this stays true, especially with the on going civil war.

- Minister of Finance – Ahmed Obeid al-Fadhli
  - As a nation with high levels of growth and development foreseen in the future, the Minister of Finance must ensure that these growths are done sustainably and in a way that promotes better living standards for all it’s citizens.

- Minister of Transportation – Mourad al-Halmi
  - Transport is relatively underdeveloped in Yemen outside of the major cities. This makes mobility within the country and to other countries very difficult. It is imperative that this minister tackles this issue to develop Yemen further.
• Minister of Human Rights – Mohammad Mohsen Askar
  
o Yemen has has a historically poor record of human rights in the international platform, so it is Mohammad Mohsen Askar’s job to try and turn this around and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to citizens in his nation.

• Minister of State – Abd Rabbo Saleh Aslami
  
o The minister of state, Abd Rabbo Saleh Aslami, acts as an oversight on all affairs that take place within Yemen. As such his role is to ensure that all the inner workings of the nation run smoothly.