



BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNGA- SOCHUM

SNAMUN '24

*AGENDA: DELIBERATION UPON THE
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN YEMEN
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON ACUTE
FOOD ANALYSIS*

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to SNA MUN 2024.

The following Background Guide has been formulated keeping in mind various aspects of the agenda to be discussed in committee. Though this Background Guide lists out the broad facets of the agenda that we would like to see being debated upon in committee, let us highlight the fact that this piece of document is NOT exhaustive and that further reading on part of the delegates is essential in order to steer the debate in the right direction. Also, not under any circumstances can the Background Guide be quoted or used as substantial proof in committee sessions. Delegates are expected to build their research upon the topics highlighted in the following pages, though further research would also be appreciated.

We are most looking forward to seeing what you, members of the committee, can bring to the table, both in terms of your ideas in debate and your creativity in crafting solutions. Please send your position papers to the email ID mentioned.

**Regards,
Executive Board
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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY- SOCHUM



Agenda:

“Deliberation upon the humanitarian crisis
in Yemen with special emphasis on acute
food crisis”

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SOCHUM

The United Nations General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee, commonly referred to as SOCHUM, plays a pivotal role in addressing a wide range of social and humanitarian issues that affect people globally. This committee focuses on topics such as human rights, social development, and the advancement of women, among others. It serves as a platform for member states to discuss and promote international cooperation in tackling pressing social challenges, including poverty, education, and health. SOCHUM's work is guided by various international treaties and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which underscores the importance of safeguarding human dignity and promoting social justice. Through its resolutions and recommendations, SOCHUM aims to foster a more equitable and inclusive world, making it a crucial component of the UN's broader mission to enhance human welfare and uphold fundamental freedoms.

SOCHUM collaborates with various bodies and organizations to enhance its effectiveness in addressing social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. Key partners include the Human Rights Council (HRC), with which it works to review global human rights situations, and UNICEF, focusing on children's rights and welfare. The committee also engages with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address the needs of refugees and displaced persons. Additionally, SOCHUM collaborates with cultural organizations like UNESCO to promote cultural heritage and diversity. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role as well, providing grassroots perspectives and advocacy for marginalized communities

INTRODUCTION

Yemen is currently facing one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, exacerbated by nearly a decade of ongoing conflict, economic instability, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations has reported that over 20 million Yemenis—more than half of the population—are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, with approximately 17 million experiencing acute food insecurity. The situation is further complicated by structural vulnerabilities, including a collapsed healthcare system and rampant malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant women. Humanitarian aid has become essential for survival, as many families struggle to secure even one meal a day, highlighting the urgent need for international support and intervention to address this multifaceted crisis.

The food crisis in Yemen is particularly alarming, with millions facing severe hunger due to a combination of factors including ongoing conflict, economic decline, and disrupted supply chains. The World Food Programme (WFP) has identified Yemen as a critical hotspot for food insecurity, where the lack of access to adequate nutrition has resulted in alarming rates of malnutrition among vulnerable populations. Despite efforts to provide food assistance, funding shortages have led to significant reductions in aid, forcing organizations to scale back their operations. The situation remains precarious, with projections indicating that food insecurity is likely to worsen in the coming months without immediate and substantial intervention. In addition to the food crisis, Yemen's humanitarian situation is marked by widespread suffering due to the collapse of essential services and infrastructure. The ongoing conflict has decimated healthcare facilities, leaving millions without access to medical care, clean water, or sanitation. Diseases such as cholera and measles are rampant, exacerbated by malnutrition and poor living conditions. As the humanitarian operating environment continues to deteriorate, the need

for coordinated efforts to deliver aid and support recovery is more critical than ever. International organizations and donor countries must act decisively to address these challenges and provide the necessary resources to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

HISTORICAL FACTORS

The humanitarian and food crisis in Yemen has deep historical roots, significantly influenced by decades of political instability and conflict. Yemen's modern troubles began with the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, which was followed by a civil war in 1994. The political landscape remained volatile, leading to a series of uprisings, including the Arab Spring protests in 2011, which culminated in the ousting of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. This power vacuum and subsequent political fragmentation set the stage for the current conflict, which erupted in 2015 when Houthi rebels took control of the capital, Sana'a. The ensuing civil war has devastated Yemen's economy and infrastructure, resulting in widespread displacement and a humanitarian catastrophe that has left millions without access to basic necessities.

The combination of prolonged conflict and economic decline has severely impacted Yemen's food security. Years of fighting have disrupted agricultural production and supply chains, leading to acute food shortages. The World Food Programme estimates that over 17 million Yemenis are food insecure, with many facing starvation. The economic downturn, exacerbated by the war, has resulted in soaring prices for food and essential goods, pushing more families into poverty. Additionally, the devaluation of the Yemeni rial has made it increasingly difficult for households to afford even the most basic food items, contributing to a dire situation where many people do not know when they will eat their next meal.

Natural disasters and climate change have further compounded Yemen's food and humanitarian crisis. The country is prone to extreme weather events, including droughts and floods, which have devastated agricultural land and reduced crop yields. Water scarcity is a significant issue, as Yemen relies heavily on groundwater, which is being depleted at alarming rates. These environmental challenges, coupled with the ongoing conflict, have created a perfect storm that threatens the survival

of millions. As a result, international humanitarian organizations are struggling to provide adequate assistance, and the need for a coordinated global response is more urgent than ever to address the complex interplay of historical, political, and environmental factors driving the crisis in Yemen.

GEO-POLITICAL FACTORS

- **Proxy Conflict:** The ongoing war in Yemen is largely viewed as a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Saudi Arabia supporting the internationally recognized government and Iran backing the Houthi rebels. This geopolitical rivalry has intensified the conflict, complicating peace efforts and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis as both sides pursue their strategic interests in the region.
- **Regional Instability:** Yemen's geopolitical significance, particularly its control over the Bab el-Mandeb strait, has drawn the attention of regional powers and heightened tensions. The conflict has implications for global energy security, as disruptions in Yemen can affect oil shipping routes. This has led to increased military involvement from neighboring countries, further destabilizing the region and hindering humanitarian access.

International Inaction and Aid Challenges: The complex geopolitical landscape has resulted in a lack of decisive international action to address the humanitarian crisis. Despite the scale of suffering, global powers often prioritize their strategic interests over humanitarian concerns, leading to inadequate responses to the crisis. Additionally, ongoing conflict and blockades have severely restricted humanitarian access, making it difficult for aid organizations to deliver assistance to those in need, thereby worsening the food and humanitarian crisis in Yemen

EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

- **Over 17.6 million people in Yemen are facing food insecurity, with many at risk of starvation. The combination of ongoing conflict, economic decline, and reduced humanitarian assistance has left millions struggling to access adequate nutrition.**
- **Nearly 2.7 million children under 5 are suffering from acute malnutrition, including 538,000 children severely malnourished and 60,000 children suffering from critical medical complications as a result. Malnutrition rates in Yemen are among the highest in the world.**
- **Aid cuts have led to a surge in malnutrition, as the UN World Food Programme was forced to pause food distributions to 9.5 million people in northern Yemen. This has had a devastating impact, with more than half of households unable to access adequate food in January 2024.**
- **Malnutrition has increased the risk of death for children under 5, with severe acute malnutrition rates rising by 15.5% in 2020. Untold numbers of innocent people could starve if urgent action is not taken to address the crisis.**
- **The lack of access to food and hygiene supplies has placed the population at high risk of malnutrition, with global acute malnutrition rates surpassing emergency thresholds. This has severe implications for public health and child survival.**

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

International Organisations

The United Nations (UN), through its various agencies, has taken a leading role in coordinating humanitarian efforts. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) oversees the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, which aims to deliver life-saving assistance to millions in need. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been crucial in providing food aid to combat acute food insecurity, while UNICEF focuses on the health and nutrition of children and mothers, addressing the alarming rates of malnutrition. However, the effectiveness of these agencies has been hampered by funding shortfalls, with the UN's humanitarian appeal often falling significantly short of its targets, complicating their ability to deliver aid effectively.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also played a vital role in Yemen's health crisis, providing medical supplies and support to healthcare facilities. WHO's efforts include combating vaccine-preventable diseases and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further strained an already fragile health system. Additionally, organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and International Rescue Committee (IRC) have been on the ground delivering critical healthcare services, treating malnutrition, and providing emergency medical assistance. These NGOs often fill gaps left by larger organizations, directly reaching communities that are otherwise inaccessible due to conflict or bureaucratic impediments. However, they face significant risks, including attacks on aid workers and logistical challenges in delivering assistance.

The European Union (EU) has emerged as a significant donor, providing substantial humanitarian aid to Yemen. In 2024, the EU allocated €125 million to support vulnerable populations, focusing on food security,

health, and sanitation. The EU's humanitarian partners also engage in mine clearance and risk education, addressing the dangers posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Other organizations, such as Islamic Relief Worldwide, have partnered with local entities to provide food, shelter, and medical assistance. Despite these efforts, the humanitarian situation remains dire, with millions still in need of urgent assistance. The interplay of geopolitical factors, funding shortages, and access challenges continues to hinder the effectiveness of these organizations, underscoring the need for a coordinated international response to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Domestic Bodies

Yemeni Ministry of Public Health and Population, which has been at the forefront of coordinating health responses, including nutrition programs aimed at treating and preventing malnutrition among vulnerable populations, particularly children and pregnant women. The Ministry collaborates with international organizations to implement health interventions, manage vaccination campaigns, and provide nutritional supplements to combat the high rates of acute malnutrition, which currently affect millions of children in the country

.Another significant domestic body is the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS), which plays a crucial role in delivering humanitarian assistance across the country. The YRCS has been involved in emergency response efforts, including providing food, water, and medical care to those affected by the ongoing conflict. Their work includes community-based programs that focus on nutrition education and health awareness, helping families understand the importance of proper nutrition amidst the crisis. YRCS also collaborates with international NGOs and the UN to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable populations, despite the challenges posed by ongoing violence and logistical constraints. Organizations such as ADRA Yemen and Oxfam Yemen have implemented programs aimed at addressing food insecurity and

malnutrition. They provide direct assistance, including food distributions, cash assistance, and livelihood support to help families regain their economic footing. These domestic bodies often work in tandem with international organizations to deliver aid effectively, leveraging their local knowledge and networks to reach communities in need.

QUESTIONS FOR GUIDING FURTHER RESEARCH

1. What role do international powers, such as the United States and Saudi Arabia, play in exacerbating or alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen?
2. How has the involvement of Iran in supporting the Houthi rebels influenced the dynamics of the conflict and the humanitarian situation in Yemen?
3. What are the implications of the Yemen crisis for regional stability in the Middle East, particularly concerning Saudi Arabia and its neighbors?
4. How effective have international humanitarian organizations been in delivering aid to Yemen, and what challenges do they face in accessing affected populations?
5. What lessons can be learned from previous international interventions in Yemen that could inform future approaches to resolving the crisis?
6. How has the international community responded to reports of war crimes and human rights violations committed by all parties involved in the Yemen conflict?
7. What impact does the ongoing conflict in Yemen have on global food security, particularly given Yemen's reliance on imported food supplies?
8. How do international sanctions and blockades affect the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and what are the potential consequences for the civilian population?
9. What role do diplomatic efforts, such as UN-mediated peace talks, play in addressing the underlying causes of the Yemen crisis?
10. How can the international community better support the needs of vulnerable populations in Yemen, particularly children and displaced persons?

11. How can the international community, particularly the United Nations and major powers, exert greater pressure on all parties to the conflict to engage in meaningful peace negotiations and adhere to ceasefire agreements?

12. What specific steps can be taken to improve humanitarian access and delivery of aid to vulnerable populations in Yemen, including lifting restrictions on ports and airports, ensuring the safety of aid workers, and holding violators accountable?

13. How can international development assistance be better targeted to support Yemen's economy, create jobs, and build resilience against future shocks, while ensuring aid is not diverted by warring factions?

14. What regional diplomatic initiatives, involving countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman and the UAE, could help broker a sustainable political settlement that addresses the underlying grievances and power dynamics driving the conflict?

15. How can the international community support transitional justice, accountability for war crimes, and reconciliation efforts to heal the deep divisions in Yemeni society and lay the foundations for long-term stability, once a ceasefire is achieved?

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