

CHAIR REPORT

Committee: Junior General Assembly One

Topic: Addressing the Deliberate Starvation of Civilian Populations in Gaza and Yemen

Name: Xiang Hui Khoo, Ung Liyan

Position: Head Chair, Deputy Chair

Introduction

The current conflicts happening in Yemen and Gaza are amongst the most prevalent and pressing global humanitarian crises.

The conflict in Yemen began in late 2014; the Houthi movement, also known as the Ansar Allah, rebelled against the internationally recognised government body and seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa. As conflict between the Saudi-backed government and Houthi rebels escalated over the past decade, 4.5 million Yemenis have been subjected to internal displacement, 74% living in extreme poverty, over 17 million suffering from food insecurity, and 18.2 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The conflict in Gaza originally arose over a century ago over the issue of land borders between Israel and Palestine. Recently, escalating tensions between Israel and Hamas (a Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement) resulted in Hamas fighters launching an assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,300 and taking 251 hostages. This triggered Israel to respond by declaring war on Palestine and launching a military invasion on the Gaza Strip on October 27. As the war progressed, almost all 2.1 million Palestinians in Gaza have been internally displaced, over 80% of infrastructure destroyed, and over 3 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

In Yemen and Gaza, deliberate starvation has been used as a method of warfare by the Houthi rebels and Israeli Defence Forces through blocking humanitarian aid carrying food, water and other necessities from reaching Yemenis and Palestinians and

intentionally targeting agricultural lands. The increase in ongoing targeted attacks on agricultural lands, water facilities and markets in Yemen has led to 1.2 million children suffering from malnutrition, 8.4 million people at the brink of starvation and 5 million at risk of famine. In Gaza, the aid blockade has resulted in the entire population facing food insecurity, and three-quarters of the Gaza population suffering from starvation and severe malnutrition.

It is imperative that the international community come together in solidarity and efforts to work diplomatically with all parties involved towards opening the doors for humanitarian aid and assistance to reach the people of Palestine and Yemen.

Key Terms

Yemen Conflict

The conflict in Yemen is an ongoing civil war and regional war mainly between the Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) and the Yemeni government, that started in late 2014 when the Houthi movement seized Yemen's capital city Sanaa.

Gaza Conflict

The conflict in Gaza has been one of the ongoing, longest struggles in the world, between Israel and Palestine over land borders, with the most current one being the war between Israel and Hamas (Palestine).

Humanitarian Aid

According to the UN, humanitarian aid is material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises

Famine

According to USA for UNHCR, famine is a situation in which a substantial proportion of the population of a country or region is unable to access adequate food, resulting in widespread acute malnutrition and loss of life by starvation and disease

Deliberate Starvation

Deliberate starvation is the intentional deprivation of food and water or any other necessities needed for survival. In situations such as war, a party would purposefully deprive the other party of resources, forcing them into yielding, and is considered a war crime.

Background Information

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Yemen had been undergoing political instability with the Sunni government, following the events of the Arab uprisings in 2011, where the country experienced upheaving protests regarding corruption, fuel prices, and the economy. In late 2014, there were protests again, demanding fuel subsidies; Houthi rebels seized this opportunity to take control of the capital city, Sanaa, forcing the government out. In March 2015, regional powers such as Saudi Arabia lent their militants in hopes of restoring the Yemeni government's authority in Yemen and overthrowing the Houthi rebels.

More than a decade of conflict both at sea and on land and the current Houthi occupation in Yemen has caused millions of Yemenis to suffer from displacement, malnutrition, and starvation. The attacks by the Houthis have deliberately targeted and destroyed agricultural land, water facilities, and fishing boats, and have continued to severely restrict and block humanitarian aid and any imports from coming in, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Palestine has also had long-standing tensions and past clashes with Israel, mainly regarding land border disputes. On October 7, 2023, Hamas militants launched a surprise attack on southern Israel, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,300 people, 3,300 injured, and the kidnapping of hundreds of hostages. Soon after, Israel formally declared war on Palestine, which was followed by a siege enacted by the IDF. On October 27 2023, Israel launched a full ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, demanding the release of hostages. The war has resulted in major bloodshed, destruction of civilian buildings and infrastructure such as hospitals, and severe food insecurity across Gaza and Palestine as a whole. The IDF's deliberate blockades of humanitarian aid and targeted airstrikes on agricultural land and food trucks have worsened the food situation and humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Major Countries and/or Organisations Involved

The United Nations

The United Nations has been involved in both the conflict in Yemen and Gaza by facilitating diplomatic efforts between parties toward ceasefires, calling for Security Council meetings to promote peace, and partnering with international agencies such as the World Food Programme to distribute humanitarian aid despite blockades.

Saudi Arabia

There were many regional powers involved in the Yemen conflict, one of the most prominent being Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has been actively backing the Yemeni

government, supplying military supplies, blocking Iran's funding to the Houthis through navel blockade, and carrying out air strikes in fighting against the Houthi rebels.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Health Organisation has been involved in establishing a humanitarian coordination system alongside the UN, allowing for aid to be delivered promptly and supplying several stocks of medicine and medical supplies to treat civilians. However, due to the aid blockage, medical supplies and the amount of humanitarian aid reaching Palestinians are dwindling.

World Food Programme (WFP)

The World Food Programme provides humanitarian aid through distributing food rations to areas with higher food insecurity, supporting families through emergency food assistance and providing nutritious food to children throughout Yemen. In Gaza, the WFP have also provided food parcels, supported community kitchens and bakeries, as well as life-saving nutrition support.

United States of America (USA)

The naval warfare between Iran and Saudi Arabia in attempts to intercept weapon deliveries to the Houthi Rebels has alerted the United States's navy, prompting them to seize any weapons reaching the Houthis. The United States have also deployed forces and collaborated with the Yemeni government in hopes of combatting against the terrorist acts of the Houthis, but has ended its support for Saudi-led military actions in 2021. The USA has facilitated peace talks and a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine, including the "Gaza Peace Plan" ceasefire which was arranged by President Donald J. Trump.

Houthi Movement (Ansar Allah)

Backed by Iran, the Houthi Movement has been in conflict against the Yemeni government and controlled the majority of Yemen for over a decade, deliberately starving Yemenis through targeted attacks on markets and trucks carrying aid, as well as restricting access for humanitarian aid to enter.

Hamas

Hamas is an armed and political Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement. The Hamas group strongly opposes the existence of Israel and believes that the land Israel stands on is Palestinian. Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October 2023, triggering a line of Israeli forces, leading to the start of the recent Israel and Palestine war.

Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)

The IDF is Israel's national army and a social institution which comprises Israel's ground, navy and air forces. Since the start of the Israel and Gaza war, the IDF has invaded Gaza, destroyed infrastructure, and withheld humanitarian aid from the Palestinians, causing widespread famine.

Timeline of Events

<i>21 September 2014</i>	Houthi rebels took control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa
<i>June 2015</i>	Saudi Arabia enacted a naval blockade, blocking Iran from supplying the Houthis with arms and weaponry. As a response, Iran dispatched naval militiamen, escalating maritime tensions and conflict
<i>13 December 2018</i>	A ceasefire called the Stockholm agreement was agreed upon, which is under UN resolution 2451, was agreed upon between all parties involved in the Yemen conflict. It was officially enacted 5 days later.
<i>October 7 2023</i>	Hamas attack on Israel, triggering Israel to respond by deploying military forces and declaring war on Palestine
<i>October 19 2023</i>	Marked the beginning of the conflict in the Red Sea, where the Houthi Rebels hijacked and launched several missile attacks on Israeli and commercial shipping lanes in solidarity with the Palestinians.
<i>October 27 2023</i>	Israel began a full-scale invasion of the Gaza Strip
<i>January 11, 2024</i>	United States and United Kingdom carried out air strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen as a response to the Red Sea conflict
<i>October 3 2025</i>	US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Palestine announced, allowing for humanitarian deliveries,

reconstruction of Gaza, release of hostages, and a step towards ending the war

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- UN Security Council Resolution 2417: The Security Council resolution explicitly condemns using starvation as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations.
- Stockholm Agreement: Facilitated by the UN, the agreement consists of 3 parts: The Hudaydah Agreement, A Prisoner Exchange Agreement, and the Taïz Agreement, where the Houthis were to withdraw their forces in Hudaydah, allowing humanitarian aid to reach the Yemenis, exchange prisoners, and preventing the escalation of military violence.
- Gaza Peace Plan: brokered by the USA, the 20-point peace agreement includes the release of hostages, opening of humanitarian aid corridors to the Palestinians, and the demilitarisation of Gaza, in hopes of rebuilding Gaza. However, it is important to note that the peace plan is currently halted due to disagreements between Israel and Palestine.
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Article 8(2)(b)(xxv)) declares “(I)ntentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies,” as a war crime in the eyes of International Law.
- Additional Protocol I (1977): Article 54(1) of Additional Protocol I states that, “Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.”

Previous Attempts to solve the issue

Several international efforts have already been attempted to address the humanitarian situation in Gaza and Yemen. In Yemen, the *UN-mediated nationwide truce of 2022* reduced violence, increased fuel deliveries through Hudaydah port and allowed commercial flights from Sanna to resume. However, the truce was not renewed permanently, portraying the difficulty of turning temporary agreements into lasting peace.

In Gaza, the UN has established humanitarian coordination mechanisms, including the 2720 mechanisms, to monitor and facilitate the delivery of aid. The UN has also proposed detailed plans for increasing humanitarian assistance through existing crossings and routes. However, continued restrictions and insecurity have limited the amount of assistance reaching civilians.

International law has also already established protections against deliberate starvation. *Article 54 of Additional Protocol I* prohibits the usage of starvation against civilians and protects the essential resources such as food, agricultural areas, and water facilities. The *Rome Statute* also recognizes intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare as a war crime.

Possible Solutions

Addressing the deliberate starvation of civilian populations in Gaza and Yemen requires the international community to form upon existing UN mechanisms rather than setting up entirely new frameworks as important principles have already been established in resolutions and humanitarian efforts, however the continued humanitarian crises demonstrates the need for stronger implementation, monitoring, and accountability.

Some sustainable solutions regarding the conflict is to increase humanitarian aid to the civilians in Gaza and Yemen. Organizations and UN agencies such as WFP (*World Food Programme*) should provide food, clean water, and medical supplies, while working with local groups to ensure the aid reaches the needed areas. Protecting these resources, including water facilities, farms, hospitals, and food markets would help civilians maintain access to basic necessities and reduce the risk of further food shortages.

Creating safe and more reliable humanitarian routes as the UN and other neutral organizations could work with parties involved to keep border crossings and aid routes open and reduce delays. Temporary humanitarian pauses and ceasefires supported by

international countries may create safer conditions for civilians. These agreements should clear commitments to allow food, water, medicine, and fuel to reach civilians.

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