



BACKGROUND GUIDE



UNHRC

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

SMIS MUN '25

IMAGINE · INSPIRE · INNOVATE

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD



Dear Delegates,

Congratulations on getting the opportunity to participate in Sancta Maria Model United Nations 2025. To the veterans of MUN, I promise you a very enriching debate that you've never experienced before and to the newcomers, I am really excited to be a part of your maiden voyage. As the world looks to come out of a rather 'depression ridden' economic environment and the world talks about a long standing 'power shift' to the east happening soon, the importance of our generation being 'ready enough' to accept various challenges that lie ahead of us can hardly be overstated.

What we desire from the delegates is not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how you can respect disparities and differences of opinion, work around these, while extending their own foreign policy so that it encompasses more of the others without compromising their own stand, thereby reaching a unanimously acceptable practical solution.

The following pages intend to guide you with the nuances of the agenda as well as the Committee. The Guide chronologically touches upon all the different aspects that are relevant and will lead to fruitful debate in the conference.

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD



It will provide you with a bird's eye view of the gist of the issue. However, it has to be noted that the background guide only contains certain basic information which may form the basis for the debate and your research. You are the representative of your allotted country and it is our hope that you put in wholehearted efforts to research and comprehensively grasp all important facets of the diverse agenda. All the delegates should be prepared well in order to make the council's direction and debate productive.

After all, only then will you truly be able to represent your country in the best possible way. We encourage you to go beyond this background guide and delve into the extremities of the agenda to further enhance your knowledge of a burning global issue.

The very best of luck delegates,
Tia Sanker

RULES OF PROCEDURE:



1) Points:

- **Point of Information:** Offered if any delegate would like to ask the delegate speaking any question about any of the points the delegate has made after their speech if time permits. Points of information are generally offered at the discretion of the Executive Board. Please note that Points of information should be framed in the form of a question, and are raised when the Executive Board asks for any points or motions.

- **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry:** Offered when any delegate has a question about the proceedings of the conference, and are directed and answered by the Executive Board. The delegate is required to raise their placard any time during the conference (except during a delegates speech) to be recognised by the Executive Board.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:



1) Points (cont.):

- **Point of Personal Privilege:** Offered when any delegate is experiencing discomfort throughout the course of the conference. Points of Personal Privilege and delegates comfort are given utmost importance, so whenever a delegate raises a placard, even during another delegate's speech, they will be recognised for the point of personal privilege. Some examples of Point of Personal Privileges can be: The conference room is too hot/too cold, the delegate can't hear another delegate's speech, during which, the Executive Board will immediately recognise the delegate's point. Delegates, please note that Point of Personal Privilege should not be misused to interrupt the course of the conference, or another delegate's speech unless there is an actual urgency.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:



1) Points (cont.):

- **Point of Order:** Offered when any delegate has a factual inaccuracy in their speech. If a factual inaccuracy is noticed, any other delegate can raise this motion through this exact verbatim; "Point of Order; The delegate of ... stated that, quote, "Narendra Modi is the president of India", whereas, Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of India, and the President of India is Droupadi Murmu". Please note that this exact verbatim is expected to be followed for the point to be entertained by the Executive Board. Please note that the Executive Board will not be entertaining any Points of Orders for logical inaccuracies, as they are subjective to each delegate, their country, and their stance.

- **Right to Reply:** Offered when a delegate's country has been targeted in a delegate's speech, or their sentiments have been hurt. The specific verbatim to raise a right to reply; "Right to reply; the delegate of ...stated that Russia does not care about human rights and has a parliament filled with inhuman members, whereas, Russia has protected its citizens' human rights throughout (give evidence).

RULES OF PROCEDURE:



2) Types of debate

Formal Debate -

- **General Speakers List:** To discuss the general agenda and used to discuss countries' stances on the agenda. There is no specific debate that takes place during the General Speakers List, as the delegates can choose to speak on any topic/subtopic related to the agenda.

Informal Debate -

- **Special Speakers List:** To discuss the crisis. Delegates state their stance and discuss the crisis during the Special Speakers List.

- **Moderated Caucus:** To discuss a specific sub-topic of the agenda. This is where proper debate takes place, as all delegates are focusing on the same sub-topic of the agenda, and can discuss their stance on the issue. Moreover, even possible solutions/resolutions for the issue can be discussed during the Moderated Caucus.

- **Unmoderated Caucus:** Informal time/debate where the delegates can lobby for resolution papers, and discuss moderated caucus topics.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:



3) Motions

- Motions are raised to change the type of debate that is taking place in the committee, for example, motions can be raised for; Moderated Caucus, Unmoderated Caucus, Discuss Resolution Paper, Change General Speakers List Time, Move into General Speakers List, etc.
- Specific verbatim is to be followed, for example;
 - “The delegate of ... would like to raise a motion to move into the General Speakers List ... with an individual speaker's time of ...”
 - “The delegate of ... would like to raise a motion to move into an Unmoderated Caucus For a total time of ...”
 - “The delegate of ... would like to raise a motion to move into Moderated Caucus on the topic of ... for a total time of ... and an individual speakers time of.....”

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS



Founded in 1945, after the devastating effects of world war II, the United Nations (UN) was formed in order to prevent future global conflicts. The international organisation is made up of 193 member states and consists of 6 main bodies -

- General assembly
- Security council
- Economic and social council
- Trusteeship council
- International court of justice
- Secretariat

Other than these main bodies, The UN also includes the United Nations human rights council. This council, which will be further discussed in this background guide, is a cornerstone of the UN, holding sessions yearly to discuss the violations of human rights around the world.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)



The United Nations human rights council is an intergovernmental body that promotes and protects against human rights violations across the globe, by addressing such situations and taking action on them. Established in 2006, This council consists of 47 member states. Its conferences are held in the United Nations office in Geneva. The main objectives of this council is to -

- Act as a global platform for discussions, debates and advocacy on human rights issues with UN officials, mandated experts, civil society, states, and other such participants
- Take action by creating resolutions that adapt the wills of the international community on certain human rights issues or situations which can also aid governments to take the same action to solve the same crisis
- Hold crisis meetings known as special sessions to respond to urgent human rights violations, out of which 36 have already been held
- Review the human rights records of all member states using the universal periodic review
- Appoints special procedures, apart from the human rights experts, to aid the council in monitoring the human rights situation in specific countries or by looking for specific themes
- Authorise commissions of enquiry and fact finding missions to produce concrete evidence on war crimes or crimes against humanity

WHAT IS A SPECIAL SESSION?



Special sessions are designed with the purpose of addressing human rights violations that cannot wait until a regular committee session. They are usually held if one-third of the member states request for it and allow for in-depth discussions on the specific human rights situation, updates from stakeholders, and the adoption of different resolutions or decisions to be taken. In the context of the agenda - “Special session on the situation of Human Rights in the Republic of Yemen”- the special session will include discussions on the ongoing civil war and how it has affected the humanitarian aspect. Addressing this aspect will be crucial during this session in order to reach an appropriate resolution.

This background guide will include further explorations of the agenda, its timeline, the groups involved and the Key violations/war crimes that have taken place during the war.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA : SPECIAL SESSION ON THE CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Throughout the duration of the conference, the committee will be discussing the agenda, “Special session on the situation of Human Rights in the Republic of Yemen”.

The situation has one of the worst humanitarian concerns in the world. What was once the heart of the middle-east is now the poorest country, a battlefield for the local groups in Yemen to fight. Saudi-led coalitions bomb from above while millions of civilians struggle to survive.

WHY IS YEMEN AT WAR?



In May 1990, Yemen elected Ali Abdullah Saleh as president of the Republic of Yemen, with Sanaa as the capital. In 2011, after the Arab spring, the people of Yemen wanted a change too. However, their attempt to stand up against the president ended in failure. It was then when Saudi Arabia, the most influential country in the Gulf Cooperation Council, helped play a major role, along with the GCC, to oversee the installment of a new government, forcing president Saleh out of power and installing vice president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi as president in 2012. However, even with president Hadi in power, unemployment, food security, and suicide bombings were still a major issue, with Yemen continuing to suffer even after the revolution. Even the initiatives that came out of the revolutions were brokered by the Gulf-powers who simply appeared to return the same leaders into power. In 2014, the Houthis began to rise. They are a Shia-Muslim Minority in the north of Yemen who often marginalised and rebelled against the government. They were especially active during the Arab spring in the uprising against president Saleh. When the GCC had plans to install a new government, in spite of their differences, the two enemies, the Houthis and allies of Saleh, decided to join forces and took over Yemen's capital, Sanaa in 2014. Due to this, President Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia expressed 3 objectives -

- To restore the government of Yemen under Hadi's presidency
- To protect its own southern border and prevent Yemen from fragmenting
- To contain its perceived growing influence over Iran in the region



In 2015, Saudi Arabia formed the Saudi led coalition in which their intervention caused 150 airstrikes within a 24 hour period. From 2016 to 2020, over 19000 airstrikes have occurred.

While the Saudi led forces claim to have only targeted the enemy, humanitarian rights groups say otherwise, where they accuse the coalition of bombing dozens of schools and hospitals, killing thousands of civilians. Humanitarian Aid is being used as a weapon as well. In 2015 the coalition created land, air and sea barriers to prevent aid from going in and out of the country. In 2024, The Houthis have also been accused of blocking, destroying and even using the AID. Due to this, Cholera cases have risen to 95000 cases (resulting in 258 deaths), medical supplies and drugs are in shortage, and food shortages continue to rise. In 2025 itself, 19.5 million people in Yemen require Humanitarian aid, and more than 17.1 million suffer from acute food shortages. In 2017, Saleh publicly announced the breaking down of the alliance between him and the Houthis on national television, expressing how he would like to speak to the coalition himself. Two days later, he was killed by the Houthis. While the Houthis may still be in control of the capital, the coalition believes this is only because of support from Iran. While Iran has openly expressed support for the Houthis, they have denied providing any ammunition and arms to them. However this may not be the case as in 2020, Saudi Arabia's Oil facilities were attacked by the Houthis. After Investigation from Saudi Arabia, the United States and other investigative forces from the UN, they found that the weapons used were manufactured in Iran.

Experts say the only way to end the war in Yemen is through diplomacy and groups such as the Houthis, Secessionist groups in the south, Al Qaeda and even ISIL, will be held Liable

CURRENT SITUATION:



The security council has stated that over 9.6 million women and girls are in need of humanitarian support and due to funding cuts, many survivors of gender based violence have been left without adequate access to healthcare, psychosocial support and legal aid. Dina El Mamoun, the Yemen Country Director of the NGO Centre for Civilians in Conflict, said that women and girls in Yemen continue to be killed, wounded, displaced, and systematically marginalised. She highlighted that economic collapse is driving more families to resort to early marriage, deepening existing inequalities and depriving girls of their rights and futures. Yemen continues to be a transit country for migrants coming mostly from the Horn of Africa, trying to access Gulf states, in particular Saudi Arabia. The International Organization for Migrants (IOM) estimated that 308,000 migrants would need humanitarian assistance, protection, and other services in 2024. In August 2023, Human Rights Watch reported on the mass killing of Ethiopian migrants by Saudi Border Guard forces at the Yemen-Saudi border. The report found that Saudi border guards killed hundreds of Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers who tried to cross the Yemen-Saudi border between March 2022 and June 2023. If committed as part of a Saudi government policy to murder migrants, these killings, which appear to have continued, would be a crime against humanity. Since the armed conflict began in Yemen in 2014, both the government and the Houthi armed group have detained migrants in poor conditions and exposed them to abuse.

TIMELINE



2011: Beginning of the Crisis

- **The Arab Spring uprising** triggered mass protests against President **Ali Abdullah Saleh's** 33-year authoritarian rule.
- Saleh is wounded in an attack; after months of unrest, he signs a **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-brokered deal granting him immunity** in exchange for stepping down.
- **Vice-President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi** assumes interim leadership.
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2012–2013: Political Transition Attempt

- Yemen launches a **National Dialogue Conference (NDC)** involving various factions, including youth, women, Houthis, and southern separatists.
- A new **constitution-drafting process** begins with hopes for a peaceful transition.
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2014: Conflict Reignites

- **Disagreements over the draft constitution** and power-sharing mechanisms deepen divisions.
- **September 2014** : Houthis, backed by forces loyal to former President Saleh, **seize Sana'a**, Yemen's capital.
- The alliance expands control into northern and central Yemen, forcing **President Hadi** to flee to **Aden**.



March 2015: Foreign Military Intervention Begins

- President Hadi formally requests military assistance.
- **Saudi Arabia** forms a coalition with:
 - **Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Senegal, Sudan, and the UAE**
 - (Qatar joins was a member until June 2017)
- **Coalition launches airstrikes**, with intelligence and logistical support from **the United States and the United Kingdom**.
- **2016–2018: Escalating Humanitarian Catastrophe**
- **August 2016:** Central Bank moved to Aden and **Public employees unpaid**, worsening economic collapse.
- **2017:** Yemen is declared the **world's worst humanitarian crisis** by the UN:
 - **22.2 million people** need aid (out of 29.3 million)
 - **11.3 million** in acute need
 - Infrastructure collapses across health, water, sanitation, housing, and protection.
- **Coalition-imposed blockade** severely restricts **food, fuel, and medical imports**.
 - **Cholera outbreak**, starvation, and displacement affect millions.



Late 2017: New Shifts and Factional Breakdown

- **November 4, 2017:** Houthis fires a **ballistic missile** into **Saudi Arabia**.
- **November 6, 2017:** Coalition imposes a **total blockade** (air, sea, land), gradually eased over weeks.
- **December 2017:** Internal clashes erupt between **Houthis** and **Saleh loyalists**.
- **Saleh is killed** by the Houthis after defecting and calling for dialogue with the coalition.

January 2018: Fragmentation Deepens

- The **Southern Transitional Council (STC)**, formed in **May 2017**, declares a **state of emergency** in **Aden**.
- **UAE-backed STC forces** clash with Hadi's government troops.
- UAE establishes **proxy control** in **southern Yemen** using:
 - **Security Belt Forces**
 - **Hadrami Elite Forces**
 - **Shabwani Elite Forces**

June 2018: Hudaydah Offensive

- Coalition launches **assault** on **Hudaydah**, Yemen's vital port city.
- The offensive **halted temporarily** for **UN-brokered negotiations**.
- Over **120,000 civilians** displaced.
- Fears rise over disruption of humanitarian supply chains.

KEY VIOLATIONS (WAR CRIMES)



Key Violent Incidents and Airstrikes

- **March 2016:** Coalition airstrikes hit **Khamees Market** (Hajjah Governorate), killing **100+ civilians**, including **25 children**.
- **August 2016:** Coalition closes **Sana'a International Airport**, cutting off essential civilian movement and aid.
- **October 8, 2016:** **Al-Kubra Hall funeral bombing** in Sana'a — **137 killed, 695 injured**. One of the deadliest incidents.
- **December 2016:** Coalition bombs **Al Zaidia prison**, killing **63 detainees**.
- **March 17, 2017:** **Refugee boat** carrying Somali refugees bombed off **Hudaydah coast** — **32 killed**.
- **December 2017:** Airstrike hits **Bab Najran**, killing **12 civilians**.
- **April 22, 2018:** Airstrike on a **wedding in Al-Raqah** — **23 dead**, including **8 boys**.
- **May 2018:** **Fishermen and civilian boats** attacked off Hudaydah; **40 killed or missing**. **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) facilities** repeatedly struck despite sharing GPS coordinates with the coalition.

LEGAL VIOLATIONS



- At least **16,706 civilian casualties** recorded (6,475 killed, 10,231 injured) — likely underreported.
- **Violations of international humanitarian law** by multiple parties:
 - **Indiscriminate airstrikes** on civilian infrastructure (markets, homes, weddings, funerals, prisons, hospitals).
 - **Double-tap strikes** targeting first responders.
 - **Failure to protect no-strike sites**, including UN and MSF facilities.
 - **Use of indiscriminate shelling** and sniping in urban areas like Ta'izz by **Houthi-Saleh forces**.

Houthis : The **Houthis**, formally known as **Ansar Allah** ("Supporters of God"), are a Zaidi Shia Muslim political and armed movement originating from **northern Yemen**, particularly the **Sa'dah governorate**. Founded in the 1990s under the leadership of **Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi**, the group initially sought to defend the rights of the Zaidi community, which had long felt marginalized by Yemen's central government.



The Houthis oppose foreign intervention in Yemen, particularly by **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**, and frequently denounce what they describe as Western imperialism. They have received **political and alleged military support from Iran**, though the extent of this backing remains contested internationally.

Designated as a **terrorist organization** by several countries, the Houthis are known for:

- Launching **missile and drone attacks** into Saudi territory.
- Engaging in **urban and asymmetric warfare**.
- Restricting humanitarian access in areas under their control.

Security Belt Forces : A **paramilitary group** operating primarily in **southern Yemen**, particularly in **Aden, Abyan**, and surrounding governorates. Established in **2016**, the group is part of the broader **Southern Transitional Council (STC)**'s military wing and receives significant **training, funding, and support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. Formed in response to the rise of extremist threats, including **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** and **ISIS**, the Security Belt Forces were originally tasked with counterterrorism operations and maintaining internal security in southern Yemen.



The group has been **accused of human rights** violations, including arbitrary detentions and the operation of secret detention centers. Despite these concerns, it remains a powerful actor in southern Yemen's security landscape and a key proxy force for the UAE.

Hadrami Elite Forces : A **UAE-backed paramilitary group** operating primarily in the **Hadramawt governorate** of eastern Yemen. Formed in **2016** with training and logistical support from the **United Arab Emirates**, the Hadrami Elite Forces were established as part of regional efforts to combat **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** and restore security in a historically unstable region.

The forces are composed largely of local recruits from the Hadramawt region and are seen by some as a more effective alternative to the fragmented national army. They maintain **close ties with the UAE** and operate **independently** of Yemen's internationally recognized government, although they have occasionally cooperated with it against terrorist groups.

Southern Transitional Council : (STC) A **secessionist political and military movement** established in **May 2017**, with the aim of **restoring the independence of South Yemen**, which existed as a separate state until unification with the north in 1990.



Founded by **Aidarous al-Zubaidi**, a former governor of Aden dismissed by President Hadi, the STC represents southern grievances over marginalization, lack of political inclusion, and deteriorating security under the unified government. The council seeks to **govern southern Yemen autonomously**, and in the long term, potentially **reestablish the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen**. **Backed militarily and financially by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).**

Politically opposed to the **internationally recognized government** of President Hadi, despite both being formally aligned in the fight against the Houthis. Functions as a **parallel authority**, with its own political council, local administration, and military wings, such as the **Security Belt Forces, Hadrami Elite Forces, and Shabwani Elite Forces.**

THE STOCKHOLM AGREEMENT:



The Stockholm Agreement was a United Nations-mediated accord signed in December 2018 between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group, aimed at de-escalating the ongoing conflict. It focused primarily on three key areas: implementing a ceasefire and redeployment of forces from the critical port city of Hudaydah to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid; facilitating the exchange of thousands of prisoners; and easing hostilities in the city of Taiz. While the agreement marked a significant diplomatic breakthrough, its implementation has faced major challenges, including ongoing violations and lack of trust between parties. Nonetheless, it remains a vital reference point in efforts toward a peaceful resolution of the Yemeni conflict

CITATIONS



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