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Lasting Damage Internally and Looming Danger Internationally
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Special Report
May 2018
The Houthis Legacy in Yemen: 
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“Allah is Great
Death to America
Death to Israel
Curse the Jews
Victory for Islam”

1 Photo: Houthi motto written on brick wall in city neighborhood (Sana’a: January 30, 2015) © C. August Elliott: “Dispatches from the Periphery”

2 Translation of Houthi trademark motto or slogan
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Introduction

The purpose of this new special report is intended to widen the aperture and to shed broad light about the Houthis in Yemen in order to better inform, shape a deeper understanding or develop a new learning about them given the current context, the immediate concerns and the future considerations that will likely impact US national security perceptions and positions on Yemen because of the Houthis. The thrust is to underscore imperative knowledge for potential recommendations in respective US foreign policy prescriptions vis-à-vis the Houthis; and whose long-term implications will have a profound effect on Yemen and the region stemming from those US Government (and US Congress) determinations and directions going forward.

After providing a background about the Houthis, this report will delve into the current situation in Yemen, recapitulating events that recently transpired that have broadly engrossed the country in conflict as was definitively instigated by the Houthis. This has led to the US Government to being laudably involved in Yemen on multiple levels, i.e.:
- by providing logistical and intelligence related support to the military operations of the Arab Coalition against the Houthis and their domestic or foreign allies;
- by supplying emergency humanitarian relief to the Yemeni population; and,
- by engaging in political settlement efforts with the international community to end the conflict.

Finally, this report will highlight and address very crucial issues from the perspective of the Yemeni Government to ardently enlighten the reader by further exposing and giving significant attention to information and insights regarding the human rights offenses perpetrated
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by Houthis and about the real menace that they pose towards the USA, and the world in general. Lastly, this report will conclude by advocating for continued support for the Yemeni Government against the Houthis, and whose actions combined with renewed and robust development support to Yemen emanating from the US Government (Administration and Congress) will have positive and productive outcomes for Yemen when implemented – and with long-term political, security and other dividends for the United States. Contemporaneously, the US Congress could harness existing legal mechanisms to maximize leverage against Iran while strengthening its strategic relationship with Yemen’s Government to counter any anticipated threats with roots or reverberations born from the Houthis in Yemen that could imperil US and global security.

Recent Dynamics in Yemen

Background and Political Developments

Yemen is a republic with a constitution that provides for a president, a parliament, and an independent judiciary. Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh stepped down in 2012 after an historic youth-led revolution after which the people mandated to power by popular vote, Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi as president, in a free and fair democratic election. The new transitional government sought to amplify political participation to groups considered excluded to Yemen’s state of affairs during Saleh’s rule, including for women, youth, and minorities. However, progress ended in September 2014, when Houthi rebels allied with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh staged an armed takeover against the legitimate government.

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https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265740.pdf

4 Image: Internationally recognized President of the Republic of Yemen:
https://from-yemen.com/alymn/list-445.html
Even though a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was launched in March 2013, and successfully concluded in January 2014 wherein the Houthis had participated in and were bestowed a significant share in overall representation, the Houthis and Saleh cunningly staged a coup. It was not (as has been commonly contended) that Houthis’ grievances were not fundamentally addressed in the NDC. On the contrary! However, the Houthis, out of a lust for power and a hidden antipathy for what the NDC would have favorably achieved for Yemen, joined forces with former President Saleh to expand their influence in northwestern Yemen – culminating in a major offensive against military units and rival tribes; upon which enabled their forces to overrun the capital, Sana’a, in September 2014. By January 2015, the Houthis eventually surrounded the presidential palace, the president’s personal residence and key government facilities, thereby intensely pressuring President Hadi and the cabinet to summarily submit their resignations.
However, as a consequence of this iniquitous coup committed by the Houthis, Yemen's new constitution was denied the opportunity for its rightful fruition. The new constitution was devised after a ten months long undertaking from the National Dialogue process.  

The new constitution codifies good governance, equality among citizens, respect for diversity, and basic human rights. A special emphasis was placed on providing for the rights of women, children, minorities, and vulnerable and marginalized groups. However, our new constitution was forcibly detained by the Houthis in Yemen when it was going to be officially submitted to the President for deliberation with the pertinent national bodies; and with additional sinister symbolism, even the Secretary-General of the NDC was kidnapped at the time as part of this unjust action.

Photo: Congressman Theodore E. Deutch

“Following the deposition of Yemen’s long time autocratic ruler Saleh in 2011, the U.S. supported an inclusive transition process, via national dialogue, into rebuilding the country’s political and governmental institutions and bridging gaps between groups that have had a long history of conflict”. And while the national dialogue was initially viewed as successful, the process concluded in 2014 with several key reforms still not completed, including the drafting of a new constitution. The Hadi government had continued to face deep opposition from Yemen’s northern tribes, mainly the Shiite Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.”  

6 Photo of Congressman Ted Deutch: https://teddeutch.house.gov/biography/bio.htm
(Excerpt from remarks by the Honorable Mr. Ted DEUTCH (D) from Florida, US Congressman and Ranking Member of Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs)

Photo⁸: Former US Ambassador to Yemen, Gerald FEIERSTEIN

“The tragedy of the current situation is that the political process that the Yemenis established in 2011 was achieving success and they had reason to believe that it would lead to a more open, democratic, and prosperous nation that was the goal of the Yemeni people. Regrettably, that transition has been sidetracked by the Houthi movement, aided and abetted by Ali Abdallah Saleh and his allies, who decided that they would seek to achieve by force what they had been unable to accomplish at the negotiating table.”

(Excerpt from Statement given by the Honorable Mr. Gerald M. Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, US Department of State)

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⁸ Photo of Ambassador Gerald Feierstein: http://www.almotamar.net/en/8123.htm
In February 2015, after escaping from house arrest, President Hadi fled to Aden and rescinded his resignation. He subsequently escaped to Oman and then moved to Saudi Arabia where he formally requested the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to intervene militarily in Yemen to protect the legitimate government from the full takeover of Yemen by the Houthis. Indeed, the Houthis had begun to rapidly maneuver to the south of Yemen seizing more territory, and ultimately captured the city of Aden. Hence, on March 26, 2015, Saudi Arabia assembled a coalition of Arab countries to intervene militarily against the Houthis and their affiliated forces.

As announced at the time on the White House Website:

The United States strongly condemns ongoing military actions taken by the Houthis against the elected government of Yemen. These actions have caused widespread instability and chaos that threaten the safety and well-being of all Yemeni citizens. The United States has been in close contact with President Hadi and our regional partners. In response to the deteriorating security situation, Saudi Arabia, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, and others will undertake military action to defend Saudi Arabia's border and to protect Yemen's legitimate government. As announced by GCC members earlier tonight, they are taking this action at the request of Yemeni President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

The United States coordinates closely with Saudi Arabia and our GCC partners on issues related to their security and our shared interests. In support of GCC actions to defend against Houthi violence, President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC-

led military operations. While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support. At the same time, the United States continues to closely monitor terrorist threats posed by al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula and will continue to take action as necessary to disrupt continuing, imminent threats to the United States and our citizens.

We strongly urge the Houthis to halt immediately their destabilizing military actions and return to negotiations as part of the political dialogue. The international community has spoken clearly through the UN Security Council and in other fora that the violent takeover of Yemen by an armed faction is unacceptable and that a legitimate political transition – long sought by the Yemeni people – can be accomplished only through political negotiations and a consensus agreement among all of the parties.”

On July 28, 2016, the Houthis, in cooperation with Saleh’s political party, the General People’s Congress (GPC), after having taken over many government functions and institutions in the capital Sana’a announced the formation of a “Supreme Political Council,” followed by the formation of a “National Salvation Government” in November 2016. Moreover, the latter were both established after the abortive peace talks that took place in Kuwait and after the meeting with former US Secretary of State, John Kerry

the ground against the Yemeni Government or the Arab Coalition, they will be able to reach that coveted plateau to be formally recognized globally as a legitimate political authority in Yemen.

Amid rising tensions between the Houthis and former President Saleh, sporadic clashes erupted in mid-2017. Eventually, Houthi forces killed erstwhile President Saleh in early December 2017 after he had publicly declared that a new page should be pursued with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries to herald a new era in relations and to usher in peace. Moreover, ex-President Saleh called for a popular resistance against the Houthis in all of Yemen after he finally realized the true danger of his alliance with the Houthis – which was made plainly evident when following his demise, both surrogates and supporters of ex-President Saleh were decimated through vindictive recriminations and vengeful recourses systematically carried out by the Houthis.

Nevertheless, however intimidating the situation has been in the political theater under the Houthis in Sana’a, the scenario in the military front has not been the same. Indeed, since the start of the military campaign against the Iranian-backed Houthis in March 2015, decisive victories have been achieved affording the Government of Yemen control of over 80% of Yemen’s territory. The city of Aden was liberated and successfully rid of the Houthi-Saleh forces in July 2015, which has been subsequently designated as the interim capital of Yemen and allowed for Yemen’s Government to have an epicenter for its normal day-to-day functions.

Indeed, the Houthis and their allied forces no longer control the preponderance of Yemen’s territory (as shown in the map below). The Houthis are currently relegated to only central and western parts of Yemen and they are being methodically encircled and encumbered. It may appear that the Houthis are firmly ensconced in Sana’a and the surrounding regions. However, as the Yemeni Government and Arab Coalition Forces continue to strangle the Houthi forces, they will struggle to sustain control of the remaining territory under their
ruthless grip since the coup, and whose brutal governance has only begotten economic failures and misery. Not only have the Houthis lost the vast majority of territorial gains, they have also lost the vast majority of their popular support and despite controlling certain state media outlets.

Territorial Control Maps of Yemen

(Map 1: Areas under the control of the Yemeni Government as of March 2015)

13 Image: Territorial Control Maps of Yemen:
© Embassy of Yemen, Washington, DC – Office of the Defense, Military, Naval and Air Attaché
“Not only have the Houthis lost the vast majority of territorial gains, they have also lost the vast majority of their popular support....”


**Conflict in Yemen**

Yemen's civil war was precipitated by a slowly developing coup that was incontrovertibly perpetrated by the Houthis against the legitimate government of Yemen. In September 2014, the Houthis, forming an amalgam of armed militias, seized Sana’a with the backing of military units and tribal groups loyal to the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Houthi militias and Saleh loyalists then quickly spread south, east and west from the capital. In February 2015, the Embassy of the United States of America in Yemen closed (among a host of other diplomatic and development related entities).

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As incisive Western experts have observed, the Iranian-backed Houthis had at the outset been in alliance with forces loyal to erstwhile ex-President Saleh. It was a flagrant marriage of convenience to advance a shared goal to topple the Yemeni Government while concealing their own divergent agendas and clandestine motivations against each other. Indeed, while both sides did engage in armed conflict against one another in prior years, any hostile impulses and stirrings of mutual animus were for the time being obscured to realize other ambitions. The Houthi-Saleh merger from two distinct groups turned into an ostensible hybrid fighting force had intricate layers and loyalties which made it complex to discern. However, as noted earlier, this initially expedient arrangement was always ulteriorly frustrated and ultimately fragmented, culminating after several days of fighting, with ex-President Saleh being slain by Houthi forces in Sana’a at his residence on 4 December, 2017.

However, before the Houthi-Saleh union had disintegrated, their militia and military forces were the primary protagonists who provoked the conflict, and who have ferociously assaulted Yemenis in many a place and against a broad spectrum of its populace. Quite prominently, this has been the city of Taiz, which is Yemen's most densely populated area. Indeed, the city of Taiz has been particularly affected by the Houthis onslaught, with glaring attacks against civilians. According to Amnesty International, the Houthi–Saleh forces have indiscriminately shelled civilian residential areas in Taiz city, killing and injuring civilians. Houthi and allied forces, including army units loyal to former President Saleh, continued to employ tactics that appeared to violate the prohibition of random attacks. They indiscriminately fired explosive munitions with wide-area effects, including mortars and artillery shells, into residential areas controlled or contested by opposing forces, killing and injuring civilians. The UN reported that a series of attacks from 21 May to 6 June 2017 that has killed and injured dozens of innocent civilians and non-combatants.

15 Amnesty International (Yemen 2017/2018 Report):
The Houthis and their allies also continued to lay internationally banned anti-personnel landmines that caused civilian casualties. On 15 September 2017, the UN reported a further series of apparently indiscriminate attacks launched by Houthi-Saleh forces throughout Taiz\(^{16}\). \textit{And the disgraceful attacks by the Houthis against Taiz continue unabated until today.}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{yemen-icrc-deeply-concerned-by-the-impact-of-fighting-in-taiz.jpg}
\end{center}

\begin{quote}
This once vibrant street in Taiz has been devastated by Houthi sniper attacks and random shelling.
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Photo: © International Committee of the Red Cross: http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/blog/yemen-icrc-deeply-concerned-by-the-impact-of-fighting-in-taiz
\end{footnotesize}
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Paramount Concerns

The Rise of the Houthis

Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi (died 2004)
Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi was a Zaidi religious, political and military leader, as well as former member of the Yemeni parliament for the Al-Haqq Islamic party between 1993 and 1997. However, from 2004, he was instrumental in the Houthi insurgency against the Yemeni government. The Houthi movement took its name after his death in 2004.

Abdulmalik Al-Houthi
Abdulmalik Badreddin al-Houthi is a leader of the Zaidi movement “Ansar Allah” (Houthis). His late brother was Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi. The recent Houthi rebellion has occurred under his leadership.

The Houthis, also known as “Ansar Allah” (أنصار الله, Partisans of God) or Partisans of God is a “Zaydi” movement from the northern province of Saadah who were not seen as being important players in national-level politics. However, in September 2014 the Houthis through a formidable alliance

18 Image of Erstwhile Houthi Leader, Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi: http://www.nasrtv.com
with ex-President Saleh were able to seize Sana’a, Yemen’s capital, with relatively little resistance. The Houthis belong to the Zaidi branch of Islam, a sect of Islam almost exclusively present in Yemen; but there are also minute minorities of Muslims who are members of other Shia sects in Yemen, namely the “Ismaili” communities. However, Yemen’s population is also significantly composed of Sunnis known as “Shafeis”.

With respect to the Zaydis, they take their name from their fifth Imam, Zayd ibn Ali, grandson of Hussein. Zayd who revolted against the Umayyad Caliphate in 740, believing it to be corrupt. However, the original Zaydis do not believe that their imam (i.e., religious ruler of the community) should be a descendent of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad) but one who made it his religious duty to rebel against unjust potentates and corruption. Although Zaydism is an offshoot of Shia Islam, its legal traditions and religious practices are similar to Sunni Islam. And, to a particular degree, Zaydism (or Zaydia) is doctrinally distinct from the “Twelver” Shiism that is enshrined in the dominant branch of Shia Islam that is adhered to in Iran and Lebanon.

Indeed, the Houthis are more like “Al-Jarodiya”, another sub-sect of the Zaydia, which is a lot closer to the Twelvers. As astutely noted by intimately informed scholars and research specialists in the field, both the principal Zaydi sect in Yemen and a sub-sect known as the “Al-Hadaweya”, are dissimilar from Twelvers; but the Houthis are actually much closer to the Twelvers than many understand. Most importantly, the Houthis are not the sole representatives of the Zaydis in Yemen. It is worth noting that a Zaydi state (or Imamate) was founded in northern Yemen in 893 and persisted in various forms until the republican revolution of 1962, particularly in the region encompassing and surrounding Sana’a. However, the Zaydis did not rule all of northern Yemen throughout this period. There were also other mini-states or statelets ruled by non-Zaydis.

20 “Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention” Jeremy M. Sharp, Specialist on Middle East Affairs, December 7, 2017, p. 1
Yet, Yemen’s modern Zaydi imams had kept their state in the Yemeni highlands in the utmost seclusion, as foreign visitors even required the ruler’s permission to enter any part of their territory.\footnote{21 “The Hadaweya: Between Political Theory and the Divine Pillar” Thabet Al-Ahmedy, Arwaqa Foundation for Studies, Translation and Publishing Ministry of Culture: Republic of Yemen, 2018 (Source available only in Arabic Language entitled: الهادوية: بين النظرية السياسية والعقودية الإلهية) 

22 In 1990, a movement called “al-Shabab al-Momen” (the Believing Youth) was founded in Saadah governorate. The goals of this movement at its early stage, according to Mohammed Azzan (one of the founders of the movement at that time), were educational, cultural, and religious in nature. But it was also founded in part to counter the presence of a Sunni Salafi center established in Saadah by Muqbil al-Wadiai—a Salafi scholar from Saadah who founded the Salafi Dar al-Hadith center in Dammaj back in 1979. However, the movement was transformed after a dispute between Hussein al-Houthi and Mohammed Azzan. Azzan wanted to keep the movement moderate and as open to others as possible, whereas Hussein al-Houthi wanted to transform the movement to a more radical and ideological one. (Embassy of Yemen Report: “Reviving the Peace Process in Yemen”)}

The Houthi movement was formed in the upper northern Yemeni province of Saadah in 2004 under the leadership of members of the Houthi family (as noted earlier herein). However, “the Believing Youth”\footnote{22 In 1990, a movement called “al-Shabab al-Momen” (the Believing Youth) was founded in Saadah governorate. The goals of this movement at its early stage, according to Mohammed Azzan (one of the founders of the movement at that time), were educational, cultural, and religious in nature. But it was also founded in part to counter the presence of a Sunni Salafi center established in Saadah by Muqbil al-Wadiai—a Salafi scholar from Saadah who founded the Salafi Dar al-Hadith center in Dammaj back in 1979. However, the movement was transformed after a dispute between Hussein al-Houthi and Mohammed Azzan. Azzan wanted to keep the movement moderate and as open to others as possible, whereas Hussein al-Houthi wanted to transform the movement to a more radical and ideological one. (Embassy of Yemen Report: “Reviving the Peace Process in Yemen”)} were there since the 1990s. The Houthis originally sought an end to what they observed as efforts to marginalize Zaydi communities and beliefs; but their aspirations amplified both in magnitude and resolve in the wake of the 2011 uprisings and government collapse, and embraced a broader populist, dissident message to counter the establishment. Therefore, and essentially, Houthis are a preponderantly Zaydi ideological and insurgent movement.

Tensions between the Houthis and the Yemeni central government steadily grew in the 2000s as the government supported the Believing Youth, with war breaking out in 2004 under the leadership of the group’s founder, Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, who had directed a rebellion against former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis have been led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi shortly after his brother, Hussein, the first leader, was killed by the Yemen Armed Forces in 2004. By the latter half of 2014, the Houthis mended their relationship with the former president Saleh, and with his indispensable help, they took control of the capital and much of the north.
Like many Iranian-backed groups such as Hezbollah, the Houthi movement attracts its Zaydi followers in Yemen by promoting regional political-religious issues in its media, including the predominant US-Israeli conspiracy and “Arab complicity” assertions. Additionally, the movement’s purported objectives include combating economic underdevelopment and political marginalization in Yemen while seeking greater autonomy for Houthi-majority regions of the country. They also professed to support a more democratic non-sectarian construct to Yemen.

The Houthis did take part in the 2011 Yemeni Revolution by engaging in street protests and by coordinating with other opposition groups. They also joined the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen as part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative to broker peace following the unrest. However, the Houthis would later reject the November 2011 GCC arrangement.

The Houthis Radical Ideology and Iran’s Influence

As shown earlier in this report, the slogan of the Houthis in Yemen states:

“Allah is Great
Death to America
Death to Israel
Curse the Jews
Victory for Islam”

This Houthi slogan is unassailably anathema to the peaceful virtues and values of Islam and is patently contrary to the good will that the people of Yemen harbor towards the United States. Such extremist, violent, and malevolent rhetoric is absolutely deplorable and is categorically rejected by the government of Yemen and the overwhelming majority of Yemenis across the country. However, and unfortunately, this has been embraced by the Houthis in their propaganda, and they have engaged in brutal practices with ordinary Yemeni citizens
with terror and persecution for any dissent or opposition to them. The Houthis are armed, trained, financed and guided by Iran – and they have kidnapped and killed American citizens in addition to the scores of Yemeni people.

Moreover, the Houthi slogan is inspired and has been propagated by the Iranians since their 1979 Revolution and whose affiliates or supporters in the region (such as Hezbollah) have adopted or pursued with the determination to realize in some manner. Resulting from to the above-mentioned slogan, the Houthis has engaged in egregious human rights violations, death has spread in Yemen from the coup and conflict that they have precipitated – over ten thousand killed (at least) – according to UN estimates, and with many more suffering from horrible injuries; not to mention the large-scale numbers of persons displaced and facing shortages in medical care, food supplies, etc. The Houthis also engage in expropriating international aid for sale in the black market to fund their violent efforts against the Yemeni people living within their own controlled areas.

23  Image of Yemen-Iran Flags Puzzle: https://www.dreamstime.com/photos-images/flag-yemen.html
24  Geophysical Map: Iran in green and Yemen in orange: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran%E2%80%93Ye- men_relations
Houthis Human Rights and Humanitarian Abuses Against Yemenis

The Embassy of Yemen in Washington, DC would like to seize this opportunity to herein shed more light on the recent human rights situation in Yemen with a particular focus on the various and vicious abuses, crimes, transgressions, violations, and wrongdoings perpetrated by the Houthis against the people of Yemen that have NOT been appreciated enough.

According to Human Rights Watch, over the past three years, the Houthis have detained, forcibly disappeared, and abused scores of people, including perceived political opponents,

students, journalists, activists, and even members of the Baha’i community. While many people are held without charge or have been forcibly disappeared, others have been prosecuted in Sana’a-based criminal courts. Furthermore, the total number of jails and detention facilities operated by the Houthis has reached 480, which have comprised of utilizing hospitals and health facilities, public and private universities, public and private schools, playgrounds and sports clubs, as well as government offices or properties. And, there are at least ten secret prisons with an uncountable number of people detained against their will therein by the Houthis. In addition to the acts of extreme torture that the Houthis have engaged in, they have recruited children to be soldiers in armed conflict.

Indeed, the Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV) which is based in Yemen, is a group that has provided thoroughly documented accounts and an exhaustive exposition regarding human rights concerns about the Houthis. The YCMHRV has documented close to ten thousand cases of arbitrary detention (including women and children), with thousands of cases for persons who have forcibly disappeared, thousands of cases of torture, with a number of them who died in ambiguous circumstances.

Houthi-Saleh forces have cracked down on dissent, closed several dozen NGOs, carried out enforced disappearances, tortured detainees, and arbitrarily detained numerous activists, journalists, tribal leaders, political opponents, and members of minority religious groups living in Yemen. Since August 2014, Human Rights Watch has documented the Sana’a-based authorities’ arbitrary and abusive detention of dozens of people, including two deaths in custody and 11 cases of alleged torture or other ill-treatment.

27 NOTE: The Bahá’í Faith is a religion that teaches the essential worth of all religions, and the unity and equality of all people. Established by Bahá’u’lláh in 1863, it initially grew in Iran (Persia), where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception in 1863.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith
29 Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (www.ymhrv.org, which is based in Yemen)
Amnesty International has documented cases in Sana’a and Marib provinces of civilians being detained solely to be used as leverage in future prisoner exchanges, which amounts to hostage-taking and is a violation of international humanitarian law. In Sana’a and other areas controlled by the Houthis and their allies, they have continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain critics and opponents as well as journalists, private individuals, human rights defenders and members of the Baha’i community, subjecting scores to enforced disappearance. Five Baha’i men remained in detention at the end of 2017. One of the men had been held for nearly four years, accused by the Houthis of apostasy, which carries the death penalty under Yemeni law.

Since September 2014, the de facto authorities in Sana’a affiliated with Houthi-Saleh forces have engaged in widespread detention of individuals. Those perceived to be opposed to the de facto authorities – including political figures, activists, human rights defenders, journalists or private individuals – have been particularly targeted. Most detainees are held for several days, weeks or months before being released. Some remain detained indefinitely. In one year alone, from December 2014 until December 2015, there were 8458 people arbitrarily detained including by the Houthis; 389 residential houses were demolished only because they belong to their opponents; 1077 cases of torture; and 2706 enforced disappearances perpetrated by the so-called revolutionary committees.

Houthi-Saleh forces have also blocked and confiscated food and medical supplies and denied access to populations in need. They have imposed onerous restrictions on aid workers and interfered with aid delivery. Aid groups have ceased working in some areas due to these restrictions. The aggregate impact of Houthi-Saleh obstructions and obfuscations with humanitarian assistance has significantly harmed the civilian population.

31 Note: Provinces are referred to as Governorates in Yemen
32 Amnesty International (Yemen 2017/2018 Report):
33 United Nations Human Rights Council (Thirty-Sixth Session, September 2017):
34 Amnesty International (Yemen 2017/2018 Report):
Houthi forces and other armed groups have used child soldiers, an estimated one-third of the fighters in Yemen. By August 2017, the UN had documented 1,702 cases of child recruitment since March 2015, 67 percent of which were attributable to Houthi-Saleh forces. About 100 were younger than 15. Under Yemeni law, 18 is the minimum age for military service. In 2014, Yemen signed a UN action plan to end the use of child soldiers. Due to the conflict the action plan has not been implemented.\footnote{35}

According to the United Nations Human Rights Council:

“The Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis and the army units loyal to former President Abdullah Saleh (the Houthi/Saleh forces) were responsible for some 67 per cent of the 1,702 cases of recruitment of children for use in hostilities. UN Human Rights monitors frequently observed children as young as 10 who were armed and uniformed, manning checkpoints. Houthi/Saleh forces were also found to be responsible for widespread arbitrary or unlawful detentions.”\footnote{37}

\footnote{35} Ibid.  
\footnote{36} Image: https://afrilinks24.com/un-experts-human-rights-must-be-respected-to-end-cycle-of-violence/  
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38 Child Manning Houthi Checkpoint: http://www.alyamanalaraby.com/175815
39 Houthi Checkpoint: https://en.trend.az/world/arab/1722669.html
40 Houthi Checkpoint: http://wwwiran-daily.com/News/13806.html
Furthermore, concerning the behavior of the Houthis in the conflict, which has included indiscriminate attacks, attacks against civilians and protected objects, sieges, blockades and restrictions on movement, the report states:

"Forced displacement of civilians has been exploited as a tactic in the conflict in violation of international humanitarian law. The OHCHR has verified two cases of entire villages forcibly displaced by Houthi/Saleh forces. On 1 November 2016, following weeks of harassment, movement restrictions and arrests, 175 families were forced to leave Al-Dabah Al-Rabee’i village, in Taizz governorate, after the Houthis threatened by loudspeaker that if the villagers did not leave within 24 hours, all the men would be detained. On 18 February 2017, again following weeks of harassment and movement restrictions, two villagers were killed by sniper-fire while trying to leave Tabaysha’a village, in Taizz governorate. The following day, armed Houthi/Saleh forces entered the village, destroying homes and seizing vehicles, while fighters positioned on the mountains overlooking the village began to fire on the residential areas. As a result of the violence, all the villagers – at least 250 families – fled the village while waving white banners."

In October 2017, Yemen endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, thereby committing to do more to protect students, teachers, and schools during conflict, including by implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict. However, as the conflict has continued, the Houthis have not demonstrated any real commitment to desist in their contemptible practice of recruiting children (less than age 15) to serve as soldiers in armed conflict against the legitimate government of Yemen and the Arab Coalition. Amnesty International notes in its latest report that the Houthis and allied forces, continued to recruit and deploy child soldiers.

In September 2017, for the third time, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended establishing an independent, international mechanism to investigate alleged abuses by all sides in Yemen. During this time, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

adopted by consensus a resolution creating a Group of Eminent Experts to conduct an international investigation into violations and abuses in Yemen.\textsuperscript{46} And we wish to assert the latter should now also include looking into the crimes committed by the Houthis against the innocent defenders, devotees and family members of ex-President Saleh who have mysteriously disappeared or have been mercilessly disposed of following his own unexpected passing at the hands of the Houthis.

\textbf{Extremist Educational Curriculum}

In addition to the acts of extreme torture and the recruitment of children to be soldiers in armed conflict engaged by the Houthis, for the Yemeni populations residing under Houthis controlled areas, nearly half a million children have dropped out of school since the 2015, bringing the total number of out-of-school children to 2 million! According to UNICEF: “An entire generation of children in Yemen faces a bleak future because of limited or no access to education,” said Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative in Yemen. “Even those who remain in school are not getting the quality education they need.” Furthermore, including close to 8.2 million children, need humanitarian assistance to establish or maintain access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Indeed, peace and recovery are an absolute necessity if children in Yemen are to resume their schooling in order to obtain the quality education that they urgently need and are entitled to.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{Tragically, the Houthis also have begun the practice of indoctrinating young children (on a mandatory basis) with curricula filled with hatred for the United States and that is also laced with antisemitism within the education system.} The aforementioned is absolutely appalling! Indeed, serious objections should be raised to call for the elimination of this academic curriculum on young children to instruct such teachings (starting at the elementary school level), because it will be terribly injurious to their educational growth and to their overall psychological development.

\textsuperscript{47} https://www.unicef.org/yemen/media_12502.html
The Houthis have eviscerated the childhood and innocence of innumerable Yemeni children and juveniles through their forced participation in armed conflict in conjunction with their exposure to precepts antithetical (if not foreign) to Yemeni society through extremist ideology, sectarian inspirations, and inimical teachings that breed and glorify violence against people of other faiths and backgrounds – all of which have engendered the distortion of their perception of the United States and the rest of the world that will be conducive to the propagation of new terrorism threats in the future. Indeed, children should be learning to thrive on culture, not on carnage! However, with the Houthis, Yemeni children, instead of being dispatched to schools as students, many have been dispersed in the battlefield as soldiers.

In a previous Embassy Publication with specific reference germane to the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY), it was passingly suggested that “the objectionable modus operandi of the Houthis was tantamount to the actions of armed bank robbers – which is why it would be fitting to call them ‘Houthieves’ – for the exploitative nature of their deeds in the CBY and the precarious predicament that they created with their monetary transgressions.” However, beyond the colossal mismanagement or pecuniary peculation of Yemen’s finite financial funds and assets, the Houthis have robbed something even more precious than merely the foreign exchange reserves or resources held within the CBY during their rule. Indeed, under the Houthis and their control of the largest swath of Yemen’s population, a heinous mission for the theft of Yemeni youth’s minds has been waged, especially with the new or current generation.

49 http://www.sahafah24.net/show852540.html
Yemen’s children have suffered tremendously from the Houthis. They have experienced an intense and deep trauma. Hence, a transformative change will be needed that is vital to imparting upon them a raison d’être for wanting to live in peace with the world, and not wanting to die in war or to commit crimes or terrorist acts against the United States or other nationalities in the future.

Consequently, and in order to remedy this warped mindset, an immense campaign must be instituted that is dedicated to instilling the rudimentary goodwill and acceptance of others (irrespective of religion, race and nationality) in educational curricula and for their existential development. However, the prerequisite to undertaking the latter, first necessitates the urgent termination of the Houthis’ control of Yemen’s educational milieu so that such odious methodologies and manipulations can never be pursued. Indeed, we cannot allow for a new generation of Yemenis to be nurtured by the Houthis who will be uncompromisingly antagonistic to the United States, unwaveringly anti-Semitic and generally hostile in nature.

Indeed, in the interest of countering any future terrorist threats to the world arising from Yemen as a consequence of the recent reign of the Houthis, Yemeni youth and children will need to be detraumatized due to either their direct and compulsory involvement in armed conflict or from the atrocious indoctrination that they have endured within the school system. The Houthis have, quite poignantly, adopted pedagogical methods and fomented a learning environment in order to incubate or inculcate a behavioral outlook filled with an acute anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism; and a worldview that will not foster the peaceful and loving tenets for humanity (as is truly embodied in the religion of Islam). Unquestionably, the Houthis have stifled universally accepted educational practices for children; and the Houthis have also stultified all the fundamental advancements recently achieved in Yemen’s institutional structures and academic landscape.
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Houthi Banner in Elementary School Textbooks

Houthi Child Soldiers

51 https://alsahwa-yemen.net/p-16945
52 https://alghadalyemeny.com/9889/
The Houthis continue to act as a menace to maritime activity in the region, which threatens international trade. Indeed, freedom of navigation and the world’s oil and commercial goods transiting the Red Sea via the Bab al-Mandeb strait cannot be put at risk because of the brazen actions of a militia and the hegemonic ambitions of their regional ally, Iran. As recently as April 3, 2018, an oil tanker ship transporting this crucial commodity for global consumption was attacked by the Houthis operating along the Red Sea of the coast of Yemen hazarding the spillage of millions of barrels of oil, which could agitate global oil prices as well as annihilate regional aquatic life whose abundance of fisheries many Yemenis depend on for sustenance and income generation. And on May 10, 2018 the Houthis launched a missile against a Turkish cargo ship about 70 miles off the coast of Yemen. The latter is further evidence of their despicable actions of routinely targeting maritime traffic along the Red Sea by Yemen; and in this case, it was disturbingly against a vessel transporting 50,000 metric tons of wheat intended to help feed Yemenis and to mitigate starvation facing those populations living under the Houthi-controlled areas. Indeed, this incident even elicited the reaction and rebuke from the White House.56

53 http://www.crownname.com
54 http://www.kibrispostasi.com
In addition, the Houthis have clearly manifested their antagonistic intent by committing hostile actions against the United States in the region, such as the attack on the US Navy (USS Mason) operating in the Red Sea in October 2016 that was targeted three times in seven days by missiles off the coast of Yemen, and that subsequently invited the appropriate military response from the US Government.

The Houthis have unhesitatingly shown their intent to target American citizens, as they have unjustly apprehended US nationals living or working in Yemen during the conflict. And, quite sadly, we must recall that United States Army 1st Sergeant John HAMEN was also tortured and killed in Yemen while in detention by the Houthi Rebels. He was subsequently buried in Arlington National Cemetery after his corpse was turned over to the US Military. Therefore, as recent events have indisputably demonstrated, the Houthis are willing to attack both US Military assets and personnel either inside or outside Yemen's border.

Photo: John Hamen, US Army 1st Sergeant

Sources:
58 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/houthi-rebels-in-yemen-are-holding-multiple-americans-prisoner/2015/05/29/ac349cc8-0618-11e5-8bda-c7b4e9a8f7ac_story.html?utm_term=.07e5f-be8a117
58 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wol2XdOYdA
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Houthi Recruits Undergoing Military Training

Young Armed Teenage Male Houthi Soldier

60 https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/28/world/falling-houthis-allies-threatens-war-Sana'a/
61 https://www.middleeastmonitor.com
Averting a Houthi Legacy

Importance of US Government Support to the Military Intervention in Yemen

In a letter sent to the leadership of the United States Congress on March 14, 2018, Secretary of Defense James MATTIS averred the following key points concerning the importance of the supportive role of the United States Department of Defense in Yemen in concert with the Saudi-led Arab Coalition in the conflict against the Houthis:

“Since 2015, the United States has provided limited support to Saudi-led coalition military operations to restore the UN-recognized government of Yemen and preserve Saudi territorial integrity from Houthi-aligned forces in Yemen. Our support takes the form of intelligence sharing, military

62 Photo, US Secretary of Defense, James Mattis – ©Agencia de Noticias EFE
advice, and logistical support, including air-to-air refueling. This non-combat support is focused on improving coalition processes and procedures, especially regarding compliance with the law of armed conflict and best practices for reducing the risk of civilian casualties. With this support, Saudi Arabia is able to defend itself from missile attacks, protect freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, and regain territory captured by the Iranian-backed Houthis after they seized territory from the Republic of Yemen Government. Withdrawing U.S support would embolden Iran to increase its support to the Houthis, enabling further ballistic missile strikes on Saudi Arabia and threatening vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea, thereby raising the risk of a regional conflict." \(^{63}\)

Meanwhile, as the United States nobly assists the Yemeni Government and the Arab Coalition to defeat the Iranian-backed Houthis and to reduce the risk of civilian casualties in the conflict, the Houthis and their allied forces have repeatedly attacked and fired mortar shells and artillery rockets indiscriminately into populated neighborhoods in Yemen, and particularly in the city of Al-Bayda, Hodeida, Taiz and even other liberated areas from afar. These attacks constitute a contravention of the laws of war.

Indeed, Houthi forces have been shelling Taiz without regard for the safety of its residents. Human Rights Watch has documented these unremitting attacks on Taiz since August 2015, which has killed scores of civilians, including women and children.\(^{64}\) Moreover, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported on these blatant attacks. Such nakedly indiscriminate attacks flout the laws of armed conflict and amount to war crimes when carried out deliberately as has been the case. Shamefully, civilians are under fire on all sides by the Houthi and affiliated forces, with sniper attacks and indiscriminate shelling. As affirmed by the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein: “For the civilians in the city of Taiz, the conflict is not

\(^{63}\) http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/world/defense-secretary-jim-mattiss-letter-to-congressional-leaders/2837/

\(^{64}\) https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/20/yemen-houthis-shell-civilians-southern-city
just escalating but inescapable." Also, during this period and until just recently in 2018, the UN Human Rights Office has documented sniping and indiscriminate shelling by Houthi forces in frontline areas in Hodeida and Hajja Governorates.\textsuperscript{65}

Let’s recall that the Houthis had used military jets to attack the presidential palace in Aden after President Hadi escaped from Sana’a in 2015. The Houthis had shelled the civilian population in Aden with heavy artillery causing major fatalities and destruction. In that vein, they have engaged in the same heinous actions elsewhere in Yemen. And on the humanitarian front, just as the Houthis had impeded the flow of aid to the residents of Aden at the time before its liberation, the Houthis have repeated the same despicable actions in other parts in Yemen, such as on the populations living in and around Al-Hodeida.\textsuperscript{66} And apart from unlawfully confiscating food and medical supplies from civilians in the city of Taiz, according to the International Crisis Group:

\begin{quote}
“Huthi/Saleh violations are the most egregious in the city of Taiz, where their fighters have enforced a full or partial blockade since, with devastating humanitarian consequences. They routinely interfere with the work of humanitarians, at times demanding the diversion of aid to themselves or denying aid workers access to populations in need, revoking visas or even detaining them. They heavily tax all imports into their areas in part to finance the war effort and also run black market in fuel, enriching military elites while driving prices up for transport of vital commodities.”\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

Therefore, it is crucial that the United States remain steadfast by the side of its allies to defeat the Iranian-backed Houthis. In a recent Senate debate on Yemen that prudently defeated an attempt to constrain United States role and support to the Arab Coalition fighting against

\textsuperscript{66} Op Ed: http://www.newsweek.com/how-houthis-have-provoked-human-disaster-yemen-570957
the Houthis, there were some US Lawmakers from diametrically opposed political persuasions and party affiliations who appreciated the importance of sustaining US Government support to the Arab Coalition against the Houthis.

Indeed, Senator John Cornyn of Texas (Republican and Majority Whip) and Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey (Democrat and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations) conveyed the following from the recent debate on Senate Joint Resolution 54:68

![Photo](http://i.epochtimes.com/assets/uploads/2017/05/John-Cornyn-Congress-Senator-Texas.jpg)

**Photo**: Senator John Cornyn

“This is another proxy war being conducted against the U.S. and its allies by Iran. Our support for the Saudi Coalition is narrowly circumscribed. It currently takes the form of intelligence including air to air refueling. This is part of the plan started under the Obama administration and continued with the Trump Administration not to put American troops on the ground, boots on the ground, but rather to facilitate allies working by, with, and through those allies to address the threat not only to them but ultimately the United States and peace in the region. The role we play in Yemen is clearly a noncombat support role. It is meant to minimize civilian casualties by improving the processes and procedures by increasing compliance with international law of armed conflict. In other words, we’re trying to help them target the terrorists and the Iranian-backed rebels and not innocent civilians, something

68 A joint resolution intended to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress. The Senate voted 55 to 44 to table the motion (i.e., to discharge the matter back to the relevant senate committee for further debate and decision for potential new legislation).

they’re not able to do as well without our assistance. Let me point out there is currently an humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, what they sometimes leave out is it only started when the Iranian backed rebels overthrew the existing government. Our military assistance is helping the Saudis and their targeting to help prevent civilian casualties, to help restore law and order and create conditions necessary to provide aid. Yemen is a place of great geopolitical concern. 3.8 million barrels of oil pass through each day, many in route of the Suez Canal and beyond. It shows that the geopolitical importance of Yemen and the surrounding region. When rebels attempt to shut down shipping the impact is global, including on the United States and our nation has every right to be concerned. If we were to remove logistical support that crisis would likely get worse.”

(Excerpt from remarks by the Senator John Cornyn (R) from Texas on the Senate chamber during debate about Yemen and the war powers resolution, March 20, 2018)

Photo: Senator Bob Menendez

“The Houthis bear much responsibility for the violence. We also must remember that the Houthis overthrew the internationally recognized and lawful government of Yemen and continue the conflict by resisting a political solution. So we asked the Saudis to have a political solution, but we need to have the Houthis to engage in a political solution as well. We also have to remember that the Houthi insurgency has vastly expanded the opportunity for

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. at the same time, I worry that withdrawal of limited U.S military support to the Saudi Coalition will weaken our leadership and our ability to influence a political settlement and improve humanitarian conditions and could even make the situation worse. Let us be clear eyed about who will most benefit from an absence of American power. as has been done throughout the region. Iran will continue to expand its proxy power enter its revolutionary guard. Iran will continue shipping weapons to the Houthis in violation of the arms embargo. With an emboldened Iranian patron, the Houthis will continue their campaign with Yemen and their attacks on Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, other nations in the region will be left questioning the commitment of its long-term security partner, the United States. In Saudi Arabia’s darkest hours, as ballistic missiles are launched in major population centers in Saudi Arabia; and Lebanese Hezbollah on the border training Houthi fighters while Iran continues to transfer lethal equipment, we risk sending the signal to our partners that and to our adversaries that the United States is not reliable. We must show our allies that the United States upholds its international commitments. The solution, I believe, is to bolster our diplomatic, humanitarian and political presence to help solve the crisis and the human suffering. We must move towards a political settlement to end the war in Yemen and the people of Yemen will see improvements in their situation immediately.”

(Excerpt from remarks by Senator Bob Menendez (D) from New Jearsy on the Senate chamber during debate about Yemen and the war powers resolution, March 20, 2018)

Therefore, by taking a supportive role in protecting its longstanding allies in the Gulf – which by extension includes Yemen, in order to help liberate it from the clutches of the putschists as embodied in the Houthis (who have been irrefutably aided and abetted by Iran by way of arms, training, financing and guidance) – the United States will continue to pragmatically serve its vital interests in the region.

Indeed, the United States Government is honorably supporting the Arab Coalition to help protect Saudi Arabia’s territory, to protect its foreign policy interests in a manner compatible with its regional allies’ considerations – and to help regain a modicum of stability in Yemen. This requires continuing to assist President Hadi’s Government with the Arab Coalition to purge the Iranian-backed Houthi forces from those areas still under unlawful occupation by those militias and military units – and in due course, to restore the rightful dominion of Yemen’s legitimate government in all of Yemen. Moreover, it’s outrageous that beyond merely launching the gratuitous coup in Yemen, the Houthis have also launched ballistic missiles into civilian populated areas of Saudi Arabia as it has done recently and recurrently, in a purposeful attempt to start a broader regional conflagration.73

Long-Term Houthi Impact in Yemen and Implications for US Security Concerns

Photo:74 Young Men and Child Houthi Soldiers in Public March

The Embassy hopes that the crux of this report has prevailed in informing the reader about the Houthis in Yemen expressed herein from the truthful perspective of the Yemeni Government – which is a strategic partner of the United States. In concluding this special report,

74 Photo of Houthi Militia: https://theyemen.net
the Embassy of Yemen would like to further underscore that the reprehensible actions of the Houthis have not only contributed to the deaths and displacement of Yemeni citizens as well as other foreign nationals (including Americans – civilian and military), the Houthis have inflicted profound damage to Yemen domestically that will require years to rectify. Nothing in the modern history of Yemen approximates the extensive level of dysfunction, deterioration and devastation that has beset the country that have been caused because of the Houthis since their coup to the current conflict!

Moreover, the Houthis pose a danger to the United States and to the rest of the world, which is a specter that must be preempted and treated as a pressing concern. Indeed, this is a matter of urgency to the United States and the world, because today’s Houthi brain-washed and battle-hardened Yemeni child soldiers and youth may become the next generation of terrorists eager to harm the United States and further disturb the world order.

Taking the view that helping Yemen is crucial to stabilize the country in the near-term, while concurrently working with the international donor community to lay the ground work for a sustainable future and the long-term national security of the United States, helping Yemen is consistent with US national interests – which are in alignment with declared constructive principles and aspirations commensurate to:

• eradicating terrorism, violent extremism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Semitism;
• promoting democracy;
• achieving overall stability to the region;
• supporting trade and economic opportunities for American businesses to flourish in the Middle East; and
• ensuring freedom of navigation and the safe flow of global maritime commerce and other naval ships.
However, **all of the latter points are impeded by the Houthis**. To that end, and similar to sustaining the humanitarian assistance that has been gratefully granted by the United States, it would be in the interest of the **US Government to sustain its support to the Yemeni Government and the Arab Coalition to defeat the Iranian-backed Houthis while contemporaneously working to apply on the Houthis the maximum possible political and economic pressures to behoove them to cooperate with the UN-led peace process to finally etch a solid and permanent political settlement to this horrendous conflict.\\

**Reaffirming National Interest of US in Yemen**

The Government of the Republic of Yemen continues its interaction with the current Administration consistent with established (and any forthcoming) shared national interests with foreign policy engagements held firmly together with the bonds of friendship.\\

Indeed, official relations between Yemen and the United States date back to the 1940s, and they are characterized as warm, cooperative, and respectful. The United States was one of the first governments to recognize and to establish diplomatic relations with Yemen. Over the years, both prior to and after unification, US-Yemeni relations have continued to evolve positively and to deepen amicably; and the United States stands in support of the Government of President Hadi.

“**Over the years, both prior to and after unification, US–Yemeni relations have continued to evolve positively and to deepen amicably; and the United States stands in support of the Government of President Hadi.**”
Excellent US-Yemen-Bilateral Relations

(Left: Matthew TUELLER, US Ambassador to Yemen) and (Right: President of Yemen)

76 Image: http://www.26sepnews.net/2017/08/28
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President Hadi with President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump

(September 2017, New York City)

© Embassy of Yemen, Washington, DC
The Houthis (as remonstrated in the first line of their slogan) aim to harm the United States; and they have clearly manifested their antagonistic intent by committing hostile actions against US interests in the region, as noted earlier in the report. Indeed, although the USS Cole was attacked in Yemen in October 2000 by Al-Qaeda, the USS Mason was targeted by the Houthis in October 2016. The U.S. Navy launched a Tomahawk missile strike to knock out coastal radar sites that may have provided targeting information for those attacks. And the Houthis have also attacked and penetrated the US Embassy in Yemen in February 2015 and took possession of any viable assets for their purposes.\(^7\) Indeed, the Houthis have no compunctions and geography will not be a constraint to realize their malicious objectives.

The Republic of Yemen has been and continues to be a strategic and stalwart partner of the United States in the fight against global terrorism and violent extremism. The US Government has been closely consulting and collaborating with Yemen for many years to combat terrorist activities that threaten Yemen, the region and the United States – and which has had a causal nexus to Yemen’s underlying instability. It cannot be disputed that Yemen’s government has faced terrorism related challenges that have disturbed Yemeni society and that have disconcerted the international community. Due to historical lacks in complete central governance, inadequate territorial control in certain locations in combination with economic shortcomings along with deficiencies in education and infrastructure, this has negatively contributed to such a predicament.

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\(^7\) Geophysical Map with Highlight: United States in green. Yemen in orange https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States%E2%80%93Yemen_relations#/media/File:USA_Yemen_Locator_2.svg
However, there is no destitution to Yemen’s determination for combating terrorism (whether indigenous in nature or exogenous in origin) so that it is wholly routed and retreated from Yemen’s society and territory. In terms of counterterrorism efforts, the Yemeni government’s resolve and readiness has been evidently demonstrated to the US Government, and in spite of the current conflict with the Houthis who have terrorized the Yemeni people.

(Please see Embassy Report: “Yemen Efforts in the Fight Against Terrorism”)

Indeed, the United States retains imperative (and geostrategic) political, security and economic interests directly and indirectly from Yemen. Ultimately, the aim for Yemen with the assistance of the US and international partners is to sprout a stable, secure, prosperous, and an effectively governed country for its people. This is a vital goal that will demand an enduring engagement and coordination with Yemen, buttressing our shared and mutual interests.

Moreover, it is worth repeating, as a matter of the national interest of the United States, that the Houthis continue to threaten maritime activity in the region that will impact the free flow of shipping lanes for military or civilian vessels. The Iranian-backed Houthis have nefariously and numerousity planted underwater mines in the Red Sea putting at risk all types of ships (including the United States Navy) which are lawfully passing in international waters. A report issued by the US Office of Naval Intelligence in March 2017, warned merchant ships from the dangers of sea mines in Bab al-Mandeb, particularly near the Mokha port entrance. Sea mines are one of the oldest weapons in the naval inventory and are often the cheapest and most available weapons. Sea mines are not only deadly, but they are also difficult to find even with modern equipment. The naval mines near Yemen, which are believed to have been sourced from Iran, appear to be of the floating type with contact detonators. Although they seem basic, they are a significant threat to merchant ships using the busy Red Sea shipping lanes.
The latter is aside from the reckless and random use of treacherous antipersonnel land mines that they have been unconscionably implanted by the Houthis on Yemeni territory from the conflict that will take many years to discover and dismantle, which in the course of time will likely murder or maim untold number of Yemeni citizens and wildlife. According to the Arab Federation for Human Rights, Houthi militias are continuing to plant both land and sea mines in violation of international regulations. It revealed in its latest report that the Houthis have planted more than half a million anti-personnel mines in different parts of Yemen,

83 https://infograph.venngage.com/p/90984/naval-min
killing more than 700 people. The Houthi militias had utilized various forms of landmines and explosives, which they planted on roads, homes and public facilities in Yemen before they had to withdraw from areas under their control as a result of military operations of Yemen’s national army and the Arab Coalition. The Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Violations of Human Rights has called on Houthi militias to provide maps of the minefields. They have also demanded the cessation of the use of further mines in accordance with international law.84

Photo85: Landmines found after withdrawal of Houthis from territory previously under their control

Photo86: Yemeni Children – Victims of Houthi Landmines

85 http://www.arabnews.com/node/1087326/middle-east
86 Ibid.
Reshaping Development Aid to Yemen in Post-Houthi Era

Undeniably, the United States has been the largest Western donor of recent humanitarian aid to Yemen (at more than one billion dollars since 2015) during this conflict with the Iranian-backed Houthis. In the past, the United States had positively impacted countless lives and communal spaces in Yemen; and in more than can be put into words, the people of Yemen are profoundly grateful to the United States for both its past and present aid to Yemen. Going forward, the United States will also retain a pivotal position to undertake a crucial role to help Yemenis mold their future by fostering tangible and positive effects across a gamut of domains touching upon political, security, economic, social, and governance issues over the long-term while addressing immediate concerns to the United States in the short term.

Indeed, in the past, the focus and trajectory of US development assistance in Yemen can be subsumed into the thematic domain of capacity-building; and this also includes the security sector. Indeed, providing Yemen with assistance to its military and security apparatus is cohesive to the overarching refrain of “diplomacy, development and defense” that has undergirded US foreign policy engagement. They have been enormously important and impactful spanning a broad range of development issues through targeted interventions that are tailored at the local community level. They have covered:

- **Education** (i.e., Literacy – particularly for females, Trainings, Cultural Exchanges, etc.,)
- **Health** (i.e., Vaccinations, Maternity, Disability, etc.,)
- **Poverty** (i.e., Entrepreneurship, Microfinance, Women’s Empowerment, etc.,)
- **Governance** (i.e., Aid Effectiveness, etc.,)
- **Environment** (Clean Water, Agriculture Production and Extension Services, etc.,)
Now, though, Yemen's needs have been magnified immeasurably due to the cumulative ravages of the conflict, and Yemen will require assistance from the international community that will be sine qua non to its recovery and reconstruction in all development sectors. Indeed, now, the Yemeni government needs great support to restore the state and stabilize security. This aid will help Yemen to overcome the major security and economic challenges that it faces in postwar reconstruction efforts, which include removing the material, psychological and social effects of war, so that Yemen will defeat the abhorrent terrorist forces and stand against extremism to uproot its intellectual, cultural and material roots, eradicating all of its manifestations and symbols.  

Previously prevalent or pre-conflict fragilities, vulnerabilities and weaknesses that were manifest in Yemen, such as: pervasive poverty, endemic education and health related deficits, high unemployment, a young and rapidly growing population, growing natural resource scarcity, unequal development, political marginalization, rampant corruption, weak state institutions, declining government revenues, and terrorism related challenges were being managed by government to the best of its limited capacity and means in cooperation and coordination with the international community.

However, compounding now the aforementioned issues has been the social fragmentation precipitated by the Houthis through their perverse ideological positions and impositions on the people. Indeed, in the past, there were never separate mosques for Sunnis (or Shafeis) and another for Shia (Zaydis) in which to perform prayer. Both prayed together in the same mosques; and one did not distinguish between the other in a place of worship. However, under the Houthis, this has been particularly designated. Therefore, Yemen's social fabric will need to also be repaired from this disturbing development by the Houthis.

The latter is aside from matters governing transitional justice and possible truth commissions in addition to the myriad of other difficulties in the offing. Unfortunately, Yemen will have to tackle the stigma born from the Houthis' detrimental rule in addition to its preexisting challenges.

In this regard, the aid to Yemen will have to be both reinvigorated and reimagined because of the altered circumstances and whose reshaping will be important towards addressing those concerns; and for marshaling the wide-ranging assistance needed from the international community to aid Yemen in its recovery and reconstruction efforts with all regional and global partners and parties concerned with Yemen as a country, and especially for its children. Therefore, as the process for harvesting more emergency aid and subsequently gathering additional assistance for Yemen from the global community continues to cultivate, it is hoped that the United States can take a leading role (as it has performed on the humanitarian assistance front).

**Yemen’s Support for Congressional Legislation Against Iran and the Houthis**

Recently, the US Congress took action to pass House Resolution 599 on November 13, 2017 which (among other things) called for a political solution in Yemen and encourages other governments to join in providing the resources necessary to address the humanitarian crisis. Moreover, House Resolution 599 condemns Iranian activities in Yemen calls on all responsible countries to take necessary measures against Iran, including the interdiction of Iranian weapons to the Houthi rebels and the application of sanctions against Iran.

In terms of Iran, the Embassy notes other Bills in the US Congress that have been deliberated, namely: House Resolution 3636 – The Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Terrorist Designation Act and House Resolution 478 – The Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Terrorist Sanction Act of 2017. The former expresses the sense of Congress that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) meets the criteria for designation as a foreign terrorist
organization. And the latter would direct the President to: (1) designate the IRGC as a terrorist entity, (2) impose sanctions against the IRGC, and (3) report to Congress on the results of such sanctions.88

Indeed, the latter concerns have essentially been incorporated into Public Law 115-44 entitled: Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). This landmark legislation from the 115th Congress was signed into law by the President of the United States on August 2, 2017.89

Moreover, as stated in CAATSA:

Title I (Sanctions with Respect to Iran),

Section 103 (Regional Strategy for Countering Conventional and Asymmetric Iranian Threats in the Middle East and North Africa),

Paragraph 5 (“An assessment of Iran’s asymmetric activities in the region, including –

Line C (“the types and amount of support, including funding, lethal and nonlethal contributions, and training provided to Hezbollah, Hamas, special groups in Iraq, the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Houthi fighters in Yemen, and other violent groups across the Middle East.”)

The Embassy fully supports the passage of CAATSA and any further legislation emanating from the US Congress against the state of Iran for their support of the Houthis. Furthermore, following the killing of ex-President Saleh (along with members of his own family), the Embassy of Yemen in Washington, DC has called upon the United States Congress to also take further strong and specific action against the Houthis in Yemen in order to compel them to make peace in Yemen or to face additional consequences that will be entirely untenable for them to continue with their illegitimate hold in the northern part of Yemen. Massive political, and economic pressures need to be applied to prevail upon the Houthis that it will be in their interest to swiftly achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict rather than face what is an unwinnable struggle.

88 https://www.congress.gov/
Prospects for Peace Despite Houthis’ Intransigence

President Hadi and his government genuinely seek to abort the conflict in Yemen and to abate the humanitarian misery that has been caused by the Iranian-backed Houthis. Indeed, the shadows of death, destruction and disease from war in all their different shades and shapes must be terminated; and the outlines of reconciliation and reconstruction must be given the chance to be formed and followed. Certainly, peace can no longer be detained by the Houthis and their allies in the manner comparable to how they have physically detained so many people in Yemen! We firmly believe that the Houthis must move from the posture of entrenchment to one of engagement to reach a final and durable political settlement with Yemen’s legitimate government.

Nevertheless, the foundations for peace can only be set with the dimensions of the Three References, known as the:

1) Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative;
2) National Dialogue Conference Outcomes; and
3) United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216

There have already been three attempted peace talks in 2015 and 2016, twice in Switzerland and another in Kuwait (the latter lasted 115 days!) under the auspices of the United Nations. The Government of Yemen did agree to the comprehensive terms outlined in the last peace talks in Kuwait as presented by former UN Special Envoy, Mr. Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed. However, the Houthis equivocated and evaded the final settlement that was offered. And heretofore, the Houthi leadership have exacerbated the process of reaching a final peace agreement to the conflict due their fierce defiance, fanatical delusions, and fervent directives – the latter of which is furtively delivered from their foreign determined allies; and their belligerence is further derived domestically, from their fecklessly devoted associates who clamor to neither compromise nor cooperate to ultimately achieve any peace agreement or a political solution with the Government of Yemen and/or the Arab Coalition.
However, if a new and promising future for Yemen is going to be engineered, this can only unfold once a sustainable political and peaceful solution is agreed upon by the Houthis with a concrete agreement which will allow for the mechanics for reconciliation and soon after reconstruction to get underway. To that end, there is no more room for recalcitrance and no more time for tolerance to any “lip service” from the Houthis to either derail or delay peace from ensuing in Yemen!

The Government of Yemen’s track record has been clear with efforts exerted assiduously both in good faith and in good conscience; and always vigorously advocating and accepting the recommendations of the United Nations for peace in Yemen. We continue to fully encourage and endorse the UN lead peace process and its Special Envoy, including with the newly recently appointed, Mr. Martin Griffiths.

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Photo 88: United Nations Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths

90 Photo of New UN Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths: https://news.un.org/en/focus/yemen
Furthermore, and as an additional reminder to the Houthis – in the interest of attaining peace and accelerating reconciliation – the Government of Yemen wishes to emphatically reaffirm to the Houthis that in spite all that has occurred recently in Yemen, they will be permitted to operate as a defined political group in Yemen as they exercised during the National Dialogue Conference process, provided that they comply with the modalities stipulated in any forthcoming settlement which must include surrendering all weapons seized by them belonging to the state and renouncing violence as a means to achieve any political ends. Nonetheless, any commitments conceded by the Houthis towards the resolution of this conflict must be deemed inveterate and inviolable. Indeed, the peace process in Yemen can be recuperated; but any legacy of the Houthis must be repudiated both in Yemen and abroad.91

“Indeed, the peace process in Yemen can be recuperated; but any legacy of the Houthis must be repudiated both in Yemen and abroad.”

91 Please also see New Embassy Report: “Reviving the Peace Process in Yemen”
NOTABLE SOURCES

1. The Yemen Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations
2. Global Think Tanks (International Crisis Group, Chatham House, etc.,)
3. International NGOs (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.,)
5. US State Department
6. The White House
7. US Congress
8. Embassy of Yemen
10. C-SPAN
11. Reuters

- Front Cover Image 1 (Houthi Child Recruit)
  Source: http://24.ae/article.aspx?ArticleId=137040

- Front Cover Image 2 (Houthi Protest with burning of US and Israeli Flags)

- Front Cover Image 3 (Houthi Soldiers)
  Source: http://gulf-yemen.net/news-1035.html

- Back Cover Image 1 (Houthi Militias)
  Source: https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-03-25/if-yemens-houthis-werent-iranian-proxies-they-could-be-soon

- Back Cover Image 2 (American Syndicated Columnist Dr. Charles Krauthammer)
  Source: http://www.azquotes.com/quote/831419

- Back Cover Image 3 (Houthis Followers Displaying Poster Connecting Photos of Shiite Leaders in Yemen, Iran and Lebanon in the following sequence)
  1. Abdulmalik Al-Houthi – Current Leader of Houthis (“Ansar Allah”)
  2. Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini – Deceased Leader of Iranian Islamic Revolution
  3. Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi – Deceased Founder of Houthi Movement
  4. Hassan Nasrallah – Leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon
  Source: http://www.islamist-movements.com/39413
The Houthi have local religious grievances, being Shiites in a majority Sunni land. But they are also agents of Shiite Iran, which arms, trains, and advises them. Their slogan - 'God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel' - could have been written in Persian.

— Charles Krauthammer —