

# Repercussions of Coronavirus in Yemen ...

## Another War

### Case Analysis

### Political Analysis Unit

April 2020

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
First: The Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on War and Politics .....	4
Secondly: The impact of Coronavirus on the public health system and humanitarian situation in Yemen .....	11
Third: The Economic Situation .....	16
Conclusion and Recommendations .....	23
Margins .....	25

## Introduction

Since the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19) in the world countries, the Yemeni people have been following with a mixture of interest and fear as they do not have means to fight the virus, which is spreading speedily throughout the world and affecting even developed countries which have strong health systems.

Yemen remained free of any infected cases during the past months, but it was only a matter of time before the first case was registered in Hadramout, in the south of the country, on April 9, 2020. This case puts the country in the face of health, economic and humanitarian catastrophe, besides the suffering from war that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Yemenis, displaced millions and put the health system in a very bad situation.

It is clear that neighboring countries of Yemen are suffering from the outbreak of the Coronavirus in a way that make Yemenis worry, especially as the dilapidated health system in Yemen is unable to withstand any new pandemic in light of the current war and multiple epidemics that the country is suffering. In November 2019, the World Health Organization said it had received from field monitoring teams in Yemen more than 78,000 reports of 28 deadly diseases, including cholera, dengue, haemorrhagic viral, measles, whooping cough and polio". Most of them are epidemic diseases that the world had already disposed, but they returned to Yemen during the current war.

Yemenis hope from multiple authorities in the country, which witnesses a deteriorating situation at all levels, to activate measures to prevent Coronavirus from entering into the country, as the risks of its spread make the health, political and economic conditions subject to expectations of entire collapse.

Lessons learned from experiences of other countries show that containing the virus spread depends on four factors: health infrastructure, political, security, and media management (particularly controlling the street movement and the kind of information it receives).

According to these factors, this paper discusses possible repercussions and impact of Corona pandemic in Yemen, according to three main axes: military / political, health / humanitarian, and economic.

## First: The Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on War and Politics

Yemen has entered a state of war since September 2014 when the Houthis took control of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, with the support of the remaining military and administrative system of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and toppled the legitimate government that subsequently requested the international community - the Gulf states in particular - to intervene to topple "the coup" and stop its control over the country.

In March 2015, the Saudi-led coalition intervened in support of the government to launch deterrent air strikes against the Houthis. The air raids did not succeed and the Houthis continued to control Sana'a and most of the densely populated northern governorates. During the war, epidemics broke out in the country, making it the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

There has been no significant change in the military map since the beginning of 2018 and the forces remained in their positions in the same fighting fronts until March 2020, when the Houthis took control of the city of Al-Hazm, the center of the strategic Al-Jawf governorate, north of the country, on border with Saudi Arabia, threatening the Yemeni government stronghold in Marib governorate.

The Houthis started military escalation, despite the United Nations peace calls for ceasefire in Yemen in order to fight the Coronavirus. Several changes have made the Corona pandemic an opportunity to reach a peace agreement in the country. In addition, some indicators have made the United Nations and other countries believe that the fight against Coronavirus can be a good opportunity to stop the war in the country. Those indicators include the following:

- **The state of exhaustion of the two conflicting parties due to the prolonged war:** The prolongation of the war and the failure of both conflicting parties to achieve a successful military victory against each other led to pressure from western parties to end the war through compromises. It is also believed that the popular and international pressure to give priority to fighting against Coronavirus may push the two conflicting parties to make concessions in order to achieve progress in the UN-sponsored peace file.

- **UAE Withdrawal:** The UAE began to reduce its participation in the Yemeni war last year via withdrawing its forces in Yemen, which puts Saudi Arabia in a position to bear the high cost of the war alone. This led to less bombing against the Houthis: the coalition air strikes decreased by more than 90%, compared to air strikes in 2015. In recent months, Saudis have hold secret talks with the Houthis with a widespread belief that Saudi Arabia has given the priority to stopping the Houthi ballistic missiles against the Kingdom, not to restoring the legitimacy in Yemen that was the announced purpose of Saudi intervention in Yemen.
- **The Economy Recession:** The Gulf countries suffer from a big economic recession, even before the Coronavirus outbreak, and this status places the Gulf in a compulsory trend to reduce spending on war in Yemen. The Houthis' continued to threaten to attack the energy infrastructure in the Gulf States, pushing them to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to stop the war and enter into negotiations to stop the Houthi threat.
- **The G20 Summit:** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wishes it can put an end to war in Yemen before the G20 Summit (November 2020). But that will not be possible in the near future, so it will seek a long-term truce.



Several changes have made the Corona pandemic an opportunity to achieve a peace agreement, but the parties to the conflict see the pandemic as an opportunity to implement war-related plans or to gain legitimacy to survive

## Exploiting the Pandemic

Local and international parties are taking advantage of the ceasefire and the Coronavirus to implement war-related plans or "legitimacy of survival" as follows:

- **Saudi Arabia /Alliance:** Most observers believe that Saudi Arabia wants to get out of the Yemen's war, and that it may exploit the Corona epidemic as a justification for saving its face. But in all cases, Saudi Arabia will not accept any agreement that ends the war and allows the Houthis to establish "new Hezbollah organization" in the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia may consider the global epidemic an opportunity to improve its reputation due to the ongoing campaign against it in the West, which has prompted many countries to stop selling weapons to Saudi because of pressure from human rights organizations. Therefore, Saudi Arabia has provided assistance to the Yemeni government to tackle the Coronavirus pandemic,<sup>[1]</sup> and has also supported efforts by the World Health Organization to respond to the pandemic with half a billion dollars. The UAE plays a similar role in fighting Corona in Yemen after it agreed to receive Yemeni students coming back from China to stay in its own quarantine headquarters. A number of Yemeni students appeared in videos thanking the UAE and its role in the country, in an attempt by the UAE to improve its reputation inside Yemen after exposing its secret prisons and accusations against it of targeting its allies in the legitimate government.
- **Armed Militias (Houthis in the North / Transitional Council in the South):** The Iran-backed Houthis and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council agree that the Corona epidemic is a good opportunity to get "legitimacy" that can be gained from "citizens' fears from Coronavirus arriving in the country", and preparing to confront it. The Houthis in their areas of control imposed strict preventive measures - bad at the same time - to confront the virus, as people were pushed to stay at home and stop work, which has bad impact on thousands of employees in governmental and private institutions in areas under the control of the Houthis, although salaries are suspended since years. The Houthis also imposed multiple levies on companies and private institutions in most of their areas of control under the pretext of confronting the virus, including mobile phone companies.

The Houthis also confirmed that they would convert football stadiums and hotels to sites for treatment of potential infections, expecting more than two million infections in the first weeks and 70,000 deaths.<sup>[2]</sup> The Houthis also closed the borders of governorates under their control and prevented people from moving to and from areas under the control of the legitimate government.

They detained thousands of travelers in "Rada" area of Al-Bayda governorate in extremely poor humanitarian conditions, without necessary basic needs.<sup>[3]</sup>

The armed group also threatened to bomb international border crossings, if the legitimate government continues to allow travelers to reach into the country.<sup>[4]</sup> The group usually claims that it has its own laboratory to examine suspected cases of Coronavirus.

They usually hold a press conference for a committee they formed to deal with the epidemic. The Houthis try to show their ability to Yemeni people and the international community that they will use their capacity to confront the virus to legitimize themselves. The same thing is related to the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, which has announced a partial curfew in the southern governorates of Yemen, to demonstrate that it is a de facto authority - such as the Houthis - that can impose measures to prevent the virus. The Transitional Council also controlled ambulances and medical supplies,<sup>[5]</sup> provided by the World Health Organization, to deal with the outbreak. The Transitional Council suspended work in a hospital designated by the government as a quarantine hospital.<sup>[6]</sup> The transitional council's leaders were able to hold talks with Martin Griffiths, the international envoy to Yemen, to discuss means of confronting Corona, days after the council announced the partial curfew.<sup>[7]</sup>

- **The Yemeni government:** The internationally recognized government is making efforts to prevent coronavirus. It closed land crossings, seaports and airports and stopped flights to and from Yemen until further notice. The government held meetings and discussed efforts and support from countries and donors to confront any outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic in the governorates under its control. At least one minister has called on the Houthis to form a joint committee to confront the virus,<sup>[8]</sup> but that seems to be difficult, as the Houthis accused the government of refusing to cooperate to confront Corona.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Call for Ceasefire:

On March 25, 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the two parties in Yemen to immediately cease hostilities, focus on a negotiated political settlement, and do everything to counter the possible spread of Coronavirus. Guterres' speech was a general call for ceasefire in most conflict areas, but he chose Yemen from all those countries for several reasons related to reasons mentioned above, which do not exist in other crises around the world. The Yemeni parties received Guterres' invitation with initial approval, but the two parties did not attend any direct or indirect meetings to discuss the expected truce until mid-April 2020.

**Several initiatives and proposals have been submitted by the United Nations and other parties, which can be referred to as follows:**

- **The Coalition and Government:** On April 9, 2020, two weeks after the Houthis sent a missile that was intercepted over Riyadh and the Saudi response with the largest air strikes on Sana'a since years, the coalition announced an unilateral one-week ceasefire. The legitimate government confirmed its commitment to a ceasefire, despite the fact that the government forces were advancing rapidly in Al-Bayda governorate (center of the country) and making clear progress in the "Hailan" mountain in Serwah district, west of Marib. However, the Houthis did not agree to the truce. They considered it a "media and military maneuver by the coalition."<sup>[10]</sup> The announcement by the coalition was the first cessation of hostilities since 2016. It was the first unilateral ceasefire. On contrary, the Houthis mobilized fighters from different areas to the fighting fronts in Al-Bayda and Marib.<sup>[11]</sup>

Although the war strategy for Saudi Arabia since 2015 was to maintain military pressure until victory or forcing the Houthis to sit on negotiations table, the Covid-19 crisis, international pressure and other factors have made Riyadh's position lately turn to multiple options, including giving up war in Yemen.

In late January 2020, when the Houthis invaded and took control of Nehm district (east of Sana'a), a strategic area that links Sanaa / Marib / Al-Jawf,<sup>[12]</sup> reports indicate that the coalition did nothing to halt the Houthis' progress. Moreover, the Saudi Foreign Minister affirmed his country's continued commitment to dialogue with the Houthis after the attack. Despite the Saudi anger with the Houthis attacks on border areas and launching missiles at Saudi, this statement by Saudi Foreign Minister shows a noticeable shift in the kingdom's strategy, which gave the priority to hold talks with the Houthis, not to reducing military losses of the government forces.<sup>[13]</sup>

- **Griffiths proposals:** The UN Envoy's office started to present its proposals for a long-term truce in Yemen to counter Coronavirus and reach a comprehensive peace agreement - as Griffiths says. The office presented three main proposals: The first proposal focuses on a ceasefire throughout Yemen, and the second proposal focuses on the most important humanitarian and economic measures that include the release of prisoners and detainees, the opening of Sana'a International Airport, the payment of salaries for government sector employees, the opening of main highways, and allowing ships loaded with basic commodities to dock in the ports of Hodeidah. The third proposal focuses on the urgent resumption of the political process.<sup>[14]</sup> Griffiths hopes that all parties will adopt his proposals soon,<sup>[15]</sup> but his hopes have been repeatedly broken in Yemen since the signing of the "Stockholm Agreement" (December 2018) between the Houthis and the internationally recognized government, which refers to previous three proposals.

- **Houthi Initiative:** Hours before the Saudi-led Arab coalition announced a unilateral ceasefire, the Houthis said that they had delivered "Griffiths" the group's proposal to stop the war in the country. The initiative stipulates the conditions under which the Houthis will accept a ceasefire. The Houthi proposal consists of three chapters. The first focuses on ending the war. The second focuses on ending what they call it "the blockade"<sup>[16]</sup>, the economic and humanitarian measures and treatments, and a political settlement through the "Yemeni political process". The document provides a list of the group's demands before it accepts the ceasefire in the country. It expresses Houthis special desires and blames the Saudi-led coalition and bears it all the costs of war. Many long-standing Houthi "claims" are repeated. The United Nations has tried to negotiate some of them in previous confidence-building measures, but the new document gives no indication of a possible compromise. The second chapter indicates an extremely important matter for the Houthis. They request that the leadership of the coalition countries open a documentary credit and pay salaries for the coming ten years, until the Yemeni economy recovers. The Houthis also request that the coalition countries commit to compensating all those affected by the war, and to the reconstruction of all buildings that were damaged during war, and [to compensate all those whose homes were bombed by the coalition or its affiliates"]. There is no explanation to whether this includes victims of the Houthi attacks or the buildings destroyed by the Houthis. According to the Houthis' vision, the coalition will be responsible for compensating the owners and workers of factories, companies, institutions, markets, restaurants..etc. In addition to the coalition's commitment to address the "direct and indirect impacts on the Yemeni citizens, support the economy and compensate the wounded, disabled, sick and families of "martyrs" who were killed during the war. Of course, Saudi Arabia and the other coalition members were really ready to pay large sums for post-war reconstruction, but the Houthis' vision was not serious regarding the peace process and fighting against Coronavirus, but rather they provocatively call for a compensation mechanism that is similar to the one that Saddam Hussein presented to Kuwait after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.<sup>[17]</sup>



While the war strategy of Saudi Arabia was a victory or forcing the Houthis to negotiate, the Corona crisis prompted Riyadh to search for other options such as getting out of the war, while the Houthi vision of peace is provocative and is not serious to fight Corona, but rather they presented demands similar to compensations that Saddam Hussein demanded from Kuwait after the Iraq invasion of Kuwait

## **Secondly: The impact of Coronavirus on the public health system and humanitarian situation in Yemen**

From the perspective of the spread of the Corona epidemic in other countries, the virus is very dangerous. Yemen represents a refreshing environment for Coronavirus and there are many factors that may help in spreading out the pandemic with a high average of infections and deaths: a large population (approximately 30 million), a poor health care system, the years-long war that exhausted the population and made the situation the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, and the country's population has become very dependent and unable to live without assistance from outside. Almost 24.1 million depend on foreign assistance and other 14.3 million are in dire need of aid.<sup>[18]</sup> Millions are on the brink of starvation and hundreds of thousands of children suffer from malnutrition and acute malnutrition, which means that the natural immunity to Coronavirus is not sufficient in a war-torn country like Yemen. The country is already suffering from high levels of malnutrition and epidemic diseases such as cholera due to the ongoing war, which increased up to 132 percent last year, compared to 2018. More than 56,000 suspected cases were registered in the first seven weeks of 2020.<sup>[19]</sup> The number is likely to rise further during the rainy season in Yemen that started in April.<sup>[20]</sup>

Yemen confirmed its first case of coronavirus on April 11, 2020 in Hadramawt, southeastern Yemen, the country's largest governorate. United Nations and relief officials believe that the virus is likely to have spread more widely, and that the increase of infections in Saudi Arabia reinforces these doubts.<sup>[21]</sup>

It is difficult to know exactly about Coronavirus in Yemen because of the limited number of testing laboratories and people's fears of reporting. The virus is likely to spread among Yemenis before the authorities realize its existence in the country. The prevalence of the virus is possible due to poor living conditions, lack of personal protective equipment, population density, the difficulty in applying hygiene behaviors and the culture of social distancing in a society that sanctifies the social gatherings and people go to the khat markets every day, making the enforcement of containment measures so difficult.

## Obstacles to Coronavirus fight

- **Infrastructure:** The country's infrastructure was destroyed during five years of conflict, leaving little capacity to respond to dangers like Coronavirus. Only 51% of health centers are operating, and Yemen used to have a weak health system even before the war. A limited number of medicines, medical equipment, personal protective equipment and only three laboratories (in Sana'a, Aden, and Mukalla) are available for testing suspected cases of Coronavirus.
- **High Occupancy in hospitals:** In addition to the fact that the health system in Yemen is very bad, hospitals suffer from stress due to patients of other diseases such as "dengue", "malaria", "cholera" and other diseases. In addition, many injuries due to the ongoing war occupy most of the intensive care beds and operating rooms. At the same time, the newly established centers that were devoted to face the Coronavirus are expected to be filled in the first days in case Coronavirus breaks out, and other sections in hospitals will be opened to receive infected cases, which may cause patients with other diseases to decide not to visit health care facilities over fears of infection with virus.

The doctors and nurses in Yemeni hospitals do not trust the sufficiency of tools that will be handed over to hospitals to prevent the transmission of the virus, so they have fears to be infected as well. In addition, the hospitals suffer from scarcity of doctors because many of them left the country due to the conflict. All these factors may fail preventive measures against Coronavirus.

- **Overcrowding in displacement camps:** following the latest military escalation, the number of displaced people increased and overcrowding in displacement camps has become very dangerous. It is difficult to implement protection measures (social distancing, regular hand-washing and wearing face masks) inside displacement camps where displaced families suffer bad conditions. More than 3.6 million people have been displaced since the beginning of the conflict in 2015. More than the third of them live in overcrowded informal camps that lack for public services, sanitation, personal hygiene tools, so any social distancing is failed.<sup>[22]</sup>
- **Living situation:** the government salaries have been stopped for years, and the living conditions in the country have become worse. Most of people live on daily wages such as construction workers, street vendors, and public transport drivers. They cannot sit at home during curfew measures, because they will be given the choice between "death with Corona or starving to death."<sup>[23]</sup>
- **Authoritarian measures:** The Yemeni government and the Houthis group- in addition to the Southern Transitional Council – carry out contradictory and conflicting measures, due to the lack of coordination between those parties, while the World Health Organization tries to act as a communication channel.
- **Lack of border control:** It is unclear whether the government has the ability to impose border control. Even if this happens, informal smuggling networks, migration and displacement are likely to continue as a result of war and "war economy." Some travelers have said that they have paid money on the Saudi-Yemeni border in order to reach the country, and that they have paid other money to pass through the Houthi detention areas to Sana'a.

Self-isolation measure for all infected people is unlikely, because the carriers of the virus often do not realize that they have been infected with the virus until after two weeks. It is difficult to examine all the returnees to the country or implement a group isolation or individual isolation voluntarily for a long period due to lack of capabilities and Yemenis focus on the priority of finding livelihood.

- **Hostile propaganda:** The Houthis - specifically – continue to broadcast propaganda that Saudi Arabia and the government are seeking to spread the virus in the group-controlled areas and hold the Houthis accountable.<sup>[24]</sup> The Houthis also circulate rumors against humanitarian assistances and claim that the international community tries to transform the virus into Yemen.<sup>[25]</sup> Humanitarian workers face a bad response in the local media and social media, which causes a decrease in community acceptance of foreign workers, so that international organizations will not able to send doctors or continue to provide medical and humanitarian assistance to Yemen in case Corona pandemic breaks out. The Houthis also imposed severe restrictions on humanitarian operations, making it difficult for any humanitarian aid workers to move freely. On April 16, 2020, the Houthis sent a letter accusing the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Liz Grande, of covering up three workers infected with the virus. The group banned the movement of aid workers between cities under their control.<sup>[26]</sup> There are other rumors about the virus. Preliminary indications say that more than 300 active rumors are widespread.<sup>[27]</sup> These rumors affect people and overwhelm health facilities. Besides, several hospitals refused to receive people with asthma. A four-year-old girl was denied to treatment in several hospitals in Aden because they suspected she had coronavirus. The girl died and then it was found out that she was not infected with the virus.<sup>[28]</sup> Another patient with asthma and diabetes died after arriving at Al-Thawra Hospital in Sanaa after doctors refused to check him. Another case of death in Sanaa was a person who died in his private residence after suffering from asthma. The neighbors refused to reach him for help out of fears from Corona, and a few days later, a special unit formed by the Houthis arrived in the house, but the man had died.<sup>[29]</sup>

Accordingly, the authorities in the country are resorting to measures in an attempt to slow or prevent the spread of the pandemic, as part of preventive measures imposed by the countries of the region against Coronavirus, including curfew and closing their borders in an attempt to contain the virus in March 2020. In the same month, the internationally recognized government and the armed Houthi group began early steps to confront the virus. The internationally recognized government closed the land borders and stopped flights to and from the airports of Sayyun, Aden and Mukalla. The Houthis suspended “mercy” flights to evacuate the sick and wounded people, just weeks after they began, and imposed strict measures on the United Nations flights. Universities and schools were closed in all governorates, and the government announced the suspension of Friday sermons in mosques, while the Houthis closed the land borders with other governorates under the government control.



Yemen lacks for personal protection tools, most of which were leaked to black market dealers while Coronavirus threatens food security in the country. Heads of companies and factories directors said that they would stop working in case the pandemic breaks out, demand declines and import stopped

### **Countering Coronavirus:**

Yemen has a very weak health infrastructure. The country is operating with half of its capacity of hospitals and health centers, and most of health workers are not qualified enough. Almost 53% of the operating health facilities do not have resident doctors and 45% of those facilities do not have specialists.

The number of health workers is estimated at 10 health workers per 10,000 people, lower than the minimum standard number set by WHO, 41 health workers per 10000 people.<sup>[30]</sup> In addition, a large number of health equipment do not operate and many health workers do not work because they are unpaid since years. The Houthis say that 93% of health equipment in the country do not start well.

To counter the Coronavirus, health authorities in major cities need at least one specialized laboratory for testing the virus infections in each city. By the end of March 2020, Yemen had only three facilities in Sana'a, Aden and Mukalla under the supervision of the World Health Organization that provided the three centers with hundreds of testing solutions, but the centers may need tens of thousands of testing solutions in the next few weeks, as well as beds and oxygen tubes. The country lacks for clean drinking water, and sanitation systems that operate regularly, which creates a major problem with individual hygiene that can help in reducing the outbreak of the virus. So there is still a lot to be prepared to counter the pandemic.

Yemen is supposed to have currently a stockpile of personal protective equipment against the Corona virus, but it will not be sufficient at all. It is also difficult at the present time to find scanners, thermometers, oxygen devices and other protective measures, as most of this stockpile has been taken outside the country via black market dealers, although the country is in an urgent need for it.<sup>[31]</sup> The pressure on the Yemeni health system is increasing even if it receives some support, because the country lacks for real authorities that are able to preserve the medical equipment to be granted by international organizations (as a result of the increasing demand), but unfortunately the armed militias, in north and south, will sell them to other countries.

### Third: The Economic Situation

The country's economy collapsed during war, according to official estimates, and Yemen lost fifty billion dollars during the period (2015-2019).<sup>[32]</sup> The World Bank estimates that Yemen's GDP has shrunk by nearly 50% since 2014.

In the first quarter of 2020, the economic predictions indicate that total economic conditions are likely to continue to deteriorate.<sup>[33]</sup>

It is difficult for the authorities and researchers to estimate the size of the economic losses in light of the current situation of the conflict and the parallel “war economy” activity, which seems to be a great driver of the economy in the country. But according to the study of epidemics in multiple times and regions, many areas will be critically affected.

### • **Food Security:**

The country has been in war for years and that has already affected food security as 80-90% of Yemen’s needs depend on imports. The food security situation is worsening due to the lack of humanitarian access to people who are in urgent need of food assistance, as well as the lack of funding as some donors stopped funding.

The crisis of Corona pandemic outbreak around the world will affect Yemen significantly for a long term due to the possible impact of Corona crisis on the supply chains and financial markets in other countries. Consequently, disturbances of external chains of supply beginning with wheat fields in Ukraine, and other places, can lead to a significant shortage of imports that will significantly affect "food security" in poor countries like Yemen.

The high levels of sovereign debts will hinder the governments’ ability to spend on stimulus plans that may help the economy during the next troublesome months and years.<sup>[34]</sup> At the same time, it will be difficult to get supporting funds from the Gulf countries due to the economic recession and the decline in oil prices. Researches on previous epidemics also indicate that the economic growth in the poor countries may suffer long-term negative effects, as what happened during Ebola crisis.<sup>[35]</sup> In addition to losses in other sectors, including agriculture and fishing sectors, which employ more than 54% of the workforce in rural areas. The agriculture sector severely constrained with the lack of agricultural savings such as feed and other basic commodities.<sup>[36]</sup>

The short-term threats include production reduction, price hikes and loss of income. Prices of food and other basic items are likely to rise because of the increasing demands and restricted movement of commodities at local levels. The low-income families are unable to store goods for quarantine period and cannot apply social distancing. Tens of workers in Sana'a and Aden told Abaad that they would not be able to leave factories and companies where they get low daily wages for their families, because they said that would be a slow killing for them and their families.<sup>[37]</sup>

The Yemeni sea and land ports did not stop letting the trade movement pass through into the country, as it is difficult to stop this traffic due to the urgent needs of the country, which will increase the coming period, despite the possible risks of Coronavirus spreading in the country through these outlets.

At the same time, it is difficult to distribute imports across the country, as some markets, shops, and local businesses in some areas are already closed in an attempt to prevent the virus spread, which negatively affects the livelihoods of Yemenis amid faltering economy and increasing food insecurity.

The Yemeni government, the Houthis, and the Southern Transitional Council impose contradictory measures that further restrict movement between the north and south of the country, and each party is trying to impose control over the population and the economy in areas under its control.<sup>[38]</sup> This has led to the emergence of two parallel economies and two values of the Yemeni currency after the Houthis stopped dealing with the new issuance of Yemeni currency in areas under their control. This resulted in an increase in the value of remittances fees from regions under the control of the legitimate government to regions under the Houthis control more than 10% of the transferred amount.<sup>[39]</sup> The rapid and uncontrolled depreciation of the currency was a major factor pushing Yemen to the brink of starvation, 18 months ago. The World Bank warns that a similar risk of currency collapse may continue.<sup>[40]</sup>

### • **Businesses retreat:**

As in most cases related to the spread of epidemics, communications and the Internet will be revitalized in the country, as some companies will be reducing the number of employees and depend on working from home.

The demand for sterilizers, disinfectants and detergents has also increased dramatically. So the price of masks and sterilizers increased up to 700%. The reopening of the Textile Factory in Sana'a to produce masks could cover the market demands after a state of panic that accompanied the beginning of measures to prevent Corona outbreak. But the Houthis nevertheless sell these masks to the people with double price and use the revenues for war.

At the same time, small and medium enterprises such as restaurants and bakeries have started to suffer because the people's fears of the virus spread resulted in a significant decline in demand. Three restaurant owners and three bakeries and deserts shops in Sana'a said that demand declined between (50-62%) during March 2020, mainly due to what they believe to be the stopping of employees from work and the closure of schools, in addition to the community's concerns about the spread of Coronavirus through eating meals from restaurants or plastic bags being used in bakeries.

Companies and factories will be forced to close if pandemic breaks out in the country. Heads of three companies and directors of two factories in Sanaa and Taiz said that they would stop working if there is a Corona spread because they said demand would decrease and imports would stop. The heads of companies, owners of restaurants and bakeries, and one factory manager also said that if the situation is getting worse by the end of April 2020, they will impose annual leave for employees during the recession or will give the employees leave without payment. One factory manager in Taiz said that the Board of Directors approved the payment of salaries even if work was suspended due to the pandemic outbreak. This means that most companies and factories will close their doors and hundreds of thousands of workers and their families will have not necessary income during the outbreak of the virus.<sup>[41]</sup>

Another sector that has been affected is the transportation sector because of restrictions, especially the Yemeni airlines, which has suspended most of flights, except some flights to evacuate stranded Yemeni citizens in some countries.

The vehicles movement between governorates is interrupted by procedures the Houthi group imposed to prevent Corona spread, as they said. These measures in general could increase dramatically if Corona breaks out in the country.

## • Yemeni Migrant Workers:

Yemeni migrants abroad are likely to face more challenges in securing income for their families inside the country. The flow of remittances to Yemen is an essential source of income for hundreds of thousands of Yemeni families trapped in the war. Most of expatriates, who have suspended their jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia, the first country to embrace Yemeni expatriates, agree that they cannot work, and that they were suspended without payment, except for meals, and that they will not be able to send money to their families in Yemen. Some landlords in Saudi Arabia have exempted Yemeni expatriates from paying rents during the suspension period, while others have refused to do, leaving Yemenis in a very bad position.<sup>[42]</sup>

According to the World Bank report (2019), remittances of Yemeni expatriates to Yemen are the first source of hard currency in the country, amounting to \$ 2.9 billion, in 2018, a 34% decrease from 2017.<sup>[43]</sup> The report attributed this to "procedures for resettling jobs in Saudi Arabia and fees imposed on residents." However, expatriates remittances still account for more than 12% of GDP. Remittances from expatriates during the crisis months are expected to drop to 70%, according to United Nations estimates,<sup>[44]</sup> which pushes the country to an unknown situation that may quickly rush into famine. This will directly affect the families, as well as the value of the Yemeni currency.

## • Low oil production:

Yemen's oil sector is operating at low rates close to 10% of what it was before the war, and oil exports are suspended due to the continuous tension between the Yemeni government and the United Arab Emirates. Unofficial estimates indicate that Yemen lost more than five billion dollars over the past five years because of the interruption of oil and gas exports. Almost 10 international companies, operating in oil and gas sector, left Yemen in early 2015,

and tens of local companies operating in oil sector and other economic sectors were stopped.<sup>[45]</sup> Yemen plans to export 30 million barrels of oil during 2020,<sup>[46]</sup> more than exports in 2019 that reached 17.5 million barrels. But the decline in global oil prices, 20-22 dollars per a barrel, will affect the government's plans to obtain high revenues to reduce the deficit in its budget. With this low price of oil, the Yemeni budget deficit will increase and the government will not be able to pay salaries of employees in areas under its control. The value of local currency will also witness a decrease due to decline in the main financing sources (expatriates remittances, oil exports, foreign aid).

This situation will also have bad impact on the ability of the Central Bank of Yemen, which is being run by the legitimate government, to provide hard currency to cover importing needs, which means hyperinflation in the value of all goods and more pressure on the banking sector, which will be in a bad situation due to decline in the main financing sources.

### • **Foreign Aid Reduction:**

The humanitarian crisis was exacerbated in 2019 when the Houthis imposed special and unexpected demands on humanitarian organizations throughout 2019, such as tax of 2% of any project's budget, restrictions on visa and delay in approving projects, which makes the implementation of humanitarian programs in areas under the Houthis control so difficult. The Houthis stopped taking tax in early 2020, after donors and international organizations threatened to suspend assistance to Yemen. But the United States has continued with plans to cut funding in the Houthi regions.

The United States provided more than \$ 700 million in aid to Yemen in 2019, but some estimates indicate that the United States will suspend more than \$ 200 million. Some reports say that the suspension of US funding to Yemen could worsen the international response to cholera: "It is said that planned cholera response activities will stop in March through June 2020 in Ibb, Taiz and Hodeidah due to the US decision to freeze funding from April 2020, unless the Houthis lift restrictions on assistances."<sup>[47]</sup>

The United Nations has spoken of stopping 31 out of 41 aid programs in Yemen, if it does not receive related funding. The United Nations estimates that it needs \$ 900 million until the end of July 2020. The providing humanitarian funding to Yemen is not binding for donors. In light of the Coronavirus spread and the economic recession in countries that have pledged to finance humanitarian operations in Yemen, may force them to refrain from financing the programs.

This means that up to one million displaced people will not receive essential supplies - including hygiene items that help protect against diseases such as cholera and Corona. The nutrition programs will also be stopped, which will affect 260,000 severely malnourished children and two million children with moderate malnutrition.

The nutrition programs suspension will weaken the immune systems of children, making them more susceptible to Coronavirus, Cholera and other diseases and epidemics. People who have corona may not find enough clinics to help them. The World Health Organization estimates that 80 percent of health services being provided to Yemen may stop at the end of April 2020. This means resolving the local health teams that were necessary in detecting and containing the outbreak of previous diseases. The need for these teams to tackle the Corona pandemic is increasing as the risk of Corona outbreak is still possible during rainy season.<sup>[48]</sup>



Yemeni migrant workers abroad face challenges in securing income, which further reduces the flow of remittances to Yemen, an essential source of income for hundreds of thousands of Yemeni families who are trapped in the war

## Conclusion and Recommendations:

**1- In politics and war,** Yemen does not only need a temporary truce, but also needs a complete cessation of war as long as Yemen faces a common threat of Corona that threatens all Yemenis. It is possible to begin with a temporary truce for several months to devote efforts to confront Corona and its expected catastrophic consequences. This step will only be achieved through concessions from the two parties of the war to reach a final formula that gives priority for health services and the economic development through forming joint specialized committees that manage these files. The priority in forming committees should be given to parliamentary committees and technical and logistical support offices to realize the purpose. All these committees and offices should be connected to a joint operations room with the supportive Gulf States and donor organizations, especially the United Nations.

**2- To reduce the health consequences:** The two parties of conflict, in their control areas, should update the Infection Prevention Protocols, with regarding the commitment of the people to international virus prevention measures and strictly following them at all levels of health services, focusing mainly on emergency departments and outpatient clinics. The suspected cases of infection must be subjected to strict surveillance, and must be immediately reported to the concerned organizations.

It is also a priority to neutralize the health sector from the parties of the conflict, start paying the salaries of health sector employees, improve the services of government hospitals and set up quarantine camps in each governorate with opening the opportunity to volunteers from students of the College of Medicine and Nursing as well as health workers and even doctors and specialists from outside Yemen. It is possible to establish a neutral body with an epidemiological monitoring office in every governorate, and working teams to fight the pandemic to be managed by the World Health Organization with a specialized Yemeni advisory team to be nominated by all parties.

Opening the door for donations from merchants, businessmen, relief organizations and charitable bodies is necessary. The World Health Organization and international organizations should provide DNA screening tools, respirators and safety tools for health workers.

Yemenis need to open multiple laboratories in each governorate to manufacture personal safety tools in accordance with international standards, especially masks and sterilizers. They also need effective awareness campaign on how to avoid infection with the virus and preventing its spread, not to be dragged by rumors about the disease.

**3- On the Economic Side:** The priority of food security will be through paying salaries of the state employees, securing food and health supplies, imposing control on the health materials markets and filling the black holes that devour the public funds through controlling the purchases of oil derivatives, operating the Aden refineries and the Marib Gas Power Station, reproducing oil and gas, and fighting the “war economy” and corruption through joint committees under international supervision, especially with regard to the State’s revenues such as oil, customs and taxes, and ensuring that they are fully transferred to the Central Bank of Yemen.

It is important to invite all international organizations, including the United Nations organizations to transfer funds related to Yemen to the Central Bank of Yemen and exercising banking affairs through it in order to improve the status of the Yemeni riyal in front of other currencies. It is also important to use the new issuance of local currency for buying cooking gas and paying the value of documentary credits in return for paying salaries to all employees throughout the republic and ending the crisis and negative consequences resulted from the Houthis procedures to prevent the new currency in areas under their control.

## Margins:

[1] Proactive Saudi supplies arrive in Aden

<https://aawsat.com/home/article/2196131/%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%86>

[2] Speech by a Houthi official on behalf of the Houthis in the Sana'a Parliament, which is not recognized internationally, on 4/4/2020 was seen on 4/18/2020 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiXa7oh1fSg>

[3] Health Hazards Confront Yemenis Held in 'Quarantine' by Houthis in Al-Bayda <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/2193251/health-hazards-confront-yemenis-held-%E2%80%98quarantine%E2%80%99-houthis-al-bayda>

[4] Houthis threaten to bomb ports if not closed by the Yemeni government <https://debriefer.net/news-16358.html>

[5] Gunmen affiliated with the "Transitional" storm the port of Aden and loot nine ambulances provided by the World Health Organization to confront Corona <https://almasdaronline.com/articles/179774>

[6] A leader in the Transitional Council stops the construction of a quarantine for Corona virus in the "Al-Amal" Hospital, west of Aden <https://almasdaronline.com/articles/179421>

[7] Al-Zubaidi and Griffiths discuss solving the Yemeni crisis and fighting "Corona" <https://ea-news.net/arabicworld/56272/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AB-%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85/>

[8] A minister in the Hadi government calls for uniting efforts to confront the Corona epidemic with the Houthis

<https://almahrahpost.com/news/15743>

[9] A speech by a Houthi official on behalf of the Houthis in the Sana'a Parliament, which is not recognized internationally, previous source.

[10] Health workers' worst fears confirmed as Covid-19 reaches war-torn Yemen <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/10/yemen-confirms-first-coronavirus-case-war-torn-country>

[11] The third day of truce in Yemen... Houthis mobilizing fighters with the absence of "coalition aircrafts" <http://www.yemenmonitor.com/Details/ArtMID/908/ArticleID/36848>

[12] Border and Oil War: Improving Conditions for Negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, Abaad Center for Studies 3/3/2020

Arabic: <https://abaadstudies.org/news-59832.html>

English: <https://abaadstudies.org/news-59833.html>

[13] A Gulf diplomat spoke to a researcher in Abaad Center on April 2, 2020 via phone

[14] Griffiths speech at a Security Council meeting on 4/16/2020 can be found at: <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/ar/%D8%A5%D8%AD%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AB-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%86-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AB-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-0>

[15] Previous source

[16] In reference to the United Nations verification and inspection mechanism, established by Security Council Resolution 2216 and its headquarters in Djibouti

[17] Houthis Release Their Wish List for Ending the Yemen War <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/houthis-release-their-wish-list-for-ending-the-yemen-war>

[18] A recent report on the United Nations can be found at: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/yemen/>

[19] Rainy season threatens huge cholera spike in Yemen as conflict hampers efforts to address forgotten crisis <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/rainy-season-threatens-huge-cholera-spike-yemen-conflict-hampers-efforts-address>

[20] Warnings of Mark Lowcock, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, 4/6/2020, followed by Abaad researcher directly

[21] Yemen: The Perfect Target for COVID-19 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/10/yemen-coronavirus-perfect-target-risk>

[22] Report published by ACAPS, 07/04/2020, nonprofit project of the Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children that publishes forecasts on the world's most vulnerable communities.

[23] Corona response measures concern Yemeni "livelihoods" (special report) <http://www.yemenmonitor.com/Details/ArtMID/908/ArticleID/36756>

[24]The Houthis accused the coalition of dropping used "masks" for people with Coronavirus in Al Mahweet Governorate. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the group's leader, directly attacked Saudi Arabia and the United States, accusing it of trying to spread the virus in Yemen.

See: Al-Houthi accuses Washington of making Corona ... the coalition is the cause of any outbreak

<https://arabi21.com/story/1253309/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%A8-%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%B4>

And the Houthi group claims that the coalition dropped "masks" contaminated by the Corona virus <https://theyemen.net/%d8%ac%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%88%d8%ab%d9%8a-%d8%aa%d8%b2%d8%b9%d9%85-%d8%a3%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%81-%d8%a3%d8%b3%d9%82%d8%b7-%d9%83%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%85/>

[25] Multiple reports have accused foreigners arriving in the country of being infected with the Coronavirus in February 2020, visit: <https://radaarnews.com/32287>

[26] The text of a message seen by a researcher from Abaad

[27] Previous source

[28]Special "Al-Nahar" - the journey of torment of child Hana ... as she spent at the doors of hospitals in Aden <https://www.annahar.com/article/1160260-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%81%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%87%D9%83%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A-A%D8%B4%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%86>

[29] Residents and a security source spoke to the "Abaad Center". The unit, after examining an Abaad researcher, said that he did not have corona but rather asthma and acute inflammation in the lungs.

[30] HEALTH WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/250330/9789241511407-eng.pdf>

[31] A businessman selling medical equipment in Sanaa spoke to a researcher in Abaad Center on April 1, 2020

[32] The Yemeni economic scene after 4 years since the “Decisive Storm” <https://arabic.rt.com/business/1009415-%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%AF%D9%88-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-4-%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D9%85/>

[33] Previous source: [acaps.org](http://acaps.org)

[34] The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Arab World: Impact, Politics, and Mitigation [http://arabcenterdc.org/policy\\_analyses/the-coronavirus-pandemic-and-the-arab-world-impact-politics-and-mitigation/](http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/the-coronavirus-pandemic-and-the-arab-world-impact-politics-and-mitigation/)

[35] Previous source, or you can read this:

Pandemics: Risks, Impacts, and Mitigation <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525302/>

[36] The Yemeni economic scene after four years of “Decisive Storm”- previous source

[37] The Abaad Monitoring Unit polled 20 people between 25 March 2020 and 10 April 2020 in Sana'a and Aden, including "factory workers, porters in the port of Aden, construction workers, bus and taxi drivers."

[38] Yemen: An overview of food security in 2019 (WFP Feb 2020)

<https://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/yemen-overview-of-food-security-in-2019-feb-2020>

[39] Money transfer fees are a worsening disaster affecting Yemenis amid a financial war between the Houthis and the government (special report)

<https://theyemen.net/%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AA/>

[40] Mark Lowcock, previous source

[41] The managers of companies and factories spoke to a researcher in Abaad via phone call and WhatsApp application (10-15 April 2020). They spoke on condition of anonymity.

[42] Eleven workers at "restaurants, factories, greenhouses, and professions such as carpentry and construction" spoke to Abaad Center researcher through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger on (12-15 April 2020). Most of them live in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia without their families, who depend on what they transfer to survive.

[43] YEMENE economic Monitoring Brief 2019

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/161721552490437049/pdf/135266-YemEconDevBrief-Winter-2019-English-12-Mar-19.pdf>

[44] Mark Lowcock, former source

[45] UAE occupies nine economic sites in Yemen: revenue destruction <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/economy/2019/11/1/%D8%A7%D9%>

[46] Statement by the Yemeni Minister of Oil in the internationally recognized government <https://www.alittihad.ae/article/8034/2020/%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83-%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B7-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B2>

[47] Foreign Policy, previous source

[48] Reports: OCHA, UNICEF, World Food Program, WHO. In addition to the speech of the United Nations' Humanitarian Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, at the Security Council session on Yemen on April 16, 2020.



مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث

**Abaad Studies & Research Center**



[telegram.me/abaadstudies](https://t.me/abaadstudies)



[@abaadstudies](https://twitter.com/abaadstudies)



[Abaad Studies & Research Center](https://www.facebook.com/abaadstudies)



[AbaadStudiesYemen](https://www.youtube.com/abaadstudies)



[abaadstudies@gmail.com](mailto:abaadstudies@gmail.com)  
[info@abaadstudies.org](mailto:info@abaadstudies.org)

[www.abaadstudies.org](http://www.abaadstudies.org)

**Abaad Studies & Research Center (Abaad) is a non-profit organization that has a license from Yemen's Social Affairs Ministry No. (436) issued on October 18 2010.**

**focuses on politics, intellect, democracy, election, political parties, terrorism, freedoms as well as economic and social issues.**