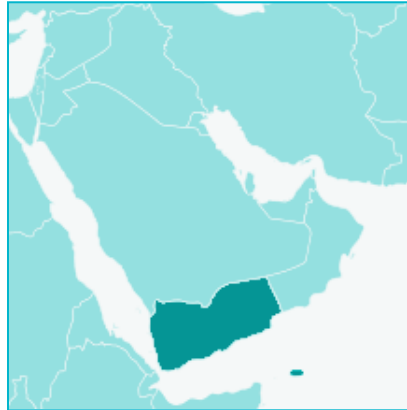


# The Civil War in Yemen: Untangling a Humanitarian Crisis

Created by Jack Gasdia  
*Secure Communities Group*

*Last updated: June 22, 2023*



In this important case study on the civil war in Yemen, middle school, high school, and college educators can teach their students about the history of the conflict in Yemen, including important events that have taken place in this region from before the fall of the Ottoman Empire to this past year's temporary truce. Second, a glossary enables students to become more familiar with important historical figures, places, and terms. In the third part of the case study, we provide “Confidential Instructions” for six characters who will take part in the negotiation exercise, so that educators can divide their classes into six groups of students, with each group working together to negotiate an end to the conflict, or at least achieve a temporary ceasefire.

---

## Table of Contents

Six Characters	2
Three Critical Issues	2
Rules of Engagement	3
Confidential Instructions for [1]	4
Confidential Instructions for [2]	5
Confidential Instructions for [3]	6
Confidential Instructions for [4]	7
Confidential Instructions for [5]	8
Confidential Instructions for [6]	9

---

Secure Communities



Group

---

**Six Characters**

1. Mahdi al-Mashat, Chair of the Supreme Political Council (Houthi)
2. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran
3. Hans Grundberg, United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen
4. Aidrous al-Zoubaidi, President of the Southern Transition Council
5. Faisal bin Farhan as-Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
6. Rashad al-Alimi, Chair of the Presidential Leadership Council (Hadi)

**Three Critical Issues to be Negotiated:**

1. Civilian Infrastructure
2. Governance
3. Humanitarian Assistance



In the 6-character role-play exercise, each person or small group will receive *only* the confidential instructions regarding the character whose role they will assume. Educators, as negotiation facilitators, encourage students to play the roles of their characters, even if they might not agree personally with the character's beliefs, teaching participants to 'walk in the shoe' of others.

This live, case-study-based negotiation and conflict resolution pedagogy is what we call an 'intellectual Outward Bound, role-play-based, conflict resolution simulation exercise.' Each case study includes 6 characters and 3 issues to be discussed by those characters during negotiations. This is based on our theory of 'triangulation' in conflict resolution.

---



---

## Rules of Engagement

### SETUP

- Set up six tables in the room to serve as ‘negotiation pods’ to be used during the negotiation rounds. Place the ‘Confidential Instructions’ for each of the Characters on the 6 different tables.
- To form the teams, assign each participant to one of the Characters and lead them to their appropriate Table to review their “Confidential Instructions.”

### GAMEPLAY

#### *Summary Statements*

- Each team has 15 minutes to understand their Character and formulate a concise Summary Statement, focusing on their Character’s stances on the 3 issues.
  - To extend the 15-minute discussion time, the majority of participants must agree.
- Each team selects a representative to deliver a 2-minute introduction of their Character and their stances on the three issues. Presentations occur sequentially in the order listed above. All other Characters’ representatives are encouraged to take notes during these presentations.

#### *Negotiation Rounds*

##### Rounds 1-5

- In the first series of negotiations, each team of two characters debates all three issues simultaneously. 5 different rounds of negotiations are necessary so that each Character is able to meet with the five other teams for 15 minutes apiece, in the following pairings:
  - *Round 1:* Pairings are Character 1 with Character 2; 3 with 4; and 5 with 6.
  - *Round 2:* Shifting to the right, pairings become 1 with 3; 2 with 5; and 4 with 6.
  - *Round 3:* Continuing to shift, pairings are now 1 with 4; 2 with 6; and 3 with 5.
  - *Round 4:* With another shift, pairings change to 1 with 5; 2 with 4; and 3 with 6.
  - *Round 5:* Finally, in the last round, pairings are 1 with 6; 2 with 3; and 4 with 5.
- If agreement on an issue seems unreachable, the 2 negotiating Characters can transition to another issue, to make the most of your time.

##### Round 6

- For Round 6, the three Tables will focus on Issue A (at Table 1); B (at Table 1); and C (at Table 3). Each team must send one-third of its members to each of these Tables.
  - Each Table must engage in issue-focused debates.

#### *Recommendation Statements*

- Each Table must have a secretary to take notes, who will write a 150-word Recommendation Statement on only the Table’s issue, stating the action that should be taken.

### CONCLUSION

- The three Recommendation Statements will be consolidated into one 450-word Treaty, which becomes the final negotiated settlement. The simulation ends when a Treaty is successfully adopted and signed by all members of the six Character teams.
-

---

**Confidential Instructions for [1]  
Mahdi al-Mashat, Chair of the Supreme Political Council (Houthi)**



**“If the aggression coalition, with America behind it, thinks of resuming military confrontations and obstructing peace steps, Yemen’s hand is the longest and strongest.” - Mahdi al-Mashat**

*Born in 1986 in Sa’dah, Yemen, you eventually became one of the leading figures in the Houthi movement. Your early life was influenced by the Houthi struggle against the Yemeni government, with the Houthi movement originating in Sa’dah. Since assuming the presidency of the Supreme Political Council in 2018, you steer the course of areas of Yemen under Houthi control. Amid the civil war, you resolutely advocate for the rights of your people, their representation in a post-conflict government, and an immediate end to foreign military intervention.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Highlight the need for infrastructure rebuilding in Houthi-controlled territories.
- Demand an end to airstrikes and the naval blockade, for these actions’ impact on infrastructure.
- Support international funding and aid to restore essential services in Houthi-controlled areas.

#### *2. Governance*

- Assert the legitimacy of the Houthi-led Supreme Political Council in areas under their control.
- Declare the necessity of including Houthi representation in any future governance structure.
- Advocate for an inclusive peace process to ensure fair distribution of power and resources.

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Highlight the critical need for humanitarian assistance, given food insecurity and disease.
- Demand the lifting of the naval blockade, which has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Advocate for international delivery of life-saving assistance, food, and water to affected areas.

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- Recognition of the Houthis’ political presence and role in any governance model for Yemen.
- An immediate end to foreign military intervention, including coalition airstrikes and blockades.
- Recognition of the severe humanitarian crisis and the imperative to address it immediately.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Power-sharing with other political factions in a post-conflict Yemen.
  - Specific monitoring mechanisms for a potential ceasefire.
  - Details on the coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-

---

**Confidential Instructions for [2]  
Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran**



**“[Iran] will continue to resist and negotiate until reaching an agreement that provides the rights of all Yemeni people. Our other demands included ending aggression, the full end of the siege.” - Hossen Amir-Abdollahian**

*Born in 1964 in Damghan, Iran, you rose to become an influential figure in the Iranian political arena, particularly in matters related to foreign policy. Your career, deeply embedded in the philosophy of the Islamic Republic, has seen you hold significant posts, most notably your current role as Foreign Minister. Instrumental in shaping Iran’s stance towards the conflict in Yemen, you have maintained a staunch call for an end to the aggression and emphasize the importance of dialogue, humanitarian relief, and Yemeni-Yemeni negotiation as pivotal in finding a resolution.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Highlight the urgent need for rebuilding infrastructure, especially in the most-affected areas.
- Call for an end to foreign military interventions, including the Saudi-led naval blockade.
- Support international funding and aid for restoring essential services across all regions of Yemen.

#### *2. Governance*

- Assert the necessity of a Yemeni-led dialogue in shaping the future governance of Yemen.
- Insist on the inclusion of all Yemeni factions in any future governance structure.
- Advocate for an inclusive peace process to ensure fair distribution of power and resources.

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Emphasize the pressing need for humanitarian assistance, given severe food and water insecurity.
- Call for the lifting of blockades, which have significantly hampered humanitarian aid delivery.
- Advocate for international delivery of life-saving assistance, food, and water to all of Yemen.

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- Recognition of the principle of self-determination for all Yemeni factions.
- An immediate end to foreign military interventions.
- Acknowledgment of the severe humanitarian crisis and the imperative to address it immediately.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Support of a power-sharing agreement among different Yemeni factions.
  - Acceptance of specific monitoring mechanisms for any potential ceasefire.
  - Agreement on the coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-

---

**Confidential Instructions for [3]  
Hans Grundberg, United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen**



**“With sustained determination from the Yemeni parties, supported by a coordinated international community, I believe outstanding issues can be resolved.” - Hans Grundberg**

*Born in 1977 in Sweden, you have devoted your career to diplomacy. Your dedication to international relations and conflict resolution has seen you ascend to one of the most significant roles within today's UN: Special Envoy for Yemen. A seasoned diplomat, you utilize your extensive experience to mediate in the Yemen conflict, striving tirelessly to foster peace and unity. Recognizing the urgent need for humanitarian aid and the cessation of hostilities, you seek to bring all parties to the negotiating table, advocating for a political solution that respects the rights and aspirations of all Yemenis.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Highlight the need for infrastructure rebuilding in all areas of Yemen.
- Demand an end to airstrikes and the naval blockade, for these actions' impact on infrastructure.
- Support international funding and aid to restore essential services, like water and electricity.

#### *2. Governance*

- Support a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned inclusive political process.
- Encourage dialogue that includes all parties to the conflict in any future governance structure.
- Champion a fair and equitable peace process ensuring a just distribution of power and resources.

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Highlight the critical need for humanitarian assistance, given food insecurity and disease.
- Demand the lifting of the naval blockade, which has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Advocate for international delivery of life-saving assistance, food and water to affected areas.

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- Respect for international law and human rights.
- Cessation of hostilities and an end to any actions exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.
- Recognition of the humanitarian crisis and the international community's duty to address it.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Nature of the governance structure that will emerge from the peace process.
  - Specific mechanisms for monitoring a potential ceasefire.
  - Details of the coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-

---

**Confidential Instructions for [4]  
Aidrous al-Zoubaidi, President of the Southern Transition Council (STC)**



**“We will negotiate with those who control the land north. We maintain, however, that we won’t put our fate in the hands of a terrorist organization. Negotiations will only take place under the UN.” - Aidrous al-Zoubaidi**

*Born in 1967 in South Yemen, you grew up witnessing the intricacies of Yemeni politics, especially the South’s desire for autonomy. Your passion for your people’s cause and your leadership qualities saw you rise to become the President of the Southern Transition Council (STC). Standing as the voice for Southern Yemen, you have persistently demanded recognition of the South’s unique political and social context. As you navigate the tumultuous waters of the civil war, you are unwavering in your call for southern autonomy and representation in any post-conflict government.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Highlight the need for infrastructure rebuilding in areas under STC control.
- Demand an end to airstrikes and the naval blockade, for these actions’ impact on infrastructure.
- Support international funding and aid to restore essential services in STC-controlled areas.

#### *2. Governance*

- Assert the legitimacy of the STC in areas under its control.
- Declare the necessity of including STC representation in any future governance structure.
- Advocate for an inclusive peace process to ensure fair distribution of power and resources.

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Highlight the critical need for humanitarian assistance, given food insecurity and disease.
- Demand the lifting of the naval blockade, which has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Advocate for international delivery of life-saving assistance, food, and water to affected areas.

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- Recognition of the STC’s political authority and South Yemen’s autonomy.
- An immediate end to any actions undermining South Yemen’s autonomy.
- Acknowledgment of the specific humanitarian crisis in South Yemen.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Power-sharing with South Yemen under the principle of southern autonomy.
  - Agreement on specific monitoring mechanisms for a potential ceasefire.
  - Coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-

---

**Confidential Instructions for [5]  
Faisal bin Farhan as-Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**



**“The conflict is only going to end through a political settlement and that needs to be the focus, and I can say that we are making progress but there’s still work to be done.” - Faisal bin Farhan as-Saud**

*Born in 1974 as a minor royal in the House of Saud, you have grown to become an essential figure within Saudi Arabian politics. Currently serving as the Foreign Minister, you play a critical role in shaping the Kingdom’s foreign policy. As part of your duties, you have been at the forefront of managing Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the Yemen conflict, attempting to balance the Kingdom’s strategic interests with increasing international calls for peace. Despite the complex geopolitical climate, you continue to advocate for a political resolution, guided by dialogue and cooperation.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Highlight the need for rebuilding infrastructure across Yemen to ensure regional stability.
- Emphasize Saudi Arabia’s commitment to helping restore essential infrastructure.
- Encourage international cooperation to fund and aid the restoration of essential services.

#### *2. Governance*

- Assert the legitimacy of the internationally-recognized government of Yemen.
- Support a process that recognizes the authority of the ruling Presidential Leadership Council.
- Advocate for a peace process that ensures fair distribution of power and resources.

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Emphasize Saudi Arabia’s significant role in providing humanitarian aid to Yemen.
- Highlight the need for effective mechanisms to ensure that aid reaches those in need.
- Encourage the international community to increase contributions to alleviate human suffering.

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen.
- Recognition of the internationally-recognized government of Yemen.
- Addressing the severe humanitarian crisis and ensuring that aid reaches those most in need.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Power-sharing arrangements that preserve Yemen’s sovereignty and stability.
  - Support for international monitoring mechanisms for a potential ceasefire.
  - Agreement on the coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-



---

**Confidential Instructions for [6]  
Rashad al-Alimi, Chair of the Presidential Leadership Council (Hadi)**



**“[The PLC] adheres to the legitimate goals and aspirations of its people in building an inclusive state. We continue to bear responsibility for restoring state institutions, whether through peace or war.” - Rashad al-Alimi**

*Born in 1954 in Ta'izz, Yemen, you have been a key figure in Yemeni politics, notably as the Chair of the Presidential Leadership Council representing the internationally-recognized Hadi government. A seasoned politician and administrator, your understanding of Yemen's political landscape has been crucial in your pursuit of legitimacy and stability for your government amid the civil war. You remain steadfast in your resolve for a united Yemen, promoting the importance of a political solution that respects the territorial integrity of Yemen and an end to the Houthi rebellion.*

### **Stances on the Critical Issues**

#### *1. Civilian Infrastructure*

- Emphasize the need to rebuild infrastructure in areas controlled by the recognized government
- Call for an end to hostilities that result in the destruction of civilian infrastructure
- Advocate for international funding and aid to restore essential services across Yemen

#### *2. Governance*

- Assert the legitimacy of the internationally recognized Yemeni government
- Reject any governance structure that fails to recognize the Presidential Leadership Council
- Advocate for a peace process that respects Yemen's territorial integrity and sovereignty

#### *3. Humanitarian Assistance*

- Highlight the critical need for humanitarian assistance in Yemen
- Demand the lifting of any restrictions impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid
- Advocate for the international community to deliver life-saving assistance, food, and water

### **Non-Negotiable Principles**

- Recognition of the legitimacy of the internationally recognized Yemeni government.
- Preservation of Yemen's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Acknowledgment and immediate addressing of the severe humanitarian crisis.

### **Potential Areas for Compromise**

- Specifics of a power-sharing agreement with other political factions.
  - Agreement on specific monitoring mechanisms for a potential ceasefire.
  - Specifics of coordination and distribution mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.
-