

# Crisis in Yemen

The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis  
An educational Resource



Prepared by Andrew Larsen

# Yemen in Crisis

Where is Yemen?



Yemen is in the Heart of the Middle East, south of Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia

**The Current Status of the Crisis:** Yemen is currently the worst **humanitarian crisis** in the world according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Yemen is home to 10 million men, women and children on the brink of **famine** and **starvation**. A total of 24.1 million Yemenis are food insecure and in need of humanitarian aid. This represents **79% of the population** of the entire country. A full two-thirds of all districts in the country are already pre-famine. In addition, 65,000 people are already in advanced stages of hunger and extreme food deprivation. The people of Yemen are extremely vulnerable. Almost **100 civilians** were killed or injured every week in recent years, and the toll on innocent families is only becoming more severe as escalation in violence has led to increased displacement and death. People are struggling to survive, **severe outbreaks of COVID-19**, cholera and other communicable diseases are ongoing, and the risk of famine looms. Millions of Yemeni people need our help. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for June through December of 2020 is **facing a shortfall** of more than **\$2 billion** for humanitarian response.

*“The world is in danger of experiencing a hunger crisis of inconceivable proportions if the World Food Program and other food assistance organizations do not receive the financial support they have requested,” the Nobel committee said.*

— World Food Program Awarded **Nobel Peace Prize** for Work During Pandemic  
October 9th, 2020

**Food Insecurity:** A person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. This may be due to unavailability of food and/or lack of resources to obtain food. Food insecurity can be experienced at different levels of severity. FAO measures food insecurity using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) shown below:

#### FOOD INSECURITY BASED ON THE FIES: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



### Short History of the Crisis

While conflict between tribes has been present for much of Yemen's history, the country plunged into a protracted civil war with regional and international players weighing in on different sides near the end of **2014**. At that time, the **Houthi rebels**, backed by Iran, overtook the country's capital in Sanaa, forcing the president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, into exile in Saudi Arabia. In **March, 2015**, a coalition of nine countries, led by **Saudi Arabia** with funding and support from the **UK** and the **US**, began bombing the rebels in support of the exiled government. The initial goal was to reinstate the exiled government in a few weeks but the Houthi rebels remain in Sanaa and the conflict continues to this day, producing massive suffering and displacement of peoples into camps within the country due to the violence.

*What is the difference, in your own words, between Refugees, Asylees, and Internally Displaced People? What is most prevalent in Yemen and why?*

— Answer Below

### Refugees

Refugee is the classification for someone who is forced to flee their country of origin due to conflict, violence, or persecution. They are unwilling or unable to return based on a demonstrable threat due to their race, religion, political stance, or social status.

### Asylum Seekers

Asylum-seeker is the classification for someone who is seeking international protection from danger in their country of origin, but whose claim for refugee status has not been finally decided. Every refugee begins as an asylum-seeker, but not every asylum-seeker will be granted refugee status.

### **Internally Displaced Peoples**

Internally displaced person (or IDP) is the classification for someone who is seeking refuge somewhere else within their own country as a result of conflict, epidemic, or natural disaster. Their hope is to return home as soon as it is safe to do so.

*What is Famine? Does this describe the situation in Yemen? Why or why not?*

**Following is a helpful discussion of Famine from an Article on the [BBC](#).**

The word famine is used to describe a hunger crisis at its worse. Famine is the most serious of five phases that are used by the UN and most aid agencies.

Certain requirements must be met for a situation to be called a famine. These include:

- At least 20% of the population doesn't have enough food for the average person to lead a healthy life (2,100 kilocalories a day)
- There is acute malnutrition in more than 30% of children
- There are two deaths per 10,000 people every day, or four child deaths per 10,000 children every day

### **What happens next?**

The declaration of a famine doesn't force governments and charities to act or do anything. But it is hoped it works as a wake-up call. The word is used carefully though.

"It is a very strong word, with a strong impact," according to Brendan Paddy of the Disasters Emergency Committee - an organization that launches big appeals for aid overseas. "We have to be precise about how we use it."

"We have to raise the alarm before it's too late, but we also don't want to be accused of crying wolf."

*Is the Situation in Yemen more like a Civil War or a Regional (Proxy) War? Explain your answer.*

*see the "short history" above for some clues.*

**Civil war** is when citizens or tribal groups of the same country fight against each other. **Regional or Proxy war** is fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these.

### **An 11-year-Old Boy Tells His Story: Bringing it Home**

**Watch** the [short video](#) of Salah telling what life is like in Yemen (scroll down to the 5th picture for video on this [BBC site](#)). **What did you learn** about the situation through Salah's story? **What did he say** about his **school** situation, why he needs to **work** and what that looks like for him. Does Salah sound like he feels like a **victim**? Lastly, what are his **aspirations for the future**?



**Jesus Invites us to Not Look Away. Responding to the Crisis in Yemen.**

**Yemen, the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today,** has two strikes against it which make it hard to address their need. Two factors seem to influence the response in many church communities from North America. These factors are not present in all churches of course. There are exceptions but we must consider the following **two issues** which limit our capacity to lend support.

1. Several years ago a group of seminary students decided to do a study on the **poor and oppressed in the Bible**. To demonstrate the astonishing results of their study, one of the students took a pair of scissors to cut out the references to the poor in the Bible. It took him a long time. Sections from throughout the Bible were cut out--much of Amos, Isaiah and several other prophetic books. Same in the New Testament including Matthew 25, the Beatitudes, Jesus' first sermon in Luke 4, on and on. Thousands of verses were eliminated from the Bible, leaving it in shreds. (see footnote #1 below)
2. **Islamophobia**, or negative stereo-types of Muslims, inhibits churches from responding to a crisis in the Muslim majority world. *The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding*, finds Evangelicals as the religious or ethnic group in America most likely to hold Islamophobic views, with **44 percent having a negative view of Muslims**, double the number who viewed Muslims favorably. Islamophobia has historical roots in Christianity. The Protestant Reformers justified "violence and aggression against the Turks," the center of the Muslim world in Ottoman times. Luther, in ways similar to the other Protestant reformers, employed negative images of Muslims to rally support for war against the Turks.

<b>Sunni Islam</b>	Yemen is <b>53% Sunni</b> with distributed among the Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali traditions
<b>Shia</b>	<b>45% are Shia</b> primarily of the Zaidi tradition but also some of the Twelver and Ismaili schools
<b>Christians</b>	3,000
<b>Jews</b>	400

*“My friends, this is the American Bible—full of holes from all that we have cut out.” Protestants, Catholics, evangelicals, Jews, liberals, and conservatives—we all hold Bibles that are full of holes. In America and throughout the Western world, we have responded to all that the Scriptures say about the poor by pretending it just isn’t there. We have cut the poor out of the Bible.[1]*

— Jim Wallis

God cares for the poor and oppressed, wherever they may be found, ***whether Muslim or Christian, Jew or Gentile, secular or follower of Christ***. This is one of the central themes of the Bible. One out of every sixteen verses in the New Testament is about the poor. In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (the Gospels which feature the life and teaching of Jesus Christ) one out of every ten verses deals with the poor (see note #2 below) When we fail to be shaped and molded by these teachings, we’ve failed to grasp **the heart of God for the poor and oppressed** and we’ve failed the world God has called us to love.

#### Footnotes

1. Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 149-50. Also discussed in Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008) 31. ↑
2. Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008) 32. ↑

## We Invite Donate & Learn More

1. Support our MENA Monday fundraising project through the Holidays as we partner with an organization helping with the desperately needed food and supplies to sustain life in this crisis.
2. We encourage you to keep learning through the additional resources listed below and to consider our Biblical call to ending hunger, helping the poor and oppressed.

[Donate Now](#)

## Additional Resources & Articles

**MENA Page.** Where to Find More about the Covenant Work in MENA (Middle East North Africa)

<https://www.facebook.com/MENASGNews>

**Bread for the World**

<https://www.bread.org/>

Learn More What the Bible Says about Hunger

<https://www.bread.org/library/bible-health-hunger-issue>

**Mercy Corp**

<https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/quick-facts-yemen-crisis>

**Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations**

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/crisis/yemen/intro/en/>

**I Feel Lucky.** Story of a Yemeni Refugee who DID make it to the United States. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/27/yemen-refugees-usa-trump-asylum>