

[INTRO](#)[HISTORY](#)[CURRENT CONFLICTS](#)[ECONOMY](#)[FOOD & WATER](#)[DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES](#)[ENERGY ISSUES](#)

# YEMEN: A COUNTRY ON THE BRINK

An Overview of the Issues Facing Yemen & Why They Matter

**AN INTRODUCTION**

TO YEMEN'S PRESSING ISSUES

THERE ARE **MANY FACTORS** CONTRIBUTING TO  
YEMEN'S CURRENT SITUATION



## AN INTRODUCTION

### TO YEMEN'S PRESSING ISSUES

Yemen is a country that not many people think about: it is small, and does not have as much oil as its Middle Eastern neighbors. It is the poorest country in the Middle East, and if it continues on its current trajectory, its economy and infrastructure will continue to decline. If you don't know why you should care about the current situation, this website should serve as a primer.

## THERE ARE **MANY FACTORS** CONTRIBUTING TO YEMEN'S CURRENT SITUATION.

Learn more about why we should be paying attention to these issues below.

### HISTORY

View a timeline of the history that makes Yemen what it is today.

### ECONOMY

See how Yemen's economy contributes to turmoil.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

Yemen's population statistics present additional difficulties.

### CURRENT CONFLICTS

View a map of Yemeni conflicts and learn about the groups involved.

### FOOD & WATER

See how agricultural issues and water accessibility affect Yemen.

### ENERGY ISSUES

Learn how some of Yemen's main industries may be in trouble.

## HISTORY: ROAD TO CONFLICT

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS LEADING TO YEMEN'S CURRENT SITUATION



## HISTORY: ROAD TO CONFLICT

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS LEADING TO YEMEN'S CURRENT SITUATION

1978

### The National Liberation Front renames itself the Yemeni Socialist Party

This became the only legal political party in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and all other political parties were merged into it.

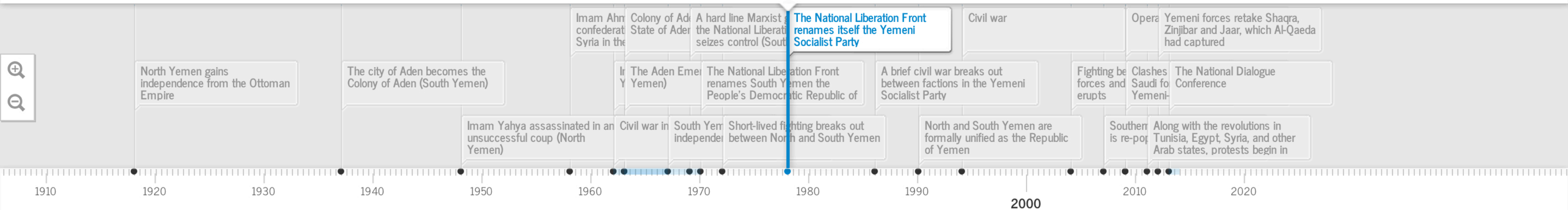
1986

A brief civil war breaks out between factions in the Yemeni Socialist Party



1972

Short-lived fighting breaks out between North and South Yemen





## CURRENT CONFLICTS

## WHAT'S GOING ON IN YEMEN TODAY & WHO ARE THE INSTIGATORS?

# YEMENI CONFLICTS: A MAP

This map includes an extensive list of violent conflicts and events in Yemen from January until March of 2014. To learn more about some of the main groups involved in these incidents, click the links below. (See footer for methodology.)

## KEY

**BOMBING | CLASHES | ENERGY-RELATED | DRONE STRIKE  
VIOLENCE AT GOVERNMENT CHECKPOINT | ASSASSINATION  
KIDNAPPING | ATTACK ON MILITARY VEHICLE | OTHER**

★ AL QAEDA ● HIRAK ◆ HOUTHIS ■ HADHRAMAUT TRIBAL FED.

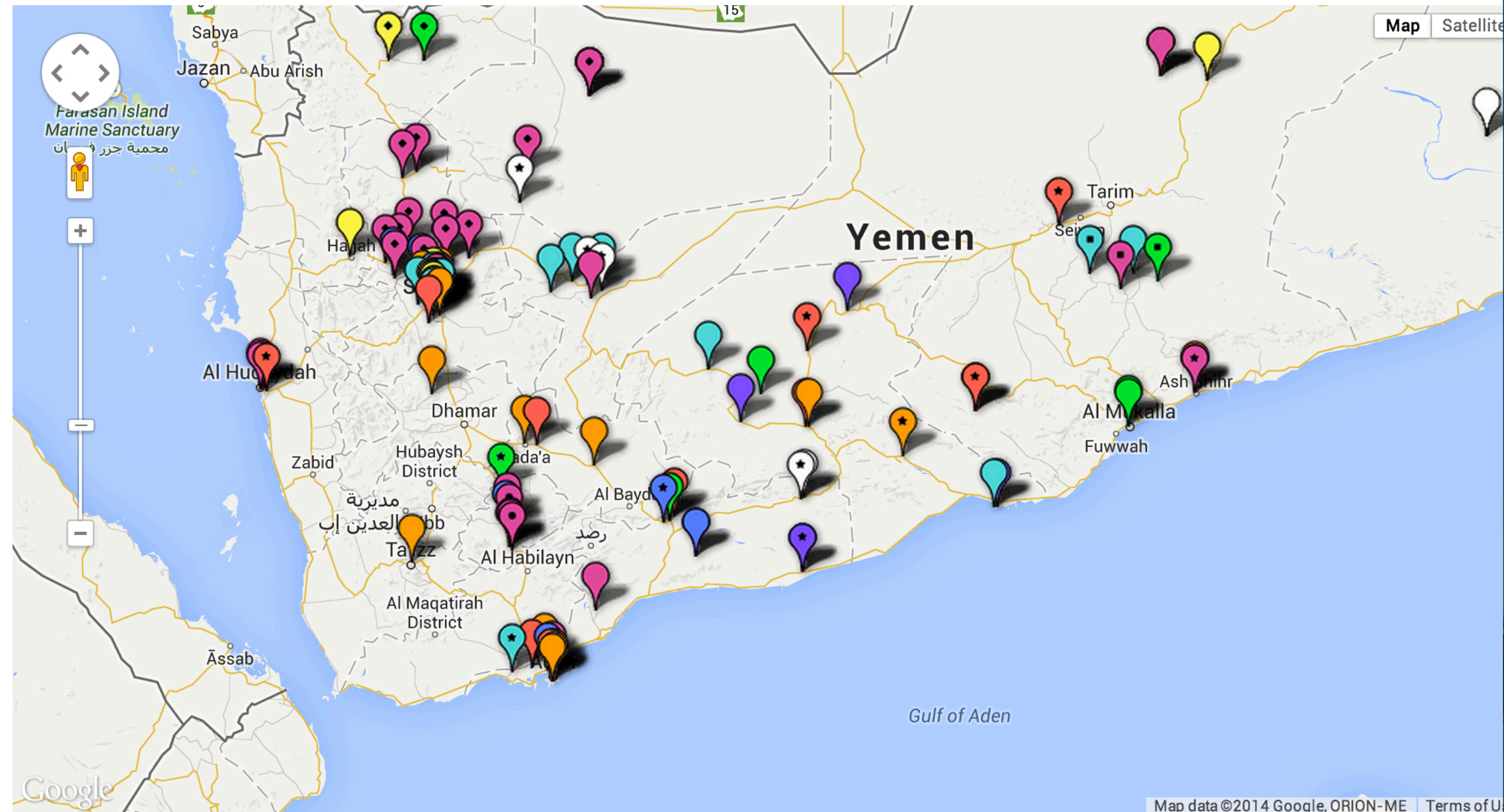
## Al-Qaeda

## Houthis

## Hadhramaut Tribal Federation

## Popular Resistance Committees

## Energy Conflict





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Al-Qaeda

Houthis

Hadhramaut Tribal Federation

Popular Resistance Committees

Energy Conflict

## Al-Qaeda

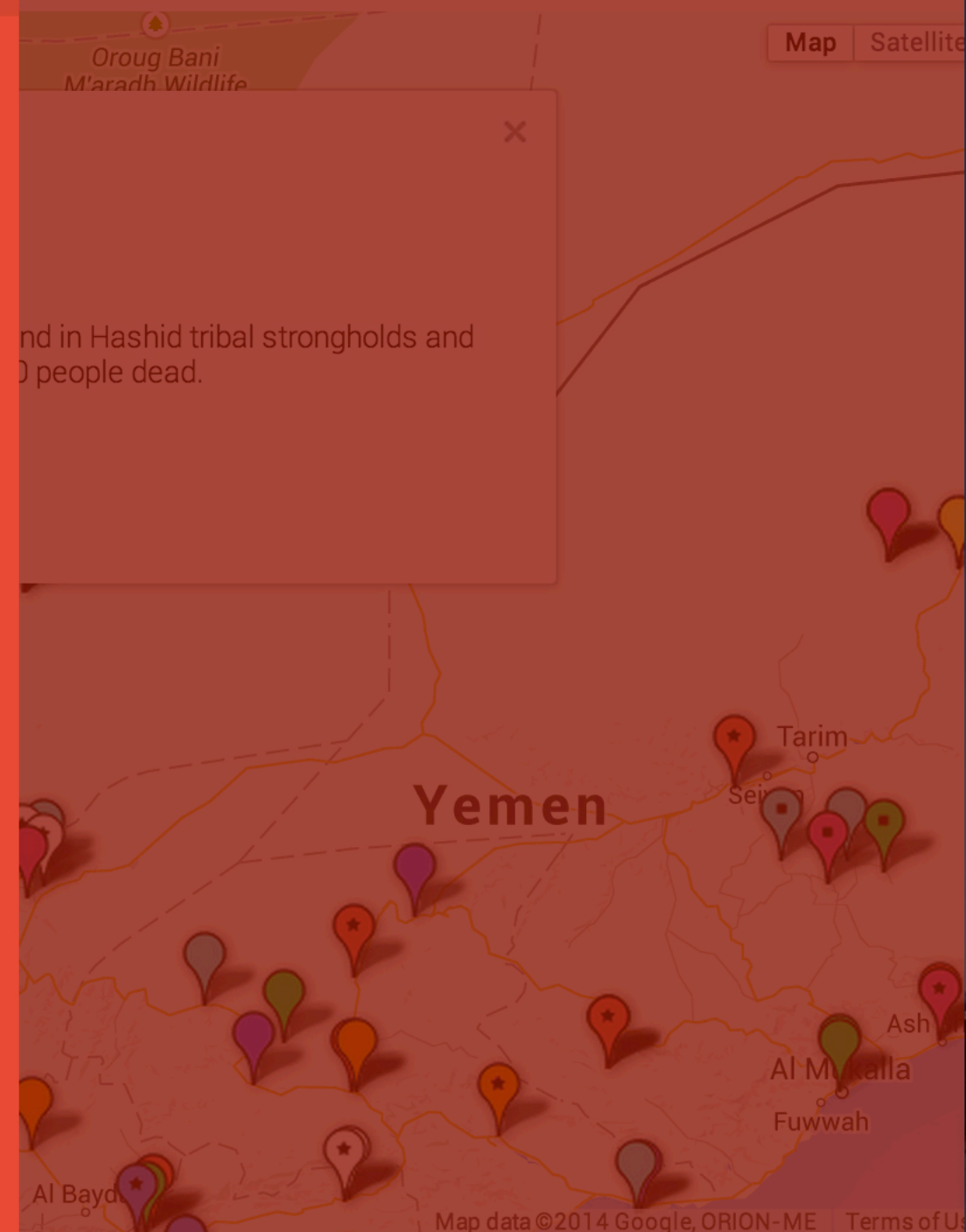
Al-Qaeda in Yemen has a long history as one of the organization's most dangerous branches. Yemen-based Al-Qaeda members are believed to have provided support for the 1998 bombings on the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. (1) In 2000, al-Qaeda bombed the USS Cole while it was in Aden, killing 17 and injuring 39. In 2006, 23 al-Qaeda members escaped from prison in Sana'a. (2) In 2009, the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian branches of al-Qaeda merged. Also in 2009, the Yemen-based infamous "underwear bomber" attempted to blow up a flight to Detroit. In 2010, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula took credit for the UPS cargo plane crash in Dubai and for the explosive devices on cargo planes bound for the United States. (3)

Taking advantage of the instability caused by the 2011 revolution, al-Qaeda transformed from a small terrorist group to an insurgent threat and took over significant portions of territory in southern Yemen, which the Yemeni military recaptured in 2012 with support from the American government. More recently, in December 2013, the group penetrated the Ministry of Defense's complex in Sana'a, killing more than 50 people. Al-Qaeda claimed the attack was aimed at operation rooms for the drone program located in the compound. (4)

One of the U.S. government's main methods for fighting al-Qaeda has been drone strikes. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, from 2002 to present, there have been 63-75 confirmed drone strikes and 93-112 possible extra drone strikes in Yemen. (5) These strikes have killed 315-505 people, at least some of whom were civilians and several of whom were children. (6) The drone strikes, such as the December 2013 strike on a wedding party that killed 15, have caused intense anger in Yemen and led to protests and retaliatory attacks on Yemeni and American targets. In December 2013, Yemen's parliament voted to prohibit drone strikes, which had little actual effect as votes from parliament can be struck down by the president and are non-binding, but which nevertheless provided symbolic ammunition to those who argue that drone strikes violate Yemen's sovereignty. (7)

\*Since the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian branches of al-Qaeda merged in 2009, Western organizations have generally referred to the organization as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP. However, this is not the name Yemenis or the Yemeni Press use; they almost universally call it simply al-Qaeda. Moreover, AQAP has pledged its loyalty to al-Qaeda's central leadership, first to Osama bin Laden and then to Ayman al-Zawahiri, although the group in reality is largely independent from the central organization. (8) This website generally follows the Yemeni convention and refers to the organization as al-Qaeda rather than AQAP.

Close



## COMPARED TO 2013

ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER NATIONAL YEMEN



## COMPARED TO 2013

ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER, NATIONAL YEMEN

200

EXPLOSIONS

260

KILLED BY SECTARIAN VIOLENCE

400

ASSASSINATIONS

700

KILLED IN DRONE STRIKES

## THE ECONOMY

YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS

CENTRAL BANK  
OF YEMEN

صَنْعَاءُ الْقَدِيمَة

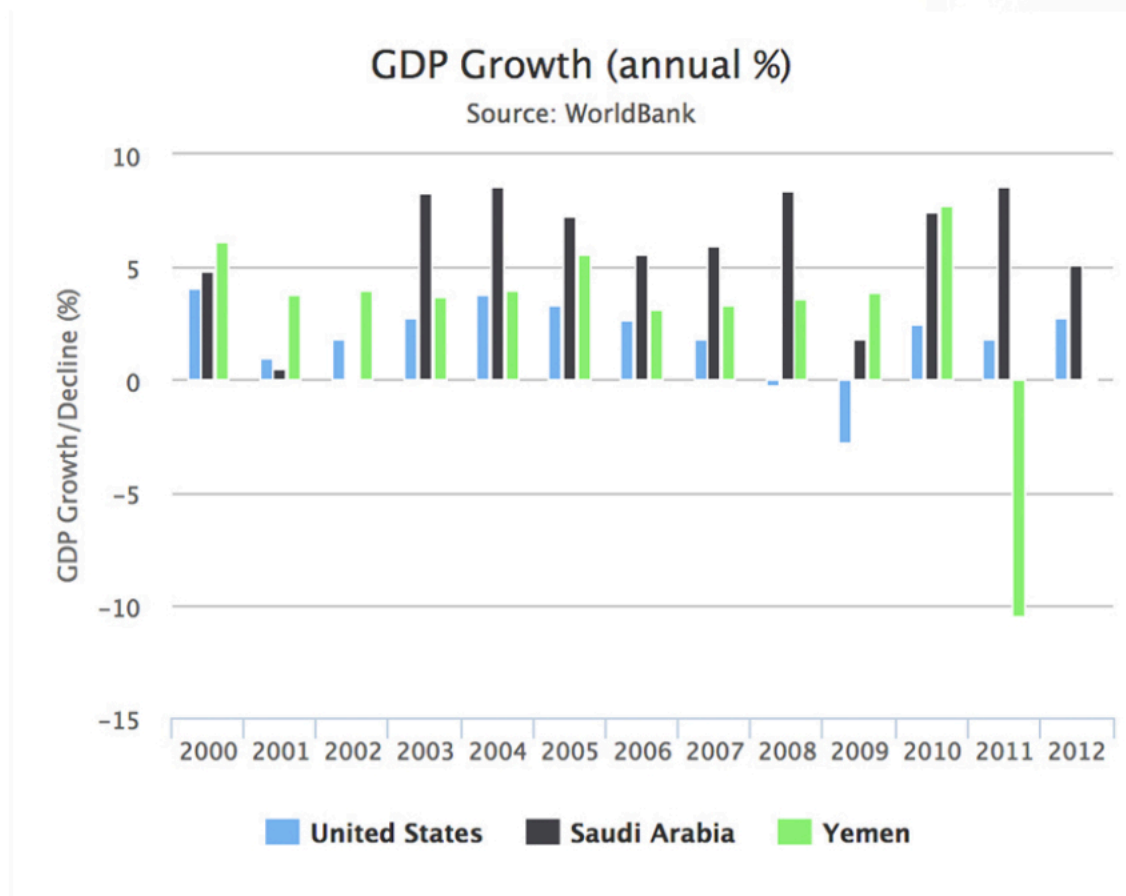


Yemen's extreme poverty severely affects its security situation. In addition, it suffers from a number of environmental and demographic pressures that will further burden its economy in the coming years, making growth difficult. Yemen's population is very young and growing at a rapid rate, which places an increased burden on its natural resources, particularly water and oil. These pressures will also likely lead to increased conflict as the growing population fights for control of increasingly limited resources, especially as the lack of oil income will destabilize the government.



# THE ECONOMY

## YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS



## HOW POOR IS YEMEN?

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab World. The 2011 Revolution was catastrophic for economic growth, causing GDP to decrease dramatically. Here, we compare Yemen's GDP with those of Saudi Arabia (a well-off neighboring country), and the United States (a familiar benchmark.)



# THE ECONOMY

## YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS

**58%**  
REQUIRE  
HUMANITARIAN AID

**54%**  
UNDER THE  
POVERTY LINE

**40%**  
HAVE ACCESS TO  
ELECTRICITY

**40%**  
OF THOSE IN NEED  
ARE UNDER 18

### POVERTY

54.4 percent of the Yemeni population is living under poverty line. As of this year, 58 percent of Yemen's population, or 14.7 million people, is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in order to meet their basic needs. 5.9 million, or 40 percent, of those in need are children under the age of 18. Only 39.9 percent of Yemen's population has access to electricity, and health care is not available for 8.6 million Yemenis. ([source](#))



# THE ECONOMY

## YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS

**40% OVERALL**  
UNEMPLOYMENT



**YOUTH 60%**  
UNEMPLOYMENT

### UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is pervasive in Yemen and poverty rates have reached devastating proportions. 40 percent of the population is unemployed, including a youth unemployment rate of 60 percent. ([Al-Monitor](#))



# THE ECONOMY

YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS



## INEQUALITY

Wealth is concentrated in a very small percentage of the Yemeni population. Just ten families control 80 percent of Yemen's imports, industrial activity, oil distribution, communications, and the banking sector. ([source](#))



# THE ECONOMY

## YEMEN BY THE NUMBERS

### CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

RANK	COUNTRY
175	Somalia
175	North Korea
175	Afghanistan
174	Sudan
173	South Sudan
172	Libya
171	Iraq
168	Turkmenistan
168	Syria
168	Uzbekistan
167	Yemen

167<sup>TH</sup> OUT OF 177

### CORRUPTION

In 2013, Yemen dropped to 167th place out 177 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. [Transparency International](#) defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" and ranks based on "informed views of analysts, businesspeople and experts in countries around the world".([Al-Monitor](#))



# FOOD AND WATER

## AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS



Because of poor water management, rapid urbanization, population growth and climate change, Yemen's water is [running out](#). The country's freshwater reserves, largely underground aquifers, are consumed much more quickly than they are replaced. Once these reserves are consumed, the economy will be decimated. Those who rely on agriculture for income will be particularly hard hit, and food prices across the country will rise while poverty worsens. Moreover, as the Arab world's poorest country, Yemen does not have the resources to easily meet the gap between water supply and water demand.



## FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS

PIPE IN  
**OR**  
MIGRATE OUT

### NO EASY SOLUTION

The country only has a few options to deal with this shortage-it faces either a mass migration of people from water scarce areas, essentially relocating the entire capital, or adding additional water from outside sources into the Sana'a basin through desalinated water pumped in from the coast or transferring water from other basins, which would cost billions in money the government doesn't have. ([source](#))



## FOOD AND WATER

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS

**SANA'A,  
YEMEN'S CAPITAL,  
WILL BE  
DRY  
IN 20 YEARS.**

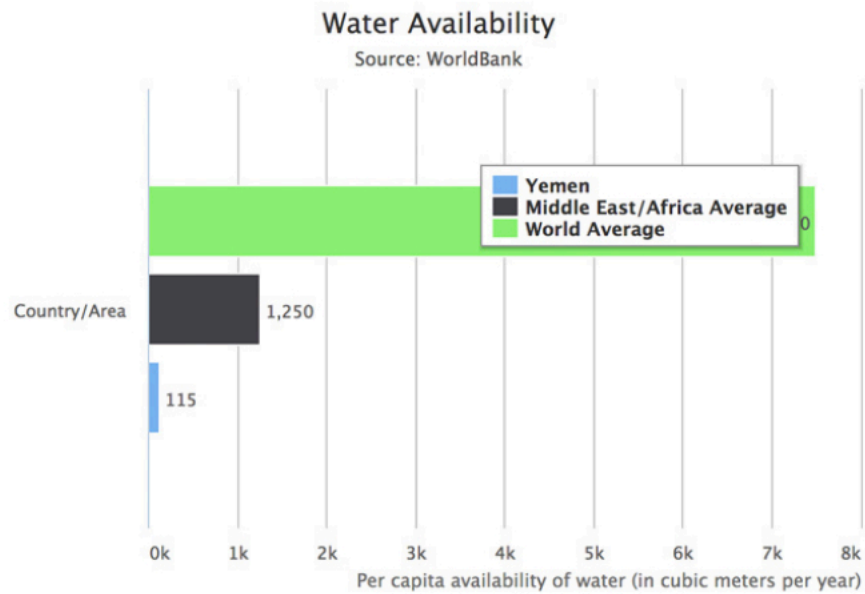
### WATER SCARCITY

[Yemen](#) is one of the top five most water scarce countries in the world. In some major Yemeni cities, such as Sana'a, the aquifers will be completely depleted within the next 20 years, and currently water is only available for a few hours each day. Water will run out in the highlands (which are densely populated) within the next 10 to 20 years, and Sana'a [has to drill](#) around six new deep wells a year to replace drying water sources.



# FOOD AND WATER

## AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS



## WATER POVERTY

Per capita availability of water is 115 cubic meters per year, compared to 1,250 cubic meters on average in the Middle East and North Africa, and 7,500 cubic meters on average for the world as a whole. Barring change, Yemen's already low water availability will fall to an unsustainable 65 cubic meters per year by 2031. The water poverty line is when per capita availability of water falls below 1000 cubic per year. ([source](#))



## FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS

**AS OF 2010**

**61%**  
**OF YEMENI**  
**HOUSHOLDS**  
**OWNED WEAPONS**

### **WATER & VIOLENCE**

Yemen's extreme water scarcity is already leading directly and indirectly to violent conflict, and the trend is will likely grow in the future as water becomes even scarcer. Moreover, Yemen is especially prone to conflict over scarce resources because it is one of the most heavily-armed countries in the world. There is roughly one weapon for every two civilians in Yemen, and 61% of households own weapons as of 2010. These numbers are now likely higher due to the political instability in 2011. ([source](#))



## FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS

VIOLENCE FROM  
LAND & WATER  
DISPUTES



KILLS 4,000  
ANNUALLY


### WATER CONFLICTS

**Violence** from land and water disputes kills approximately 4,000 people annually (many more than either the Houthi or the Al-Qaeda conflicts). 70 to 80 percent of all rural conflicts in Yemen are related to water. ([source](#))



# FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS



**90%**  
**OF YEMENI**  
**WATER USE**  
**IS CROP IRRIGATION**

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture [accounts for](#) approximately 15 percent of Yemen's GDP, and 70 percent of people in the rural areas make their living from agriculture. Water scarcity will cause decreases in agricultural output that will be devastating to the economy, making poor people even poorer while simultaneously raising food prices. Crop irrigation accounts for 90 percent of all water use in Yemen, and unregulated wells dug by Yemeni farmers are using up Yemen's water supply at a rapid rate. ([source](#))



# FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS


## ECONOMICS OF QAT

Qat is a mild, not seriously addictive drug chewed by 90 percent of Yemeni adult men and up to 50 percent of adult women. Its production takes up massive amounts of water and other resources that the poor country could otherwise use to meet basic needs, worsening Yemen's already precarious food and water situation. However, Qat also provides desperately needed employment and income, particularly in rural areas, and replacing it will be difficult, both economically and politically. ([source](#))



# FOOD AND **WATER**

AGRICULTURE, QAT, AND THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS



**TAKES UP  
26 PERCENT,  
OF HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME.**

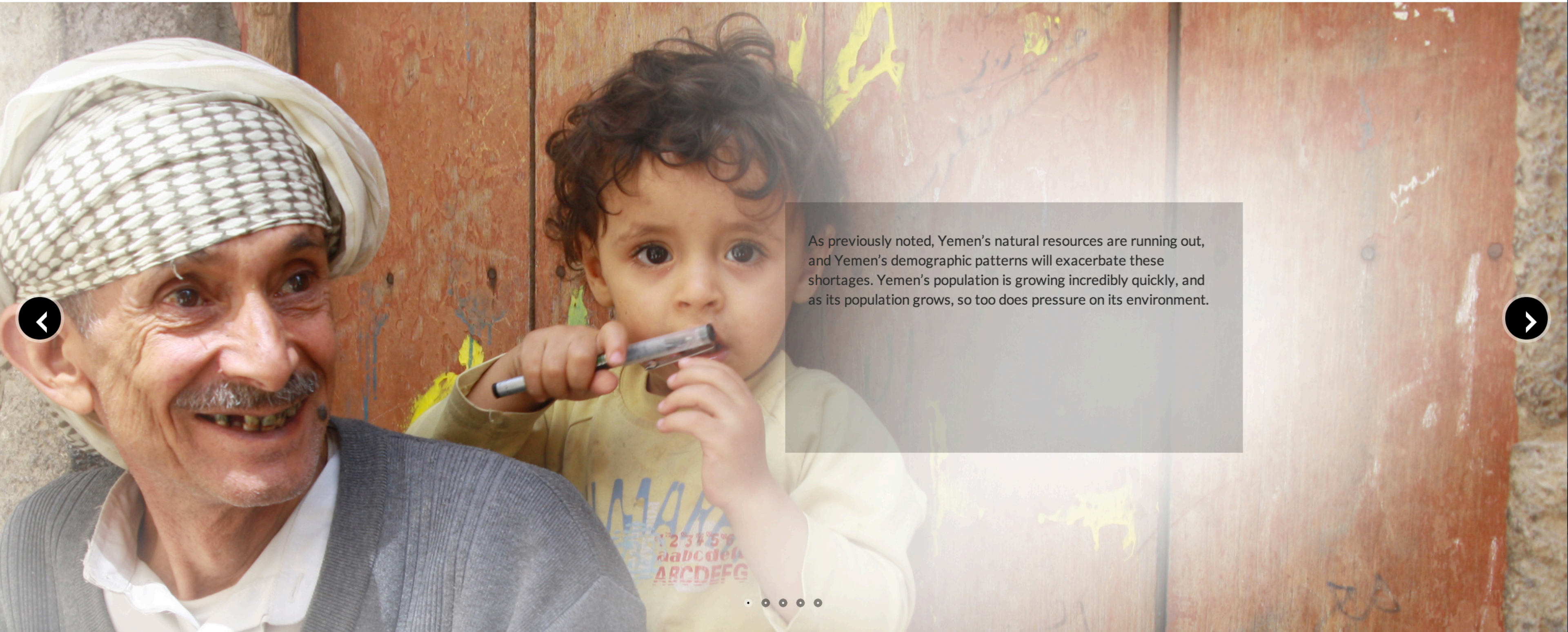
## QAT & RESOURCES

Qat production consumes up to 70 percent of Yemen's groundwater resources, and makes up 20 percent of its total agricultural production (which is bad in a country suffering massive food insecurity). Approximately 25 percent of irrigated land is [devoted to Qat production](#), and it takes up 26% of household income. Many poor families buy it at the expense of food and other basic needs.([source](#))



# DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

## YEMEN'S SOCIETAL CHALLENGES



As previously noted, Yemen's natural resources are running out, and Yemen's demographic patterns will exacerbate these shortages. Yemen's population is growing incredibly quickly, and as its population grows, so too does pressure on its environment.



## DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

YEMEN'S SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

**62.8%**  
**OF YEMEN'S**  
**POPULATION**  
**IS < 25**

### POPULATION

Yemen's current population is 25.2 million with a growth rate of 2.72 percent, the 20th highest in the world. With a median age of 18.6 years, 62.8% of Yemen's population is under the age of 25.  
(sources: [1](#) / [2](#) / [3](#))



# DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

YEMEN'S SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

## POPULATION MOVEMENT DRIVES CONFLICT


### MIGRATION

In addition to its high fertility rate (4.09 children born/woman), Yemen's population growth is also heavily affected by displacement and migration. Much of this population movement has to do with the conflicts in the country forcing people to leave their homes and move away. In turn, this high level of population movement drives conflict.



# DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

YEMEN'S SOCIETAL CHALLENGES



URBANIZATION  
**RATE**  
**4.78%**

## URBANIZATION

Yemen's rate of urbanization is 4.78% according to the CIA World Factbook. There are approximately 943,000 total displaced people in Yemen, concentrated in the Sa'ada, Hajjah, Amran, Aden and Abyan governorates.

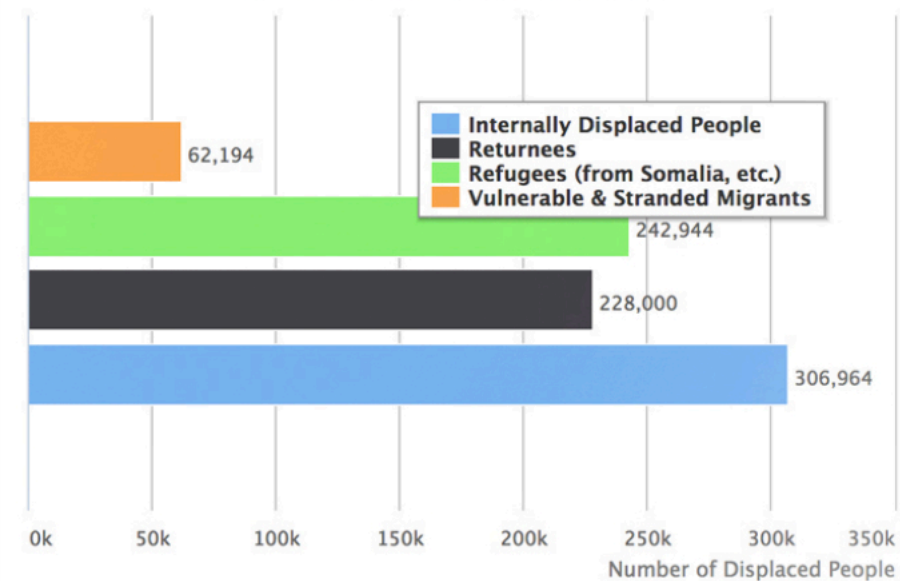


# DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES

## YEMEN'S SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

### Displaced Groups in Yemen

Source: [yemen.humanitarianresponse.info](http://yemen.humanitarianresponse.info)



## DISPLACEMENT

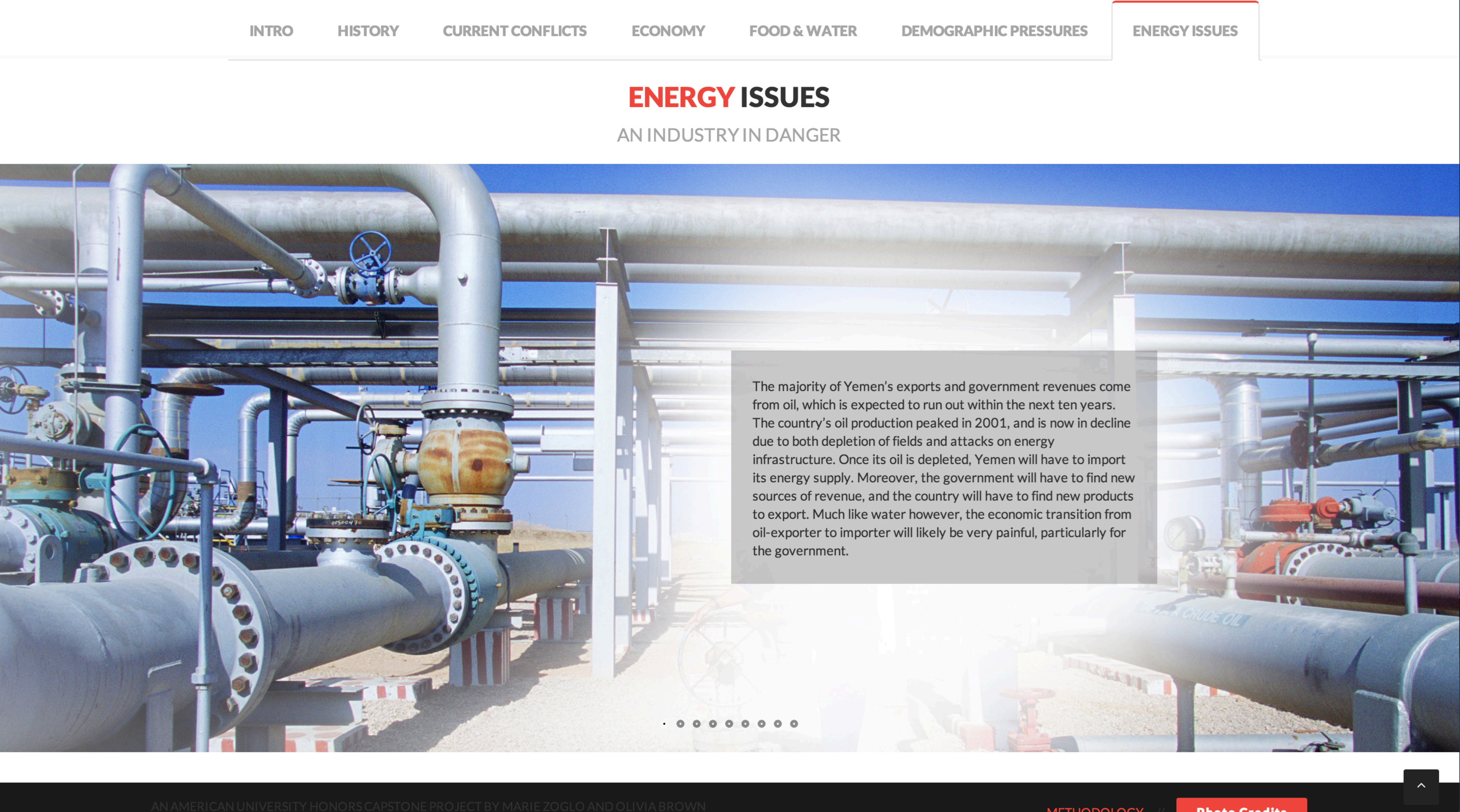
Yemen's population of displaced people includes:

- 306,964 internally displaced people
  - 228,000 returnees in 2013 (with 400,000 more expected to return in 2014, mainly from Saudi Arabia)
  - 242,944 Refugees (majority are from Somalia)
  - 62,194 vulnerable and stranded migrants
- ([source](#))



# ENERGY ISSUES

## AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER



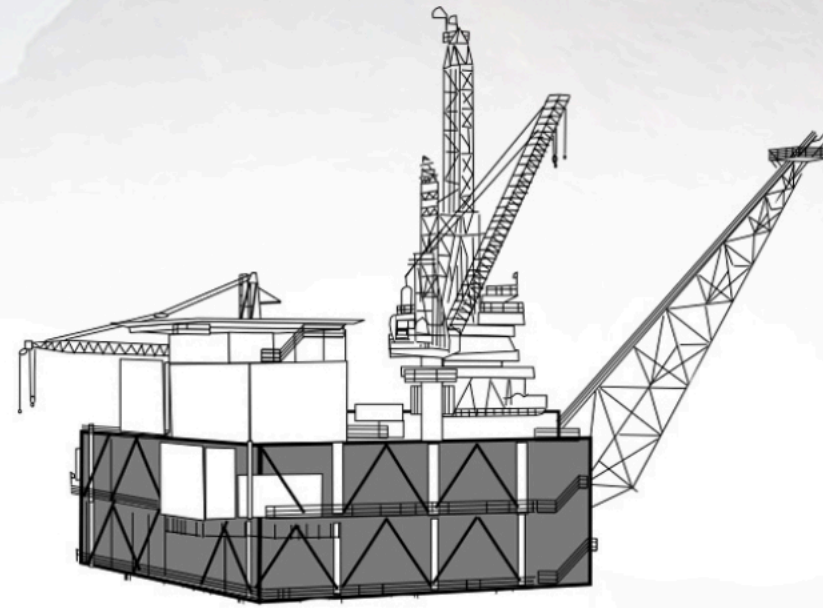
The majority of Yemen's exports and government revenues come from oil, which is expected to run out within the next ten years. The country's oil production peaked in 2001, and is now in decline due to both depletion of fields and attacks on energy infrastructure. Once its oil is depleted, Yemen will have to import its energy supply. Moreover, the government will have to find new sources of revenue, and the country will have to find new products to export. Much like water however, the economic transition from oil-exporter to importer will likely be very painful, particularly for the government.





# ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER



**AT THE CURRENT  
EXTRACTION RATE  
YEMEN'S OIL WILL  
LAST ONLY  
10 YEARS**

## OIL SHORTAGE

Yemen has 3 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Oil production in Yemen has declined steadily since it peaked in 2001. Barring significant new discoveries (which are not impossible as the government said in 2013 that oil reserves are higher than previously thought and exploration for new reserves is ongoing), at current extraction rates crude oil reserves will be exhausted in the next 10 years.) (sources: [1](#) / [2](#))



# ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

## OIL EXPENDITURES

Yemen earned \$750 million less from oil revenues in 2013 than it did in 2012 and for the first time, oil import expenditures surpassed oil revenue in the country. Oil production in Yemen is [expected](#) to drop below 250,000 barrels per day by 2014. (sources: [1](#) / [2](#))



## ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

# 25% OF YEMEN'S GDP



# IS FROM OIL

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Petroleum [accounts for](#) approximately 25 percent of GDP and 63% of government revenue. Government [revenues](#) from the oil and gas sector in 2010 were more than \$5 billion. In 2009, oil [accounted for](#) over 85% of export earnings, which makes Yemen very vulnerable to fluctuations in the international price of oil. The Yemeni government [believes](#) that their deficit could be close to 8 percent of gross GDP as a result of the lost oil earnings, compared to 6.3 percent in 2012.



## ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

**3% OF  
THE WORLD'S  
NATURAL  
GAS  
COMES FROM YEMEN**

### NATURAL GAS

Yemen is hoping to replace its oil revenue with income from natural gas. As part of this diversification effort away from oil, Yemen exported its first liquefied natural gas in October 2009. As of early 2013, Yemen's liquefied natural gas production accounted for approximately 3% of the world's total volume. Yemen's gas revenues are [set to total](#) US \$30-50 billion from 2008 to 2028. (sources: [1](#) / [2](#))



# ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER



## OIL & GAS CONFLICTS

Yemen's oil and gas resources have actually destabilized the country rather than being used to develop the economy. The communities in which these resources are located have received very few benefits from the exploitation of their resources, and this in turn has led to intense anger against the government and foreign companies. This anger in turn has led to violent conflict between groups in these areas and the government.

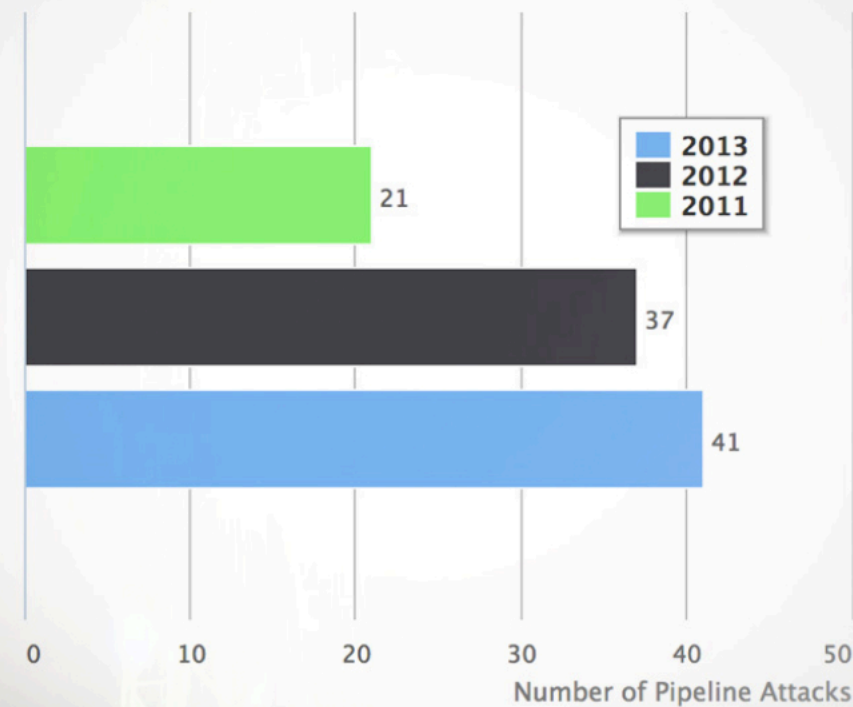


# ENERGY ISSUES

## AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

### Pipeline Attacks Since 2011

Source: yementimes.com



## PIPELINE ATTACKS

There were 41 [attacks](#) on oil pipelines in Yemen over the course of 2013 (38 in Marib, 2 in Shabwa, and 1 in Hadramout.) There were also 23 attempted attacks. 37 attacks were recorded in 2012 and 21 in 2011. Halts in oil production caused by attacks on infrastructure caused the Ministry of Oil and Minerals to lose \$5 billion from March 2011 to the end of 2013, money that would have been used by the government to fund its budget requirements.



# ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

## SAUDI INFLUENCE

Yemeni media is increasingly [reporting](#) that there are huge previously undiscovered oil reserves in al-Jawf governorate, and that Saudi Arabia is pressuring the Yemeni government and local leaders to prevent oil and gas exploration in the area, which is on the border with Saudi Arabia.



# ENERGY ISSUES

AN INDUSTRY IN DANGER

## GAS & CORRUPTION

There are signs of clear corruption in Yemen's energy resource market. For example, 20-year contracts signed in 2005 [allowed](#) the Korea Gas Corporation KOGAS to purchase Yemen's liquefied natural gas (LNG) for only \$3.15 per million BTUs and France's Total to purchase it for \$1 per million BTUs, even though the actual market price is much closer to \$14 per million BTUs. Since the agreement was signed, the country has lost an [estimated](#) \$5.6 billion in revenues due to the artificially low LNG price.