Search for
Common Ground

PATHWAYS FOR
PEACE & STABILITY
IN TAIZ, YEMEN:

AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

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Search for Common Ground

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international organization committed to conflict transformation. Since 1982, Search has led programs around the world to help societies transform the way they deal with conflicts, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. Our programs reach 4.2 million people each year, with more than 600 staff and 1200 partners in 43 countries around the world. Using our Common Ground Approach, we work in many of the world's most difficult conflict environments, including situations of widespread violent conflict, to prevent and mitigate violence, empower local and national actors to build peace, and support reconciliation. We do this by supporting inclusive dialogue and dispute resolution processes, developing media programs that promote fact-based public information and tolerance, and strengthening collective and community actions that solve local challenges.

Search for Common Ground in Yemen

Search has worked in Yemen since 2010, with an all-Yemeni team based in Aden and Sana'a working throughout the country to build sustainable peace, facilitate constructive dialogue, and increase local capacity for non-violent solutions. We primarily work with civil society organizations, youth, teachers, and media professionals, empowering them to bridge divides within their own communities and promote social cohesion at the local level. Search-Yemen's project *Unifying Yemen to Stand Up Against Violence* has received international praise and was a finalist for the Classy Award for the top 100 most innovative non-profits and enterprises of 2016. Since the outbreak of war in 2015, Search has continued its support and programs to local organizations committed to peace. As one of the few international peace and conflict organizations still working on the ground in Yemen, Search connects local-level initiatives and expertise with national and international policymakers and experts to ensure that local voices and local solutions are at the forefront of decision-making. Search-Yemen promotes recognition of opportunities for positive action to reduce divisions and promote peace despite the ongoing conflict, and creates pockets of stability through its programs that sow the seeds for peace.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yemen is a currently experiencing complex and protracted conflict that has had an immense impact on civilians, resulting in over 10,000 civilian deaths since its start in 2015. As of 2018, over 3 million people have been displaced by the conflict,[1] and 22 million, nearly 80% of the population of Yemen, are in need of humanitarian assistance.[2] In August 2017, Search for Common Ground (Search) produced a report, *Pathways to Peace and Stability in Yemen*, which outlined the history of the current conflict and the national conflict dynamics in Yemen.[3] It also emphasized that investing in local level peace was both necessary and strategic despite the ongoing war. Since then, Search has continued to operate peacebuilding programs and conduct research in Yemen and determined that a deeper analysis focusing on Yemeni perspectives about the current dynamics and opportunities at a more localized level would be beneficial both for practitioners and policymakers seeking to identify ways to build and bolster peace and reconciliation.

Search selected the city of Taiz as the location for a qualitative study because it holds economic, geographic, and symbolic importance in Yemen. As Yemen's third-largest city, Taiz has been a flash point of the current civil war. With approximately 600,000 residents, it is a microcosm of religious, tribal, political, and ideological factors playing out in Yemen today, and it is an important economic, industrial, and cultural center. It is strategically located between the north and south of the country and overlooks the Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandab strait. Taiz in particular and Yemen more generally are in the throes of a war and major economic decline, where power and violence are used to capture and control resources. The prevalence of a multitude of armed groups backed by regional players, widespread criminality, and intra-communal tensions breed insecurity and violence throughout Taiz. Any peacebuilding strategy must move beyond engagement of national political actors to build a "constituency for peace" focused on stabilizing communities and addressing conflict drivers and triggers at the local and international levels.

To conduct this small-n qualitative study,[4] the research team relied on desk research and qualitative methods. Data was collected from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with religious figures, economic experts, humanitarian aid workers, and government officials, as well as through six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with male and female participants from affected communities. Qualitative information was reinforced with analyses of publicly available data on instances of armed conflict, as well as Search's own research and program data. This study aims to inform the design of effective interventions, strategies, and policies in and about

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1   Rohwerder, B. (30 March 2017). Conflict and gender dynamics in Yemen. *Institute of Development Studies.* Retreieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/068-Conflict%20and%20Gender%20dynamics%20in%20Yemen.pdf

2   Lowcock, ERC. (24 May 2018). Yemen: As conflict escalates, more than 22M people are left in dire need of assistance and protection. *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.* Retrieved from https://www.unocha.org/story/yemen-conflict-escalates-more-22m-people-are-left-dire-need-assistance-and-protection

3   Maqtari, S. and Smith, K. (August 2017). Pathways for Peace and Stability in Yemen. *Search for Common Ground.* Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pathways-for-Peace-Stability-in-Yemen.pdf

4   This study focused on a small number of cases in detail. It included 10 Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions reaching 42 individuals. Research methodology can be found in Appendix 2.

Yemen. It is intended to reflect local perceptions and ensure that local insights inform international strategies. The study's methodology, data analysis, and research questions can be found in Appendix 2.

The results of this study identified a range of unique Yemeni perspectives on impacts of the current conflict in Taiz, concrete opportunities for peace and stability, and recommendations for ways to move the community forward. Recommendations to local actors and the international community to support long-term peace and stability in Taiz include:

- **Recognize that some drivers towards conflict participation in Taiz are rooted in longstanding local grievances**. Efforts to build peace in Yemen should not solely focus on international or high-level national processes to the exclusion of investing in local level peace and efforts to prevent and mitigate local drivers. Peace efforts must account for and include mechanisms to resolve underlying and secondary conflicts that are intertwined with the broader war, including long-standing grievances around governance, relationships between religious groups, land ownership, and equitable access to services. In the face of diminished municipal resources and lack of functioning state-sanctioned conflict mechanisms to resolve conflicts, these divides and grievances become drivers of conflict, adopting the exclusive identity narratives of the broader conflict.

- **Support inclusive and responsive local governance that acknowledges and addresses perceptions of past marginalization within Taiz**. A general distrust in government institutions and officials was clear from the majority of interviews and group discussions conducted for this study. Many citizens of Taiz regard them as incapacitated, inefficient, and corrupt, and many respondents continue to perceive injustice, favoritism, and lack of inclusion. This disconnect between government and citizens is an important driver of the war that we witness in Yemen today. Therefore, to reach any peaceful solution, it is essential that governance structures and systems at all levels are reformed and/or developed in ways that are perceived by locals to be fair and inclusive and promote active citizen engagement where all minority voices are heard and respected.

- **Support those actors and institutions that are already preventing and mitigating conflict in Taiz**. Taiz continues to see locally-rooted efforts to build local-level peace and stability. Current and future efforts to build a more peaceful Yemen should leverage what already shows potential or is working to ensure local buy-in and sustainability. Tribal sheikhs, community representatives, informal arbitration committees, and other local leaders have local credibility and have implemented conflict resolution mechanisms for decades. Family ties have played a critical role in maintaining some basic forms of stability within communities and contributing to community resilience to violence and extremism. This research also highlighted local businesses as a unlikely group that has important potential to build and uphold peace while also undermining economic incentives to participate in violence. The international community and actors in Yemen should provide financial and political support as well as invest in building the capacity of these actors and institutions, including conflict sensitivity training for businesses, network and skills building for leaders of traditional mechanisms, and dedicated programming focused on families including psychosocial support, livelihoods programs, preventing violent extremism programming, and social cohesion initiatives. Future conflict resolution efforts should engage the members of these groups as allies and these mechanisms as components of Yemen's long-term peace plans.

- **Begin planning for stabilization and increase service provision activities.** In the short-term, increased service provision to civilians in Taiz is needed to provide access to basic goods and services, and in the longer term, income-generating activities and restored market functions are necessary to provide residents with livelihoods and the ability to recover from the conflict in Taiz, which previously had an important economic and industrial role in the country. Engaging with national, regional, and international businesses and reconnecting locals with external markets will be crucial to creating economic recovery and stability in this area of Yemen. Because the city's infrastructure has been so badly damaged due to fighting, stabilization strategies will need to specifically include construction and repair projects that facilitate increased mobility for citizens and commerce.

- **Strengthen investment in schools as a space for peacebuilding and learning**. Short-term and longer-term planning must address the education needs of Taiz's youngest citizens, as many schools have been closed or destroyed and private education is out of reach for most families. Lack of education limits young people's future prospects and increases marginalization and grievances, which risks feeding into longer term cycles of violence. At the same time, schools also have unique potential as spaces for peacebuilding, bringing together citizens from all backgrounds and social groups together to interact. International and local actors should invest in reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools, strengthen both formal and informal education, and providing youth with vocational trainings and livelihood opportunities, in addition to trust building activities and peace education.

- **Recognize psychosocial impact of the conflict and increase access to services.** The psychosocial impact of the war is often overlooked, but it has a major impact on the citizens of Taiz as violence becomes normalized, communities become accustomed to bombardments and fighting, and access to mental health services is limited. It is challenging to think of long-term peace and stability in Taiz without investments in psychosocial support, given the widespread nature of this conflict. International actors, NGOs, and local government should prioritize interventions that provide psychosocial support services to adults and children immediately and in the longer-term, including increased access to mental health care, support to trauma healing initiatives, creation of safe spaces where different community members could come together and strengthen social ties, support for trust building and reconciliation, and peace education.

- **Design gender-specific initiatives that recognize the distinct vulnerabilities and potential of women in Taiz to bolster peace and stability**. Conflict provides an opportunity for societies to re-evaluate previous norms of engagement, including gender dynamics. The international community should seize upon this moment of fluidity and flux to implement multifaceted gender-specific programs promoting women's empowerment, inclusivity in governance, vocational training programs and economic empowerment for female heads of households, and additional research on the role of women in armed and extremist groups. There is also a need to work with both women and men to shift the traditional gender norms on the role of women within Taiz specifically and in Yemen more broadly, and it will be important for gender programs to engage "gender champions" including moderate elders, religious leaders, and/or influential business leaders who could support and advocate for this change.

- **Empower potential "peace champions."** While conflict drivers in Taiz are numerous, there are also a number of influential groups that may act as possible "peace champions," such as religious leaders and

the media. Moderate religious leaders remain influential, and local communities tend to hold them in high regard and carefully consider their guidance. International actors should build religious leaders' capacities in advocating for peace, further strengthening and promoting moderate religious speech messages, and helping shift gender norms. Efforts to build intra-religious tolerance in Taiz, particularly between Sunni and Shi'a, will pay long-term dividends for Yemen's future stability. While the role of media in conflict was not the focus of this research, it was noted that the media plays an important role in igniting the conflict, spreading rumors, and rallying supporters from each side of the conflict. There needs to be greater capacity strengthening of existing media outlets to provide training on conflict sensitivity and neutrality, as well as the need to increase support to those neutral reporting agencies that do exist, enhancing their skills and reach.

- **Ensure that local perspectives from Taiz are reflected in any national and international peace dialogues or processes via multi-track engagement**. Given the significant participation of regional and international actors in this conflict, it is crucial that the international community pursue, promote, and support Track I dialogue efforts, inclusive of all key parties. There is also significant room for Track II diplomacy targeting non-state actors, religious leaders, influential business persons, and civil society organizations with a vested stake in the conflict and future of Yemen. Track II engagement can and should be linked to official Track I processes to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of local communities are mainstreamed into high-level political processes. Finally, Track III efforts targeting local communities will help to address some of the major Yemeni divisions and tensions. An integrated, multi-track approach would help to ensure that high-level policies reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge, contributing to the policies' legitimacy and sustainability.

NATIONAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Lead Up to Today's Conflict

In February 2011, thousands of Yemeni civilians who were outraged by widespread corruption, high unemployment, and deteriorating economic conditions and who were inspired by protests in Tunisia the previous month that ignited the Arab Spring, took to the streets to demand a change in government and the resignation of then President Ali Abdulla Saleh, who had ruled Yemen for over 32 years. Although Saleh announced in response to these protests that he would not seek reelection, continued clashes led to retraction of international funding and aid. Protests against the government continued around the country in cities including Sana'a, Aden, Mukalla, and Taiz. Clashes between government security forces and Saleh supporters and those who were protesting culminated in the injury 22,000 Yemenis and the death of over 2,000 people in 2011 alone.[5] By April 2011, Saleh had agreed to peace negotiations but backed out multiple times, and the country saw a new wave of support for the opposition as well as further increased clashes and violence. On

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5   Al-Haj, A. (18 March 2012). Yemen says more than 2,000 killed in uprising. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yemen-says-more-than-2000-killed-in-uprising/2012/03/18/gIQAGOtcLS_story.html

June 3, 2011, a bombing injured Saleh and killed five people, leading Saleh to flee to Saudi Arabia for treatment. As a result, then Vice President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi took power. After nearly a year of violent clashes between protesters, tribal militias, and government forces, Saleh agreed to sign a political transition plan formulated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on November 23, 2011. In accordance with the power-transfer agreement, Saleh would transfer his presidential duties and the power to negotiate with the opposition to Hadi until the February 2012 presidential elections.[6]

On Tuesday, February 21, 2012 an estimated 65% of the population of Yemen voted to officially replace Saleh after 32 years of rule with Hadi, despite protests and bomb threats at several polling stations.[7] Although he ran unopposed, Hadi pledged to establish a unity government that spanned the political, geographic, and ideological divides of Yemen, rebuild economic and social institutions, and renew the fight against Al Qaeda. The National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was held in Sana'a, Yemen from March 18, 2013 to January 24, 2014. Intended to serve as a core part of the transition process and bring together Yemen's diverse political and demographic groups to address critical issues, the conference established that Yemen would shift to a federal model of government, a move which was proposed and forcefully backed by Hadi. However, the Houthis, a Northern religious-political secessionist movement dating back to the 1990s, rejected the deal and felt that their interests were not represented, in particular by this new governance model. The begrudging transition of power from Saleh to Hadi and subsequent failures to establish a unity government fostered the political milieu from which the current context of the 2014 Yemeni Civil War emerged and from which it continues.

Religious and Political dynamics

Today's conflict in Yemen not only reflects political, economic, and governance grievances and tensions, but it also reflects a long history of religiopolitical tensions also underpin the current context in Yemen. Zaidi Islam emerged in the eighth century as a sect of Shi'a Islam more theologically similar to Sunni Islam, and its members believed themselves to be descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, or Hashemites. Despite their similarities, Zaidis, who constitute an estimated 40% of Yemen's population, have historically clashed with the rest of Yemen's Sunni population. Zaidi Imams ruled the north of Yemen starting in 897 CE for over 1000 years. This rule was not only over Zaidi people, but also Sunni people in Taiz and other Sunni areas within the north of Yemen. The Yemeni Zaidis retained independence and governed through an Imamate until the coup d'état of September 26, 1962 that ultimately deposed the Imam and established the Yemen Arab Republic. While fighting between republicans and monarchists was on its surface a conflict over political ideology, it was also reflective of historic religious, political, and social divisions between Zaidis and other Yemenis. The most recent resistance from Zaidis against the centralized ruling government in Yemen began in the 1990s when Al-Shabab Al-Mo'omen was formed by a group of young Zaidi people inspired and led by Hussien Al-Houthi, the elder brother of the current Houthi leader, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi. Throughout

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6   Yemen's Saleh agrees to transfer power. (24 November 2011). *Al Jazeera.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/2011112355040101606.html

7   Kasinof, L. (25 February 2012). Yemen Swears in New President to Sound of Applause, and Violence. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/world/middleeast/abed-rabu-mansour-hadi-sworn-in-as-yemens-new-president.html

the movement, later re-branded as Ansar Allah, Houthis voiced claims of discrimination by the central government, and tensions turned to violent conflict between them and the Saleh-led government in 2004 and continued sporadically into the Yemeni Revolution that culminated in the ousting of President Saleh.[8]

Starting in the 2000s, Yemen's central government also confronted conservative Sunni elements throughout the country such as Al Qaeda, an armed Salafi group operating as a global network that launched attacks on Yemeni Government and foreign government targets for several decades. Following assertions by the United States that Saleh's government was "an important partner in the global war on terrorism," the Yemeni government collaborated with the West in military operations to capture and kill Al Qaeda fighters throughout the 2000s and into the present. Such counterterrorism efforts have made Saleh's government, the subsequent Hadi administration, and Yemeni military forces frequent targets of Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups in Yemen as well as the so-called Islamic State in Yemen. These armed Salafi groups are also vehemently opposed to Houthi control of government, seeing the Houthis' brand of Zaidi Shia Islam as heretical. Ansar Al Sharia, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, has exercised administrative and military control over large swaths of land throughout eastern, central, and southern areas of the country since 2011, from which it orchestrates attacks on government targets.[9]

Compounding these factors, Yemeni actors have at times used religious and nationalistic narratives to mobilize and recruit supporters or appear morally righteous. From the Houthis, the conflict has been framed as a "holy jihad" against foreign invaders and supporters of the United States and Israel in addition to those who do not admit to the right of Prophet Muhammad's descendants to rule the country.[10] On the other hand, some of the sub-groups aligned with Hadi also describe the conflict as a "holy jihad" against the invading "*Rawafedh*," a word used to refer to the Shi'a in general and in Yemen to the Zaidi people coming from the North.[11] These characterizations play off of the history of religious divisions within Yemen to help fuel today's conflict.

Current Conflict and the Role of Regional Actors

Following President Saleh's removal from power, his supporters and the Houthis formed an alliance of convenience against the internationally recognized Hadi government and rejected the GCC plan for a unity government. In an attempt to push the Yemeni government from power, Houthi-led protests escalated when the Houthis stormed and seized control of Yemen's capital city of Sana'a on September 21, 2014, leading to the immediate resignation for Prime Minister Mohammed Basindawa and later resignation of President Hadi and his ministers on January 22, 2015. Hadi then retracted his resignation in February 2015 after escaping to-

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8   Albaradoni, A. (1993). Culture and Revolution in Yemen. *Alhadathan Press, 3rd edition*. Salmoni, B.A., Loidolt, B., and Wells, M. (19 June 2017). Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon. *RAND National Defense Research Institute*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG962.pdf

9   Al-Maqtari, B. The evolution of militant Salafism in Taiz. *Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies*. Retrieved from http://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/4843

10   Al-Maqtari, B. (29 September 2017). The evolution of militant Salafism in Taiz. *Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies*. Retrieved from http://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/4843

11   Ghaleb, S. (March 2015). Viewpoint: The War Project at a Time of Representation Monopoly in Yemen. *BBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2015/03/150310_yemen_politics

the southern city of Aden. By March 2015, the Houthi-Saleh forces had advanced further south and captured the cities of Taiz and Aden, with March 22nd considered to be the start date of Yemen's ongoing war. The Houthi gains were eventually fought back by the internationally-recognized government, as the "Arab Coalition," a Saudi-led military coalition of 11 Arab countries, attacked Houthi positions in a series of airstrikes known as "Operation Decisive Storm" that took place from March 25, 2015 until April 21, 2015.

The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen's conflict stems from their regional rivalry with Iran. To the Saudis, the Houthi movement embodies a threat of Iranian encroachment, especially near the Houthi strongholds in Sa'ada along the Saudi southern border. Being Zaidi-Shi'a Muslims, the Houthis are seen by some observers as natural allies to the Iranian regime. Therefore, reasons for the Saudi-led intervention extend beyond a desire for stability on their southern border; many consider Saudi efforts in Yemen as more broadly an action to protect their regional leadership, to stymie Iran's growing regional influence, and to protect against perceived threats to Saudi sovereignty. There is also the internal Saudi unrest in the eastern area of Saudi Arabia, which is populated with Shi'a followers. This area has witnessed many demonstrations against the Saudi ruling regime, and there is a Saudi fear of Iranian influence on these Shi'a followers to destabilize KSA. The Saudi-led coalition eventually rebranded the military campaign to extricate Houthi forces as "Operation Restoring Hope," and this campaign is ongoing.

The current conflict – a kaleidoscope of centuries-old religiosocial and geographic tensions, 20th century grievances of under-development and weak governance, opportunistic transnational Salafi groups, and external, regional rivalries – continues with limited pathways to a national resolution in sight. A full-out military victory, for either the Houthi-Saleh bloc or the Saudi-backed Hadi government, is improbable. The official UN-led peace process has not yet produced major gains, though the recent appointment of Martin Griffiths as the new Special Envoy in March 2018 seeks to reinvigorate the process. Even if the peace process does play out and results in a peace agreement, it must be married with acceptance for peace and coexistence at the local level.

CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN TAIZ

Yemen's historical political and religious dynamics are evident in and around its third-largest city, Taiz, which has been a flash point of the current civil war. Located in central-western Yemen, Taiz is the capital of the Taiz Governorate and has approximately 600,000 residents. Once serving as the capital of Yemen, Taiz is an important economic and industrial center and remains a cultural capital of the country. It is also strategically located between the north and the south of the country and overlooks the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab strait. Therefore, political and military control of Taiz not only offers economic and geographic advantage but also symbolic victory.

On February 11, 2011, Taiz was the first city to protest against ex-president Saleh's regime. This movement, known as the "February 11th Peaceful Revolution," was followed by military clashes between Saleh's forces and

protesters consisting of tribesmen affiliated with the Islah party and supported by Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, an ex-Saleh ally and military strongman.[12] The most recent military confrontation in Taiz began in March 2015, when citizens of Taiz refused the occupation of the city as a reinforcement point for Houthi-Saleh troops fighting in the southern government-held city of Aden against Hadi's Government and its affiliated groups. Previously, in an attempt to prevent further violence in Taiz, city officials and community leaders, led by former governor Shoqi Hail, met in July 2014 and agreed to remain neutral like the neighboring city of Ibb.[13] However, clashes between Houthi-Saleh and anti-Houthi parties broke out following the injuries and deaths of protesters during demonstrations decrying the Houthi hold in Taiz,[14] and the planned neutrality was broken. As the Houthis withdrew from their southernmost positions in Aden, Tazi became one of the *de facto* frontlines dividing the Hadi-controlled areas from the Houthi-controlled areas.

Taiz has seen the most instances of armed conflict in comparison to all other governorates in Yemen, experiencing 22% of incidents of armed conflict and 28% of conflict-related deaths from January 2017 to March 2018.[15] The conflict in Taiz and Yemen more broadly is nested within the ongoing regional conflicts and international political trends. From the current Saudi-Iranian rivalry to the historical divide between Sunni and Shi'a, the situation in Taiz cannot be extricated from the broader context. The dissatisfaction with government and the widespread desire for regime change in Yemen is also impossible to remove from the broader trends occurring elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. It stands as an example of the confluence of international rivalries and domestic grievances and divides. As of the date this report was researched and written, Taiz remains at a standstill, as Houthi and Pro-Hadi forces vie for control of the city.

Considering this complex situation, Search set out to conduct this research to examine in detail the situation in Taiz and understand the conflict's drivers, inhibitors, impacts and prospects for peace. Researchers conducted a small-n study utilizing Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), as well as past research and publicly available data, to understand local perspectives on the conflict and opportunities to build peace in Taiz. It is important to note that this research reflects individual perspectives and is representative of the group who participated in the research; large-scale qualitative and quantitative studies are required to expand these analyses and generalize findings to the broader population. The full set of research questions as well as data analysis tools can be found in Appendix 2.

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12   Islah is a Yemeni Sunni Islamist party established in 1990 by former members of the GPC and the Muslim Brotherhood. Islah embodies a mix of tribal influences and is less ideologically cohesive than other Islamist groups in the region. Further information on the history and composition of the Islah can be found at: Hamzawy, A. (November 2009). Between Government and Opposition: The Case of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform. *International Crisis Group*. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/files/yemeni_congragation_reform.pdf
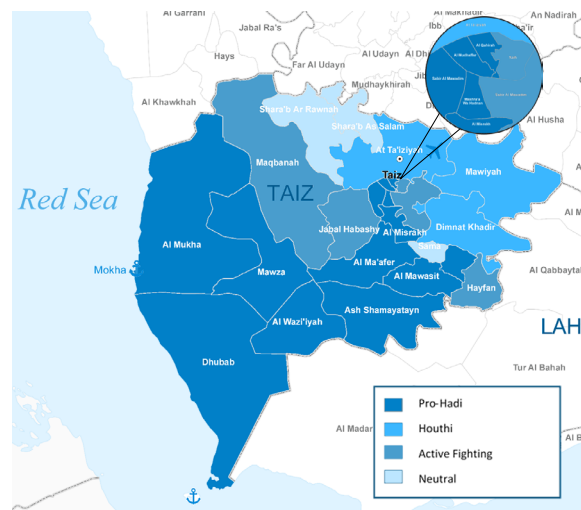
13   Al-Akhali, E. (09 March 2015). Taiz will not be natural again. *Mareb Press*. Retrieved from www.marebpress.net/articles.php?lng=arabic&aid=167&id=41215

14   Arab World News. (21 March 2015). Demonstrations in Taiz against the expansion of the Houthis. *Russia Today Online*. Retrieved from https://arabic.rt.com/features/777775-

15   Clionadh, R., Linke, A., Hegre, H., and Karlsen. J. (2010). Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data. *Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651–660.*

Forces Controlling Areas of Taiz

While the resistance to Houthi and Saleh forces in Taiz initially consisted of individuals who were joined by some Hadi-affiliated military units, members of the Islah party, and Salafis, the actors in the conflict have changed after three years of fighting. Following the assassination of President Saleh in December 2017, the Houthis acquired control of the eastern area of Al-Houban and northern areas such as Highways 40 and 60 within Taiz, and they controlled all areas surrounding the city except a southern passageway. More recently, the Houthis were pushed out of the center of the city of Taiz to the suburbs, except for the eastern part of the city. In the countryside, pro-Hadi forces pushed Houthis out of areas such as Bab El-Mandeb, Mukha, Al-Selw, and recently Mawza, Al-Wazi'iyah, and areas of Maqbanah.

Within the areas that are not controlled by the Houthis, Hadi's government forces, supported by the Arab Coalition, remain the primary actor. These army units share the control of the city with Islah party fighters, as well as an Islamist group led by Abo Al-Abbas and supported by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.[16] The non-Houthi controlled area also has some pockets in which Al Qaeda exercises control. The army, represented by military police, controls most of the official offices. Although there are no formal borders or barriers, the city is virtually divided by Jamal Street with the Islah party and its allies controlling the northern part of the city and Abo Al-Abbas group, Al-Qaeda, and other small groups controlling the south. As a result, Hadi's government faces many obstacles in controlling some parts of the city.[17]

The Conflict in Taiz by the Numbers[18]

The residents of Taiz have seen the most instances of armed conflict in comparison to all other governorates in Yemen. Taiz Governorate contains Taiz city and the strategic port city of Mukha, which have both borne the brunt of the current multi-front war. Of the 9,600 reported instances of armed conflict – which include remote violence, ground battles, and targeting of civilians – between January 2017 and March 2018, 22% (2,075) of those instances occurred in the Taiz Governorate. In terms of fatalities, the Governorate has also

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16   UAE is engaged in Yemen as part of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition, with the focus of its military engagement in the south. While nominally allies with Saudi Arabia, the two nations' objectives and allies in the Yemen conflict are frequently at odds. UAE is backing many southern secessionist militias and notably clashed with Hadi loyalists over control of the Aden airport in early 2017. Salisbury, P. (December 2017). Yemen: National Chaos, Local Order. *Chatham House, Middle East and North Africa Programme.* Retrieved from https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/research/2017-12-20-yemen-national-chaos-local-order-salisbury2.pdf
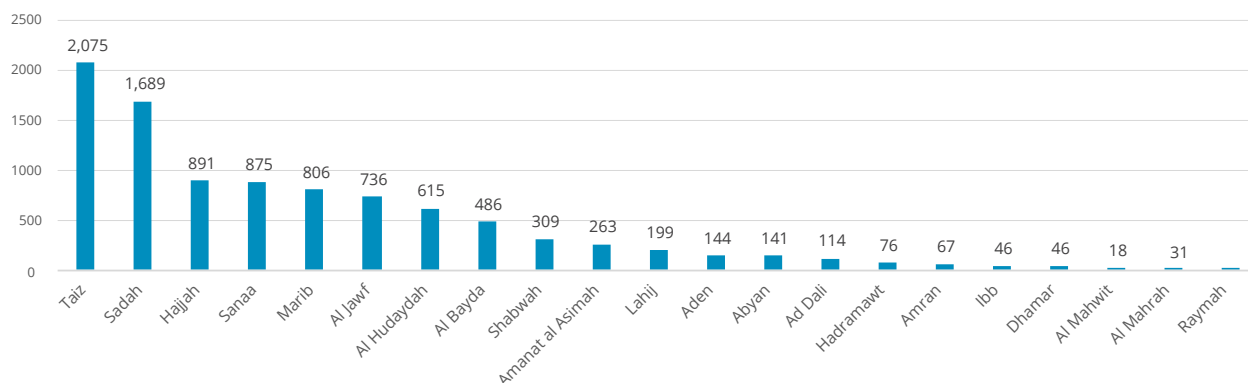
17   United Nations, Security Council, *Letter dated 26 January 2018 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen mandated by Security Council resolution 2342 (2017) addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S.2018/68 (26 January 2018), available from https://www.al-arabi.com/ArticleFiles/20182151911217046365431868l7047760.pdf.

18   The statistics in this section are drawn from Clionadh, R., Linke, A., Hegre, H., and Karlsen. J. (2010). Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data. *Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651–660.*

seen the largest number of deaths over the same period, with nearly 28% (6,667) of the 24,132 reported oc-
curring in Taiz. Taiz city itself has seen 330 instances of armed conflict from January 2017 to March 2018,
resulting in 1,145 civilian and combatant fatalities. Given that Taiz city is more densely populated than other
areas of the Governorate, this fighting has also had a significant negative impact on the city's infrastructure,
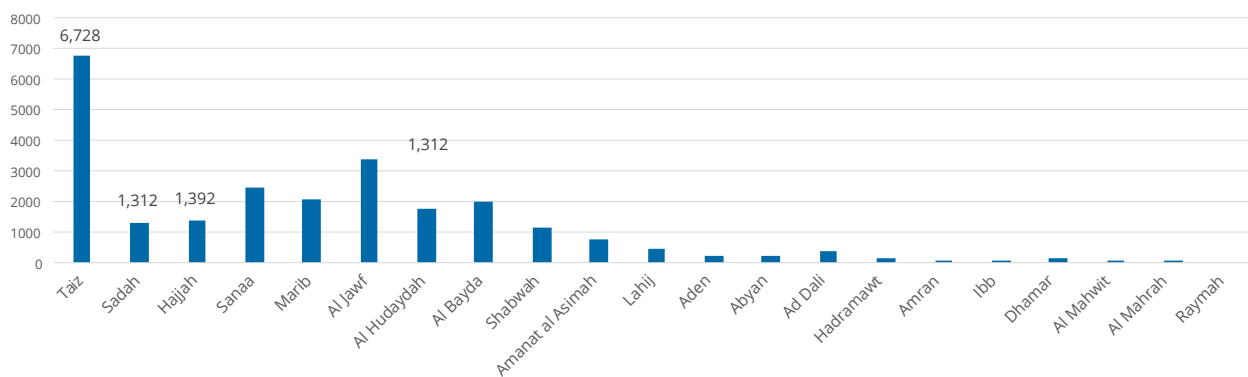buildings, and homes.

Reported Instances of Armed Conflict by All Governorates
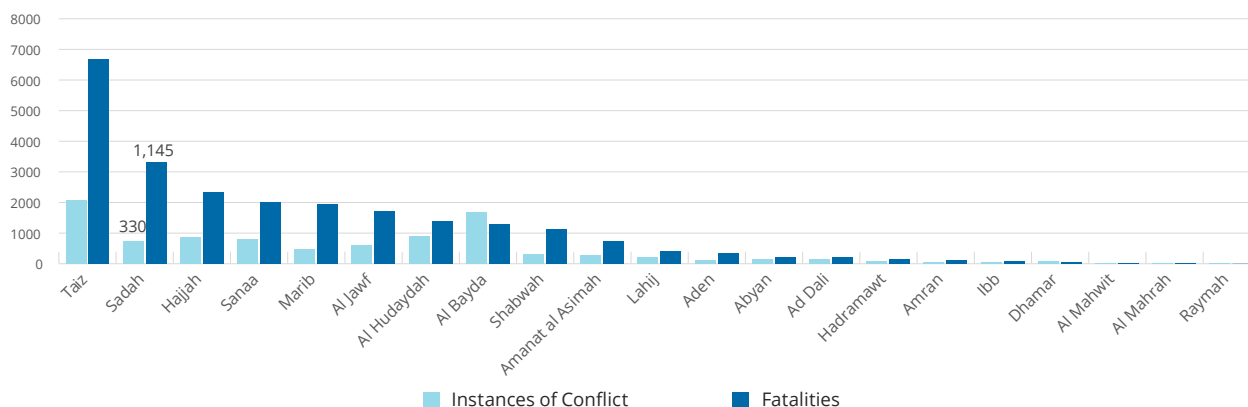January 2017 - March 2018

Reported Fatalities by All Governorates
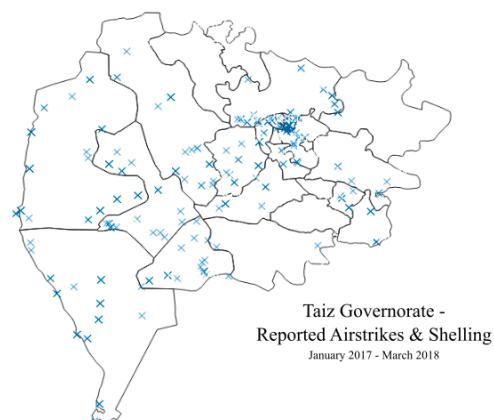January 2017 - March 2018

Reported Instances of Conflict & Fatalities within Taiz Governorate
January 2017 - 2018

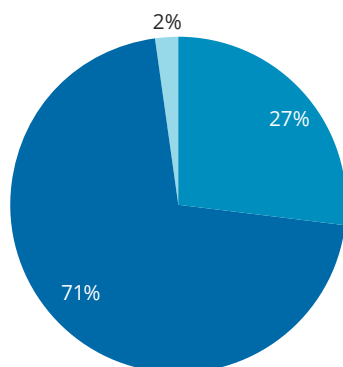■ Instances of Conflict   ■ Fatalities

There are three general types of violence occurring in Yemen today: remote violence, ground battles, and targeting of civilians:

- **Remote violence**, a catch-all term for various forms of airstrikes and shelling, is the most common type of violence in the current conflict and represents 71% of all reported instances of armed conflict from January 2017 to March 2018. While remote violence does not deliberately target civilians, it is known to have a disproportionate effect on civilians, especially women and children,[19] and has large-scale and long-term negative effects on vital infrastructure, such as roads, waterways, and power grids.[20] Comparatively, the Taiz Governorate has seen less remote violence than other areas, though these attacks still comprise 63% of the total instances of armed conflict in the Governorate.
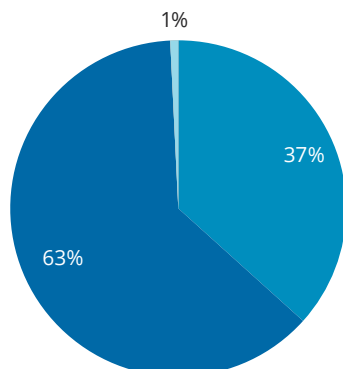

Taiz Governorate -
Reported Airstrikes & Shelling
January 2017 - March 2018

**Types of Armed Conflict
in All Governorate**

January 2017 - March 2018

**Types of Armed Conflict
in Taiz Governorate**

January 2017 - March 2018

- Ground Fighting
- Air Strikes & Shelling
- Targeting Civilians

- **Ground battles** are instances of armed conflict involving ground forces, using small arms and light weapons, tanks, or armored vehicles to fight over specific territory. This type of fighting makes up 27% of all reported instances of armed conflict in Yemen and 37% in Taiz Governorate. The higher portion of ground fighting in and around Taiz relative to the rest of the country reflects its strategic importance as a point of control for both sides.

The deliberate **targeting of civilians** by all armed forces makes up less than 2% of all current reported instances of armed violence throughout Yemen and less than 1% in Taiz Governorate. Current data suggests that deliberate targeting of civilians is not a strategic component to either side's war effort and the targeting of civilians is antithetical to a primary goal of both the pro-Hadi forces and the Houthis in their struggle to win recruits and legitimacy. In the time period examined, there were 16 reports of attacks against civilians in Taiz resulting in 37 deaths. Of these attacks, eight were perpetrated by Houthi forces, three by Hadi forces, and five by unidentified armed groups. However, the figure does demonstrate Houthi and Hadi forces' failures to create consistent command and control structures regulat-

19 UNAMA Human Rights Service. (12 October 2017). Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Quarterly Report. *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.* Retrieved from https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_quarterly_report_1_january_to_30_september_2017_-_english.pdf

20 Sowers, J. L, Weinthal, E., and Zawahri, N. (7 September 2017). Targeting environmental infrastructures, international law, and civilians in the new Middle Eastern wars. *Security Dialogue, Vol 48, Issue 5.* Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0967010617716615

ing all combatants. While intentional attack against civilians are relatively limited, other forms of violence affect and threaten the day-to-day lives of civilians and lead to civilian deaths, as this report explores further on.

The conflict has ebbed and flowed over time and has also shifted from rural to urban and vice versa within Taiz. Instances of armed violence and fatalities reached a peak in the Governorate as a whole in January 2017, when fighting was heavily concentrated at Mukha. However, when violence around the Governorate overall was at its lowest, in July 2017, Taiz city saw a spike in deaths due to conflict compared to previous months. Another spike in fatalities occurred in Taiz city in January 2018. In addition, there are also regular clashes between some anti-Houthi fighting groups in Taiz city over economic resources, such as capturing revenues from markets and shops. These spikes coincide with specific strategic developments and political events, such as increased fighting after Houthi forces assassinated their once-ally Saleh in December 2017 and consolidated power, a topic that this report explores in more detail in the next section.

Current Major Combatant Forces in Taiz

Houthi Forces:

After the assassination of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh on December 4, 2017, pro-Saleh sub-groups and military units came under the command of the Houthis. All Houthi forces are generally referred to as "The Army and Popular Committees." However, the sub-formations of troops commanded by the Houthis are:

- **Army** – Formerly pro-Saleh elements of the Yemeni Army currently commanded by the Houthis.
- **Republican Guard and Special Forces** – An elite group of pro-Saleh military forces that were led by Saleh's son, Ahmed, and currently commanded by the Houthis.
- **Special Security Force (SSF)** – Previously the Central Security Forces (CSF) - semi-military forces units allied to ex-president Saleh and led by his nephew, Yahya.
- **Popular Committees** – Tribal fighters commanded by Houthis.

Pro-Hadi Forces:

Formal military and security units that are allied to Hadi and supported by the Arab Coalition:

- **22nd Mechanical Brigade**
- **35th Armored Brigade**
- **17th Infantry Brigade**
- **Military Police Forces**
- **Special Security Forces**

Informal units and groups allied to Hadi-government:

- **Al-Sa'alik Brigade** – A group of fighters led by Majed Mahyoob and Al-Hussain bin Ali. Formed at the start of the conflict, they describe themselves as independent and are very active in Taiz.

- **Abu Al-Abbas Militia** – A Salafi armed group led by Abu Al-Abbas (Adil Abduh Fari). This militia is aligned with pro-Hadi forces against the Houthis and was financed by Saudi Arabia and UAE until the United States deemed the group to be an Al-Qaeda and Islamic State supporter in 2017.

- **The Student Brigade** – A group of fighters, mostly formed by university students and graduates, led by Abdo Hamoud Al-Sagheer, a math teacher from Taiz.

- **Hasm Militia** – A group of fighters led by Adnan Ruzaiq, a military man from the southern Shabwa Governorate. Later this group also became known as the Fifth Presidential Brigade.

- **Tribal forces** – Allied to Hadi-government, they are mainly affiliated to the Islah party, Nasri party, and independents.

Other Armed Groups:

These groups take advantage of insecurity to promote their own interests and exist in some neighborhoods:

- **Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula** – The international, non-state armed group's local affiliate in Yemen, led in Taiz by Hashem Al-Sanaani.

- **Islamic State** – An international, non-state armed group with a Salafi ideology.

It is important to note that most Houthi and anti-Houthi fighters in Taiz are from Taiz and northern governorates. However, there are some insignificant numbers from other governorates such as Ibb, Al-Dalie, and Raymah. After Al-Qaeda was pushed out of Al-Mukalla city in Hadramout Governorate, some Al-Qaeda members moved to Taiz and joined the anti-Houthi fighters.[21]

As of April 2018, Pro-Hadi forces control the coastal areas of Taiz Governorate and much of the southern-central areas, stemming from their control further south in Aden, while the Houthis hold the north-east regions of the Governorate, including the northern edge of Taiz City. Active fighting continues in the central regions of the Governorate and along touch points between Houthi and pro-Hadi areas, such as Hayfan district. Due to geographical constraints and a lack of strategic significance, some areas outside the city center are free of active armed conflict.

Local Perspectives on the Drivers of the Conflict

The individuals we interviewed in Taiz primarily highlighted four key drivers of participation in today's conflict:

- **Weak governance**: The recent history of corruption, lack of centralized government, and perceptions of injustice from the ruling authorities in Sana'a, Yemen's capital, have led some of the residents of Taiz to support the opposition. *"This centralized power in the circles surrounding ex-president Saleh caused severe marginalization for Taiz and some other governorates,"* noted one Key Informant. Most interviewees have

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21   This is how Al Qaeda's activity in Taiz has increased. (9 September 2017). *The New Arab.* Retrieved
from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/2017/9/8/%D9%87%D9%83%D8%B0%D8%A7-
%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B8%D9%85-%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B7-%D8%A7%D9%
82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%
D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/

also lost confidence in the Hadi government and its policies, as they felt that it was the ineffectiveness of the government that allowed for "Houthi occupation," a term used by the majority of FGD and KII respondents.

- **Control by force**: As armed groups obtain new territory through military power, they have continued holding these areas with force. As a result, residents reported feeling as though they had no choice but to accept the new ruling authority. *"People have to cope with the controller, there is no freedom. If you are in the Houthi-controlled areas, you have to be anti-Hadi and his allies, and vice versa when you are in the anti-Houthi controlled areas,"* said Kamal, a religious man from Taiz. *"In Houthi-controlled areas of Taiz, you cannot ask for services, goods, or even salaries because you will be accused of being with the aggression on Yemen,"* said Muneer, a FGD participant.

- **Persistent political and community divisions**: Most Taiz residents we interviewed believed that the Houthis should not control Taiz, but they had significant disagreements over politics and management of their city. *"We all agree on pushing the Houthis out of Taiz, but we are politically divided,"* said Shoqi, a FGD participant in Taiz. *"Unlike other governorates, especially northern ones, Taiz has always been politically active, and most parties started off in Taiz or with people from Taiz. Therefore, people in Taiz are divided between parties,"* said an expert on Taiz's history in a KII. While the most influential political parties in Taiz are the Islah party and Almotamar (the General People's Congress), many politically independent individuals blame the parties for causing and continuing the war. In some instances, these political divisions intersect with and compound existing community grievances, pushing people align to behind fighting parties. For instance, a large portion of the community of Al-Hashamah, located in Ataizyah, supported the Houthis, and some community members felt that this was a way of taking revenge against the neighboring area of Al-Mekhlaf over historical rivalries and land disputes, according to local interviews.

- **Biased media**: Both the Houthi and pro-Hadi factions have their own media platforms that fuel the ongoing conflict, advocating for their own views and legitimacy. In addition to TV channels, radio stations, and newspapers, there are also websites and social network pages for this purpose.[22] Whereas media is divided into two major sides, pro-Houthi and pro-Hadi, the latter is also divided between major parties that have roles in Taiz, such as official state authorities, Islah party, the General People's Congress, Nasri party, and the Communist party.

Local Perspectives on the Social and Economic Impacts of the Conflict

Almost every aspect of life in Yemen has been severely affected by this conflict. Individiuals that we interviewed highlighted seven key social and economic impacts of the conflict today in Taiz:

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22   For instance, after taking control of Sana'a, Houthis took control of all formal media platforms. Later, the Hadi government made its versions of these platforms with the same names, starting with TV channels, news agencies, newspapers, and websites. Houthis also have their own platforms, such as **Almasirah** and **Alsahat** TV channels and plenty of websites. Islah has **Suhail** and **Yemen Shabab** TV channels and countable websites. The communist and Nasri parties have their websites, **aleshteraky.com** and **alwahdawi.net** respectively. Al-Motamar (GPC) has **Yemen Today TV** and other websites. Salafies also have **Rushd TV** and other websites.

Lack of Security and the Psychosocial Impact

The many serious implications of the war in Yemen, ranging from the population's frequent exposure to violence to widespread insecurity, food shortages, disease, rampant and accelerating poverty, fractured social ties, and a lack of basic social services, have been immense stressors on the population that significantly heighten the threat of widespread deterioration of mental health. While there is currently a lack of adequate data on the general status of mental health in Yemen, the available information suggests that much of the population is likely suffering adverse psychosocial and emotional well-being consequences, such as depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.[23]

"Kids now simulate the war in their games; they turn sticks into guns, and they act as sides of the conflict, some of them depict Houthis, and some others depict resistance, and so on. Once I gave a child a piece of paper and a pen to draw anything, but surprisingly he drew a rocket hitting a house," Noriah during a focus group in Taiz.

"This is a friendly shell," Widad said sarcastically, when she heard a shell exploding in a near neighborhood during our FGD. Thousands of people escaped from Taiz when the military clashes broke out. Some went to their home villages, some moved to other cities and started businesses, and others moved to other cities to stay with their relatives. Nevertheless, the majority of people stayed in Taiz. Security is very fragile, and citizens of the city reported being in constant fear, an effect one FGD participant described as "*fear of the sky and fear of the ground.*" This includes the fear of stray shells, rockets, or bombs as well as clashes between gunmen in the streets. Thousands of people are displaced in the city because of the clashes in Taiz and the nearby areas. For those who are still in Taiz, there is no escape from the war, and they have had to adapt to everything the conflict brings. *"At the beginning of the conflict, we used to run when we heard a shell or a rocket. Now the shell hits a street, and kids are playing in the other,"* said Nazik, a FGD participant.

Yemen's children have been particularly affected, as many of them cannot remember a time of peace. According to UN sources, Yemeni children face extreme fear and emotional suffering due to the war, and the recruitment of child soldiers has increased exponentially.[24] It is hard to quantify the psychological trauma suffered by children. As most of the families in Taiz province are struggling to provide their children with food, the attention and resources they are able to dedicate to mental health is minimal.[25]

Lack of Access to Education

As a result of the war, the formal education system collapsed, deeply affected by ongoing fighting and shelling, lack of electricity and resources, and lack of pay for teachers. When the war broke out, many schools were unable to operate, and some public schools were turned into military camps. 468 out of 1624 schools were closed

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23   Al-Maqtari, B. (29 September 2017). The Impact of War on Mental Health in Yemen: A Neglected Crisis. *Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies.* Retrieved from https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/5119

24   What is cholera? (24 March 2016). *BBC News.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/arabic/science-and-tech-40028775 Videotaped more than 12,000 casualties and 91 cholera deaths in Taiz. (20 June 2017). *Al – Alam channel.* Retrieved from http://www.alalam.ir/news/1985841

25   Al Qalisi, M. (11 March 2017). Yemen's children suffer untold psychological damage. *The National World.* Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/world/yemen-s-children-suffer-untold-psychological-damage-1.52460

in Taiz Governorate, preventing about 250,000 students from attaining an education.[26] Volunteer teachers have resorted to providing lessons to children in their homes. These informal teachers gather children of every neighborhood into a house and take turns teaching them, though this system will likely be insufficient in the long-term when students are able to return to school after the conflict ends. While our research and local staff noted that some schools are now arms-free and are beginning once again to receive students after three years of conflict, the education process has not fully normalized due to outbreaks of violence, shellings, and absent teachers. For example, some teachers joined the fighting for the income provided by the warring parties. *"A lot of teachers joined Hadi-government army in Mareb or Al-Jawf just to get two thousand Yemeni Rial a day. People are poor and will do whatever it takes to feed their families,"* said Nabil during a focus group in Taiz. Because of the lack of formal public education, private schools are a phenomenon in Houthi- and Hadi-controlled areas that have stepped in to fill this gap. *"The fighting groups are destroying the public education purposefully because they want to make money,"* Nabil added. *"A lot of families pay lots of money for these private schools not only for educational purposes, but also to save their sons from joining the fighting groups,"* says Latifah, an FGD participant.

Lack of Access to Basic Goods, Services, and Medical Care

As a result of road blocks leading into Taiz and the collapse of the Yemeni Rial, the food and water available to Taiz's citizens at the market have become increasingly expensive. Some prices have more than doubled compared to what they were before the crisis. Despite efforts by some local and international groups to provide humanitarian assistance, supplies do not meet the real need, with FGD participants noting that small food portions were being received as rarely as every three months for a large family. Additionally, fighters reportedly have forced the distribution teams of some international organizations to give their affiliates and fighters the majority of the supplies to use them for recruitment purposes, buying loyalty, or purchasing silence. Because of harassment and threats from these armed groups, most international humanitarian NGOs have left Taiz city and moved to the neighboring city, Al-Turbah, and now operate and manage their activities in Taiz city remotely through local partners. This has created some new challenges, as some local NGOs lack operational capacity and may face more interference from armed groups.

Compounding the lack of access to food and water, there are only two public hospitals and one military hospital to serve more than half a million people in Taiz. These hospitals get some support from international NGOs and organizations, yet they are still short of the necessary medicine because of the conflict, with some centers focused on diabetes and renal failure closing because of lack of medicine and others not being able to provide services people need. People who can afford it go to private hospitals to get very expensive medical care. *"I consider private hospitals as war criminals,"* says Nabil. *"Your son or mother might die in front of you just because you do not have money,"* added Mohammed. A cholera epidemic has also deepened the problems facing residents of Taiz. From May 2017 to January 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) recorded 62,371

26   Al-Falahi, A. (6 March 2016). More than 250,000 students are denied education in Taiz. *Arabic21.*
            Retrieved from https://arabi21.com/story/892526/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-
            %D8%A3%D9%83%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-250-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-
            %D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%
            8A%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B2

cases of cholera in Taiz, which is about 20 cases per 1,000 people. In that same period, cholera led to 187 deaths in Taiz Governorate according to WHO figures.[27] Given that cholera is an easily preventable disease that arises from unclean drinking water and can be treated through immediate rehydration and medical care, these figures speak to the lack of services and treatment available in Taiz. Due to the lack of public healthcare and extremely high costs of private healthcare, barriers to mobility additionally play a major factor in the ability of those who are sick to seek treatment.

Most public services, such as health, water, and electricity, have also vanished since the beginning of the conflict. *"What services are you asking about?"* asked Nabil, a Key Informant, angrily when asked about the availability of public services. *"There are zero services in Taiz,"* he added. Prices for basic goods are very high, having increased by more than 72% compared to before the war, largely due to the blockade of all Houthi-controlled roads to the city except the southern entrance which is under Hadi government control.[28] Garbage and lack of electricity are problems throughout the city. Streets are frequently full of garbage, and *"people who can afford to buy solar power systems have light, but those who cannot live in the dark,"* according to Habibah, a FGD participant.

Economic Struggles

These issues are compounded by a severe lack of financial resources and economic opportunity in Taiz today. As of October 2016, both the Hadi-government and Houthi authorities stopped giving salaries to the 1.2 million government employees in Yemen, including 67,000 in Taiz alone. This further escalated the deterioration of the Yemeni economy and the 35% unemployment rate that existed prior to the outbreak of the conflict. Five billion Yemeni Rial (more than ten million USD) was lost from the Taiz economy due to the suspension of government sector salaries, according to a KII with an expert on Taiz affairs.[29] Houthis and other armed groups are enforcing levies and taxes under different pretexts such as "supporting military efforts" and "protection charges," which further exacerbate economic difficulties.

Barriers to Mobility

Where there are no formal prohibitions or barriers on movement within Hadi-government controlled areas or the Houthi-controlled areas of the city, travel has been highly affected by infrastructure damage and insecurity. *"Whoever goes out after seven at night might not come back home,"* says Kamal, a FGD participant. When moving from the Houthi-controlled territory to the Hadi-government side of the city or vice versa, a person must travel in a 4x4 vehicle along Alakroudh road, a narrow, unpaved mountainous road, for approximately four to six hours to travel a distance that used to take about ten minutes, due to the Houthi blockade of this road. Sometimes, because this road does not accommodate two lanes in both directions, groups of cars have

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27   World Health Organisation. (26 November 2017). Yemen: Cholera Outbreak Epidemiology Update Data. *HDX.* Retrieved from https://data.humdata.org/dataset/yemen-cholera-outbreak-daily-epidemiology-update

28   A report for the economic media: 25% The rate of increase of basic materials during the year 2017 and 22 million people need assistance in Yemen. (February 2018). *Economic Media.* Retrieved from http://economicmedia.net/ar/?p=1380

29   Al-Maitami, M. Inflation of the State in Yemen. *CIPE.* Retrieved from http://www.cipe-arabia.org/files/pdf/Feature_Service/Re-evaluation_of_the_Yemeni_State.pdf

to reverse down a mountain to make space for the cars coming from the opposite direction. This critical road is also full of military checkpoints controlled by the Houthis and Hadi government. Due to the division of the city, families living on opposite sides have been unable to visit each other for months, if not years. This immobility has led to severe suffering for those in emergency situations. *"My niece had renal failure, and when we wanted to rescue her out of Taiz, she died on her way,"* said Muneer, a FGD participant. The front line that divides the city is full of mines and covered with snipers from both sides, further reducing mobility.

Even for daily tasks, mobility is limited. *"We cannot go shopping as we used to do,"* says Asma. Due to road blocks, such as the Al-Houban highway leading to Aden and Sana'a, mobility in and out of Taiz remains limited. "*We do not go out of the city unless it is a matter of life or death*," says Ahmed.

Gender Dynamics in the Current Conflict

While men and boys make up the vast majority of direct victims of armed conflict, forced recruitment, and arbitrary detention, women and girls are more at risk of injury or death from airstrikes, kidnapping, and sexual and gender based violence.[30] Airstrikes and mortars pose a physical threat to women and girls who culturally tend to stay indoors and are more likely to be injured by collapsing building and falling debris. Following the deaths of their husbands, brothers, or sons, many Yemeni women face the challenge of becoming the primary income earner and head of household for their families in a society that often has cultural barriers for women to earn an income equivalent to that of the deceased male relative. The community in Taiz is very conservative and mostly dominated by men; therefore, women often find themselves either jobless or working low-paying jobs. These families are also at higher risk of exploitation and abuse.[31] There are risks of violence, harassment, and sexual and labor exploitation, as well as early, child, and forced marriage, due to the need for income and protection.[32] Furthermore, more than 3 million people are displaced, and 52% of the internally displaced persons (IDP) population in Yemen are women. Displacement and the breakdown of protection mechanisms have dramatically increased the vulnerability of women and girls to violence, including domestic violence.

However, it is important to note that the roles of women in the conflict have not only been as victims, as some women in Taiz have cooked and furnished shelters for soldiers, recruited fighters, and countered the traditional rules that prohibited their participation in armed conflicts by taking up arms with pro-Hadi forces against the Houthis and becoming trained police officers or snipers on the frontlines.[33] Combatant or victim, warrior

30   Rohwerder, B. (30 March 2017). Conflict and gender dynamics in Yemen. *Institute of Development Studies.* Retreieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/068-Conflict%20and%20Gender%20dynamics%20in%20 Yemen.pdf

31   Conflict and Gender Relations in Yemen. (November 2016). *Care International, Gender Standby Capacity Project, Oxfam.* Retrieved from https://www.care-international.org/files/files/YemenGenderReport171116.pdf

32   Rohwerder, B. (30 March 2017). Conflict and gender dynamics in Yemen. *Institute of Development Studies.* Retreieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/068-Conflict%20and%20Gender%20dynamics%20in%20 Yemen.pdf

33   Yemeni women: Armed and dangerous. (21 December 2015). *The New Arab.* Retrieved from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/ english/society/2015/12/21/yemeni-women-armed-and-dangerous Al-Sakkaf, N. (25 July 2017). Yemeni women break taboos to join police. *TRT World.* Retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/yemeni-women-break-taboos-to-join-police-9100 Rodrigues, C. and Al Sakkaf, N. (18 October 2015). Women of Taez take up arms against Yemen's rebels. *The National.* Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/world/women-of-taez-take-up-arms-against-yemen-s-rebels-1.64301

or bystander, women in Taiz hold roles as complex as the conflict itself.

Increased Vulnerability to Extremism

The deteriorating circumstances in civil life in Taiz and the breakdown of the salaries system has increasingly left citizens vulnerable to the recruitment by armed groups. Extremist groups, such as Abo Al-Abbas's group or Al-Qaeda, have exploited the lack of economic opportunity, social divisions, and local grievances to recruit new members by offering them monthly income, food supplies, ways to take action on their grievances, methods for empowerment, and sometimes protection.[34]*"Some people move from one side to the another, fighting for who pays more,"* said Norah, a FGD participant. The social culture in Taiz is primarily work-oriented; interviews and FGDs for this study show that local residents identify those who have joined religious extremist or armed groups in Taiz as having done so out of the desire for employment and income rather than extremist ideas.[35] However, compared with the other armed groups, joining extremist groups is still limited in Taiz. Though some Sunni religious extremist groups have used material inducements, religious hate speech, and campaigns telling youths that Houthis had come to Taiz to convert people from Sunni to Shi'a, religious speech in Taiz has a history of being moderate, and communities are generally reluctant to accept the extremist ideations of such groups. While some women have joined armed groups or civilian militias, interviews indicated that women are not joining extremist groups as fighters due to the conservative nature of Yemeni society. Though some women follow their male family members as wives or daughters.

Key Actors and Institutions Preventing and Mitigating Conflict in Taiz

Despite the ongoing violence and divisions in Taiz, there are also important steps being taken to prevent and mitigate conflict by local citizens and supported by international actors. Our study found four particularly important local dynamics that citizens are drawing on for resilience: existing local conflict resolution mechanisms, family ties, the local business community, and international organizations:

- **Local conflict resolution mechanisms:** Throughout the conflict, people in Taiz have struggled to continue daily life due to ongoing violence, absence of security, and lack of access to goods and services. With the semi-absence of formal authorities, community leaders in Taiz, such as tribal sheikhs and neighborhood representatives, have attempted to constructively fill this role by providing spaces for non-violent conflict resolution to civilians through informal, traditional community structures to resolve day-to-day disputes. Additionally, informal arbitration committees have been created by local communities in the absence of national authorities in each neighborhood to judge and settle grievances and daily disputes. These informal mechanisms are trusted by many local citizens and have been utilized for decades in Yemen, often due to mistrust in the formal authorities of government. Although

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34   Maqtari, S. and Smith, K. (August 2017). Pathways for Peace and Stability in Yemen. *Search for Common Ground*. Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pathways-for-Peace-Stability-in-Yemen.pdf

35   Data gathered from other contexts globally have shown that economic factors are rarely the main or only reason why people join violent extremist groups. It is thus noteworthy that in the qualitative research for this study, community members noted financial incentives as a strong motivator, alongside other factors including a need for protection or empowerment. The level to which economic factors are main or singular reason for many Taiz recruits, or whether this is connected to other demographic markers such as income or social class, warrants further exploration and follow on study.

informal actors and institutions often lack the authority necessary to enforce compliance with resolution outcomes, they can be drivers of stability at the grass-roots level because they enable non-violent, community-led conflict resolution. Providing additional resources and capacity to capitalize on these established structures may lead to increased resilience at a local level, regardless of the national and regional nature of the conflict.

- **Family ties**: While family structures have been negatively affected by conflict, including divisions within some families and loss or separation of family members, strong family networks do continue to provide an important social safety net that contributes to resilience in Taiz. A study conducted by the Institute for Development Studies found that the most frequently used strategy to cope with economic stresses of the conflict was to borrow money from family or friends to buy essential items or to borrow food directly.[36] In addition to the financial support, familial links provide emotional support and guidance for those who suffer from conflict-related emotional impacts and trauma. Additionally, many families have taken steps to shield their members, especially fighting-aged sons, from recruitment or conscription to armed groups. Because of fear of recruitment, many families send their sons to other cities, such as Sana'a or Aden, that they deem safer and less saturated by armed group propaganda.

- **Role of local businesses**: Taiz has a robust business and industrial past; however, businesses and markets have been deeply affected by the conflict, and many basic functions have stopped. Unemployment affects up to 60-70% of the population of Taiz, according to informal estimates (formal figures are not currently available given the heavy impact of the conflict in Taiz). Some businesses from Taiz have taken their operations elsewhere, seeking safer markets in which to conduct business; engagement with local businesses from the international private sector is severely lacking, particularly around opportunities for livelihood and income-generating activities. However, the businesses that have remained can be important components of local-level resilience and can serve as connectors within the community, providing stable economic opportunity and income sources during a time of particular need as well as bringing people together. As armed groups tax and charge citizens, enforcing levies and "fundraisers" to support their activities, unemployment and economic struggles are exacerbated and sources of income are more important than ever. Taiz's crime rates have increased dramatically, in large part due to lack of employment and payment to public sector employees, which has resulted in more citizens engaging in illegal trades and crime. This trend of criminality is contrary to the interests of business owners, and increased business opportunities may help alleviate the rise in crime by providing constructive avenues for income generation. Finally, local businesses have demonstrated a willingness to unite around shared interests and rebuild their communities, even during the ongoing conflict. In one example, local businessmen and volunteers created a project that restored community lighting in some areas, which helped curb burglary and break-ins around Muthafar.[37]

- **International organizations** It is worth noting that despite local resiliencies and efforts to mitigate and prevent conflict, needs remain immense due to the scale and impact of the ongoing war, and com-

36   Carter, B. (23 June 2017). Social capital in Yemen. *K4D*. Retrieved from http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/138-Social-capital-in-Yemen.pdf

37   Rising to immense challenges in Taiz, Yemen. *Saferworld*. Retrieved from https://www.saferworld.org.uk/en-stories-of-change/rising-to-immense-challenges-in-taiz-yemen

munity members in Taiz cited the critical importance of international assistance as a driver of stability. For example, groups such as Mercy Corps and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have provided medical assistance, supported food distribution, and have helped occasionally with trash removal. Search and other peacebuilding and development organizations have provided stabilization assistance and support to social cohesion for local communities through bottom-up engagement and capacity building. However, international organizations have faced critical challenges, including unstable funding, harassment by armed groups, and insecurity, which has severely limited the support they are able to provide. Armed groups have tried to dictate activities to benefit themselves, such as allocating shares of food supplies and preventing organizations from conducting activities. Sometimes international organizations have even been directly affected by violence, as was the case with Hanna Lahoud, an ICRC worker who was killed in Taiz by unknown gunmen.[38] As a result of these challenges, most international NGOs have left the city. Nevertheless, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Hadi-government has called all international NGOs to stay in Taiz,[39] and citizens of Taiz recognize the critical need they fill. *"Even though the INGOs and the local organizations did not cover our needs, leaving Taiz is going to compound our problem,"* said Ammar, a FGD participant.

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN TAIZ

> *"We only want to live, nothing more,"* says Mona. *"We are all brothers and sisters, all we want is to live,"* added Hayat.

Despite the ongoing conflict and the immense impact it has had on civilians in Taiz and Yemen more broadly, important opportunities remain to build and bolster local level peace. The key assertion of Search's previous *Pathways to Peace and Stability in Yemen* report holds true today in Taiz, based on the interviews conducted to produce this analysis: "addressing the growing divides within communities now and working to reconcile differences on the local level will engage conflicting groups to peacefully coexist, identify mechanisms and leaders for handling disputes, and create the channels to feed local interests and concerns into national processes."[40] Understanding the nuances of the Taiz context can help local actors and the international community support local-level peacebuilding and reconciliation both now and in the future and also identify similarities with other communities in Yemen where similar dynamics are playing out.

Recommendations for local and international actors to increase peace and reconciliation in Taiz, based on our interviews and discussions, include the following:

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38   Reuters Staff. (21 April 2018). Red Cross says employee killed in Yemen. *Reuters World News.* Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-red-cross/red-cross-says-employee-killed-in-yemen-idUSKBN1HS0HN

39   After the assassination of one of his staff Al-Makhlafi calls on the Red Cross to continue its activities in Taiz governate. (22 April). *Okaz.* Retrieved from https://www.okaz.com.sa/article/1634717

40   Maqtari, S. and Smith, K. (August 2017). Pathways for Peace and Stability in Yemen. *Search for Common Ground.* Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pathways-for-Peace-Stability-in-Yemen.pdf

- **Recognize that some drivers towards conflict participation in Taiz are rooted in longstanding local grievances**. While international dynamics undoubtedly play a role in Yemen's conflict, this research shows that drivers such as weak governance and persistent community and political divides fuel participation in the conflict. At the same time, the extensive socio-economic impact of the conflict has the potential to develop and ingrain new grievances and conflicts, risking Taiz's long-term stability. Efforts to build peace in Yemen should not solely focus on international or high-level national processes to the exclusion of investing in local level peace and efforts to prevent and mitigate local drivers. Peace efforts must account for and include mechanisms to resolve underlying and secondary conflicts that are intertwined with the broader war, including long-standing grievances around governance, relationships between religious groups, land ownership, and equitable access to services. In the face of diminished municipal resources and lack of functioning state-sanctioned conflict mechanisms to resolve conflicts, these divides and grievances become drivers of conflict, adopting the exclusive identity narratives of the broader conflict.

- **Support inclusive and responsive local governance that acknowledges and addresses perceptions of past marginalization within Taiz**. A general distrust in government institutions and officials was clear from the majority of interviews and group discussions conducted for this study. Many citizens of Taiz regard them as incapacitated, inefficient, and corrupt, and many respondents continue to perceive injustice, favoritism, and lack of inclusion. This disconnect between government and citizens is an important driver of the war that we witness in Yemen today. Therefore, to reach any peaceful solution, it is essential that governance structures and systems at all levels are reformed and/or developed in ways that are perceived by locals to be fair and inclusive and promote active citizen engagement where all minority voices are heard and respected.

- **Support those actors and institutions that are already preventing and mitigating conflict in Taiz**. Taiz continues to see locally-rooted efforts to build local-level peace and stability. Current and future efforts to build a more peaceful Yemen should leverage what already shows potential or is working to ensure local buy-in and sustainability. Tribal sheikhs, community representatives, informal arbitration committees, and other local leaders have local credibility and have implemented conflict resolution mechanisms for decades. Family ties have played a critical role in maintaining some basic forms of stability within communities and contributing to community resilience to violence and extremism. This research also highlighted local businesses as a unlikely group that has important potential to build and uphold peace while also undermining economic incentives to participate in violence. The international community and actors in Yemen should provide financial and political support to these traditional mechanisms as key tools for healing local divisions and building resilience, even in times of weak governance and war. International NGOs should invest in building the capacity of these actors and institutions, including conflict sensitivity training for businesses, network and skills building for leaders of traditional mechanisms, and dedicated programming focused on families including psycho-social support, livelihoods programs, preventing violent extremism programming, and social cohesion initiatives. Future conflict resolution efforts should engage the members of these groups as allies and these mechanisms as components of Yemen's long-term peace plans.

- **Begin planning for stabilization and increase service provision activities.** The war has had a crip-

pling effect on Taiz's civilians, from widespread injury and loss of life to massive infrastructure impact and loss of access to goods, services, education, and economic opportunity. This research shows the lack of basic needs, due to both to a lack of services and a lack of access to services resulting from inability to work and generate income, as an important driver of participation in armed groups. In the short-term, increased service provision to civilians in Taiz is needed to provide access to basic goods and services, and in the longer term, income-generating activities and restored market functions are necessary to provide residents with livelihoods and the ability to recover from the conflict in Taiz, which previously had an important economic and industrial role in the country. Engaging with national, regional, and international businesses and reconnecting locals with external markets will be crucial to creating economic recovery and stability in this area of Yemen. Because the city's infrastructure has been so badly damaged due to fighting, stabilization strategies will need to specifically include construction and repair projects that facilitate increased mobility for citizens and commerce. People we interviewed believe that reconstruction and compensations for the destruction and damage should form the basis of any future reconciliation process.

- **Strengthen investment in schools as a space for peacebuilding and learning**. Short-term and longer-term planning must address the education needs of Taiz's youngest citizens, as many schools have been closed or destroyed and private education is out of reach for most families. Lack of education limits young people's future prospects and increases marginalization and grievances, which risks feeding into longer-term cycles of violence. At the same time, schools also have unique potential as spaces for peacebuilding, bringing together citizens from all backgrounds and social groups together to interact. International and local actors should invest in reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools, strengthen both formal and informal education, and providing youth with vocational trainings and livelihood opportunities, in addition to trust building activities and peace education.

- **Recognize psychosocial impact of the conflict and increase access to services.** The psychosocial impact of the war is often overlooked, but it has a major impact on the citizens of Taiz as violence becomes normalized, communities become accustomed to bombardments and fighting, and access to mental health services is limited. It is challenging to think of long-term peace and stability in Taiz without investments in psychosocial support, given the widespread nature of this conflict. International actors, NGOs, and local government should prioritize interventions that provide psychosocial support services to adults and children immediately and in the longer-term, including increased access to mental health care, support to trauma healing initiatives, creation of safe spaces where different community members could come together and strengthen social ties, support for trust building and reconciliation, and peace education.

- **Design gender-specific initiatives that recognize the distinct vulnerabilities and potential of women in Taiz to bolster peace and stability**. This research highlighted risks specific to women in Taiz, as many women find themselves as heads of households, lacking access to jobs and income, and vulnerable to exploitation whether by radical groups or other parties. Many families are moving towards negative coping mechanisms, such as petty crimes, early child marriage, and child labor which also could include child recruitment into the many armed groups operating in the area. Because of the conservative culture in Taiz, women's participation in decision making is generally limited, and in some

areas even women's employment is considered shameful. All of these issues combined have a direct impact on community resilience to violence and to radicalization. Additionally, new and challenging gender dynamics are likely to emerge when men who were fighting return home. Conflict provides an opportunity for societies to re-evaluate previous norms of engagement, including gender dynamics. The international community should seize upon this moment of fluidity and flux to implement multifaceted gender-specific programs promoting women's empowerment, inclusivity in governance, vocational training programs and economic empowerment for female heads of households, and additional research on the role of women in armed and extremist groups. There is also a need to work with both women and men to shift the traditional gender norms on the role of women within Taiz specifically and in Yemen more broadly, and it will be important for gender programs to engage "gender champions" including moderate elders, religious leaders, and/or influential business leaders who could support and advocate for this change.

- **Empower potential "peace champions."** While conflict drivers in Taiz are numerous, there are also a number of influential groups that may act as possible "peace champions," such as religious leaders and the media. Moderate religious leaders remain influential, and local communities tend to hold them in high regard and carefully consider their guidance. International actors should build religious leaders' capacities in advocating for peace, further strengthening and promoting moderate religious speech messages, and helping shift gender norms. Efforts to build intra-religious tolerance in Taiz, particularly between Sunni and Shi'a, will pay long-term dividends for Yemen's future stability. While the role of media in conflict was not the focus of this research, it was noted that the media plays an important role in igniting the conflict, spreading rumors, and rallying supporters from each side of the conflict. There needs to be greater capacity strengthening of existing media outlets to provide training on conflict sensitivity and neutrality, as well as the need to increase support to those neutral reporting agencies that do exist, enhancing their skills and reach.

- **Ensure that local perspectives from Taiz are reflected in any national and international peace dialogues or processes via multi-track engagement**. There is a huge potential for multi-track diplomacy work in Yemen. Given the significant participation of regional and international actors in this conflict, it is crucial that the international community pursue, promote, and support Track I dialogue efforts, inclusive of all key parties, including representatives from Yemeni factions, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran. There is also significant room for Track II diplomacy targeting non-state actors, religious leaders, influential business persons, and civil society organizations with a vested stake in the conflict and future of Yemen. Track II engagement can and should be linked to official Track I processes to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of local communities are mainstreamed into high-level political processes. This will generate greater local-level buy-in for any future political solution, thus increasing its sustainability. Finally, Track III efforts targeting local communities will help to address some of the major Yemeni divisions and tensions. Connecting Zaidi community members with Sunni community members would be an important step, since most armed forces use this religious angle to draw supporters from both sides of the conflict. An integrated, multi-track approach would help to ensure that high-level policies reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge, contributing to the policies' legitimacy and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The roots of the war in Yemen are based in long-time religious and tribal differences, power struggles, political rivalries, ideological divisions, and international participation. In many ways, the current standoff between pro-Hadi and Houthi forces in Taiz is a microcosm of these factors, playing out to the detriment of the people still living there. While adapting to the ever-shifting dynamics of the conflict, the residents of Taiz are suffering physically, psychologically, and economically. These conditions have led some to join in hostilities and extremist groups, while also creating new grievances and divisions that have the potential to impact Taiz's longer-term recovery and stability.

Despite the circumstances, there is both a need and opportunity to invest in peace at the local level in Taiz. Residents of Taiz have shown their dedication, resilience, and self-reliance in spite of the ongoing conflict, including through efforts such as creating informal schools, utilizing ad-hoc information networks, and using traditional mechanisms to resolve disputes. Ultimately if strengthened and utilized at the local level, it is these factors that will help enable peace and stability in Taiz.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: References

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APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, AND LIMITATIONS

<u>Research Questions</u>

To outline a detailed portrait of the current conflict dynamics, the actors and institutions inhibiting conflict, the social and economic impacts of the conflict, and future prospects for resolution in Taiz, the following research questions were formulated to guide the research team's efforts and structure its findings:

1. Understanding conflict dynamics and identifying key actors or institutions driving conflict

1.1: What is the nature of the conflict? What are the root causes of conflict? Is it a primarily political, social, economic, cultural, or ideological conflict? What are the key dividing lines in the society? Which ones have the most potential to lead to violent conflict?

1.2: What are the dynamics which create an environment conducive to violent conflict?

1.3: What are the goals in this conflict? What do the different parties hope to achieve? What incentivizes them to pursue violent conflict? What consequences or gains will they incur if they cease participation in conflict?

1.4: Is there a connection between the current conflict and extremism?

1.5: How vulnerable are the citizens of Taiz to extremism as a result of the current conflict?

1.6: How do actors exert control through threat of violence, provision of services, political/tribal/sectarian affiliation with population, or other tactics?

1.7: How is the conflict manifesting? What are the effects of the conflict and in which physical areas? Who holds power where?

1.8: What is the relationship between conflict actors and the local population? What is the relationship between conflict actors and the national and regional level conflict? Are conflict actors native to Taiz and the surrounding area, or are they forces aligned with other groups elsewhere in the country and/or region?

1.9: What are the most prevalent social divides in the community: political affiliation, sect, tribe, or other? How to individuals define community? What are limits and definition to in-group belonging? What defines "us" versus "them"?

1.10: What is the level of interaction across social lines? Do individuals live in diverse neighborhoods? Is the city segregated along conflict lines, i.e. political affiliation, sect, tribe, other?

2. Identify key actors or institutions inhibiting conflict

2.1: Who is working to mitigate and/or resolve conflict? What relationships, structures, and other work exists to maintain stability and peace in areas less affected by conflict?

2.2: How, if at all, can drivers of stability from less affected areas be scaled up and replicated in other communities in Taiz?

2.3: Who are the missing actors that no one is engaging with, and can we leverage them to increase the opportunities for peace?

2.4: What are the key elements to and nature of community resilience in Taiz?

3. Social and economic impacts of the conflict

3.1: How are the different community members coping with conflict?

3.2: What actors or institutions (formal or informal) are providing communities with basic needs (i.e. food, water, and medicine) and services (i.e. trash removal and other municipal services, security, electricity, and more)? Which social structures and institutions have broken down, and what others remain functioning?

3.3: To what extent is the lack of services and fulfillment of basic needs being exploited by extremists?

3.4: What emergent structures or processes have been created as a result of the conflict?

3.5: What is the level of mobility within Taiz as a result of the conflict? Are individuals able to travel throughout the city, or are there barriers to free and open movement? Are residents easily able to leave and return to Taiz?

3.6: How are communities resolving conflict? What institutions or actors have authority to resolve conflict and enforce resolutions? What are the sources of these institutions' or actors' authority?

4. Prospects for future reconciliation and peace

4.1: What are the opportunities for building peace? What change in the conflict system do you want to cause?

4.2: What organizations/stakeholders are working on resolving conflict, and how can this be leveraged? Where is there complementarity, and where are potential overlaps?

4.3: What do communities want to see from future reconciliation and peace processes? What do residents see as the end goal of reconciliation processes? What is the change they wish to see?

4.4: What types of processes are desired, national level or local level, state-led, civil society-led, and/or other? Who are the actors they would like to facilitate reconciliation processes: government actors, religious actors, tribal leaders, and/or others?

<u>Methodology</u>

This research effort capitalized on open-source data and publicly available research, coupled with original data collection and analysis. The methodology takes a qualitative, small-n approach using purposively sampled Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). An analysis of open source data from Armed Conflict Location Event Data (ACLED)/Yemen Data project provided supplemental and contextual information on the conflict dynamics and was the basis for the GIS and network analysis aspects of the research findings.

<u>Data Collection</u>

Open-Source Data

The research team conducted a detailed desk review of past research and publicly available information from the Armed Conflict Location Event Data (ACLED) project and collected by The Yemen Data Project.

ACLED provides up-to-date data points on conflicts happening around Yemen that are collected through a wide variety of media by local analysts and verified by a global team of researchers. For this research, the team compared datasets from Taiz to Yemen as a whole from January 2017 to March 2018. No data is available on ACLED prior to January 2017.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten experts on the history of the region, the conflict dynamics, and humanitarian assistance. Questions ranged from uniform contextual questions to specific questions relevant to each interviewees' area of expertise. Given a variety of security restrictions and concerns, the research team conducted most KIIs over the phone.

Key Informant Interviews					
Number of People	Field	Expertise	Date	Location	Method
1	Humanitarian Aid	Awareness	Mar. 29, 2018	Taiz / Sana'a	Phone
1	Humanitarian Aid	Gender	Apr. 4, 2018	Taiz / Sana'a	Phone
1	Humanitarian Aid	Food Security	Apr. 4, 2018	Taiz / Sana'a	Phone
1	Religion	Lecturer	Mar. 29, 2018	Taiz	Phone
1	Religion	Masjed Imam	Apr. 3, 2018	Taiz	Phone
2	Gov. Officials	Local Gov.	Apr. 1 and 3, 2018	Taiz	Phone
3	Experts	History and affairs of Taiz	Apr. 1 and 10, 2018	Taiz/ HQ	Phone, Face to Face

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of 42 men and women who were either current or former residents of Taiz and have been affected by the conflict participated in FGDs. These semi-structured focus groups were held in groups of seven participants to generate key insights on the conflict's impact on everyday life in the city. Two FGDs were held with men between the ages of 20 and 34, two were held with men above the age of 35, and two were held with women above the age of 20. The FGDs were held in either Taiz or Sana'a, depending on security.

Focus Group Discussions						
# FGDs	# People	Age Group	Gender	Location	Date	Method
2	14	20 - 34	Male	Sana'a and Taiz	Apr. 4 and 8, 2018	In person
2	14	35 - 59+	Male	Sana'a and Taiz	Apr. 5 and 9, 2018	In person
2	14	20 - 59+	Female	Sana'a and Taiz	Apr. 5 and 9, 2018	In person

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

The research team used a deductive approach to analyze the qualitative data, meaning that the interview guides and focus group discussions were semi-structured to elicit answers for specific points of inquiry to address the research questions. Qualitative data was structured and analyzed using matrices in MS Excel

and Word.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysis

The research team used the ACLED Yemen 2017-2018 conflict dataset which was localized to Taiz to add to the contextual analysis and visualization of the conflict dynamics. Analyses and visualizations of the geolocated conflict data were produced using the QGIS software package.

Limitations

Due to a variety of security and logistical considerations, the research team used a small-n qualitative approach to this research and drew from publicly available data and past research. Therefore, while their input is valuable to understanding the conflict, research participants' perceptions and opinions is only representative of that group. Large-scale qualitative and quantitative studies are required to further expand these analyses and generalize findings to the broader population.

Furthermore, the research team lacked a female facilitator in the field, making a deeper analysis of issues affecting women more difficult. For that reason, this research relied more heavily on external research and data to inform its findings on the gender nexus of the conflict and the impact of the conflict on women. Despite these limitations, this research takes a deep dive into the conflict in Taiz drawing from important input from current and former residents of Taiz as well as key experts. It illustrates key aspects of the conflict upon which future research and programs can be derived.

APPENDIX 3: KII GUIDES

Humanitarian Aid KII Guide

الجزء الأول: توصيف النزاع وتحديد الأطراف الفاعلة فيه:

كيف يمكنك وصف النزاع؟

ما هي الأسباب التي قادت إلى النزاع وخلقت بيئة مواتية له؟

من هي الأطراف المتنازعة؟

ما هي آثار النزاع على المستوى الخدمي والإنساني؟

في حالة استمرار النزاع، ما هي الآثار التي تتوقع حدوثها؟

ما هي المناطق التي يسيطر عليها كل من أطراف النزاع؟

برأيك، هل هناك علاقة بين النزاع القائم والتطرف بشكل عام؟

الجزء الثاني: تحديد المؤسسات/ الجهات التي تخفف من حدة النزاع:

هل هناك دور للمنظمات المحلية أو العالمية برأيك؟

ما هو الدور الذي تقوم به كلا منهما في التخفيف من حدة النزاع؟

كيف يتفاعل كلا من أطراف النزاع والسكان مع أنشطة منظمات المجتمع المدني أو المنظمات الدولية؟

ما الأنشطة التي توصي بها من أجل تخفيف حدة النزاع؟

هل هناك أطراف أخرى تعمل على تخفيف آثار النزاع أو حله؟

كيف يتم الحفاظ على السلام في المناطق التي لم تتأثر بالنزاع أو الأقل تأثرا به؟ وهل يمكن الاستفادة من هذه التجارب أو الحالات لتوسيع نطاق عوامل الاستقرار وزيادة فرص السلام؟

كيف ستؤثر أي عملية مصالحة مستقبلية على الأوضاع الإنسانية في تعز؟

هل هناك شكل معين للمصالحة توصي باستخدامه في تعز؟

الجزء الثالث: التحليل الاجتماعي:

كيف هي حياة الناس في ظل النزاع؟

ما هي الجهات أو المؤسسات (الرسمية وغير الرسمية) التي تزود المجتمعات المحلية بالاحتياجات الأساسية، كالطعام والماء والدواء؟

وماذا عن الخدمات الأخرى مثل إزالة القمامة والخدمات البلدية الأخرى، الأمان، كهرباء، وغيرها؟

هل تعتقد بأن هناك استغلال لنقص الاحتياجات والخدمات من قبل الجماعات المتنازعة؟

ما هي الهياكل أو التنظيمات/المؤسسات التي نشأت نتيجة للنزاع؟

هل الأفراد قادرون على السفر في جميع أنحاء المدينة، أم أن هناك حواجز أمام الحركة الحرة والمفتوحة؟

هل يمكن للسكان مغادرة تعز والعودة إليها بسهولة؟

ما هي العوائق التي تواجه عمل المنظمات المحلية والدولية كنتيجة للحواجز الناتجة عن الحرب؟

Religion leaders KII Guide

الجزء الأول: توصيف النزاع وتحديد الجهات الفاعلة فيه:

كيف يمكنك وصف النزاع الحالي؟ هل هو نزاع سياسي، طائفي، قبلي، مناطقي، أم ماذا؟

ما هي الأسباب التي قادت إلى النزاع؟

من هي الأطراف المتنازعة؟

هل هذه الأطراف المتنازعة من تعز أم أنها من مناطق أخرى؟

برأيك، ما هي أهداف الأطراف المتنازعة من الحرب؟

ما هي العلاقة بين أطراف النزاع والسكان المحليين؟

هل يقتصر النزاع على الجانب العسكري أم أن هناك جوانب أخرى؟

ما هي الآثار التي يخلفها النزاع على المجتمع؟

برأيك، هل هناك علاقة بين النزاع القائم والتطرف بشكل عام؟

الجزء الثاني: تحديد المؤسسات/ الجهات التي تقلل من حدة النزاع:

ما هو دور رجال الدين وقادة المجتمع الآخرين في هذا النزاع؟

هل هناك من يعمل على مساعدة السكان خلال هذا النزاع؟

هل هناك طرف/ أطراف لم تشارك في النزاع؟

من هي الجهات التي يرغب المجتمع منها تسهيل ورعاية أي عملية مصالحة مستقبلية؟ هل هي الجهات الحكومية، رجال الدين، زعماء القبائل، أم غيرهم؟ من غيرهم؟

ماذا تريدون من أي عملية مصالحة مستقبلية أن تحقق؟

الجزء الثالث: التحليل الاجتماعي:

كيف يعيش السكان في تعز في ظل النزاع؟

هل تعتقد بأن المجتمع في تعز موحد أم منقسم؟

ما هي الهياكل والمؤسسات الاجتماعية التي انهارت؟ وما هي التي لا زالت تمارس مهامها؟

إلى أي مدى يتم استغلال نقص الخدمات من قبل الجماعات المتنازعة؟

كيف يتعامل السكان مع الهياكل والتنظيمات التي نشأت خلال النزاع؟

Gov. Officials KII Guide

الجزء الأول: توصيف النزاع وتحديد الجهات الفاعلة فيه:

كيف تصف النزاع القائم، هل هو نزاع سياسي، طائفي، قبلي، مناطقي، أم ماذا؟

ما هي الأسباب التي قادت إلى النزاع وخلقت بيئة مواتية لاستمراره؟

من هي الأطراف المتنازعة؟ وهل أطراف النزاع مقيمة في تعز والمنطقة المحيطة بها؛ أم هي قوات مرتبطة بمجموعات أخرى في أماكن أخرى من البلاد أو في المنطقة؟

ما هي العلاقة بين أطراف النزاع والمؤسسات الحكومية؟ هل تتدخل الجماعات المتنازعة في عمل المؤسسات الرسمية؟

هل تشارك الجماعات المتنازعة في النزاع كجماعات أم كجهات رسمية؟

كيف تسيطر الجهات الفاعلة على مناطق تواجدها، هل من خلال التهديد بالعنف، تقديم الخدمات، مشاركة الانتماء السياسي / القبلي / الطائفي مع السكان الآخرين؟

ما هي المناطق التي يسيطر عليها كل من أطراف النزاع؟

الجزء الثاني: تحديد الجهات/المؤسسات التي تخفف النزاع ومعرفة فرص المصالحة المستقبلية:

ما هو دور المؤسسات الرسمية في النزاع؟

هل هناك دور للمؤسسات الرسمية في التخفيف من حدة النزاع؟

هل هناك أطراف أخرى تعمل على تخفيف آثار النزاع أو حله؟

كيف تتفاعل المؤسسات الرسمية مع المنظمات المحلية والعالمية العاملة في تعز؟

ما هي المؤسسات أو الجهات الفاعلة التي لها سلطة حل النزاع وإنفاذ القرارات؟ وما هي مصادر سلطة هذه المؤسسات أو الجهات الفاعلة؟

كيف يتم الحفاظ على السلام في المناطق التي لم تتأثر بالنزاع أو الأقل تأثرا به؟ وهل يمكن الاستفادة من هذه التجارب أو الحالات لتوسيع نطاق الاستقرار؟

برأيك، ما هي فرص السلام في تعز؟

ما هو الدور الذي يمكن للمؤسسات الرسمية القيام به في أي عملية مصالحة مستقبلية؟

هل يفضل المجتمع مصالحة بتدخل/ رعاية على المستوى المحلي في تعز، المستوى الوطني في اليمن ككل، أم مستوى آخر من الرعاية؟

ماذا تريدون أنتم في السلطة المحلية في تعز من عمليات المصالحة المستقبلية؟ ما المطلوب تحقيقه؟

الجزء الثالث: التحليل الاجتماعي:

هل تمارس الجهات الرسمية مهامها بشكل طبيعي خلال النزاع؟ ما هي العراقيل أو العقبات التي تواجه عمل المؤسسات الرسمية خلال النزاع؟ كيف أثر النزاع على أداء المؤسسات والجهات الرسمية في تعز؟

هل هناك ثقة بين السكان في تعز والمؤسسات الرسمية؟

ما هي الجهات أو المؤسسات (الرسمية وغير الرسمية) التي تزود المجتمعات المحلية بالاحتياجات الأساسية، كالطعام والماء والدواء؟ ماذا عن الخدمات الأخرى مثل إزالة القمامة والخدمات البلدية الأخرى، الأمان، كهرباء، وغيرها؟

ما هي الهياكل والمؤسسات الرسمية التي انهارت؟ وما هي التي لا زالت تمارس مهامها؟

هل هناك استغلال لنقص الخدمات وعدم توفر الاحتياجات الأساسية من قبل الجماعات المتنازعة؟ إلى أي مدى؟

كيف تصف مستوى التعاون أو التنسيق بين المؤسسات الرسمية المختلفة؟

Experts KII Guide

الجزء الأول: توصيف النزاع وتحديد الأطراف الفاعلة فيه:

ما هي طبيعة النزاع، هل هو نزاع سياسي، طائفي، قبلي، مناطقي، أم ماذا؟

ما هي الأسباب التي قادت إلى النزاع؟

من هي الأطراف المتنازعة؟ هل هي مقيمة في تعز والمنطقة المحيطة بها؛ أم هي قوات مرتبطة بمجموعات أخرى في أماكن أخرى من البلاد أو في المنطقة؟ ما هي المناطق التي يسيطر عليها كل من أطراف النزاع؟ ما هي مظاهر النزاع في هذه المناطق؟ هل تقتصر فقط على الجانب العسكري أم تمتد إلى جوانب أخرى؟

ما هي أهداف الأطراف المتنازعة من الحرب؟ ماذا تأمل الأطراف المختلفة في تحقيقه؟ ما الذي يحفزهم على مواصلة النزاع؟ هل هناك عواقب أو مكاسب أمام الأطراف المتنازعة في حالة توقف النزاع؟

ما هو مفهوم التطرف في تعز؟ هل هناك علاقة برأيك بين النزاع القائم في المنطقة والتطرف بشكل عام؟ هل هناك مجموعات محددة متطرفة أم أن التطرف صفة يمكن اطلاقها على جميع المجموعات المسلحة بشكل عام؟

هل برأيك يلعب رجال الدين والخطاب الديني دورا في النزاع؟ ما هو؟

ما رأيك بالخطاب الديني في تعز هل هو معتدل أم متطرف؟ كيف ذلك؟ إلى أي مدى برأيك يتم استغلال الخطاب الديني لصالح بعض المجموعات المسلحة لاسيما المتطرفة منها؟

الجزء الثاني: التحليل الاجتماعي:

هل تعتقد بأن المجتمع قد تكيف مع النزاع؟

ما هي الهياكل والمؤسسات الاجتماعية التي انهارت؟ وما هي التي لا زالت تمارس مهامها؟ ما هي الهياكل أو التنظيمات/المؤسسات البديلة التي نشأت نتيجة للنزاع؟

إلى أي مدى يتم استغلال نقص الخدمات وعدم توفر الاحتياجات الأساسية من قبل المتطرفين والمجموعات المسلحة؟

ما هي الطرق التي يستخدمها المتطرفين والمجموعات المسلحة لاستغلال الشعور بالحرمان من الخدمات الأساسية؟ ما هي أبرز الحجج المقنعة التي يستخدمونها؟ ما مدى انتشار هذه الظاهرة بين الشباب وأفراد المجتمع بشكل عام؟

هل تختلف أساليب جذب الذكور الى هذه المجموعات عن أساليب جذب النساء؟ كيف ذلك هل يمكنك ان توضح؟

الجزء الثالث: تحديد المؤسسات/ الجهات التي تخفف من حدة النزاع:

هل هناك من يعمل على تخفيف آثار النزاع أو حله؟

برأيك، ما نوع المصالحة أو الحل الذي يتناسب مع النزاع في تعز؟

ما هي الجهات التي تعتقد أن بإمكانها حل النزاع؟ ما هي مصادر سلطة هذه الجهات؟

ما هي برأيك فرص بناء السلام الحالية؟ كيف يتم الحفاظ على السلام في المناطق التي لم تتأثر بالحرب أو الأقل تأثرا بالحرب؟ وهل يمكن الاستفادة من هذه التجارب أو الحالات لتوسيع نطاق عوامل الاستقرار وزيادة فرص السلام؟

APPENDIX 4: FGD GUIDE

الجزء الأول: توصيف النزاع وتحديد الجهات الرئيسية الفاعلة فيه:

هل تعتقدون بأن المجتمع موحد أم منقسم؟

في حالة الإجابة (منقسم)، ما هي الانقسامات الاجتماعية الأكثر انتشارًا في المجتمع: الانتماء السياسي، الطائفي، القبلي، أم غير ذلك؟

كيف تصفون النزاع القائم؟ هل النزاع سياسي، اجتماعي، اقتصادي، ثقافي، أم أيديولوجي؟

من هي الأطراف المتنازعة؟ وما هي المناطق التي يسيطر عليها كل من أطراف النزاع؟

هل أطراف النزاع مقيمة في تعز والمنطقة المحيطة بها؛ أم هي مرتبطة بمجموعات أخرى في أماكن أخرى من البلاد أو المنطقة؟

ما هي الأسباب التي قادت إلى النزاع؟ وما هي الأسباب التي تؤدي إلى استمراره؟

من خلال ملاحظاتكم اليومية، كيف تسيطر الأطراف المتنازعة على مناطق تواجدها، هل من خلال القوة، تقديم الخدمات، مشاركة الانتماء السياسي/ القبلي/ الطائفي مع السكان الآخرين، أم غيره؟

ما هي العلاقة بين أطراف النزاع والسكان المحليين؟

كيف تتعاملون مع الأطراف المتنازعة في حياتكم اليومية؟

هل هناك قبول لتواجد هذه الجماعات في تعز؟

إلى أي مدى تعتقدون بأن النزاع سيستمر؟

الجزء الثاني: تحديد الجهات أو المؤسسات التي تخفف النزاع ومعرفة فرص حل النزاع:

هل هناك من يقدم المساعدة للسكان خلال النزاع؟

في حالة الإجابة بنعم، من هو؟ وما الذي يفعله/ يفعلونه بهذا الشأن؟

كيف تحصلون على الحاجات والخدمات الأساسية، كالطعام والماء والدواء في تعز؟

ما هي الجهات أو المؤسسات (الرسمية وغير الرسمية) التي تزود المجتمعات المحلية بهذه الحاجات والخدمات؟

ماذا عن الخدمات الأخرى مثل إزالة القمامة والخدمات البلدية الأخرى، الأمن، كهرباء، وغيرها؟

هل هناك جهات أو شخصيات تعمل على تخفيف آثار النزاع أو محاولة حله؟ من هي، وما الذي تفعله؟

ما هي المؤسسات أو الجهات الفاعلة التي ترون بأنها قادرة على حل النزاع؟

هل هناك أطراف أو جهات لم تشارك في النزاع؟

برأيك، لماذا لم تشارك في النزاع؟

ما الذي تريدونه من أي عملية مصالحة مستقبلية؟ ما المطلوب تحقيقه؟

ما الذي تعتقدون بأنه أهم عنصر أو الخطوة الأهم في انهاء النزاع وبناء السلام؟

الجزء الثالث: التحليل الاجتماعي:

كيف هي حياتكم اليومية في ظل النزاع؟ كالذهاب إلى المدارس، التسوق، ممارسة الأعمال اليومية، وغيره؟

ما هي الهياكل والمؤسسات الرسمية وغير الرسمية التي انهارت؟

وما هي التي لا زالت تمارس مهامها؟

هل تمارس مهامها بشكل كلي أم جزئي؟

ما هي الهياكل أو التنظيمات/ المؤسسات التي نشأت نتيجة للصراع؟

كيف ينظر سكان تعز لهذه المؤسسات/ التنظيمات الناشئة حديثا؟ هل هناك قبول لهذه التنظيمات/ المؤسسات لدى السكان في تعز؟

إلى أي مدى يتم استغلال نقص الخدمات وعدم توفر الاحتياجات الأساسية؟

كيف يتم هذا الاستغلال ومن قبل من؟ ما هي الطرق التي تستخدمها تلك الجهات لاستغلال الشعور بالحرمان من الخدمات الأساسية؟

هل يتعرض سكان تعز لأي ضغوطات أو دعايات للانضمام للمجموعات المتنازعة؟

في حالة الإجابة بنعم، من هي هذه المجموعات؟ وما هي الوسائل والمبررات التي تستخدمها لجذب منضمين جدد؟

ما هي ردود الفعل التي يبديها السكان تجاه هذه الضغوطات أو الدعايات؟

كيف يتم التنقل داخل تعز كنتيجة للنزاع؟

وكيف يمكن التنقل من وإلى تعز؟