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**SOCHUM Study Guide for Simulations of Social, Humanitarian &  
Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) at the NUST International Model  
United Nations**

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**The Humanitarian Crisis in the MENA Region**

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## 1. Understanding SOCHUM's Mandate

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), formally known as the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, serves as a platform for addressing global issues related to human rights, social development, and cultural cooperation. Since its establishment in 1945, SOCHUM has played a pivotal role in ensuring adherence to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It focuses on creating solutions to contemporary challenges while fostering international cooperation and solidarity.

In the context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, SOCHUM emphasizes addressing deep-seated social inequalities, resolving humanitarian crises, and protecting the rights of vulnerable communities impacted by conflict, climate change, and cultural tensions. [1]

### *a. Protecting Human Rights:*

Ensuring the universal protection of human rights is one of SOCHUM's primary responsibilities. In order to address violations of human rights and the systematic exclusion of vulnerable groups, it promotes dialogue and resolutions. SOCHUM is especially committed to protecting the rights of women, children, minorities, internally displaced people (IDPs), and refugees. SOCHUM works to solve human rights abuses in the MENA region that are made worse by long-running conflicts, authoritarian governments, and institutionalized prejudice. For example, SOCHUM has demanded that the kabala system's exploitative labor practices be abolished, as they disproportionately impact migrant workers. In order to promote equity and dignity, it works with organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). [2]

***b. Providing Humanitarian Assistance:***

SOCHUM coordinates international humanitarian efforts to alleviate suffering caused by natural disasters, armed conflicts, and socio-economic instability. Its mandate includes advocating for increased funding and resources for relief operations while ensuring aid reaches those most in need, including refugees and displaced persons.

In MENA, humanitarian crises such as those in Syria, Yemen, and Libya have prompted SOCHUM to work with agencies like the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to deliver aid. These initiatives emphasize neutrality, impartiality, and the protection of human dignity. [3]

***c. Promoting Sustainable Development:***

SOCHUM recognizes that sustainable development is key to addressing the root causes of social and humanitarian crises. It supports policies aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on poverty reduction, quality education, and gender equality. These efforts aim to create long-term solutions that empower communities and reduce reliance on humanitarian aid.

In MENA, where inequality and resource scarcity are prevalent, SOCHUM advocates for inclusive economic policies and education reforms that target marginalized groups, particularly women *and* youth. [4]

***d. Addressing Climate Change:***

While climate change is not SOCHUM's primary mandate, the committee recognizes its direct impact on vulnerable populations, particularly in the MENA region. SOCHUM works to address issues such as water scarcity, desertification, and displacement caused by climate change. It collaborates with other UN bodies to integrate climate resilience into its humanitarian and development strategies.

MENA countries are particularly affected by climate-induced challenges, which exacerbate poverty and migration. SOCHUM advocates for comprehensive climate action that aligns with the Paris Agreement to mitigate these impacts. [5]

*e. Promoting Cultural Diversity and Tolerance:*

Encouraging Tolerance and Cultural Diversity In order to combat xenophobia, bigotry, and hate speech, SOCHUM is crucial in encouraging tolerance and cultural understanding. It places a strong emphasis on protecting cultural assets and encouraging communication amongst various groups. These initiatives are especially important in the MENA area, where historical tensions mix with religious and cultural diversity. Through collaborations with regional organisations and UNESCO, SOCHUM supports programs that foster multilingualism, cultural site protection, and diversity-celebrating education

## **2. The MENA Region: A Fractured Landscape**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is marked by its historical significance and cultural diversity. However, its contemporary landscape is dominated by pervasive challenges that have led to severe humanitarian crises. The region's issues are deeply interconnected, stemming from complex geopolitical conflicts, fragile political systems, environmental vulnerabilities, and public health challenges.

*a. Geopolitical Tensions and Conflicts:*

The MENA region remains one of the most conflict-prone areas globally, with countries such as Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq experiencing prolonged violence. These conflicts, rooted in historical grievances, sectarian divisions, and power struggles, have led to widespread displacement and immense human suffering. Over 40 million migrants and 15.7 million internally

displaced persons (IDPs) currently reside in the region, accounting for 26% of the global IDP population.

Conflict-induced destruction of infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and water systems, has left millions dependent on humanitarian aid. The ongoing proxy wars and involvement of external actors, such as the United States, Russia, and regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia, further complicate peacebuilding efforts. For example, the Syrian civil war alone has displaced over 13 million people, causing one of the largest refugee crises in modern history.

Efforts to address these crises have been spearheaded by the United Nations and other international organizations, yet political impasses often hinder comprehensive solutions. The need for multilateral diplomacy to resolve these conflicts is greater than ever. [6][7][8]

***b. Political Instability and Authoritarian Regimes:***

The MENA region's political landscape is characterized by weak institutions, authoritarian governance, and systemic corruption. Political instability often manifests through coups, contested elections, and a lack of democratic accountability. These issues are exacerbated by the persistence of authoritarian regimes, where the suppression of dissent and violations of human rights are common.

For instance, in countries like Libya, a power vacuum following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 has led to continuous factional fighting. Similarly, in Yemen, the ongoing civil war has caused a collapse of state institutions, leaving civilians vulnerable to violence and famine. Corruption and rent-seeking behaviors also undermine the region's economic development, contributing to growing inequality and public discontent.

International actors and institutions have repeatedly called for inclusive governance models and anti-corruption measures to address these systemic issues. However, achieving political reform requires overcoming entrenched interests and fostering grassroots movements for accountability and justice. [9][10][11]

### *c. Socioeconomic Challenges:*

Socioeconomic disparities are deeply entrenched in the MENA region. High unemployment rates, particularly among youth, and limited economic diversification hinder progress. Countries reliant on oil revenues, such as Saudi Arabia and Algeria, face volatility due to fluctuating global energy prices. This dependency stifles investments in education, healthcare, and technology, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Unemployment rates among MENA youth average around 25%, with women disproportionately affected due to cultural and systemic barriers. These disparities not only impede development but also fuel social unrest, as seen in the Arab Spring uprisings.

To address these challenges, regional and international efforts have focused on diversifying economies and creating employment opportunities. Initiatives such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aim to reduce oil dependency and promote sustainable growth. However, the effectiveness of such programs depends on robust governance and the inclusion of marginalized communities. [12][13][14]

### *d. Water Scarcity and Climate Change*

The MENA region is the most water-stressed region globally, with less than 1% of the world's freshwater resources serving 5% of the global population. Climate change has exacerbated these challenges, leading to severe droughts, desertification, and resource conflicts. Rising temperatures in the region, which are increasing at twice the global average, further threaten agricultural productivity and food security.

Countries like Iraq and Yemen are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In 2021, floods displaced over 233,000 people in the region. Meanwhile, warming waters in the Red Sea and Mediterranean impact marine ecosystems, threatening livelihoods dependent on fishing.

To mitigate these issues, governments and international organizations advocate for climate resilience through sustainable water management practices and renewable energy investments. However, political instability often hinders the implementation of these strategies. [15][16][17]



### *e. Public Health Crises*

Conflict and displacement in the MENA region have severely disrupted healthcare systems, leaving millions without access to essential medical services. Outbreaks of infectious diseases such as cholera, COVID-19, and polio disproportionately affect IDPs and refugees living in overcrowded camps with poor sanitation. For instance, Yemen experienced one of the worst cholera outbreaks in modern history, with over 2.5 million suspected cases reported between 2017 and 2023.

Malnutrition remains a critical issue, particularly among children, with acute food shortages exacerbated by conflict and climate change. Furthermore, mental health challenges among displaced populations often go unaddressed, contributing to long-term societal impacts.

Efforts to address public health crises include humanitarian interventions by organizations such as the WHO and MSF (Doctors Without Borders). These efforts focus on providing emergency care, rebuilding healthcare infrastructure, and addressing the root causes of malnutrition and disease. [18][19]

## **3. Key Humanitarian Challenges**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains one of the most complex and conflict-ridden areas in the world. The humanitarian challenges faced by this region are multi-faceted, stemming from both man-made and natural factors. These challenges include the ongoing displacement of populations, widespread water scarcity, the devastating impacts of climate change, and severe public health crises. This section provides a detailed analysis of the primary humanitarian issues facing MENA today.

### *A. Conflict and Displacement*

The MENA region continues to grapple with violent conflicts that have caused widespread displacement, infrastructure destruction, and humanitarian suffering. These conflicts often intersect with issues of governance, social inequality, and geopolitical rivalry, creating a volatile and unstable environment.

### ***1. Mass Displacement***

Conflict and violence have resulted in one of the largest refugee crises in the world. Countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq have witnessed mass displacement, with millions of people being forced to flee their homes. In Syria alone, approximately 13 million people have been displaced since 2011, both internally and across international borders. Yemen has seen the displacement of over 4 million people since the start of the civil war in 2015, and Iraq has faced similar challenges due to internal conflicts.

This displacement often leads to the creation of sprawling refugee camps in neighboring countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, where basic living conditions are difficult and humanitarian needs are extreme. These camps struggle with overcrowding, limited access to clean water, sanitation, and medical care. International organizations such as the UNHCR and the ICRC continue to provide vital assistance, but the scale of the crisis often outpaces the resources available.

### ***2. Destruction of Infrastructure***

Prolonged conflicts in the MENA region have led to the widespread destruction of critical infrastructure. Health facilities, schools, transportation networks, and water supply systems are often deliberately targeted during hostilities, leaving civilians without access to essential services. In Syria, the World Health Organization reported that more than half of the country's hospitals and clinics have been damaged or destroyed, severely impairing the ability to deliver medical care to those in need.

Additionally, the destruction of water supply networks has led to a dramatic increase in waterborne diseases, particularly in conflict zones like Yemen and Syria. The loss of these critical infrastructures not only hampers humanitarian relief efforts but also stifles long-term recovery prospects for the region.

### ***3. Human Rights Abuses***

The ongoing conflicts in the MENA region are marked by severe human rights abuses, including war crimes, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, and torture. International bodies like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented widespread violations in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya. For instance, in Syria, both the government and rebel forces have been accused of using chemical weapons, conducting airstrikes on civilian areas, and committing mass executions.

The use of rape and sexual violence as tools of war has been reported extensively in countries such as Iraq and Yemen. Humanitarian organizations are calling for stronger international accountability and a reformed

framework for the protection of civilians, particularly in conflict settings. Despite these calls, impunity remains rampant, and justice for the victims is often denied.

#### ***4. Protection of Civilians***

Civilians, particularly women, children, and the elderly, are often caught in the crossfire of these conflicts. They face widespread risks of violence, forced recruitment by armed groups, and sexual exploitation. Women and children are disproportionately affected by conflict, as they are often left behind in refugee camps or targeted for violence in the midst of combat. International humanitarian law emphasizes the protection of civilians in conflict, but enforcement remains inconsistent across the region.

Organizations such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have made significant strides in providing emergency protection, but the complex geopolitical dynamics in the region often hinder effective intervention. [20][21]

### ***B. Water Scarcity and Climate Change in the MENA Region***

“Water is life, and without it, there is no life.” – Theodore Roosevelt

Water scarcity and climate change are undeniably two of the most pressing challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region today. These interconnected issues have profound implications for the region’s stability, economic development, and public health. The region, already one of the driest in the world, faces increasingly severe water shortages, which are exacerbated by climate-induced phenomena. These challenges affect agriculture, human populations, and even regional geopolitics, as countries struggle to manage their dwindling water resources.

#### **1. Water Stress:**

Water scarcity is an existential challenge in the MENA region, where countries like Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Jordan experience extreme water stress. On average, the region has less than 1,100 cubic meters of water per person annually, which is far below the threshold of water scarcity (1,700 cubic meters per person)

defined by the United Nations. This scarcity is the result of both natural factors and unsustainable human practices, such as over-extraction of groundwater and inefficient water management systems.

One of the key drivers of water stress is the over-exploitation of groundwater, which is often used for irrigation and agricultural purposes. In countries like Egypt and Iraq, farmers pump large quantities of groundwater to irrigate crops, despite the fact that these aquifers are non-renewable or replenish at an exceedingly slow rate. This unsustainable practice leads to aquifer depletion, particularly in arid regions where surface water sources like rivers and lakes are limited or nonexistent.

Another significant challenge is the region's reliance on a few transboundary rivers, such as the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris. As populations increase and agricultural demands rise, tensions over water rights have escalated. For example, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River has raised tensions between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, as each country vies for control over the precious water resource. [22][23]

## **2. Climate-Induced Disasters**

The MENA region is one of the most vulnerable areas in the world to the effects of climate change. The region has already seen a rise in temperature and a decrease in rainfall, leading to more frequent and intense heatwaves, droughts, and floods. These climate-induced disasters have wide-ranging consequences for both human populations and the environment.

Heatwaves are becoming more frequent in MENA, with average temperatures rising steadily each year. Cities like Baghdad, Riyadh, and Cairo have been experiencing record-breaking heat waves, which not only threaten human health but also stress water and energy systems. The rise in temperature leads to increased evaporation of water from lakes, rivers, and soil, further exacerbating water scarcity.

Droughts are another growing concern, particularly in areas that rely heavily on agriculture. Prolonged periods of low rainfall, coupled with high temperatures, lead to crop failure and food insecurity. In Syria, for instance, droughts have been linked to the mass migration of farmers to urban centers, where they seek better opportunities. These internal migrations are also linked to the destabilization of societies, as seen in the Syrian conflict. Similarly, in northern Africa, countries like Morocco and Algeria have been grappling with drought conditions that have negatively impacted agricultural yields and livestock.

Flooding is another serious consequence of climate change in MENA. Flash floods, exacerbated by changing rainfall patterns, have become more common in regions such as the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. These floods not only cause immediate destruction but also displace large populations, leading to further humanitarian crises. For instance, the 2019 flash floods in Lebanon displaced thousands of people, highlighting the vulnerability of urban areas that lack adequate infrastructure to cope with extreme weather. [24]

### **3. Food Insecurity**

The combined effects of water scarcity and climate change have direct consequences on food security in the MENA region. Agriculture, which is already constrained by limited water resources, faces additional challenges due to changing weather patterns, such as erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts. As a result, food production is increasingly unstable, and many countries in the region rely heavily on food imports to meet their needs.

In countries like Yemen, Syria, and Sudan, where conflict has already taken a severe toll on agricultural infrastructure, food insecurity is exacerbated by environmental stress. For example, the war in Yemen, coupled with ongoing drought conditions, has led to a humanitarian crisis where millions of people face acute food shortages. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), approximately 20 million people in Yemen suffer from food insecurity, with more than 10 million of them in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

In addition to the direct impacts on agriculture, water scarcity also affects the region's ability to produce sufficient quantities of food. Countries in the MENA region, especially those in the Gulf, are highly dependent on food imports, which make them vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. As climate change continues to strain agricultural productivity in other regions, the MENA region may face even greater challenges in securing enough food to feed its growing population. [25][26]

### **4. Migration and Displacement**

As the effects of climate change worsen, migration within and outside the MENA region is expected to increase. Environmental stressors such as water scarcity, drought, and desertification are already contributing to the displacement of vulnerable populations. In countries like Syria, Iraq, and Sudan, climate-

induced displacement has already led to the movement of large numbers of people, either internally or across borders, further exacerbating the region's humanitarian challenges.

Climate-induced migration is primarily driven by the search for better living conditions and livelihoods. People from rural areas that are severely impacted by drought and water scarcity are increasingly migrating to urban centers or neighboring countries. In some cases, this has led to tension between host countries and displaced populations, as local resources become stretched.

The growing problem of climate refugees in the MENA region has also gained international attention. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has noted that climate change could become a significant driver of future displacement, particularly as entire agricultural communities are forced to leave their homes in search of food and water. As climate-induced migration grows, there will be increased pressure on both MENA countries and their neighbors to manage the influx of climate refugees. [27][28][29]

By exploring the interconnections between water scarcity, climate change, food insecurity, and migration, it is clear that the MENA region faces a complex and evolving crisis that requires coordinated international response. These environmental challenges will continue to shape the region's future, with significant humanitarian, political, and economic implications.

### ***C. Public Health Crisis in the MENA Region: A Deep Dive into the Challenges and Consequences***

“The greatest wealth is health.” – Virgil

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the public health crisis has been exacerbated by a combination of ongoing conflicts, environmental challenges, socio-economic inequalities, and the disruption of healthcare infrastructure. Despite significant efforts to improve public health systems, the region continues to face widespread health challenges, from infectious diseases to chronic malnutrition. As healthcare systems struggle to cope with the mounting pressures, the region is witnessing a growing crisis that affects not only public health but also social stability and economic development. This section will delve into the key aspects of the public health crisis in MENA, discussing issues such as infectious diseases, malnutrition, healthcare accessibility, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **i. Infectious Diseases: Persistent Threats to Public Health**

The MENA region continues to grapple with outbreaks of infectious diseases, many of which are preventable through vaccination and basic healthcare interventions. War-torn countries, such as Yemen and Syria, face persistent outbreaks of diseases like cholera, measles, and polio, exacerbated by the collapse of public health infrastructure and limited access to medical care. The healthcare system in conflict zones is often overwhelmed, with hospitals destroyed and healthcare workers unable to provide basic services due to insecurity.

One of the most notable outbreaks in recent years has been the cholera epidemic in Yemen. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Yemen has experienced one of the largest cholera outbreaks in modern history, with over 2.5 million suspected cases and more than 4,000 deaths since 2016. The outbreak has been attributed to the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, compounded by the ongoing conflict. The collapse of these systems has allowed the cholera bacteria to spread rapidly, especially in areas with overcrowded displacement camps. The situation is further worsened by the limited availability of medicines and medical professionals, as well as the lack of funding for public health interventions.

Measles outbreaks are another ongoing health threat in MENA. Despite global efforts to eliminate measles through vaccination programs, outbreaks continue to occur in countries like Syria and Yemen, where conflicts have interrupted immunization campaigns. In Syria, the WHO reported in 2018 that the country saw a 250% increase in measles cases compared to previous years. Similarly, the risk of polio resurgence in MENA remains high, particularly in conflict zones like Syria and Afghanistan, where vaccination campaigns have been hindered by insecurity and logistical challenges.

These infectious disease outbreaks in the MENA region are not only health crises but also strain on the social fabric, as they often disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and those displaced by conflict. [30][31]

### **ii. Malnutrition: The Silent Epidemic**

“Malnutrition is not just a health issue, but a development issue.” – Gro Harlem Brundtland

Malnutrition is another critical public health challenge facing MENA, where food insecurity is widespread, particularly in conflict-affected countries like Yemen, Syria, and Sudan. The combination of inadequate food supplies, poor access to healthcare, and a lack of clean water exacerbates the malnutrition crisis. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), approximately 40% of the population in Yemen is food insecure, with more than 2 million children suffering from malnutrition.

The MENA region has one of the highest rates of stunting (low height for age), a key indicator of chronic malnutrition. According to UNICEF, more than 20% of children under the age of five in MENA suffer from stunting. This is a direct result of inadequate nutrition during the critical stages of growth and development. Stunting has long-term consequences on cognitive development, educational outcomes, and productivity, which ultimately affects national economies.

In addition to stunting, wasting (low weight for height) and micronutrient deficiencies are also widespread in many MENA countries. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) for 2020 ranked several MENA countries, including Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan, among the highest in terms of hunger and malnutrition rates. The crisis in Yemen, where the ongoing conflict has disrupted food production and supply chains, has particularly severe consequences. According to the WFP, 2.5 million children in Yemen are acutely malnourished, and approximately 500,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition, which is life-threatening without immediate medical intervention. [32][33]

### **iii. Limited Access to Healthcare: The Strain on Healthcare Systems**

The availability and quality of healthcare services in the MENA region vary significantly between countries, with conflict zones facing the most severe challenges. Healthcare systems in many MENA countries have been decimated by years of war and political instability, leading to a shortage of medical personnel, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and a lack of essential medicines. In countries like Syria and Yemen, hospitals and clinics have been deliberately targeted, leading to the destruction of vital healthcare facilities. In some cases, medical personnel have been forced to flee, leaving communities without access to basic healthcare services.

In Yemen, for instance, the ongoing war has left the country with one of the worst healthcare systems in the world. According to the WHO, more than half of Yemen's healthcare facilities are non-functional, and approximately 18 million people lack access to basic healthcare services. The lack of trained healthcare professionals is also a significant challenge, with many doctors and nurses fleeing the country or being unable to work in conflict zones.

In addition to the destruction of healthcare infrastructure, there is also a significant disparity in healthcare access between urban and rural areas. Urban areas typically have better access to healthcare services, but even in these regions, the quality of care remains inadequate due to resource shortages. Rural areas, however, face even more severe challenges, with many people in these areas having to travel long distances to reach the nearest healthcare facility. [34][35]



#### **iv. The COVID-19 Pandemic: A New Dimension to the Health Crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of complexity to the already fragile public health systems in MENA. The region faced significant challenges in managing the pandemic due to pre-existing health disparities, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, and economic difficulties. In countries like Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, the pandemic has stretched healthcare systems to their limits.

Iran, which became one of the first countries outside China to experience a significant outbreak of COVID-19, has been particularly hard-hit. According to the Iranian Ministry of Health, as of mid-2021, the country had reported over 3 million cases and more than 80,000 deaths. The pandemic exacerbated existing health issues, including the country's high rates of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, which put many people at higher risk of severe illness.

In addition to the health crisis, the pandemic has led to widespread economic fallout, which in turn has worsened food insecurity and malnutrition. For instance, the WFP reported that COVID-19 increased the number of people in need of food assistance in Yemen and Syria, where the pandemic further disrupted supply chains and exacerbated poverty.

One of the most concerning aspects of the pandemic in MENA has been the impact on mental health. The economic downturn, combined with the fear and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, has led to a rise in mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In countries like Lebanon, where the healthcare system is already overwhelmed by the economic crisis, mental health services are insufficient to meet the growing demand. [36][37]

The public health crisis in the MENA region is multifaceted and deeply entrenched. From the spread of infectious diseases to the silent epidemic of malnutrition and the destruction of healthcare infrastructure, the challenges facing the region are vast and complex. While the COVID-19 pandemic has only added to these difficulties, it has also highlighted the resilience of health professionals and humanitarian organizations working under extreme conditions. Addressing these public health challenges requires coordinated efforts from governments, international organizations, and local communities.

## 4. International Response and Challenges

The international community has responded to the humanitarian crisis in the MENA region with a mix of humanitarian aid, diplomatic efforts, and development assistance. However, several challenges hinder effective response:

### a. Security Risks:

The death toll of humanitarian workers in 2024 has become the “deadliest on record”, with 281 killed globally.

*“Humanitarian workers are being killed at an unprecedented rate, their courage and humanity being met with bullets and bombs,”*

Tom Fletcher, the new UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.[38]

Ferocious conflicts, attacks against aid workers and essential services and access impediments took a devastating toll on humanitarians’ ability to reach people in desperate need. From OPT to Sudan to Myanmar and beyond, the first half of 2024 was characterized by extreme challenges, from attacks against health, education and water and sanitation facilities that left millions of people without access to the services they need to survive and thrive, to the killing, injury and detention of aid workers. [39]

In response to this crisis, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2730 (2024), which mandates the Secretary-General to recommend measures to prevent attacks on aid workers and enhance protection for humanitarian personnel.

These recommendations will be presented at a Security Council meeting on 26 November. [40]

**b. Funding Shortages:**

Despite generous support from many donors, the funding forecast for 2024 indicates that the Office is facing further shortfalls; as of end-April, operations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have received \$256.4 million out of \$2,341 million required (11%).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been obliged to significantly reduce its planned expenditures in four countries – namely Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen – by \$93 million in total so far.

The Office is doing its utmost to minimize the impact of reductions on those in need. We continue to look for ways to be more efficient globally and advocate urgently for more funding. Nevertheless, budget cuts will expose the forcibly displaced and their host communities in the concerned countries to additional vulnerabilities, higher levels of poverty, and increased protection risks. Protection space is tangibly shrinking, onward movements increasing, including irregular and dangerous departures by sea, all while the underlying geopolitical dynamics in several parts of MENA remain unresolved, with far-reaching effects on regional peace and stability.

Over the first four months of 2024, more than 40,000 people arrived by sea in Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta from countries in the MENA region and Türkiye. Funding shortfalls compromise UNHCR's ability to provide international protection and find solutions for forcibly displaced people while upholding their rights. This obstructs efforts to create legal pathways for labour mobility and refugee integration into local economies.

Lack of resources also severely limits support for the safe and dignified return to the country of origin for those without protection or legal migration options. Failing to address these protection challenges is likely to prompt more refugees to attempt

perilous onward journeys. Sustainable responses extending beyond protection and humanitarian aid are necessary to improve refugees' dignity and quality of life. [41]

**c. Political Obstacles:**

Political divisions, geopolitical rivalries, and lack of political will can hinder humanitarian efforts.

The current struggle for the control of Yemen is not only a complex humanitarian emergency in the midst of war, but it is a complex humanitarian emergency that is a consequence of war. Yemen's antagonists are battling for control of the country, and they are using whatever tools are at hand in order to advance their interests. In the Yemen context, where scarce food and fuel boost prices and money is in short supply, aid invariably becomes part of the equation of the conflict. It does so in several ways.

First, local political actors battle for the control of resources to distribute, to reward their supporters and to add to their own coffers. Every humanitarian organization needs an array of local partners. Who those partners are, and what ties they have to combatants, is not always clear. Humanitarians cannot distribute supplies in areas controlled by one of the many forces in Yemen without relying in some way on that force's allies—in part because the forces in control of an area would encumber non-favored entities to ensure that its own networks benefit. Armed networks also charge transit or distribution fees, putting them somewhere between taxes and bribes. Distributing aid not only enriches the networks economically, but it also boosts their political sway by putting their allies in control of resources. Providing relief supplies aids the combatants in another way: the provision of resources from the outside frees up more local resources for fighting.

Second, outside donors can use aid to further political goals with the population. Directing resources to government-controlled areas and denying them to those controlled by the Houthis, for example, essentially besieges Houthi areas and holds

the civilian population hostage. Ironically, doing so may further entrench the Houthis by eliminating alternative channels for civilians to obtain food, fuel, and water. In addition, showering resources on areas recently liberated from Houthi control may be intended to tempt Yemenis to expel the Houthis rather than meet the areas of greatest humanitarian need.

Yemen presents a series of wicked problems, but one of the most difficult is the best way to distribute aid. When humanitarian and political crises are intertwined, there is no way to neatly separate the two. [42]

**d. Complex Humanitarian Emergencies:**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to face multiple and complex crises, conflicts, displacement and damage to vital health care, education and water infrastructure as well as natural disasters (drought, floods, earthquakes, etc.).

With globally declared acute and protracted Level 3 emergencies in Syria, across the five countries hosting Syrian refugees, Iraq and Yemen, in addition to other ongoing emergencies in Libya, Sudan and the State of Palestine, there are about 70 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the MENA region, including 27 million children. In addition, 50 million people in need live in conflict affected countries, including about 24 million children.

The needs of affected populations are increasing in scale and are aggravated by economic crises, chronic underdevelopment, natural disasters and diseases such as the cholera outbreaks in Iraq and Yemen and long-term drought in Djibouti. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has given rise to serious protection concerns due to indiscriminate or targeted attacks and widespread violations of human rights by parties to the conflict. In Yemen, the nutrition crisis has put 385,000 children at risk of severe acute malnutrition and the collapse of the health system has increased

the vulnerability of about 540,000 people to acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) or cholera. The complex emergency in Iraq, including the operation to retake Mosul from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, has increased displacement, with spill over into neighbouring countries that has compounded the burden on already stretched public services. More than 9 million people in Libya, the State of Palestine and the Sudan require humanitarian assistance. [43]

The international response has been significantly delayed due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the crises, including overlapping emergencies, logistical barriers, and the immense scale of needs, which overwhelm the capacity of humanitarian actors to deliver timely and effective assistance.

## **5. Case Studies**

### **a. CrisisCase Study 1: The Syrian**

The Syrian crisis began in March 2011 as peaceful protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, inspired by the Arab Spring movements across the Middle East. What started as demonstrations for democracy and reform quickly escalated into a complex and devastating civil war after the government responded with violent crackdowns. Over the years, the conflict has drawn in numerous domestic and international actors, creating a multi-dimensional war with severe consequences for Syria and the region.

#### **Key Issues**

##### **1. Mass Displacement:**

The Syrian conflict has triggered one of the largest displacement crises in modern history. By

2024, more than **6.8 million Syrians** remain internally displaced within the country, often living in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic necessities. Another **5.5 million Syrians** have sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Turkey (hosting over 3.6 million refugees), Lebanon, and Jordan. Refugees often face harsh living conditions, limited economic opportunities, and strained host country resources. The mass exodus has also placed significant pressure on international humanitarian systems and created political tensions in host countries and Europe, which has received a smaller but impactful number of Syrian refugees.

## 2. **Destruction of Infrastructure:**

The conflict has decimated Syria's infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, and water systems. Entire cities such as **Aleppo**, **Homs**, and parts of **Damascus** have been reduced to rubble. Basic services like electricity, healthcare, and sanitation are almost non-existent in many areas. The destruction of healthcare facilities, in particular, has left millions without access to medical treatment, leading to a public health crisis exacerbated by the ongoing violence and displacement.

## 3. **Human Rights Abuses:**

All parties in the conflict have been accused of severe human rights violations. The Syrian government has been implicated in **chemical weapons attacks** against civilians, torture, extrajudicial killings, and indiscriminate bombings. Rebel groups and extremist factions, such as ISIS (Islamic State), have also committed atrocities, including mass executions, sexual violence, and targeting of minority groups. The civilian population has borne the brunt of these abuses, with thousands of innocent lives lost and countless others traumatized.

## 4. **Humanitarian Access Challenges:**

Delivering humanitarian aid to those in need has been one of the most significant challenges in the Syrian crisis. Ongoing fighting, sieges, and political disputes have made many areas inaccessible to aid organizations. The United Nations and NGOs have faced difficulties in obtaining permissions to deliver supplies, while armed groups have blocked or stolen aid intended for civilians. The lack of consistent access has left millions of people without food, clean water, and medical assistance, worsening the humanitarian catastrophe.

## International Response

### 1. Humanitarian Assistance:

International organizations, including **UN agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, and the UNHCR**, have been at the forefront of providing aid to Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Their efforts have included food distribution, temporary shelters, education programs for displaced children, and mental health support for trauma victims. NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) have also played a critical role in delivering medical care in conflict zones.

### 2. Donor Contributions:

Wealthy nations, including the United States, European Union countries, and Gulf states, have contributed billions of dollars to fund humanitarian efforts. For example, the **Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria** has been an annual forum where international donors pledge financial support. However, despite these efforts, the scale of the crisis has overwhelmed resources, leaving many needs unmet.

### 3. Political and Military Interventions:

The Syrian war has drawn in several external powers, complicating the conflict. Countries like **Russia** and **Iran** have backed the Assad regime, providing military support and funding, while the United States, Turkey, and Gulf states have supported various opposition groups. Efforts to negotiate peace, such as the **Geneva peace talks** and the **Astana process**, have largely failed due to conflicting interests among the parties involved. Ceasefires have been short-lived, and international efforts have struggled to bring about a resolution.

## Lessons Learned

### 1. Early Intervention is Crucial:

The Syrian crisis highlights the importance of addressing emerging conflicts early before they escalate into full-blown humanitarian disasters. The lack of a strong and unified international response in the early stages of the conflict allowed violence to spiral out of control, resulting in long-term suffering and regional destabilization.



## 2. **Protection of Civilians:**

One of the greatest failures of the international community in the Syrian conflict has been its inability to protect civilians. The widespread targeting of civilian areas, use of chemical weapons, and destruction of essential services underscore the need for stronger enforcement of international laws and norms. Future conflicts require more robust mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable and prevent mass atrocities.

## 3. **Long-Term Recovery Planning:**

Humanitarian aid alone is insufficient to address the long-term impacts of a crisis like Syria's. Reconstruction efforts, economic recovery, and rebuilding trust in governance will be critical to Syria's future. Lessons from the Syrian crisis emphasize the importance of integrating immediate relief efforts with strategies for sustainable development and political reconciliation.

## **Conclusion**

The Syrian crisis remains one of the most devastating conflicts of the 21st century, with profound humanitarian, political, and social implications. It underscores the need for a more effective international system that prioritizes early intervention, civilian protection, and sustainable recovery. Without these, the suffering of millions of Syrians continues, and the lessons learned risk being ignored in future crises.

### **b. Case Study 2: The Yemen Crisis**

The Yemen crisis is one of the most devastating humanitarian disasters in the modern era, characterized by years of conflict, mass displacement, food insecurity, and a near-total collapse of infrastructure. The roots of the crisis lie in longstanding political instability and economic challenges in Yemen, which were exacerbated in 2014 when the Houthi rebel movement took over large parts of the country, including the capital, Sana'a. The conflict escalated in 2015 with the intervention of a Saudi-led coalition that aimed to restore the internationally recognized Yemeni government. Years of fighting have left the country in ruins, with catastrophic consequences for its population.

### **Key Issues**

#### 1. **Severe Food Insecurity:**

Yemen faces some of the worst levels of food insecurity in the world, with the ongoing conflict disrupting food supplies and agriculture. The country relies on imports for over **90% of its food**,

but blockades, damaged ports, and restricted access have led to skyrocketing food prices and shortages. According to the **World Food Programme (WFP)**, more than **21 million people**—approximately 70% of Yemen's population—require food assistance. Among them, **17 million people** are food insecure, with around **2 million children under five** suffering from acute malnutrition. In many areas, families are forced to survive on minimal food rations, while famine-like conditions persist in the worst-affected regions.

## 2. **Malnutrition and Starvation:**

The war has turned hunger into a weapon, with blockades and sieges cutting off food supplies to vulnerable populations. Malnutrition rates are alarmingly high, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Prolonged starvation has caused stunted growth in children, leaving lasting physical and cognitive impairments. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, often eating last and least in their households. The food crisis in Yemen is a dire example of how war can devastate a population's access to basic necessities.

## 3. **Cholera Outbreaks and Disease:**

Yemen has suffered from one of the largest cholera outbreaks in modern history. Since 2016, there have been **over 2.5 million suspected cases** of cholera, with thousands of deaths, mostly among children. Cholera thrives in Yemen due to the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, leaving millions without access to clean drinking water. The lack of functional healthcare facilities has allowed preventable diseases like cholera, diphtheria, and measles to spread rapidly. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies have worked tirelessly to provide vaccines and clean water supplies, but efforts have been hindered by the ongoing conflict.

## 4. **Collapsed Healthcare System:**

Yemen's healthcare system has been devastated by the war. More than **50% of health facilities** are non-functional due to damage or lack of funding. Hospitals and clinics that remain open struggle to operate without sufficient staff, medical supplies, or electricity. Many healthcare workers have gone months without pay, forcing them to abandon their posts. Patients with injuries from airstrikes or gunfire often cannot receive timely treatment, and those with chronic illnesses face life-threatening delays in care. The collapse of the healthcare system has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, leaving millions without basic medical assistance.

## 5. Displacement and Refugee Crisis:

The conflict has displaced millions of Yemenis, creating a massive internal and external refugee crisis. Over **4 million people** have been displaced within Yemen, often living in overcrowded and under-resourced camps. These camps lack adequate food, water, sanitation, and healthcare, exposing residents to disease and further hardship. Additionally, thousands of Yemenis have fled to neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and Somalia, but many face hostile conditions and limited support in these regions.

### International Response

#### 1. Military Intervention:

In 2015, a Saudi-led coalition, backed by countries like the **United States** and the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, launched a military intervention to restore the Yemeni government and push back the Houthi rebels. However, the intervention has been widely criticized for exacerbating the conflict. Airstrikes have killed thousands of civilians, and coalition blockades have contributed significantly to food and fuel shortages. While the coalition claims its actions target Houthi forces, indiscriminate bombings have destroyed civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and markets.

#### 2. Humanitarian Aid Efforts:

International organizations, such as the **United Nations**, the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**, and **Doctors Without Borders**, have been at the forefront of delivering humanitarian assistance. Aid agencies provide food, water, shelter, and medical care to millions of Yemenis. However, access to many areas remains severely restricted due to active fighting, bureaucratic hurdles, and attacks on aid workers. Despite billions of dollars in international aid, the scale of the crisis has overwhelmed available resources.

#### 3. Diplomatic and Peacebuilding Efforts:

The United Nations has mediated multiple rounds of peace talks and ceasefire agreements, but these efforts have largely failed due to the deeply entrenched political divisions among Yemen's warring factions. In 2018, the **Stockholm Agreement** brought some hope for peace by initiating a ceasefire in Hodeidah, a key port city, but violations of the agreement have undermined its success. The involvement of regional powers, including Iran's support for the Houthis and Saudi

Arabia's military campaign, has further complicated the path to peace.

### **Lessons Learned**

#### **1. The Need for a Comprehensive Political Solution:**

The Yemen crisis demonstrates that military interventions often fail to resolve complex political conflicts. Sustainable peace in Yemen will require a comprehensive political settlement that addresses the grievances of all parties, including the Houthis, the Yemeni government, and regional actors. Without political reconciliation, the humanitarian crisis will continue to worsen, and instability will persist.

#### **2. Sustained Humanitarian Aid:**

Humanitarian aid has been vital in preventing mass starvation and disease, but it must be sustained and expanded to meet growing needs. The international community must ensure unimpeded access for aid organizations and provide adequate funding to address the crisis. Efforts should also focus on rebuilding Yemen's healthcare, education, and water infrastructure to create long-term solutions.

#### **3. Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict:**

The crisis in Yemen is not only a result of the current war but also of decades of poverty, inequality, and political exclusion. Long-term stability will require addressing these root causes through economic development, improved governance, and investment in education and public services. Efforts must also prioritize empowering women and marginalized groups to create a more inclusive society.

### **Conclusion**

The Yemen crisis is a tragic reminder of the devastating consequences of protracted conflict on human lives and infrastructure. It has left millions of people on the brink of starvation, struggling with preventable diseases, and living in conditions of extreme deprivation. Despite significant international attention, the situation remains dire. A comprehensive political solution, sustained humanitarian aid, and efforts to address the underlying causes of the conflict are essential to bring lasting peace and stability to Yemen. This case underscores the need for coordinated global efforts and long-term planning to address complex humanitarian emergencies effectively.

### c. Case Study 3: The Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis is one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim minority group in Myanmar, have faced decades of discrimination, persecution, and violence at the hands of the Myanmar government and military. The crisis reached its peak in August 2017 when a brutal military crackdown, described by the United Nations as “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing,” forced over **700,000 Rohingya** to flee to neighboring Bangladesh. Today, the Rohingya people continue to face immense challenges as stateless refugees living in overcrowded camps, with little hope for a resolution to their plight.

#### Key Issues

##### 1. Mass Displacement:

The Rohingya crisis has led to the forced displacement of more than **1 million people**, making it one of the largest refugee movements in recent history. The majority of Rohingya refugees have sought shelter in Bangladesh’s **Cox’s Bazar**, now home to the largest refugee camp in the world. These camps are severely overcrowded, lacking adequate shelter, clean water, and sanitation facilities, which leaves refugees vulnerable to disease outbreaks and other health risks. Many Rohingya families are separated, and children have been orphaned as a result of the violence.

##### 2. Ethnic Cleansing and Human Rights Abuses:

The Myanmar military’s operations against the Rohingya have been marked by systematic and widespread human rights abuses, including mass killings, rape, torture, and the burning of entire villages. Survivors recount harrowing stories of violence, including the targeting of women and children. Independent investigations have revealed that these atrocities were carried out with the intent of erasing the Rohingya identity, amounting to acts of ethnic cleansing and possibly genocide.

##### 3. Statelessness and Denial of Citizenship:

The Rohingya have been stateless for decades, as Myanmar’s 1982 citizenship law excluded them from official recognition as one of the country’s ethnic groups. This denial of citizenship has left the Rohingya without basic rights, including access to education, healthcare, and

employment opportunities. Statelessness has compounded their vulnerability, both in Myanmar and in refugee camps, as they lack legal protections and face systemic discrimination.

#### 4. **Dire Living Conditions in Refugee Camps:**

Life in the refugee camps in Bangladesh is extremely challenging. Overcrowding has made it difficult to provide adequate shelter, while poor sanitation and lack of clean water have led to frequent disease outbreaks, such as cholera and COVID-19. Refugees face limited access to healthcare and education, and the camps often rely on international aid to meet basic needs. The lack of livelihood opportunities has left the Rohingya dependent on aid, with little hope of rebuilding their lives.

#### 5. **Security Challenges:**

The refugee camps have also become hotspots for security issues, including human trafficking, exploitation, and the presence of militant groups. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, while tensions between refugee communities and host populations in Bangladesh have led to occasional conflicts. These challenges further complicate efforts to improve the living conditions of the Rohingya and find long-term solutions.

### **International Response**

#### 1. **Condemnation and Humanitarian Aid:**

The international community has strongly condemned the violence against the Rohingya. Organizations such as the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, the **World Food Programme (WFP)**, and **Doctors Without Borders (MSF)** have been instrumental in providing humanitarian aid, including food, medical care, and shelter. However, funding shortfalls and the sheer scale of the crisis have left many needs unmet. Humanitarian agencies continue to struggle with limited resources and logistical challenges in addressing the plight of the Rohingya.

#### 2. **Diplomatic Efforts:**

Diplomatic efforts to hold Myanmar accountable have included resolutions by the **UN General Assembly** and the imposition of sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders by countries such as the United States and the European Union. In 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) began hearings on a case brought by **The Gambia**, accusing Myanmar of genocide against the

Rohingya. While these actions have brought some international attention to the crisis, tangible outcomes in terms of justice and accountability remain limited.

### 3. **Repatriation Efforts:**

Efforts to repatriate the Rohingya to Myanmar have been largely unsuccessful due to ongoing security concerns and the lack of guarantees for their safety and rights. Many Rohingya refugees fear returning to a country where they faced persecution, and Myanmar's government has shown little willingness to address the root causes of the crisis. Voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation remains a distant goal, as the conditions in Myanmar are far from conducive to the return of refugees.

## **Lessons Learned**

### 1. **Accountability for Perpetrators:**

One of the key lessons from the Rohingya crisis is the importance of holding perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable. Despite international condemnation, meaningful justice for the Rohingya remains elusive. Stronger mechanisms are needed to ensure accountability for atrocities, including trials for military leaders responsible for the violence. Without justice, the cycle of impunity is likely to continue, further undermining international norms.

### 2. **Addressing Root Causes of the Crisis:**

The Rohingya crisis highlights the need to address the root causes of ethnic and religious conflicts. In Myanmar, this includes granting the Rohingya citizenship and equal rights, addressing decades of systemic discrimination, and fostering reconciliation between ethnic groups. Without tackling these fundamental issues, the crisis will persist, and the Rohingya will remain marginalized.

### 3. **Promoting Durable Solutions for Refugees:**

The current response to the Rohingya crisis has focused heavily on immediate humanitarian needs, but there is an urgent need for durable solutions. This includes exploring resettlement opportunities, improving conditions in refugee camps, and ensuring that host countries like Bangladesh receive sufficient support to manage the crisis. The global community must work together to provide pathways for the Rohingya to rebuild their lives, whether through integration,

resettlement, or safe repatriation.

### **Conclusion**

The Rohingya crisis serves as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of ethnic and religious discrimination. Despite widespread international condemnation and humanitarian efforts, the situation remains dire, with millions of Rohingya living in precarious conditions as stateless refugees. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach that includes holding perpetrators accountable, addressing the structural causes of the conflict, and providing sustainable solutions for the affected population. The Rohingya crisis underscores the need for stronger international mechanisms to prevent and respond to such atrocities, ensuring that the world does not stand by in the face of ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses.

## **6. Potential Solutions and Recommendations**

### **Potential Solutions and Recommendations**

#### **1. Diplomatic Efforts:**

- **Mediation and Dialogue:**

In order to address the protracted conflicts such as those in Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, it is imperative that the international community facilitates a neutral and inclusive dialogue between the conflicting parties. In particular, the inclusion of all stakeholders, including local groups, civil society, and marginalized communities, is crucial for creating a lasting peace. The efforts should focus on fostering trust and reconciliation, emphasizing the shared goal of achieving sustainable peace. The use of third-party mediators, with the backing of the UN and other impartial actors, can help in bridging gaps and building common ground.

- **Support for Peace Processes:**

A concerted effort is required to actively support UN-led peace processes and peacebuilding



initiatives. In the context of Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, international diplomatic actors must not only facilitate peace talks but also hold parties accountable for compliance with ceasefires and agreements. Mechanisms for monitoring peace processes, along with increased diplomatic pressure and sanctions against violators, are essential to ensure the credibility and success of peace negotiations.

- **Addressing Root Causes:**

The underlying causes of the conflicts must be addressed holistically, focusing on both immediate and long-term solutions. Poverty, inequality, and governance issues are at the heart of many crises, and their resolution requires structural reforms. In Yemen and Myanmar, inclusive governance models that promote equity and protect the rights of marginalized groups, such as the Rohingya, are fundamental to creating a stable political environment. In Syria, rebuilding trust in the government and ensuring fair representation of all ethnic and religious groups is essential for long-term peace.

## **2. Humanitarian Aid:**

- **Increased Funding:**

The humanitarian response in conflict zones like Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar has been hindered by insufficient funding. A call for increased financial commitments from international donors is necessary to meet the growing needs of displaced populations and those living in conflict-affected areas. The donor community must recognize the long-term nature of these crises and make sustained financial pledges that ensure both immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts.

- **Improved Coordination:**

Strengthening coordination among humanitarian organizations is critical to maximizing the impact of aid delivery. This can be achieved by establishing clear communication channels, sharing resources, and aligning efforts to avoid duplication of services. In Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, coordination between UN agencies, NGOs, and local actors should be streamlined to improve access, efficiency, and reach. Moreover, ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches the most vulnerable, including women, children, and the elderly, should be a top priority.

- **Protection of Civilians:**

Protecting civilians in conflict zones is paramount. Humanitarian organizations must not only deliver aid but also ensure the safety and dignity of the populations they serve. This includes advocating for humanitarian corridors, ensuring the protection of aid workers, and demanding that all parties to the conflict adhere to international humanitarian law. In Yemen and Syria, where indiscriminate bombing and sieges have harmed civilian populations, the international community must hold perpetrators accountable and push for the creation of safe zones.

### 3. Long-Term Development:

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

In the aftermath of conflict, countries must rebuild with an eye toward achieving the SDGs, focusing on inclusive growth and sustainable development. For Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, long-term development should prioritize peace, social cohesion, and human rights as a foundation for rebuilding. Efforts should be made to promote gender equality, empower youth, and reduce inequality, which will ensure that recovery processes are equitable and resilient.

- **Investment in Education and Healthcare:**

To build human capital and promote long-term stability, significant investment in education and healthcare is necessary. In Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, large portions of the populations have been deprived of access to quality education and healthcare services due to ongoing conflict. By prioritizing these sectors, the international community can help to create a generation capable of rebuilding their societies. In particular, education programs targeting displaced children and healthcare initiatives addressing malnutrition and preventable diseases are essential to addressing the humanitarian consequences of conflict.

- **Economic Development:**

Economic recovery is vital for the stability of post-conflict societies. The international community should support programs that promote job creation, improve infrastructure, and provide access to markets. In Yemen and Syria, rebuilding the economy requires investment in agriculture, industry, and services, as well as creating opportunities for entrepreneurship, especially among youth and women. Sustainable economic growth will reduce dependency on

humanitarian aid and promote self-reliance in conflict-affected communities.

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#### **4. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:**

- **Climate Action:**

Climate change mitigation must be integrated into the humanitarian and development efforts in conflict-affected regions. In countries like Yemen, where climate change has exacerbated droughts and water scarcity, and in Syria, where environmental stress has played a role in triggering migration, climate action is crucial. Supporting local governments and communities in adopting climate-resilient practices, investing in renewable energy sources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions will strengthen resilience to future environmental shocks.

- **Sustainable Water Management:**

Water scarcity is a pressing issue in many conflict zones. In Yemen, where water sources have been heavily impacted by the conflict, and in Syria, where infrastructure destruction has led to severe water shortages, promoting sustainable water management practices is vital. This includes supporting water conservation technologies, improving the efficiency of water usage, and rebuilding water infrastructure. International cooperation on transboundary water management in regions like Syria and Yemen can help mitigate future conflicts over this essential resource.

- **Disaster Risk Reduction:**

Strengthening disaster preparedness and response is essential to ensure that countries affected by conflict are better equipped to withstand future shocks. In Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, the international community should assist in creating disaster risk reduction plans that include early warning systems, emergency response training, and community-based preparedness programs. These measures will help mitigate the impact of natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and storms, and reduce the vulnerability of affected populations to additional crises.

## 7. QARMA

### 1. What is the problem?

The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is grappling with a complex set of humanitarian crises, primarily driven by ongoing conflicts, political instability, and environmental stress. These crises have resulted in large-scale displacement, loss of livelihoods, and widespread suffering, with vulnerable populations facing severe deprivations of basic rights and access to essential services. Specifically, the region is burdened by protracted conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya, which have left millions without access to food, healthcare, education, and safe living conditions. The humanitarian crises are further exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change, which leads to water scarcity, droughts, and environmental degradation.

### 2. Who is affected?

The most vulnerable groups affected by the humanitarian challenges in the MENA region include:

- **Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Millions of people have been forced to flee their homes due to violence and conflict. Refugees, especially from Syria and Yemen, are seeking asylum in neighboring countries or further afield, facing poor living conditions and limited opportunities for integration. IDPs within countries such as Syria and Yemen are often stranded in camps, unable to return home due to ongoing violence or destruction.
- **Women and Children:** Women and children are disproportionately affected, often facing gender-based violence, exploitation, and abuse. Children, in particular, suffer from a lack of access to education, malnutrition, and the psychological effects of living through conflict.

- **Displaced Communities and Marginalized Groups:** These include ethnic and religious minorities such as the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and the Yazidis in Iraq. These groups often face compounded risks, including ethnic cleansing, displacement, and systematic denial of basic rights.
- **Elderly and Disabled Individuals:** These groups are highly vulnerable, often facing limited mobility, insufficient healthcare, and a lack of support in emergency situations.

### 3. What are the root causes?

The humanitarian crisis in the MENA region is the result of multiple intertwined factors:

- **Conflict and Political Instability:** Ongoing wars in Syria, Yemen, and Libya have displaced millions, destroyed infrastructure, and disrupted social systems. Political instability and governance issues, such as corruption and lack of representation, exacerbate the humanitarian situation.
- **Poverty and Inequality:** High levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality fuel social unrest and contribute to the vulnerability of communities, especially marginalized groups. Economic collapse in conflict zones, such as Yemen, has made basic survival increasingly difficult.
- **Governance and Human Rights Violations:** The absence of good governance, political repression, and human rights violations contribute to the breakdown of social systems and exacerbate the suffering of civilians.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Stress:** In countries like Yemen and Syria, water scarcity, droughts, and other environmental stresses are intensifying the challenges faced by already vulnerable populations. Climate-induced migration is further exacerbating the crisis.

### 4. What are the proposed solutions?

The solutions to the humanitarian challenges in the MENA region are multifaceted and require coordinated action across several fronts:

- **Diplomatic Solutions:** Engage in sustained diplomatic efforts to mediate conflicts and promote peacebuilding initiatives. Supporting UN-led peace processes and fostering

dialogue among conflicting parties is crucial. Addressing the root causes of conflict, including governance issues, human rights violations, and poverty, is necessary for creating long-term stability.

- **Humanitarian Aid:** Increase funding and resources for humanitarian organizations working in the region. Strengthen coordination among international and local humanitarian actors to ensure aid reaches the most vulnerable populations. The protection of civilians must be a priority, along with ensuring access to food, healthcare, education, and shelter.
- **Sustainable Development and Reconstruction:** Focus on rebuilding infrastructure, including education and healthcare systems, to restore the region's human capital. Promote sustainable development through the implementation of the SDGs, ensuring that economic recovery includes marginalized groups. Support local businesses and job creation, especially for youth and women.
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Support climate adaptation and resilience measures, including sustainable water management, disaster risk reduction, and renewable energy solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change in vulnerable areas.

### 5. Who is responsible for implementation?

Several actors are responsible for the implementation of solutions to the humanitarian crises in the MENA region:

- **United Nations (UN):** The UN and its specialized agencies (such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO) play a central role in providing humanitarian aid, coordinating efforts, and leading peace processes.
- **National Governments:** Local governments in conflict-affected countries must take ownership of recovery and peacebuilding efforts. International pressure, in the form of diplomatic engagement and aid, can encourage governments to prioritize human rights and development.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Humanitarian Actors:** NGOs and humanitarian organizations, both international and local, are crucial in delivering immediate relief and implementing development programs. They also play a critical role in advocating for the rights of vulnerable populations.

- **Regional Organizations:** Regional bodies such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have a role in facilitating regional peace initiatives and coordinating disaster relief efforts.
- **Private Sector:** The private sector, including businesses and financial institutions, can contribute to reconstruction and development through investment in infrastructure, job creation, and sustainable practices.

## 6. How will success be measured?

Success can be measured through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators:

- **Humanitarian Impact:** The number of people receiving aid, including food, healthcare, shelter, and education, will indicate the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions. Additionally, the reduction in the number of displaced persons and refugees will serve as a critical benchmark.
- **Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution:** The success of peace negotiations and the establishment of ceasefires, along with the return of displaced populations to their homes in safety, will demonstrate progress in addressing conflict and instability.
- **Reconstruction and Development Progress:** The successful rebuilding of infrastructure, particularly in areas such as education and healthcare, as well as improvements in employment rates, poverty reduction, and access to basic services, will indicate the long-term success of recovery efforts.
- **Climate Resilience:** Measures of climate adaptation and sustainability, including the implementation of water management systems and renewable energy projects, will track the region's progress in addressing climate change and its impacts on vulnerable populations.
- **Human Rights and Governance Improvements:** Success can also be evaluated based on improvements in human rights protection, the implementation of democratic reforms, and reductions in corruption and political violence.

By setting clear benchmarks and tracking these indicators, the international community and local stakeholders can measure the progress of humanitarian efforts and ensure that solutions are effective in addressing the challenges facing the MENA region.

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