

Yemen Blockade

Why in news?

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Saudi Arabia has recently imposed a blockade on Yemen, which was already reeling from a humanitarian crisis.

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What are the contours of the war?

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- Yemenese civil war broke out when Shia Houthi Rebels captured large swathes of land in the western regions.

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- They've captured the capital Sana and also enjoy the patronage of the country's Shia community and the previously deposed President 'Ali Abdullah Saleh'.

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- The Saudi-backed 'Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi' government which actually operates from the southern coastal city of Aden.

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- Saudis see Houthis as Iranian proxies and have been bombing their territory with impunity for almost 3 years.

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- Saudis also enjoy the steadfast support of successive U.S. administrations for their Yemenese aggression.

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- While the war has entered a stalemate, more than 10,000 people have been killed and many more displaced.

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- Notably, Al-Qaeda has grown in strength in the midst of this chaos.

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Why was blockade imposed?

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- The Saudi-led coalition closed all air, land and sea access to Yemen on November 6.

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- This was done following the interception of a missile fired towards the Saudi capital.

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- Presumably, the blockade was imposed to prevent the Houthi rebels from smuggling high-end weaponry from Iran.

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- But as a consequence, it led to one of the worst famines.

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How worse is the famine?

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- The American alert on Yemen said that a prolonged closure of key ports in Yemen led “unprecedented deterioration in food security” to the worst category of **Phase 5**.

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- 17 million people who are already dependent on international aid for food and drugs will starve.

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- Notably, about 80% of Yemen’s basic food supplies are imported through ship deliveries along the Red Sea coast.

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- Further, incessant bombing and the failure to provide basic services have resulted in a medical emergency.

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- Incidentally, there is already a major cholera outbreak in the country due to non availability for clean water supply.

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What is the way ahead?

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- There has been no meaningful effort thus far, from the international community to end this humanitarian crisis.
- While the Saudis don't want the Houthis to control the country, they lack strategic depth and resources to shape Yemen's future.
- Hence, UN and other international bodies need act soon to prevent this man-made disaster from reaching catastrophic proportions.

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Quick Facts

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- The five-stage scale, with Phase 5 being famine, is used by humanitarian aid groups to anticipate the severity of potential hunger emergencies.
- Famine is defined as existing in areas in which at least one in five households suffers "an extreme lack of food and other basic needs where starvation, death and destitution are evident."

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Source: The Hindu

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