Committee: Advisory Panel

Agenda Item: Strengthening Multilateral Efforts to Address the Consequences of Protracted Conflicts in MENA

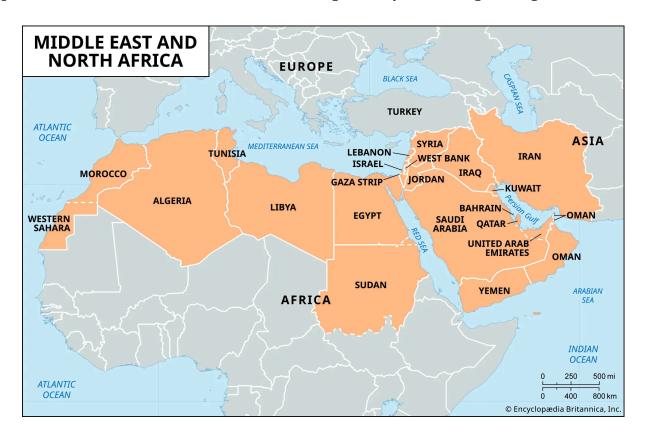**Student Officer:** Ege Varlık - Deputy Chair

Introduction

MENA Region, or Middle East and North Africa Region, consists of 22 countries and numerous conflicts in its borders. In a 2020 report, it was declared that the region held 7 active conflicts, many of them were interconnected and involved foreign intervention by numerous global powers, as well as non-state actors such as terrorist groups. Although some of these conflicts have a slightly more improved situation today in 2025, there is no doubt in that fact that, these long lasting conflicts, although the hostilities may have calmed down, will have long lasting impacts on the region as a whole.

There are many examples of protracted conflicts. The Yemeni Conflict, which has been ongoing since the 2004 Houthi Uprising, eventually turned into a civil war in 2014 between the recognized government and the alliance between the Iran-backet Houthis and the forces loyal to the former president. This conflict and the situation as a whole is being regarded as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. The Syrian civil war was triggered by the Arab Spring of 2011 and ended in 2025 when Assad was overthrown and a ceasefire was made. Türkiye, Russia, USA and numerous terrorist groups were also involved in the civil war as international and non-party actors. Although the Islamic State was militarily defeated in Iraq in 2017, the country is still in turmoil because of the long lasting instability. In addition, numerous terrorist groups are active in the country. This causes foreign countries to conduct airstrikes in Iraq in their attempts to counter terrorism. Israel has been occupying the Gaza Strip since 1967.

The economic and social effects of these issues are massively straining the stability and well being in the region. Efforts for a solution have been made, but further cooperation and bilateral talks must be achieved in order to find a long lasting solution. Since there are multiple issues at hand, one single solution is not possible, each issue should be taken care of, gradually stabilizing the region.

A map of the MENA Region (Brittanica)

Definition of Key Terms

MENA: Middle East and North Africa: used to refer to the group of countries in this area (Cambridge)

Houthi Movement: Islamic fundamentalist movement in northern Yemen and one of the main actors in the Yemeni Civil War (Brittanica)

Civil War: A war fought by different groups of people living in the same country (Cambridge)

Islamic State: A transnational Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group (US Congress)

Collateral Damage: Damage done to something or harm done to someone that is not intended (Cambridge)

Major Actors Involved

Syria: Syrian civil war began in 2011 when it was triggered by the Arab Spring. Protests opposing the authoritarian rule of Bashar al-Assad eventually turned violent and the country descended into conflict. Many international actors such as Russia, the United States, Türkiye and Israel took part in the civil war, as well as numerous terrorist groups. The civil war ended in 2024 and Assad fled the country. Although the civil war is over, the country needs international aid in their efforts to rebuild the country post-conflict.

Iraq: Although the country struggles with post-conflict political, economic and security challenges, these aren't the only issues. Islamic State was militarily defeated in 2017. However, its remnants are still active alongside several other terrorist groups that are mainly found in the northern parts of the country. The actions taken by international actors against the terrorist groups (i.e the airstrikes conducted by the Republic of Türkiye in their efforts of counter terrorism) occasionally causes instability and displaces the population in the country.

Yemen: Yemen has been dealing with Houthi insurgency for over 20 years, and has been in a civil war also for over 10 years. On top of that, the country approaches a catastrophic food crisis, which could result in hundreds of thousands of people dying of starvation. The situation is regarded as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

A photograph of the Houthi soldiers (The Guardian)

Israel: After Israel won the 6 day war in 1967 and captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights from Palestine, it introduced new settlement plans in the region, threatening the mass displacement and exodus of the Muslim population. Throughout the years, Israel continued the annexation of the Palestinian territories and oppression against the Muslims in the region. In 2023, Hamas and Israel entered a violent conflict. Israel blocked off humanitarian aid from reaching the region, leaving millions under the threat of starvation.

International Community: Most of the conflicts taking place in the MENA region have foreign intervention of global powers such as Russia, United States, European Countries and Türkiye. They have sometimes taken part in numerous military conflicts either directly by deploying their army in the region or indirectly by supporting the fighting sides with weapons and equipment. Even though they can be related to the development of these issues and can be a reason for the crises, the part they can play in making peace deals cannot be ignored.

General Overview of the Issue

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA Region) has been home to several different conflicts for many years. Even though some conflicts are over, they have left the countries involved in a state of instability and chaos. Millions of people have been displaced because of civil wars and terrorist groups, and those who stayed in the country in the middle of conflict are in no better condition, struggling to access even the most basic humanitarian needs. Below can be found several issues that have taken place/are taking place in the MENA Region:

Buildings destroyed by the Islamic State in Iraq (UN News)

The Yemeni conflict began in 2004, after Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi launched an uprising against the government in power. Although Houthi was killed in that uprising, the insurgents loyal to him continued their acts of violence, and came to be known as "Houthis". After a decade since the beginning of the uprising, the country descended into civil war in 2014. Iran backed Houthis and the loyalists of the former president Saleh against the recognized government of President Hadi, which was also supported by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and joined by several neighboring states. Although numerous attempts have been made in the name of peace, such as the 2018 Stockholm Agreement and the 2019 Riyadh Agreement, they were not able to resolve the conflict. In 2020, the country was deemed to be on the brink of a catastrophic food crisis, with over 100 thousand children being at the risk of dying from hunger. The issue is being regarded as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

The Syrian Civil war was another conflict that was active in the region for over a decade. Although the Civil war is declared to be over, the effects of war still linger in the region. The Civil war was triggered in 2011 by the Arab Spring. Protests demanded an end to Bashar al-Assad's authoritarian rule. Conflict escalated into a civil war in 2012, with Russia, United States, Türkiye, Israel, Iran and numerous terrorist groups such as the Islamic State also being involved in, it turned international. The conflict ended in 2024 after the Assad government was unable to stop an offensive from opposing forces, which eventually led to Bashar al-Assad fleeing the country. Deals and agreements were made shortly after. Although the conflict is over, it scarred the country. 6.7 million people were internally displaced, 5.6 million refugees fled the country and were hosted by nearby countries. In terms of casualties, although there is no reliable source, the death toll is estimated to have exceeded half a million. Problems with refugees and rebuilding the country are still present.

Although the Islamic State was militarily defeated in Iraq in 2017, the country still has struggles with political and security challenges, as well as economic hardships. Remnants of the Islamic State are also present in the country. One another issue Iraq faces is the fact that several terrorist organisations are active in its borders. The Republic or Türkiye conducts airstrikes and military operations in the northern parts of the country for counter terrorism efforts, which sometimes results in collateral damage and wildfires and thus the displacement of its citizens.

After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the State of Israel captured most of the Gaza Strip, West Bank and the Golan Heights and started settlement plans in the regions, displacing the Muslim people. Israel and the neighboring Arab States were involved in armed disputes from time to time, with the most recent conflict beginning on October 7th 2023 following an attack from Hamas. Israel retaliated with a major counter offensive operation. Millions of Muslims died as Israel targeted civilian buildings and hospitals, claiming they are used by Palestinian fighters. Israel also blocked any humanitarian aid from coming into Palestine. As a result, millions faced the threat of starvation. In October 2025, a peace plan was agreed upon, leading to a ceasefire.

As it can be seen, many conflicts, some still being active, are present in the borders of the MENA Region. Some conflicts, although being over, left an impact that continues to impact lives. Some conflicts being connected (i.e Iraq and Syria) lead to them affecting a much larger area. Remnants of the Islamic State are still active in some regions and fighting continues in certain countries. Although peace and humanitarian attempts have been made before the international forces, a definite solution is yet to be found.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
1967	Six Day War takes place between Israel and several Arab states. Israel captures territories of Egypt, Syria

	and Jordan
2004	Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi launched an uprising against the government, Houthi Insurgency began.
2011	Protests begin in Syria against President Assad's regime
2012	Conflict in Syria erupts into a civil war
2014	Yemen descends into a civil war between the recognized government and Houthis supported by loyalists to the past government
March 2015	A coalition led by Saudi Arabia starts military intervention in Yemen, supporting Hadi
2017	Islamic State is defeated in Iraq and only remnants remain in the country
2022	Israeli government announces settlement expansion plans
April 2022	President of Yemen, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi resigns
7 October 2023	Hamas launches an attack on Israel
January 2024	United States launches strikes against Houthi rebels, also declaring them as a terrorist organization
8 December 2024	Syrian rebel forces enter Damascus, Assad flees to Russia
October 2025	Hamas and the Israeli Government agrees to the first phase of the peace plan proposed by Donald Trump

Related Documents

E/RES/2025/33 Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan : resolution / adopted by the Economic and Social Council
https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4088687?ln=en&v=pdf

S/RES/2801 Resolution 2801 (2025) / adopted by the Security Council at its 10044th meeting, on 14 November 2025

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4093082?ln=en&v=pdf

Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council on 4 April 2025
https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4082007?ln=en&v=pdf

Past Solution Attempts

All the conflicts mentioned in this report have been the center of attention in the United Nations during the time they were active and their aftermath also are. UN missions on improving humanitarian rights were active in the needed regions and ceasefire talks were being brokered by several member states. However, humanitarian crises and conflicts continue to strain the region. Ceasefire deals made in Yemen were not followed, Israel and Hamas occasionally violate the ceasefire and human rights violations are still crippling the population in Gaza Strip. Syria and Iraq, although not participating in an active conflict, are still far from stability.

Children playing among the rubble in Gaza (The Guardian)

Possible Solutions

Since most of the conflicts have calmed down, humanitarian aid and rebuilding of the country post conflict should be the first priority of such countries. Syria and Iraq are not currently engaged in active warfare and efforts should be made to improve the well being of the civilians in those nations. A corridor should be opened for the flow of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and international collaboration should ensure the necessary help arrives. The ceasefire should be monitored. For Yemen, which is still actively engaged in warfare, bilateral talks with the support of regional actors and the United Nations should be established. This way, a ceasefire can be achieved and a peace plan can be made. Then Yemen would move on to the post conflict improvement part of the solution as well.

Useful Links

https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06s0.pdf

https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06sI.pdf

https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06sII.pdf

https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06sIII.pdf

https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06sIV.pdf

https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB21c06sV.pdf

Here are some articles published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, it offers a deeper perspective to the conflicts mentioned here.

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