Sarah*, 12 (blue headscarf), is from Haradh district in Hajja, northern Yemen. She and her family had to flee their home when the conflict escalated and airstrikes targeted Haradh; she has now been out of school for almost 2 years. She looks forward to going back home, to her original school and to fulfilling her dream of becoming a police officer.
OVERVIEW

Children’s lives have been torn apart after more than two years of brutal armed conflict in Yemen, a country in the Middle East. As the war continues, children’s prospects of survival are reducing day-by-day. Over 4,000 children have been killed or injured as a direct consequence of the war, while every ten minutes a child under five dies due to preventable causes, including malnutrition.

Explosive weapons continue to be used in towns and cities in Yemen. These weapons are generally aimed at soldiers but they affect a much wider area and this means that many civilians including children are being killed and injured. Last year more civilian deaths and injuries from explosive weapons were recorded in Yemen than in any other country around the world1. The war has disrupted every aspect of daily life, and the most vulnerable groups, including children, continue to pay the heaviest price. More than a million children are currently internally displaced and double that number are out of school, meaning a quarter of school-aged children are missing out on an education. This is having a devastating impact on their futures and the future of Yemen.

Yemen was already the poorest country in the Arab world, with over 54% of the population living in absolute poverty. It also consistently ranks as the one of the worst places to live if you are a woman or girl. The war is having a dreadful impact on people who are already vulnerable.

The War
There have been disagreements between different political groups in Yemen for a long time but in 2014, the situation became much worse:

• The Houthis, mainly from the North of Yemen, disagreed with the views and rulings of the Government of Yemen, which was mainly made up of people from the South of Yemen. In September 2014 soldiers from the Houthi army took control of parts of the country, including the capital Sana’a.

• In February 2015 they took over the government and forced Yemen’s President Hadi to flee to Aden in the south of the country, and then to Saudi Arabia. The Houthis are supported by former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

1 According to Action on Armed Violence, there were 6,119 civilian deaths and injuries from explosive weapons in Yemen in 2015 –93% of casualties were civilians
• In March 2015 a coalition of ten countries led by Saudi Arabia sent military airplanes and soldiers to try and get the land back from the Houthis. The Houthis have also launched missile rocket attacks into Saudi Arabia from the border with Yemen.

• The UK government supports the Saudi Arabian coalition, and are supplying them with weapons such as airplanes and bombs.

• The situation has become very unstable and unsafe and this has created the opportunity for other armed groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS to come into Yemen and try and take control of parts of the country.

**Lives destroyed**

Right now, no part of Yemen is safe; over 3/4 of Yemeni people are in need of humanitarian assistance because of the conflict.

Indeed, since March 2017, the conflict is reported to have claimed nearly 60,000 lives, almost half of whom are believed to be civilians. The impact on children has been worrying high with 1,676 children killed and over 2,767 wounded, and that figure is rising every day. Actual figures are believed to be much higher, as medical facilities have been bombed and authorities can no longer keep track of the number of people in need.

In addition, 3 million people have had to flee their homes, and many are internally displaced. About half of these people are children.

**Lack of food and clean water**

Markets and shops have been damaged or destroyed which has cut off essential services to families, including clean water and waste water systems. As a result, some 10 million children do not have access to safe drinking water.

The war has prevented key supplies from moving around the country, and the price of basic supplies has increased dramatically. It is almost impossible for emergency supplies to get through to the people who need them. As a result, 1.3 million

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2 Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Photo: Samia*, 8 years old, has been displaced from Sa’ada, in the north of Yemen, after Saudi airstrikes meant that it was too dangerous to live there anymore. She is now staying in an old, structurally unsound building with her mother, cousin and 4 siblings. With no steady source of income Samia’s family are now dependent on a monthly cash transfer of 18,000 Yemeni Rials ($83), from Save the Children.
children under the age of five are now suffering from acute, life-threatening *malnutrition* (a serious illness caused by lack of food). Babies as old as two have lived their whole lives in a country where there isn’t enough food; this not only affects their physical health, but severely impacts their brains and mental capabilities.

This lack of clean water and food has led to an outbreak of a serious disease called cholera with an average of more than 1,000 suspected cholera cases a day. Nearly two out of three sufferers are children under 15 years old, and Save The Children staff are warning that the latest outbreak could become a full-blown *epidemic*.

This increase in cholera is not a coincidence, and comes as a consequence of Yemen’s health system, clean water and waste-water facilities reaching breaking point because of the ongoing war.

**Hospitals and schools closed**

In the conflict in Yemen, both sides are targeting civilians, and even children, in a way that we haven’t seen since the World Wars.

Many hospitals have been bombed or attacked by soldiers and nearly half of all hospitals and health centres have closed due to a lack of staff and supplies. Desperate parents are being asked to provide their own medicines, and UNICEF estimate that as a result one child dies every ten minutes due to preventable diseases like diarrhea, malnutrition and respiratory tract infections.

The specific targeting of schools has been all too common during this conflict. Since the conflict began, there are records of 222 attacks on schools. Many schools are now occupied by armed groups, and both sides are attempting to recruit children as soldiers.

In total 1,499 schools have been damaged by the war, and as a result, 2.2 million children are currently unable to go to school. That’s the equivalent of all children in London not being able to go back to school in the new term... because their school no longer exists.

Despite peace talks, the conflict has intensified in recent weeks with particularly heavy bombing in the densely populated city of Sana’a.
The impact on Children

In Yemen the rules of war are being broken by all sides many times over and children are paying the ultimate price. They no longer have that fundamental human right: they no longer feel safe.

“I was so scared; I kept my eyes closed. My father took us to the hospital, and we were treated there. My wounds still hurt and I am very afraid when I hear aircraft overhead. I have nightmares at night – I see aircrafts hitting our house again and again. My brother and I cannot sleep properly. Sometimes I wake up because I hear my brother Khalil shouting while he is asleep. I am so sad that we left our village.”

I want to go back, but we are too scared to return because we fear the aircraft will hit us again. We still hear aircraft flying over our house, and constant bombardments targeting military locations in the city. It is too scary! I do not want to go to school. I am too scared to leave the house.”

Noor*, 6, and her brother Khalil*, 9, were injured after an airstrike hit their home on January 1, 2017. The airstrike killed their grandmother, 3 year old cousin, and 3 guests who were visiting.
What do Save the Children want to change?

Save the Children asked the United Nations to:

List the Saudi-led coalition in the UN Secretary General’s annual Children in Armed Conflict Report: a list of countries and other forces bombing schools and hospitals, and killing children.

Last year, following intense pressure from Saudi Arabia, the previous United Nations Secretary-General removed the coalition from the report. In the 2016 report, Houthi forces were listed along with other parties to Yemen’s conflict.

And we won!

In October 2017, the UN Secretary-General ‘named and shamed’ the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition in Yemen for grave violations against children.
This is a crucial victory in stopping the bombing of children in Yemen.

The UN has clearly stated that it will not let the Saudi coalition get away with deliberately harming children.

Now Save the Children will be making the case to the UK government to that they shouldn’t be supporting states who have been blacklisted for violations against children...

Save the Children are now asking the British Government to:

- **Immediately stop the sale of British Weapons to the Saudi Arabian coalition;** currently bombs are made in Britain, and dropped on Yemen’s children.

- **Ensure children and their families can get food and basic supplies** by pressuring all sides in the war to let aid get through to **those in need** and make sure that ports and roads are open for supplies to get into the country and to reach the areas where they are needed.

- **Ensure children and their families are protected from the armed violence** by urging all sides in the war to respect international law, immediately stop the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in areas where there are lots of people, and to stop selling arms to groups who will use them to kill civilians

- **All claims that civilians have been deliberately attacked should be fairly investigated**

- **If there is proof that armies have deliberately bombed civilians, they should be brought to justice in the International Criminal Court**

- **Pressure all sides in the war to agree an immediate ceasefire** and continue supporting efforts to seek a political solution to the conflict.
United Nations (UN) - An international organization formed in 1945 to increase political and economic cooperation among member countries. The organization works on economic and social development programs, improving human rights and reducing global conflicts.

Secretary General - Antonio Guterres, "chief administrative officer" of the UN Secretariat. Leads the UN Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other United Nations organs.

Saudi Arabian coalition - Nine African and Middle Eastern countries who have joined Saudi Arabia in fighting against the Houthis in Yemen.

Houthis - A movement of religious-political people in Yemen who believe in a certain branch of Islam.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) - People who have been forced to flee their homes because of war, violence, human rights violations or disasters - but who have not left their country.

Civilians - People who are not in the armed forces and do not work for the police.

Malnutrition - Lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat.

Absolute poverty - a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

ISIS - A group based in the Middle East, mainly in Iraq and Syria, whose members have extreme religious beliefs. They started growing rapidly in 2014 and use brutal violence against anyone who doesn't agree with their views. They claim to follow the religion of Islam, but many people say their beliefs of hatred and violence have little to do with what the majority of Muslims believe.

Al Qaeda - A terrorist organisation responsible for many attacks on Muslims and on the West, including 9/11 in New York.

Epidemic - a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.
FAQs for teachers

Why did the Houthis want to take over the government?

The Houthis, from mainly the North of Yemen, disagreed with the views and rulings of the Government of Yemen, which was mainly made up of people from the South of Yemen. In February 2015 they dissolved the Parliament and replaced the government with a presidential council, prompting Yemen’s President Hadi to flee to Aden, in the south of the country, and then to Saudi Arabia. The Houthis are supported by former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Who is arming the Houthis?

It is believed that Iran, a country near Yemen, backs the Houthis politically and with weapons.

Why are ISIS and Al Qaeda involved?

ISIS and Al Qaeda want to influence the direction of the Government of Yemen. They are using the conflict as an opportunity to push for their own goals and for their ideas to take hold in Yemen.

What is ISIS? (see above definition)

ISIS is a terrorist group in the middle east who seek to impose their own strict laws and views on different groups of people across the middle east, forcing people to follow their religious and political views.

Is it only Save the Children who are running a campaign to Stop Bombing Children in Yemen?

No. Similar campaigns exist that are run by other charities such as War Child, the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, the Watch List.

What does the UK government think about it?

The government knows that the situation is very bad and provides backing to charities to provide aid, but it also sells arms to Saudi Arabia for money that are being used in the war.

What does Boris Johnson, the Head of the Foreign Office, think about it?

Boris Johnson has to think about a lot of different conflict zones around the world all at the same time. We want him to think that Yemen is a priority war that needs to be dealt with.

Why is it important that we speak to our MP about this?

As your democratic representative in Parliament, your MP can tell the Government your views, and ask Boris Johnson directly to change his position.
Why are they still selling weapons to the Saudis?

The UK Government have a long-standing partnership with Saudi Arabia, and the weapons we sell are worth a lot of money to the Government. Saudi Arabia have historically been a political ally of the UK government in the Middle East, and therefore the UK government are hesitant to sever ties with Saudi Arabia. Because of our exit from the European Union, the UK is more politically vulnerable than usual and looking to renew ties with it’s allies outside of the EU.

What would happen if the UK stopped selling weapons to the Saudis? Would they get their weapons from someone else?

The conflict would not end. Other countries like France and America also sell arms to Saudi Arabia. Some people in the UK would lose jobs and the UK Government would lose some money but selling weapons that kill children is not the right thing to do.

It’s also about partly about our legal commitments – the UK should abide by our legal obligations and promises we’ve made to the world to sell weapons responsibly. And ultimately it’s about our place in the world – if we want to be proud of our country as a global nation, we need to lead by example – not fund a war that is killing children.

What would happen if the Saudi’s didn’t have weapons and the Houthis did?

The Houthis may end up stronger in the war and may win, but the situation is so complicated that we cannot predict what would happen.

What does the UN think about this?

The UN has to remain impartial and cannot take sides. The UN wants peace and to put the interests of civilians and children first. Every year, at the request of the UN Security Council, the Secretary-General prepares a report on the impact of armed conflict around the world on children. The principle of ‘naming and shaming’ parties to conflict that commit grave violations against children in war on the list is the keystone to the Security Council’s children and armed conflict agenda. The stigma attached to the list provides an incentive for leaders to “do what it takes” to be de-listed; it opens a dialogue between parties and UN country teams about the steps that must be taken to end violations; and the listing provides an effective means to secure concrete improvements in behaviour not only from states, but also from non-state armed groups.

October 2017 update: In early October 2017 the UN Secretary-General ‘named and shamed’ the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition in Yemen for grave violations against children.

This is something Save the Children have been campaigning on for six months, after the Saudi Arabian government used their political influence to be removed from the ‘Children in Arm conflict report’ last year, despite clear evidence of killing children and attacks on schools and hospitals. This is a crucial victory in stopping the bombing of children in Yemen.
The UN has clearly stated that it will not let the Saudi coalition get away with deliberately harming children. Now Save the Children will be making the case to the UK government to that they shouldn’t be supporting states who have been blacklisted for violations against children.

Thank you so much to all of you who signed the petition or met with and sent messages to your MP to speak about the importance of protecting children in war; this win absolutely wouldn’t have happened without your support.

Let’s keep standing up for children’s rights all over the world.

**Together, we really can achieve great things!**

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**The Blockade**

**What is a Blockade?**

This is the attempt to totally seal the borders around a certain area or country which prevents anything or anyone from entering or leaving.

**Why is a blockade particularly dangerous for Yemen?**

In addition to the political crisis, Yemen is experiencing an environmental catastrophe. Nearly 90% of the country’s land is classified as a desert which is nearly impossible to grow crops upon. Water is very scarce - Yemen has one of the lowest rates of water availability per-person in the world, about 2% of what the global average person has available to them.

Before the civil war broke out, Yemen imported nearly 90% of its food, mostly by sea. Seven million Yemeni people rely entirely on imported food. Because of the fighting, importing food has become much more difficult. Many shipping companies simply won't send supplies anymore. Even before the blockade, those who did ship supplies could face massive delays and mandatory searches by coalition warships.

See more information on the blockade here:

**Why is Saudi Arabia enforcing a blockade?**

On November 4th, the Houthis fired a powerful rocket-powered missile towards Saudi Arabia's capital. The Houthis do not have the resources to make such a sophisticated weapon. Saudi Arabia believes that that this missile came from the Houthi’s primary supporter, Iran, which has the capability to produce high-tech weapons.

In order to prevent more of these weapons from entering Yemen for the Houthis to use, Saudi Arabia decided to impose a total blockade so that nothing could be smuggled into Yemen.
**Why not just block weapons from coming in?**

It is too difficult to separate weapons from food and medicine as weapons can often be smuggled in amongst humanitarian shipments. Saudi Arabia eliminates the risk of some weapons entering the country by imposing a total blockade, but this is at the huge expense of millions of starving civilians.

**Why is Iran involved?**

In every region of the world there are powerful countries who are able to control the politics of the other countries surrounding them and shape things to suit their agendas. This is usually the richest/largest country which has the most power. In the Middle-East, Saudi Arabia has long been the biggest, richest country because of all the oil it sells to the rest of the world and therefore has been able to shape the Middle East the way it wanted.

Iran is a nearby country, with similar-sized oil reserves and population, which means it is in a position to challenge Saudi Arabia’s control over the Middle East.

For years, Iran has been trying to challenge Saudi Arabia without launching into a full-scale war, which would be too costly and dangerous.

Instead of directly attacking Saudi Arabia and its allies, Iran has been influencing its own key-allies and interfering in areas of the Middle East where there are political weaknesses and opportunities.

Yemen is seen as the perfect opportunity for Iran to undermine Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is allied to the Yemeni government which called upon its allies to help defend it against the Houthi uprising. Iran is known to support the Houthis in the hope that they will win the war and gain complete control over Yemen.

If the Houthis win, this would mean that Yemen would be under the influence of Iran. This would pose a major threat to Saudi Arabia as Yemen shares a long border to its south.

*If you have any questions that we haven’t answered here or would like to find out more, see [this great resource mapping the Yemen conflict](https://example.com).*