Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis: The Role of the European Union in Supporting Peace and Humanitarian Aid

Role:European Union Humanitarian Policy Analyst

Audıence:EU policymakers and humanitarian aid decision-makers

Summary

KEY POINTS

1.The Conflict and the Peace Process

Attacks in the Red Sea and the military responses led by the United States have made Yemen's peace process more difficult.

2.The Humanitarian Consequences of Conflict

Years of conflict, disease and malnutrition have contributed to severe humanitarian suffering and loss of life in Yemen.

3.The Need for Humanitarian Assistance

Millions of Yemenis require urgent humanitarian assistance making international support essential.

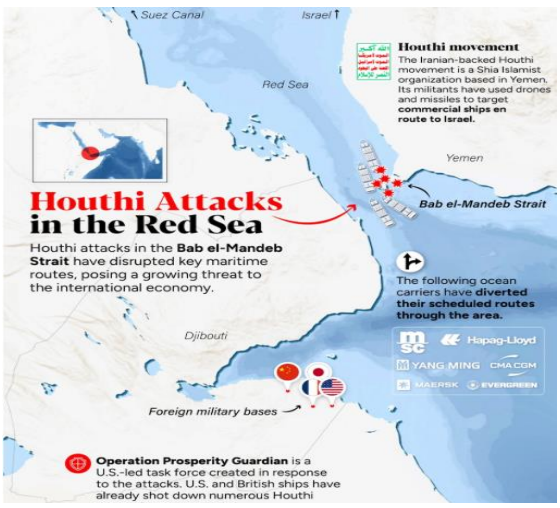
This policy brief examines the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the difficulties facing the country's peace process. The main research question is: How can the European Union help address Yemen's humanitarian crisis while supporting diplomatic efforts to achieve peace? The analysis focuses on three key points. First, attacks in the Red Sea and the military responses led by the United States have made the peace process more difficult. Second, years of conflict together with disease and malnutrition have caused serious humanitarian consequences for the Yemeni population. Third, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) millions of Yemenis need urgent humanitarian assistance. These challenges require both immediate humanitarian support and continued diplomatic efforts. Therefore this policy brief recommends that the EU strengthen its humanitarian assistance work more closely with international partners and support diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving a peaceful and lasting solution in Yemen.



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The Conflict and Yemen's Peace Process

The conflict in Yemen has become more difficult to resolve because of regional tensions and attacks in the Red Sea. In August 2026 the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, warned that renewed attacks and military escalation were threatening the progress made under the 2022 truce. He also stated that diplomatic negotiations remained necessary to prevent further conflict. These developments show that the Red Sea crisis affects not only maritime security but also the possibility of peace in Yemen. For the European Union supporting diplomatic efforts and working with international partners could help create better conditions for negotiations (1)







The Humanitarian Consequences of the Conflict

Years of conflict in Yemen have caused widespread loss of life and suffering. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the conflict was estimated to have caused 377,000 deaths by the end of 2021, including direct deaths from fighting and indirect deaths linked to hunger and limited access to healthcare. Disease and malnutrition have added to the human cost of the conflict. The European Union has responded to these needs through humanitarian assistance, including support for food healthcare and nutrition programmes. This shows how EU humanitarian policy can help address the consequences of the conflict (2)

THE NEED FOR URGENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The scale of humanitarian need in Yemen remains extremely high. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) more than 22 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2026. The same report estimates that 18.3 million people face acute food insecurity, while more than 2.2 million children under five suffer from acute malnutrition. These figures demonstrate the urgent need for food assistance healthcare and other essential services. The EU can respond by maintaining humanitarian funding and coordinating with UN agencies and humanitarian organisations to help reach people most in need (3)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Union should take three key steps to address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. First, the EU should continue to provide humanitarian aid funding for food, healthcare, nutrition, and clean water focusing on the most vulnerable people and hard-to-reach areas. Second, the EU should work more closely with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to improve aid distribution and ensure humanitarian aid reaches those in need safely and may even seek support from superpower states with significant influence in the world. Third the EU should strengthen its diplomatic efforts to support the UN-led peace process, encourage de-escalation of tensions in the Red Sea and promote respect for international law. The EU is already providing humanitarian aid and supporting diplomatic initiatives in Yemen so these recommendations are based on its current role. By combining humanitarian aid with stronger diplomatic engagement the EU can help alleviate the suffering of civilians and support the conditions necessary for lasting peace.

FOOTNOTES *

1.United Nations Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. (2026, August 7). Statement attributable to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen – Hans Grundberg on the situation in Yemen. https://osesgy.unmissions.org/en/news/statement-attributable-to-the-un-special-envoy-for-yemen-hans-grundberg-on-the

2. Years of conflict in Yemen have caused widespread loss of life and suffering. (2025, September 24)

https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/yemen_en

3. OCHA, Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 (29 March 2026).

https://yemen.un.org/en/312711-ocha-yemen-yemen-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2026-march-2026.

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This Policy Brief has been prepared as part of the participants / students' assessment in the framework of the EU Politics lecture.

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