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Your son is lying in a hospital bed, weak and immobile as starvation takes hold of his body. You have already lost one child to severe malnutrition; you fear losing a second. Sadly, this is the reality of several children and their families in Yemen, and the conditions continue to deteriorate with every passing day. Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen has devastated the economy and prevented the supplies necessary to support the population from reaching markets. With millions of children insufficiently fed, fatality rates have significantly increased. Poverty and the current political climate in Yemen allows an entirely preventable malnutrition epidemic to plague millions of children and increase death rates; a strategic economic approach may be Yemen's only hope.

It is impossible to deny the facts: the situation in Yemen is becoming increasingly dire. Parents helplessly watch their children die before their eyes. "Shaadi, 4 years old, lies in a grave marked by a single broken rock. In hushed hunger wards, ailing infants hover between life and death. Wadah Askari Mesheel, 11 months old, arrives at a clinic with severe malnutrition and dies eight hours later" (Walsh). The atmosphere inside medical facilities grows increasingly grim, as the survival of several Yemeni children is in jeopardy. The director of the World Food Program, David Beasley, visited Yemen in mid-November to analyze the dark conditions. He reported, "What I have seen in Yemen this week is the stuff of nightmares, of horror, of deprivation, of misery. And we- all of humanity- have only ourselves to blame" (Karasz). The

descriptions provided by Beasley paint a clear image of desperation and immense suffering around the country, and communicates how greatly the country is in need of aid. The former British foreign secretary and current president of the International Rescue Committee stresses the absurdity of the human-induced devastation among Yemeni children. He says, "This is not a case where humanitarian suffering is the price of winning a war. No one is winning, except the extremist groups who thrive on chaos" (Krisof). He believes that the extent to which children suffer should be enough to drive countries to help stop the war. The real war appears to be against the children of Yemen.

Malnutrition notably increases children's susceptibility to disease and heightens their risk of death. Save the Children revealed statistics on how many children die each year as a result of the epidemic. Their estimate on the amount of children that died since 2015 is 84,701. The group uses historical studies to base these estimates, and found that 20% to 30% of Severe Acute Malnutrition cases ended in fatality if left untreated. The figure was based from parts of Yemen where children were unable to receive aid (Mandy). The fatality rates for malnourished children is high enough to take a significant toll on the child population. Even the children who survive the epidemic will not fully recover, and will suffer from stunted growth for the rest of their lives. The degradation of the immune system caused by malnutrition can allow disease to easily take over a child's body. "When malnutrition arises, the immunity of children falls, and makes them more susceptible to diseases like cholera" (Toy). Suffering from malnutrition increases a child's risk of contracting a fatal disease. They are especially likely to get cholera, a bacterial disease spread through water, because many children do not have access to clean water. The chance for survival is slim for malnourished children who contract cholera. Most infected children live in

poverty, so medical attention is rare. Save The Children's Yemen director, Tamer Kirolos, reveals the sad truth about how malnutrition truly affects children. She asserts, "Children who die in this way suffer immensely, as their vital organ functions slow down and eventually stop" (Mandy). This torturous process is especially frightening for young children who do not understand the circumstances. The process is ongoing, and it is a devastating experience for children.

Poverty has a strong grasp on Yemen, with most children who suffer from malnutrition coming from families with little to no money. The country's economy is crashing, and employees working for health care facilities continue to work without pay. Approximately 30,000 employees have remained unpaid for almost 10 months (Toy). People who already lived with poor conditions are now having to survive on nothing. Even if a family has money, healthy food will be unavailable. Eating foods with no nutritional value may help subside hunger, but will encourage malnutrition in the long run. The war in the middle east is the culprit of the fallen currency that forces workers to continuously work around the clock with no pay. This will certainly lead to declining health in workers; as the number of suffering children increases, the demand for health workers strengthens. Overworking health care employees with no pay only enlarges the probability of their families suffering from poverty. Economic conditions continue to deteriorate quickly, and Lise Grade, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, fears that time may be running out. She observed several families who went from having food to absolutely nothing in a matter of weeks, and reported, "Tens of thousands of families were able to buy the bare necessities needed to survive, but within a few weeks, they were unable to feed their families at all; all because of the fallen currency" (Summers). This rapid change is

concerning. The quantity of people who rely on emergency aid increases as households continue to fall under the poverty line. If this change persists at the same rate, the malnutrition epidemic will undoubtedly worsen. The current dependency on emergency food aid to support the lives of Yemenis is around eight million people, but that number could soon grow to 14 million (Walsh). Once the dependency on emergency aid almost doubles, more medical help and personnel will be necessary to provide care for the masses. This will be a difficult task to accomplish, so immediately implementing action is vital to prevent this number from doubling.

Saudi Arabia's blockade of Yemen ports restricts the amount of resources and food that enter the country, and food availability grows increasingly slim. Bhanu Bhatnager, a Save the Children spokesman, explains how the restrictions affect Yemeni families. He states, "The prevention of imports from entering Yemen has significantly restricted the amount of food and supplies available. Even when a market has food, many people are unable to afford it. Several citizens have not received their salary" (McKernan). Since the blockades limit imports, several markets have been unable to stay open. Families who live near these markets have nowhere to buy the necessary goods required for their survival, and their children are inadequately fed. Availability of food largely determines a child's chances of dying from malnutrition.

The crisis may be more terrible than we initially anticipated. The country could soon collapse into famine if malnutrition continues to grow at the current rate. There are three criteria set by the United Nations that are required for a country to officially be declared under famine. Of children under the age of five, more than 30% must be affected by malnutrition, about one in five houses must experience a severe shortage of food, and no less than two people out of each 10,000 must die every day. The United Nations is in doubt over whether third criteria has been

met, but they made a statement that the first and second criteria had been exceeded and have decided to redo their investigation (BBC News). Therefore, Yemen may already be classified as "in famine" according to the UN's criteria and could be in deeper need than acknowledged. Once the analysis is redone, more information will surface about how close Yemen is to famine. Unreported cases of severe malnutrition reduce the accuracy of these statistics. Only about 50% of human health facilities are in business, and many families cannot even gain access to these, because they live in poverty (BBC News). Since only cases brought to health facilities can be considered, the numbers may be higher than studies reveal. Although unreported cases may be somehow accounted for, it seems impossible to estimate the magnitude to which malnutrition affects all children in Yemen. Once the new results of the analysis are revealed, we may have a better idea on the true effects of malnutrition on death rates.

Several people want to cut off the import of all weapons to Saudi Arabia, and believe it would be the most efficient way to help save Yemen from collapsing into famine, but this could cause several issues to arise. Many politicians from America and the UK have concluded that cutting off weapons would stop the malnutrition crisis, and agree that "cutting off the flow of arms to Saudi Arabia would be an effective way to put pressure on them with little cost to the economy or national security" (Caverly). This is the most effective step we could take. The restriction of weapons could backfire, as "a cutoff would only invite China and Russia to sell weapons to the Saudi's instead" (King). By cutting off weapon supply, the possibility would arise for other countries to sell weapons to Saudi, continuing Saudi's supply. Additionally, the US relies heavily on good relations with Saudi Arabia; it is imperative to keep these relations. A couple decades back, both countries created a deal: The US would give security warranties to

Saudi Arabia, while America receives a constant oil supply in return. Energy resources from Saudi Arabia currently provide for approximately 11% of American imports (King). Cutting off ties with Saudi Arabia will simply ruin our good relationship and possibly cause more conflict.

The malnutrition crisis in Yemen is rapidly worsening, and "it's entirely preventable" (Karasz). The most efficient approach to solving the malnutrition crisis involves an economic plan. Dave Harden, the director of the Georgetown Strategy group, whose main goal is to progress stability in the Middle East, says, "The realistic short-term next steps must be to increase the purchasing power at the household level by: (i) increasing supply and lowering costs of basic commodities, fuel, and medicines; (ii) stabilizing the currency and increasing household income" (Harden). Supplying Yemeni families and stabilizing their currency would allow easier access to food and necessities. With children managing to receive food and care, malnutrition and death rates will significantly decline. In this current climate, "generosity will make a great difference to thousands of children" (Toy). The economic approach is not impossible to attain; persistence and kindness will ultimately improve the circumstances in Yemen. How many victims will malnutrition take before the world makes more effort to intervene and improve the devastating conditions in Yemen?

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