
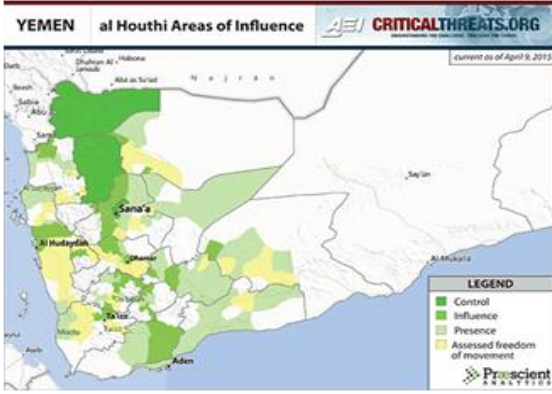


Last update: April 2015

Location: Yemen

Main/original objectives	Images
<p>This Shiite militia is fighting for more autonomy, economic resources and for the right to practice their religious beliefs.</p>	
Official objectives stated by leader	Currently identifiable objectives
<p>The current leader Abdel-Malik al-Houthi addressed the nation on Yemen TV in a late-night speech on 20th January 2015 after troops loyal to him seized the presidential palace and attacked the private residence of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in the Yemeni capital Sana'a. He demanded Hadi implement reforms giving the Houthi movement more control over the government.</p>	<p>The groups' refusal to open dialogue during the escalation of fighting signals their desire to gain more control on Yemen. The surprise advancement of the Houthis from Sa'ada to Sana'a and now Aden displays their intent of taking advantage of the power vacuum and control of at least a majority of northern Yemen.</p>
Areas of Influence	Other zones of influence in the region
	<p>The Houthis have also been successful in mounting attacks against Saudi border patrol officers, heightening concern over the likelihood for the violence to spill over into Saudi Arabia. Saudi airstrikes have tried to stop Houthi advancement in Aden but the group seems to be increasing its influence in the east and towards the south as the fighting resumes.</p>
Type of structure	Structural Failure
<p>Membership of the group was of between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters as of 2005 and between 2,000 and 10,000 fighters as of 2009. However according to Houthi expert Ahmed Al-Bahri the Houthis had a total of 100,000-120,000 followers, including both armed fighters and unarmed loyalists. The military wing of the Houthi movement is also known as Ansar Allah ("Victors of God").</p>	<p>The lack of willingness to open talks with the Gulf countries or the Hadi government has galvanized Arab opposition against the Houthis. The image of an Iran backed Shia militia taking over Yemen was probably a communication failure on the Houthi part. However Saudi-led airstrikes have attempted to undermine their strong position by targeting strongholds, warehouses, as well as civilian hideouts.</p>

Mapping features of armed groups		Houthi Rebels	
Military Capacity		Outlook on other groups	
<p>Yemeni and Saudi officials say that the Houthis have received significant support from Iran in the form of weapons, money and training since 2004, while Houthi leadership denies having received weapons or financial support from Iran. The group has displayed its military might and ability not to just be a guerrilla force but in being a contending political power with the ability to advance on a vast amount of territory. Its co-operation with ex-president Saleh is also evident through their use of air power in the bombing of Sana'a and Aden during March-April 2015.</p>		<p>The group opposes the West, and one of their slogans says: "God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. God Curse the Jews. Victory for Islam." At the same time, they're also staunch enemies of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the powerful AQ affiliate based in Yemen. The central government is at the top of the enemy list as the Houthis continue advancing and undermining Hadi's regime. Perhaps the only positive outlook is one toward Iran that has defended the actions of the group publically.</p>	
External Support		Key names	
<p>The Houthis are often described as "Iran-backed," but the exact nature and extent of Iran's support is hard to track. Iran sees the Shiite rebel group as a convenient irritant to its regional Sunni rival Saudi Arabia. But the Houthis aren't a proxy militia created by Iran, and it is unlikely Iran is pulling strings. The Houthis' grievances are local, but their push south and the involvement of other countries have given the conflict a regional and sectarian tone.</p>		<p>Founder/ Ex-leader: Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi (b.1956, d. 2004) Current Leader: Abdul-Malik al-Houthi (b. 1982)</p>	
Religious dimension		Cultural or traditional practices	
<p>The Houthis are part of the Zaydi sect of Shiite Islam, an early sect that emerged in the eighth century named after Zayd ibn 'Alī, the grandson of Husayn ibn 'Alī. Followers of the Zaydi Islamic jurisprudence are called Zaydi Shi'as and make up about 35-40% of Muslims in Yemen. The Houthis are followers of cleric Hussein Badr Eddin al-Houthi, who was killed in September 2004, after months of battles with Yemeni security forces. Sheik al-Houtjhi, a one-time had wide religious and tribal backing in Yemen, particularly in the northern mountains. The government of Yemen accused al-Houthi of setting up unlicensed religious centres.</p>		<p>The Houthis practice a form of Shia Islam, but their Zaydi sect is closer to Sunni Islam and their grievances are local and political, not sectarian. In an interview with Yemen Times, Hussein Al-Bukhari, a Houthi insider said that Houthi's preferable political system is a republic with elections where women can also hold political positions, and that they do not seek to form a cleric-led government after the model of Islamic Republic of Iran. Bukahari stated: "we cannot apply this system in Yemen because the followers of the Shafi doctrine are bigger in number than the Zaydis". The group maintains a social discourse by declaring its struggle against corruption and inequality in the country.</p>	
Control over population		Support / distrust of communities in the group's area of intervention	
<p>The Houthis currently have extended their influence from the northern province of Sa'ada encroaching upon the southern port of Aden. The capital Sana'a has also fallen under their control. Currently the group is thought to control : all of Saada Governorate, all of 'Amran Governorate, a majority of Al Jawf Governorate, all of Hajjah Governorate, a majority of Sana'a Governorate, all of Dhamar Governorate, all of Al Mahwit Governorate, and all of Raymah Governorate (please see the map above).</p>		<p>There is a reciprocal distrust between the Houthis, Sunni population, jihadist elements and the central government. The Saudi-led coalition has also given the conflict an increasingly Sunni vs Shia dynamic adding to sectarian tensions. The divide between north and south existing before unification in 1990 is also visible with secessionist demands and movements widespread across the country.</p>	