The corruption in countries around the Red Sea

General Assembly 4

Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights

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Introduction

The Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly (GA4) convenes to address the escalating and alarming issue of corruption in countries around the Red Sea. Defined as the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain, corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism. The nations bordering the Red Sea, which include those in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, struggle with the intricate interactions between internal causes of corruption, geopolitical forces, and historical legacies. This report aims to offer significant perspectives and suggest diplomatic resolutions that align with the principles of global collaboration and sustainable growth, as we examine this intricate matter.

Definition of Key Terms

Marginalized Peoples

Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions

Geopolitics

The study of the influence of such factors as geography, economics, and demography on the politics and especially the foreign policy of a state

Economic Reforms

The changes made in the economy to deregulate it and to solve the prevalent economic problems of the country.

General Overview

Historical Context

After going through periods of colonization, many of the countries in this area saw resource exploitation and the creation of government institutions that occasionally encouraged unethical behavior. Economic inequalities, societal upheavals, and historical changes in political allegiances have all added to the climate that encourages corruption. European powers frequently took advantage of these countries' wealth throughout the colonial era, constructing governance frameworks that occasionally encouraged corruption.

For example, the political landscapes of Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti have been permanently impacted by the historical effects of European colonization. Geopolitical rivalry and strategic interests in the Red Sea have complicated things more since independence.

One prominent example is the Bab el Mandeb Strait, a vital maritime chokepoint where regional and international forces compete for dominance, which may encourage corrupt activities in government. Corrupt practices have been made easier by internal power struggles and shifting political alignments in nations like Somalia and Yemen.

Impact of corruption

Economic Consequences

Via market distortion deterred foreign investment, and resource diversion from profitable industries, and corruption stifles economic progress. The equitable distribution of resources is compromised by inefficiencies and bribery in public institutions, which exacerbates economic disparity and impedes attempts to reduce poverty. The Red Sea nations like Ethiopia and Sudan prove the detrimental effects of corruption on the economy in areas like public services and infrastructure development. These countries struggle with weakened investment environments because corruption discourages both international and indigenous capital. Corruption-related misallocation of money makes it difficult to carry out important development initiatives, which feeds the cycle of underdevelopment.

Sudan's former president, Omar al-Bashir, was involved in decades of corruption that resulted in economic mismanagement and the diversion of cash from critical public services. In addition to undermining Sudan's economic potential, financial mismanagement and theft fueled civil discontent that finally resulted in the country's government being overthrown in 2019. Similar to this, Yemen's economic progress has been seriously impeded by a protracted conflict that is exacerbated by corruption. A severe economic crisis has been sustained by the misappropriation of funds meant for development initiatives and humanitarian help.

Political Instability

Political leaders who participate in unethical behavior, including bribery, nepotism, or embezzlement, undermine the legitimacy of the state and may cause general discontent among the populace. The misuse of public finances for private benefit frequently leads to the neglect of vital public services, which fuels social instability and public dissatisfaction. For instance, accusations of corruption at the highest levels of government have contributed to the increased political unrest in nations like Yemen and Sudan.

Extremist organizations and insurgencies have found fertile roots thanks to the misappropriation of money intended for public services and the manipulation of political processes, which have stoked complaints. Eritrea, another example, has experienced protracted political unrest partly because of claims of official corruption. Tensions have increased due to accusations of theft against political leaders, which has resulted in waves of internal migration and regional instability. In addition to being an issue of good governance, combating corruption in these settings is essential to establishing strong, responsible political institutions throughout the Red Sea and bringing political stability back.

Social Inequality

The divide between the affluent and the vulnerable is further widened by the uneven distribution of rewards resulting from corrupt actions. Ethiopia and Sudan, show how corruption may obstruct attempts to reduce poverty and strengthen class divides, which can hamper social progress. Corrupt activities, like bribery, can also weaken the rule of law by fostering an atmosphere in which wealthy individuals can take advantage of the system and put marginalized people at a disadvantage.

The Omar al-Bashir dictatorship is an example of there, where, money that was supposed to go towards healthcare and education instead went towards other purposes, feeding the cycle of inequality and poverty. Comparably, in Ethiopia, claims of official corruption have sparked questions about how resources are allocated fairly. Corrupt practices frequently put marginalized populations at a disadvantage by preventing them from accessing opportunities and critical services. Because corruption erodes public confidence in the institutions that are supposed to defend their interests, it has a structural as well as economic influence on social inequality.

Major Parties Involved

Arab Anti-Corruption Organization (AACO)

ACINET is an Arab region platform that develops the capacities of its members, facilitates information exchange among them as well as with their peers around the world, and provides different stakeholders with a joint platform for policy dialogue and action against corruption. To promote best practices among member governments, facilitate information sharing, and coordinate anti-corruption activities, AACO is essential. The goal of AACO's lobbying and capacity-building initiatives is to make it more feasible for Arab countries to combat corruption together.

Red Sea Anti-Corruption Task Force (RSACTF)

The Red Sea Anti-Corruption Task Force is a collaborative initiative among countries in the Red Sea region to address cross-border corruption challenges. It was established to enhance regional cooperation in investigating and combating corruption that transcends national boundaries. To tackle cross-jurisdictional corruption, RSACTF conducts cooperative investigations, and information exchanges, and standardises procedures. The task force provides a forum for member nations to collaborate, combining resources and knowledge to combat international corruption.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Red Sea Governance Project

The UNDP Red Sea Governance Project is a development initiative aimed at strengthening governance structures in countries around the Red Sea. It addresses issues such as corruption, aiming to promote transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

To carry out governance changes, the UNDP collaborates closely with governments, civil society, and other stakeholders. This includes assisting with the creation and improvement of anti-corruption organizations, offering technical help, and encouraging global collaboration to combat corruption issues.

African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC)

The African Union Advisory Board on Corruption is an autonomous organ established within the African Union (AU), in terms of Article 22 of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. AUABC promotes collaboration among African countries, assesses member states' anti-corruption initiatives, and offers recommendations on legislative frameworks. As part of its engagement in the Red Sea area, it works with nations to bolster their anti-corruption initiatives.

Red Sea Economic and Anti-Corruption Council (RSEACC)

The RSEACC is a regional council established by Red Sea countries to address economic challenges and combat corruption. It brings together government officials, experts, and representatives from the private sector to formulate strategies for sustainable development. RSEACC is actively involved in the establishment and implementation of anti-corruption measures that are consistent with economic development objectives. It encourages governments and the private sector to work together to establish transparent business processes and minimize corruption-related barriers to economic progress.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) - Red Sea Economic Governance Program

The IMF's Red Sea Economic Governance Program is designed to assist countries in the region in enhancing economic governance, including addressing corruption issues. It provides financial and technical support to improve public financial management and strengthen anti-corruption institutions. The IMF works with Red Sea nations to develop economic reforms to address corruption weaknesses. This includes attempts to promote fiscal transparency, boost financial monitoring, and increase the efficiency of government agencies.

Timeline of Events

1950 - 1980	During the Cold War era, geopolitical rivalries and alliances contributed to corruption and political instability in some countries around the Red Sea as external powers supported regimes for strategic reasons.
2002	Yemen establishes the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC) to address corruption challenges within the country.
2005	The Arab Anti-Corruption Organization (AACO) is established, signaling a regional commitment to addressing corruption in Arab countries, including those around the Red Sea.
2006	Djibouti experiences protests calling for political reforms and transparency, including efforts to combat corruption.

2011	The Arab Spring uprisings begin, with popular movements in several countries demanding political reform, transparency, and an end to corruption.
2012	Egypt undergoes political upheaval with the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, reflecting widespread public discontent with corruption and economic inequality.
2014	Ethiopia establishes the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC) to strengthen anti-corruption efforts nationally.
2015	The African Union establishes the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) to address corruption-related challenges across member states, including those in the Red Sea region.
2016	Saudi Arabia initiates an anti-corruption campaign, leading to the arrest of high-profile figures and the recovery of significant assets.
2017	Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was ousted from power after months of protests, with corruption being one of the grievances raised by demonstrators.
2018	Sudanese citizens protest against corruption and economic hardships, contributing to political changes in the country.
2019	Somalia experiences high-level corruption scandals, leading to calls for increased accountability and reforms. Saudi Arabia introduces anti-corruption reforms, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (Nazaha), to enhance accountability and transparency.
2020	Ethiopia launched a high-profile anti-corruption campaign, arresting and prosecuting government officials and business figures accused of corruption. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Red Sea Governance Project to enhance governance structures and address corruption in the region.
2021	Eritrea faces public protests highlighting concerns about corruption, leading to increased calls for government accountability.
2022	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) launches the Red Sea Economic Governance Program to assist countries in the region with economic governance reforms and anti-corruption measures. The Red Sea Economic and Anti-Corruption Council (RSEACC) is established to address economic challenges and promote transparent business practices.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Anti-Corruption Legal Reforms in Ethiopia

Ethiopia have worked hard to combat corruption by establishing institutional and legal structures. One such instance is the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC) which was established in Ethiopia. The mission assigned to this anti-corruption organization is to look into and bring charges against instances of government corruption.

Although the autonomy and capability of these organizations determine how successful they are, the establishment of specialized bodies shows a commitment to combating corruption on a systemic level.

Sudanese Anti-Corruption Initiatives Post-Regime Change

As part of larger political changes, Sudan implemented several anti-corruption initiatives after President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in 2019. Working with foreign allies, the Sudanese transitional administration has attempted to bring down corrupt networks and retrieve stolen property. The creation of anti-corruption committees and the prosecution of those connected to corruption scandals are examples of these initiatives. These programs' chances of success depend on the persistence of political will and the capacity to handle challenging post-conflict issues.

International Collaboration in the Red Sea Region

Acknowledging the transnational character of corruption, nations bordering the Red Sea have joined forces internationally to fight corrupt activities. The collaboration of agencies like INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has made it easier to share information, develop expertise, and coordinate anti-corruption initiatives. For example, cooperative projects including Djibouti, Eritrea, and other regional players seek to improve the collective ability to fight corruption and fortify legal systems. International cooperation emphasizes the knowledge that corruption is a common issue needing coordinated actions, even though difficulties still exist.

Possible solutions

Strengthening Anti-Corruption Institutions and Whistleblower Protection

Improving the ability and autonomy of anti-corruption establishments, such as ombudsman offices or anti-corruption tribunals, might be a critical first step. The success of Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which runs independently and has been successful in looking into and prosecuting corruption cases, is an example of this. Similar to those in the US, whistleblower protection laws can motivate people to come forward with proof of wrongdoing without fear of retaliation, promoting an environment of accountability.

Promoting Technology-Based Transparency and Open Data

Using technology to make information more accessible and transparent helps reduce the likelihood of corruption. By automating procedures and reducing face-to-face encounters, the use of e-government platforms for public services, as demonstrated in Estonia, lowers the possibility of corrupt behaviors. Blockchain technology may be used for safe, transparent transactions, lowering the likelihood of corruption. Initiatives in nations like Georgia are an example of this. Adopting such tech solutions can help public services become more accountable and efficient.

Civic Education and Public Participation Initiatives

Red Sea nations can learn from Brazil's "Open Budget" program, in which the populace actively participates in financial choices and keeps tabs on governmental expenditure. As seen by Singapore's effective anti-corruption initiatives, promoting a culture of integrity through education and awareness campaigns may inculcate moral principles and standards for responsible administration.

Useful documents

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)
www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf

African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption
au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36382-treaty-0028_-_african_union_convention_on_preventing_and_combating_corruption_e.pdf

Arab Convention against Corruption
star.worldbank.org/sites/star/files/Arab-Convention-Against-Corruption.pdf

Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre (CAACC) www.thecaacc.org/

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