

South Yemen Update

Dream no small dreams for they do not have the power to move the hearts of men

Newsletter of the Friends of South Yemen

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OPEN LETTER TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ENVOY TO YEMEN

We are grateful for your efforts to bring an end to the Yemeni crisis, but clearly now is the time for you to support us to secure a peace deal that gives South Yemen an opportunity to secure our own long-term security. The path to achieve recognition from the international community is not yet clear to us, but we all know that the project of unity initiated in 1990 has failed to deliver for our people and Houthi political and military control over the North give us no choice but to start the process for South Yemen's independence – the best-case scenario is by mutual agreement with the international community through the efforts of your esteem office. The more the international community continues to ignore the expressed will of Southerners to have their own state the more the situation in Yemen will get worse.



Dr. Abdul Shaif, Co-Founder friends Of South Yemen

Some of our friends in the international community are asking us to remain part of a state that has been unable to defend its territory from the Houthis, who have overthrown the government of Yemen and attempted to occupy our lands in the South – Clearly the Houthis have self-imposed themselves as rulers in the North, defeated in the South and still have an aim of occupying the South of Yemen, consequently they have killed any hope of unification. The unity state for decades has mismanaged its resources and has failed to allocate resources through a mutually agreed share of the national budget. As a result, Unity has brought South Yemen to its knees financially, rendering us unable to pay our civil servants and soldiers their salaries and a worsening of our basic public services. We invite the international community to help us strengthen our Southern institutions. Press us for progress on democracy and human rights.

We have been working for years on reforms that will put us in a strong position to govern for the well-being of our citizens and the strength of our nation. Nobody pressured us to do this. We ourselves recognized what we needed to do for our own survival, despite our lack of the tools and instruments that sovereign nations have at their disposal. We want to be an open, tolerant and pluralistic society that accepts all southerners to build their state. The Southern Transitional Council was established as the umbrella organisation that will bring all southerners in the process of establishing our state.



We did not hesitate to join the Arab coalition that set out to liberate the South from the Houthis and Islamic State. Nor did we hesitate to fight al-Qaeda, but we are not mercenaries, paid to fight wars. Our lives and the future of our nation are on the line, and we, too, have our strategic and national interests. We didn't think twice about opening our doors to those displaced by conflict or engaging in the Riyadh agreement, despite our own economic problems. We did all this to support the international community become a strong partner in the current negotiations with

the Houthis. The two state solution for the crisis in Yemen is the correct response to the current crisis. Two states living side by side as neighbours is a much better proposition than one state that fails its people and continues on a permanent crisis.

OUR citizens have committed themselves to the mutual goal of independence and our argument is compelling enough to ensure that all citizens in the South will work together to achieve this goal. Historically, such goal has included winning our independence from Great Britain, building our own state and with all its faults, it was much better than our current situation, striving to fulfil the promise inherent in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, solving the economic problems in our society, and making sure all citizens have the opportunity to work themselves out of poverty. We are all united as Southerners through our mutual commitment and mutual efforts to achieve our overall joint goal for an independent state again. Joining together to achieve mutual goals is the heart of a well-functioning democracy. We need your urgent support to achieve this goal.

Despite all this, rather than recognizing a southern state or rewarding us, some nations have joined forces to oppose our right to self-determination. Where were you when we were being attacked by the Houthis and Islamic state?? Vague commitments with exit clauses do not address the desires of our people. It is time for our international partners to seriously chart out a path that resolves the Southern question and gives our people what you already enjoy, and what we deserve: a state of our own.

UN Envoy to Yemen

The UN envoy to Yemen, Hans Gruenberg, revealed the details of his meeting with the vice president of the Presidential Leadership Council and the leader of the STC, Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, in the UAE on 20 Feb 2023.

The Office of the UN Envoy to Yemen said in a brief statement on Tuesday: "UN envoy Hans Grundberg met with Aidarous Al-Zubaidi" in the UAE today to discuss ways to improve living conditions in Yemen and make the most of the current momentum in order to make progress towards a comprehensive ceasefire and the start of an inclusive Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue to end the conflict in a sustainable manner. The meeting was positive and constructive.

According to the information office of the STC, the meeting discussed the latest developments in the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen, the outcomes of his meetings with the parties concerned with the peace process and ending the war, and his recent paid visits to the Federal Republic of Germany and the Russian Federation.

President Al-Zubaidi reiterated the support of the leadership of the PLC and the STC to push for de-escalation and reach a comprehensive political process to cease the war after eight years of ordeal.



Al-Zubaidi Meets the UN Envoy to Yemen

Similarly, President Al-Zubaidi reaffirmed the PLC's and STC's endorsement of all the endeavours made by the UN special envoy and expressed aspirations to play a greater role in a way that contributes to ending the war and bringing peace to our country, stressing the importance of dealing with the joint negotiation team that was agreed upon in the PLC to facilitate achieving pacification and reaching agreements without obstacles. Furthermore, President Al-Zubaidi underscored the centrality of the cause of the people of the South and the importance of including it in the agenda of the political negotiations sponsored by the United Nations within a specific negotiating framework. For his part, the UN special envoy affirmed the commitment of the UN to continue efforts to cease the war and reach a comprehensive and sustainable peace process that accommodates all parties without exception. The

meeting was attended by Major General Ahmed Saeed Ben Brik, Chairman of the National Assembly of STC, Dr. Naser Al-Khubaji, member of STC's Presidium, head of the Negotiations Unit, Mr. Amr Ali Al-Beidh, member of STC's Presidium, the Special Representative of President Al-Zubaidi, Mr. Imad Mohammed, the office director of the Vice-Chairman of the PLC, Mr. Nabeel bin-Lasem, Political Officer at the Office of the Special Representative of the STC President for Foreign Affairs, and from the UN Office team: Mr. Muin Shreim, Deputy Head of Mission at the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESOG) and two advisors of the UN envoy: Ms. April Longley Alley and Mr. Peter Rice.

Press Statement by Official Spokesperson of the STC

The Southern Transitional Council (STC) affirms that the statements of Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) to Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper are disappointingly inaccurate and show a lack of seriousness in the partnership and consensus that emerged from the GCC consultations, and underscores that the cause of the South is a people, homeland, identity, and state emanating from the failure of unification between the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Arab Republic of Yemen, as well as the war of occupation of the South in the summer of 1994, and the right of the people of the South to restore their fully sovereign state.

The STC emphasizes that settling the cause of the South accepts no procrastination or postponement, and it will never be done with the cause in such a manner. As it is clearly stated in the outcomes of the Riyadh consultations, it was agreed to include the cause of the people of the South within the agenda of the negotiations to cease the war and to establish a negotiating framework for it, through which what they call the "form of the state" will be determined by negotiating settlement.

In this respect, the STC finds it odd to obstruct the issuing of the resolution to form the joint negotiating body that was agreed upon and is concerned with negotiating the form of the state, the political system for the transitional period, and the required guarantees. Moreover, the STC highlights that the delay in implementing the commitments contained in the outcomes of the GCC consultations represents a jeopardy that serves neither the future of the partnership nor the entire political process.

Ali Abdullah Al-Kathiri : *Official Spokesperson of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) Member of the STC's Presidium.*

Southern National dialogue



Preparations are in place in Aden on May 4 for a southern cohesion effort by the Southern Transitional Council, which will be hosted under a National Southern-Southern Dialogue. The dialogue has been ongoing for the last two years, and which is represented by various political, tribal, and other social figures across all southern provinces domestically and internationally. The goals are as follows:

1. Strengthen the unification between Southerners.
2. Southern National Charter signing (essentially a charter of honor).
3. The May 4 consultative launching will represent an entry point for all Southerners from different affiliations.

4. Represents a new political phase between Southerners, which will be a source to combat challenges that may arise in light of current political developments.

Additionally, there is an expected reshuffle within the Southern Transitional Council starting on May 4, which will also coincide with Southern National Dialogue consultative session after two years of talks. The restructuring of the committees and departments will also include high-level positions that will address next phase of organizational management.

Yemeni children starve as fears of renewed fighting loom

“The international community today showed it has abandoned Yemen at this crucial crossroads,” said Erin Hutchinson, the Norwegian Refugee Council’s Yemen Country Director. “This is woefully inadequate and gives the signal that some humans are less valuable than others.”

The high-level gathering was co-hosted by Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.N. in the organization’s Palais des Nations in Geneva. It was attended by officials from across the world including the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. Baerbock was the first to announce a pledge, saying her country will provide 120 million euros (\$127 million) to Yemen’s 2023 humanitarian response.



In his speech to the conference, Blinken called on donors to step up their contributions to meet the humanitarian demands in Yemen, pointing to last year’s funding shortages that forced U.N. agencies to scale down operations including food rations for thousands of families. He said the U.S. will provide more than \$444 million in humanitarian assistance to Yemen in 2023. “The scale of the challenge we face is daunting. But I urge everyone to keep our focus on the people we seek to help,” he told the conference. Blinken also called for an end to restrictions on humanitarian workers and operations, especially in Houthi-controlled areas where the rebels restrict the movements of female aid workers by forcing them to be accompanied by male guardians. The \$4.3 billion appeal for 2023 is almost double the \$2.2 billion that the U.N. received in 2022 to fund its humanitarian program in Yemen. The U.N. had sought \$4.27 billion for 2022. The conference came as the global economy remains rattled by the yearlong Russian invasion of Ukraine. Inflation rates have surged over the past year across the world, forcing many governments to focus on elevating the needs of their own people.

Yemen’s conflict started in 2014, when the Iran-backed rebel Houthis seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country’s north. A Saudi-led, U.S.-backed coalition intervened months later, in early 2015, to try and dislodge the rebels and restore the internationally recognized government to power. The conflict has in recent years become a regional proxy war that has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians. The war has also created a horrendous humanitarian crisis, leaving millions suffering from food and medical care shortages and pushing the country to the brink of famine.

The conference is taking place as the warring sides continue to observe an informal and fragile cease-fire. Efforts are underway to declare a new truce after the parties failed to renew a U.N.-brokered truce in October. “We have a real opportunity this year to change Yemen’s trajectory and move towards peace, by renewing and expanding the truce,” Guterres, the U.N. chief, said.

The truce, which took effect in April, brought some relief for Yemenis, especially in Houthi-held areas. It enabled commercial traffic to resume at Sanaa’s airport and the sea port of Hodeida. However, partly because of the territorial division – with roughly half of Yemen under Houthi control and the other half under government control – the country is haunted by an economic crisis. There is dual system of currency, dual exchange rates, restrictions on imports and double taxation on goods, according to the U.N. Panel of Experts investigating Yemen’s conflict. Annual inflation reached 45 percent, and food prices surged 58 percent, according to the panel’s report. There have also been Houthi attacks on oil facilities in government-held areas, resulting in the disruption of oil export, which is a major source of funds for the government.

The war has decimated the country’s civilian infrastructure including its health care system. Hospitals and medical facilities have repeatedly been attacked. “Yemen requires urgent and robust support from international donors and other partners to effectively avert the potential collapse of its health system,” said Adham Ismail, the World Health Organization’s representative in Yemen. He said \$392 million was needed for WHO-led operations in 2023 to ensure health facilities remain functioning and provide “even the most basic services to the 12.9 million most vulnerable people.”

Climate change has added to the suffering. Yemen, located at the south-western corner of the Arabian Peninsula, is “at the forefront” of a global climate crisis, as natural disasters, including floods and arid weather, threaten lives, the U.N. has said.



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