

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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YEMEN IN 2022

Another challenging year for the STC

The leader of the Southern Transition Council (STC) Aidaroos Al-Zubaidi is confronted by numerous challenges this year. The war and humanitarian crisis which has plagued Yemen since 2015 is likely to continue due to the different, irreconcilable agendas of the Houthis, the Internationally Recognised Government (IRG), the STC, the Saudi-led Arab coalition, Iran and the United Nations.

Zubaidi has to make sure the voice of the southerners is heard by all the parties to the conflict and that the STC is included in all critical negotiations involving the future of Yemen. The STC has demonstrated its ability to defeat the Houthis in Aden, Dhala region and now currently in Shabwa becoming an attractive proposition for the Arab Coalition.

The Houthis are determined to rule Yemen and establish an Islamic traditional state similar to the imamate which ruled the country for hundreds of years until they were overthrown in the September 1962 revolution. First and foremost the STC wants to ensure that the Houthis do not advance any further into the south. Their recent advances into Shabwa and their missile attack on Aden airport and Ataq airport are cause for concern.

The Saudi-led Arab coalition wants to bring Houthi rule to an end but the war against the Houthis has not progressed according to their expectation. The coalition helped the southern forces dislodge the Houthis from Aden in 2015 and is assisting the IRG to prevent their takeover of Marib. The Arab coalition's relationship with IRG has as a consequence of the war weakened. The military weakening of the IRG provided the STC with the opportunity to rebuild their relationship with the Saudis, as a reliable partner in the fight against the Houthis and their Iranian backers.

Zubaidi in order to make political progress at an international level has to stay on the right side of the Saudis and assist in the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement aimed at resolving the differences between the IRG and STC. Shabwa has been the focal point of clashes between the STC and the Saudi-backed Islah Party which is part of the IRG. The only beneficiaries of conflict between anti-Houthi forces are the Houthis who are consolidating their strangle hold on the north of the country.

The IRG wants to rule the areas not under Houthi control until they are dislodged. It favours a federal state with six regions. The STC wants a separate federal southern state with six governorates. Without a united vision and compromises between the two the power-sharing government will remain a government on paper which



cannot provide essential basic services urgently needed by the people. Zubaidi has to reconcile the conflicting visions of the STC and the IRG so they can work for the benefit of the people in the liberated areas.

The United Nations has tried unsuccessfully to reconcile the conflicting parties through peace

talks. Martin Griffiths the UN's Special Envoy to Yemen spent three years trying to bring the antagonists to the negotiating table but the Houthis refused to meet him. The current UN envoy Hans Grundberg has also made several trips to the country and at the end of December warned of "a more fragmented and bloody conflict." Like Griffiths he has not managed to arrange a meeting with the Houthis.

Security Council Resolution 2216 (2015) names the Houthis and the IRG as the belligerents and demands the Houthis surrender to President Hadi whom it affirms as Yemen's legitimate president. Hadi and his backers and the Houthis argue that the resolution restricts the UN's mandate to a two-party negotiation framework but the situation on the ground has changed and the STC, the political wing of Tariq Saleh's National Resistance Forces and the Tehama Council now have to be included. A new UN resolution is therefore essential.

For the first time in the history of the seven-year conflict the UN Envoy met Zubaidi in December last year. The ambassadors of the five permanent members of the Security Council have also recently met Zubaidi. The STC is now in a good position to ensure the case for southern statehood is heard by the UN.

At the beginning of 2022 negotiations for a ceasefire were deadlocked. The major stumbling block to progress is the issue of the coalition's sea, air and naval blockade imposed since March 2015. The Houthis will not agree to a ceasefire until the coalition lifts the blockade and the coalition will not lift the blockade until the Houthis agree to a ceasefire. The latest UN effort to cajole a cease-fire in November garnered significant media attention but saw little traction on the ground with warring actors.

At the beginning of this year the UN Resident Coordinator in Yemen, David Gressly, painted a picture of destroyed infrastructure and people scared of moving around. "There are so many land mines that many Yemenis stay away from health clinics and schools because they fear being killed or maimed. The average Yemeni cannot get basic services from the two rival governments [in the north and in the south]. They are too busy fighting each other and wouldn't have the resources anyway."



Zubaidi (2nd from left) with the ambassadors of the member states of the Security Council

Zubaidi can change this by encouraging the Gulf states to invest in the liberated areas. Over the past six years, Saudi military intervention has failed to weaken the Houthis militarily and to compel the rebel group to come to the negotiation table in good faith. The coalition's air strikes are not intimidating the Houthis who capitalise on the destruction to mobilize more fighters. Hussein Al-Ezi a senior Houthi official tweeted on December 26th: "We believe God controls the matter. So even if we hate the escalation and consider it unnecessary, it may bring a benefit and a wave of great events may happen as a result."

If the people in the north who are increasingly oppressed by the Houthis see that the south of the country is developing with the aid of external investment they will be encouraged to end Houthi rule. An economic strategy if implemented would have paid dividends by now for the Arab coalition and the people of Yemen.

Ultimately, South Yemen must focus on the economic challenges now and set its priorities on issues of infrastructure development (both social and human), governance and maintaining law and order. Donor regional and international states and NGOs can also play an important role at this stage by helping South Yemen lay the foundation for sustained development through foreign aid and technical assistance training

There has been a change in the leadership of the National Bank of Yemen and the currency that was 2000 riyals per dollar has been reduced to 1000 riyals per dollar. That has been welcomed by the people in the liberated areas but it is not enough. They need a big deposit of foreign currency reserves to come into the bank from the Saudis and Emirates to help support the Yemeni rial. By encouraging stability in the south and an end to internecine struggles the STC can help create a climate favourable for foreign investment.

FOSY's Chairman Abdul Galil Shaif believes in 2022 the conflict and war will intensify even further. "There will be more humanitarian disasters, more hunger and a lack of liberty in the country. Now there is a common enemy – the Houthis and the IRG and STC are working together to oust them. But their opposition to the Houthis is one of the few points of agreement between them. When the Houthis are gone the STC and IRG could end up fighting each other," Shaif said.

Behind the scenes it is possible that a grand bargain is being worked out. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are hoping that Iran can be both a credible partner in Yemen and keep the Houthis in check, ensuring that they abide by whatever deal is eventually made. A full Saudi military withdrawal is still a long way off, but talks with the STC about efforts to jointly confront the Houthi forces suggest the Saudis may be switching allies in Yemen.

But while talks are being held in foreign capitals Yemen is disintegrating. In a paper *Seven Yemen's: How Yemen Fractured and Collapsed and What Comes Next?* Gregory D Johnsen a non-resident fellow at the centre for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution concludes that Yemen will not be reconstituted as a single state, nor is it likely to revert to the pre-1990 North-South division. Instead, the reality is likely to be much messier with various warlords and armed groups holding sway in different parts of the country. Lakhdar Brahimi the former UN Special Envoy to Syria said: "Everybody has their agenda and the interests of the Syrian people come second, third or not all." This perceptive comment also describes the situation in Yemen where an urgently needed ceasefire, restraint, de-escalation and dialogue is unlikely in 2022. Zubaidi has a crucial role to play in solving Yemen's seemingly intractable problems as long as he acts as an honest broker in reconciling conflicting agendas and advancing the case for southern statehood.

CHRONOLOGY

Dec 16: The Yemeni Ministry of Health says five people were killed and 124 others wounded, during celebrations following the national Yemen Junior team's victory in the West Asian Football Championships.

- The Ambassadors to Yemen from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom, and the US Chargé d'Affairs express concern about the grave humanitarian situation in Yemen, noting this is closely linked to the continued military escalation and the Houthi militias' rejection of the ceasefire.

Dec 17: More than 50 Saudi Arabian-backed military commanders were killed as the battle for control of Marib continues.

-The Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY) launches the first workshop of a program to build the capabilities of the Yemeni Ministry of Finance.

Dec 18: Houthi Minister of Foreign Affairs Hisham Sharaf says the dialogue to end the war should take place under the auspices of the UN or with the participation of international partners.

-Hassan Irlu, Iran's envoy to the Houthis, leaves Yemen and heads back to the Islamic Republic to receive treatment after testing positive for COVID-19.

Dec 19: Kamel Jendoubi, a former Tunisian minister who served as the chairman of the now defunct Group of Eminent Experts in Yemen (GEE), who was probing possible war crimes by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, was targeted with spyware made by Israel's NSO Group, a forensic analysis of his device has found.

- Saudi warplanes strike targets in Sanaa, after intercepting Houthi drones which the kingdom said were heading for civilian airports.

Dec 20: Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Minister of Defense, meets with Yemeni Prime Minister Dr. Maeen Abdulmalek Saed. They discussed efforts and initiatives aimed at realizing security, stability and peace in Yemen, in addition to several issues of mutual interest.

- The Houthis convert a one-time cultural hub in Sanaa into a garment store.

- The Yemen Security Belt Forces played a significant role in countering terrorism in southern Yemen in recent years, the US State Department says.

Dec 21: The Arab coalition carries out air strikes on Houthi targets inside Yemen.

- Starting in January, eight million Yemenis will receive a reduced food ration from the UN's World Food Program.

Dec 22: The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen destroys an explosives-laden boat before it can carry out an attack.

Dec 23: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sign a grant agreement valued at \$2million to support highly vulnerable internally displaced persons and host community project in Yemen.

- The Saudi-led coalition says it targeted a central security forces camp in Sanaa.

Dec 24: A leak is reported from the crumbling SFO Safer tanker moored off Yemen's west coast, which is carrying more than 1.1 million barrels of oil.

Dec 25: The Saudi-led coalition launches a "large-scale" assault on Yemen after a projectile killed two people in the kingdom, in the first such deaths in three years blamed on the Houthis.

- The Yemeni Minister of Social Affairs and Labour Dr. Mohammed Saeed Al-Zaouri praises the efforts being exerted by Saudi Arabia in supporting the Yemeni government and people in all fields.

Dec 26: The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis publishes footage they say shows instructors from Hezbollah training Houthi on how to use UAVs.

-The Saudi-led coalition says the Houthis fired 430 ballistic missiles and 851 armed drones at Saudi Arabia since the war started in 2015, killing 59 Saudi civilians.

Dec 27: A Yemeni man Mohammed Abdullah Ahmed Al Saddam has been executed in Saudi Arabia for plotting a suicide attack under the direction of ISIS.

- The Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed Al-Jaber, meets with the president of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, to discuss "efforts to jointly confront the Houthi group forces."

Dec 28: Several missiles are launched against Yemen's Ataq airport in Shabwa province targeting the UAE-backed Giants Brigades following the withdrawal of Saudi forces who handed over the site to them.

- Pro-UAE forces take over Shabwah after President Hadi sacks the governor.

Dec 29: The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, says that a recent military escalation in the country is "among the worst" in years and increasingly putting civilians in crosshairs.

Dec 30: Yemen's Sanaa airport temporarily resumes permitting United Nations and international organisations' flights according to the aviation authority run by the Houthi administration.

-The Houthis foreign minister calls on the UN Security Council to hold Saudi Arabia and its arms suppliers to account in accordance with international law over their war crimes in Yemen.

Dec 31: Yemen's Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik visits Abu Dhabi to seek support for his government and strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

My country is starving and needs the international community's help - a plea from a former minister

The Saudi-led coalition's operations in Yemen to defeat the pro-Iranian Houthis and restore the internationally-recognized government of Yemen (IRG) are set to end their seventh year on March 26, with no sign of a political settlement. The protracted conflict and the economic collapse it has caused have pushed the country into the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

According to various United Nations (UN) agencies, 20.7 million Yemenis—two-thirds of the total population—require humanitarian assistance—12.1 million of which face acute need.

Actors on all sides have contributed to Yemen's descent into crisis. The Houthis have regularly looted UN convoys carrying humanitarian relief and food aid is often sold in marketplaces for profit. The Saudi-led coalition's blockade of the al-Hudaydah Port on the Red Sea and Sana'a International Airport in the capital have restricted vital channels for aid delivery. While Saudi Arabia has expressed its willingness to negotiate the reopening of these channels, the Houthis have insisted that the reopening is a prerequisite for negotiation, not an issue open for discussion.

In IRG-controlled territory in the country's south and east, poor economic governance has triggered rapid currency depreciation and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. Since early 2020, the Yemeni rial has lost nearly half its value, with the black market exchange rate for one US dollar dropping from 600 to 1,650 rials in some areas. Alongside monetary issues, the government's insolvency has prompted delays in public sector salary payments, and funding for service programs has dwindled.

To make matters worse, the economic collapse has coincided with waning international support for humanitarian operations in Yemen. Donors to the UN-coordinated humanitarian response plan have fulfilled less and less of their pledged donations. Moreover, Saudi Arabia, which previously provided the IRG with crucial infusions of foreign capital to finance daily operations, appears increasingly reticent to donate additional funds due to rampant corruption within the internationally-recognized government.

The ongoing Houthi offensive on Ma'rib, the IRG's last remaining city in the historical north, has added an extreme sense of urgency to the need to revamp humanitarian operations in Yemen.

Despite these realities, there remain options the UN can take to prevent the further collapse of the economy, stave off the onset of famine, and alleviate suffering in Yemen. First, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen should lead international efforts to stabilize the Yemeni rial and address the issue of public sector payments.

The international community, particularly the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), should encourage the IMF to work with the IRG and Houthi authorities in Sana'a to formulate a joint response to the collapse of the monetary system. This should begin with forming an emergency panel of economic experts that includes officials from the two warring branches of the Central Bank of Yemen based in Aden and Sana'a to coordinate monetary policies. These cooperative measures may also aid in securing a new source of international funding as potential donors see greater potential for economic recovery.

The IMF's endeavors should run parallel to a new set of World Bank projects designed to boost agricultural production, provide temporary cash for workers, rehabilitate service provisions in communities, and support fishermen.

The UN can contribute to international efforts by developing a complementary humanitarian response plan that relies heavily on engagement with local civil society organizations. These relationships with Yemeni civil society organizations will allow the UN to identify communities of acute need—such as women, persons with disabilities, or other marginalized groups—and develop systems to provide them with additional social protection. They will also allow for more localized approaches to conflict management and economic recovery.

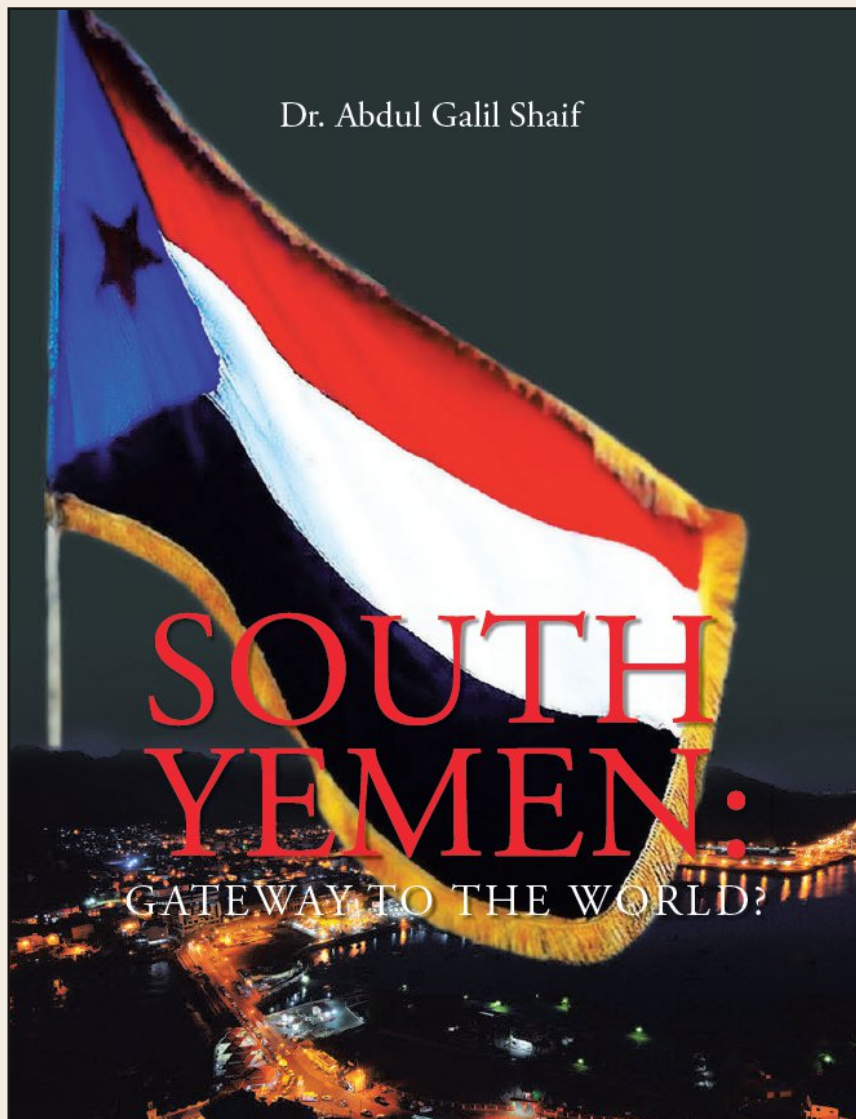
Finally, the UN must also rethink its engagement with various parties to the Yemeni conflict. While all permanent UNSC members have expressed their support for a unified Yemen, they have failed to coordinate their outreach efforts in a meaningful way. Together, the UNSC members can adopt a more aggressive diplomatic campaign that will more quickly and effectively bring together representatives from across Yemen's political spectrum and geographical divides.

These countries, alongside the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, can then build on this cooperation to establish an international political conference on Yemen. This forum will not only put pressure on Iran to come to the negotiating table, but will also push the IRG's nominal allies to address the crippling issue of corruption within state institutions.

The situation in Yemen cannot be permitted to continue on its current trajectory. Every day, purchasing power drops, services deteriorate further, and ordinary Yemenis sink further into crisis. The international community must act immediately to remedy these issues and change the country's course from disaster to diplomacy.

Ambassador Khaled H. Alyemany is the former Foreign Minister of Yemen

FOSY CHAIRMAN PUBLISHES HISTORY OF SOUTH YEMEN



Dr. Abdul Galil Shaif

SOUTH YEMEN: GATEWAY TO THE WORLD?

This book traces the history of South Yemen, beginning with its struggle for independence from the British. Dr. Abdul Galil Shaif, originally from South Yemen, reveals how South Yemen gained its independence and how it became a unique socialist state in the Arab world, emancipating women, redistributing land, and helping people learn to read.

He also highlights how struggles within the Yemeni Socialist Party led to a myriad of problems, including South Yemen's struggle for independence. The southerners were militarily defeated in the 1994 war and for decades were discriminated against. A Houthi coup in 2014 and the invasion of Aden in 2015 further changed the political landscape. Another struggle for independence is now being waged as the southerners are unlikely to agree to live in one state with the fundamentalist Houthi regime, which controls more than eighty percent of the North. Complemented by a timeline, biographical notes, and pictures, this book highlights the rich history of South Yemen, examines where it is heading and seeks to answer whether it can live up to its promise as a gateway to the world.



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- The UN asks Yemen's internationally recognised government to allow communications equipment to be sent to Sanaa's airport, which is under the control the Houthis.

Jan 1: The Israeli Navy sets out to establish an independent military runway on the island of Socotra.

Jan 2: The Houthis seize an Emirati-flagged vessel in the Red Sea which they say was carrying weapons. The coalition says it was carrying medical supplies.

Jan 3: Around 200 fighters are killed in intense clashes near Marib.

Jan 4: Authorities in Hadramout, should immediately and unconditionally release freelance journalist Hala Fuad Badhawi, the Committee to Protect Journalists says.

Jan 5: The Houthis say Ahmed al-Hamza a senior military leader has been killed as fighting surges for the strategic city of Marib.

Jan 6: Forces under the command of the STC capture areas of the oil-rich Shabwa province.

Jan 7: Iran has reportedly sent thousands of weapons seized in the Arabian Sea to Yemen.

Jan 8: The Saudi-led coalition believes the use by Houthi forces of two ports as military bases would turn them into legitimate military targets, coalition spokesman Brigadier General Turki al-Malki says.

Jan 9: Yemen's Giants Brigade forces announce taking full control of Shabwa province from the Houthis, after taking control of Ain district.

Jan 10: The UAE's ambassador to the UN Lana Nusseibeh urges the UN Security Council to take a "firm position" against the Houthi's seizure of an Emirati-flagged cargo vessel and other dangerous acts off the coast of Yemen.

Jan 11: Mohamed al-Bukhaiti, a member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, warns the UAE if it continues its hostile actions against Yemen it will be attacked.

Jan 12: The United Nations will need around \$3.9 billion this year to help millions of people in Yemen, the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ramesh Rajasingham says.

Jan 13: The United Nations will need around \$3.9 billion this year to help millions of people in Yemen, the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ramesh Rajasingham says.

Jan 14: Yemeni forces backed by the United Arab Emirates join coalition troops fighting the Houthi movement around Marib.

-The members of the Security Council condemn the Houthi seizure and detention of the UAE-flagged vessel, RWABEE, off the coast of Yemen on 2 January 2022.

-The Houthis confirm that all governorates under their control are suffering from an acute fuel crisis.