

# 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

Issue 23 — 16th March - 15th April 2022

## Ceasefire and new Presidential Council herald a bright future



Yemen is witnessing a new dawn. On the seventh anniversary of a brutal war that has claimed the lives of around 377,000 people and resulted in the world's worst humanitarian crisis a ceasefire came into force on April 2nd, and apart from some minor violations, is holding.

As a result of the truce, 18 fuel ships will enter the port of Hudaydah. The blockade on Yemen has been to a limited extent lifted, flights will resume out of Sanaa and roads in the city of Taiz which have been besieged since 2015 will be open.

The two-month ceasefire, the first nationwide truce since 2016, was brokered by the United Nations with Gulf states support playing a vital role in stopping the bloodshed. "We need to make the best possible use of the window for peace this truce provides towards ending the conflict," the UN's envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg said. As *South Yemen Update* went to press Grundberg had just concluded talks in Sanaa with the Houthis on a comprehensive peace plan that he is currently working on.

The truce comes at a time when the coalition was able to prevent the fall of Yemen's gas-rich Marib region to the Houthis who had advanced on most districts barring the main city and nearby hydrocarbon sites. The Houthis responded by stepping up attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE prompting a strong military response from the coalition.

"If the international community and parties can work together this two-month truce could build into a lasting ceasefire and inclusive political process that ultimately gives shape to a new Yemen," the US envoy to the country Tim Lenderking said.

The second significant development is the recent resignation of President Hadi and the formation of a new

presidential council (See **Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council: Who's Who? Page 3**). "I irreversibly delegate to the Presidential Leadership Council my full powers in accordance with the constitution and the Gulf Initiative and its executive mechanism," Hadi announced in a statement on April 7th. His lack of popularity, corruption in the state and determination to hang on to power stymied efforts to establish a new political framework for Yemen.

Over the past seven years, Hadi and Ali Mohsin have widely been seen as both ineffective executives and barriers to peace. He sabotaged peace talks in Kuwait in 2016 before they even start by naming Ali Mohsen his Vice President. Mohsen, who was unpopular in the West due to his ties to jihadis and a nonstarter with the Houthis for his conduct against them during the Saada wars from 2004-10, was a hedge against Hadi being removed from power. Also in 2016 Hadi split Yemen's Central Bank cutting off the Houthi controlled branch in Sanaa and establishing a new one in Aden. The move effectively divided Yemen's economy in two and is one reason that the Yemeni rial trades at widely disparate rates in Sanaa and Aden.

The eight-member council will try and negotiate a ceasefire with the Houthis and find a final political solution to the conflicts which have ravaged the country for seven years. It is made up of political and military figures with direct roles on the ground and is, what Peter Salisbury a Yemen analyst for the International Crisis Group described as "the most consequential shift in the inner workings of the anti-Houthi bloc since the war began."

The council will be supported by a commission of 50 members who will work in an advisory and consultative role. There are also separate legal and economic teams. The council will end its term upon the election of a new president. It also has the powers to adopt foreign policy; enhance national security, issue changes to combat terrorism; establish diplomatic relations; enable a state of emergency; and appoint governors, security directors, and supreme court judges.

The Houthis did not attend the talks hosted by Saudi Arabia from 29th March – 7th April which facilitated the formation of the council saying Saudi Arabia cannot be a mediator or host, since it is a party in the war. Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam described the council as a farce and a desperate attempt to restructure the ranks of mercenaries to push them towards further escalation. It is not yet clear if the Houthis will break the two-month

**FOSY WRITES TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ABOUT THE SOUTHERN ISSUE (See Page 4)**

## TRAGIC HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN YEMEN

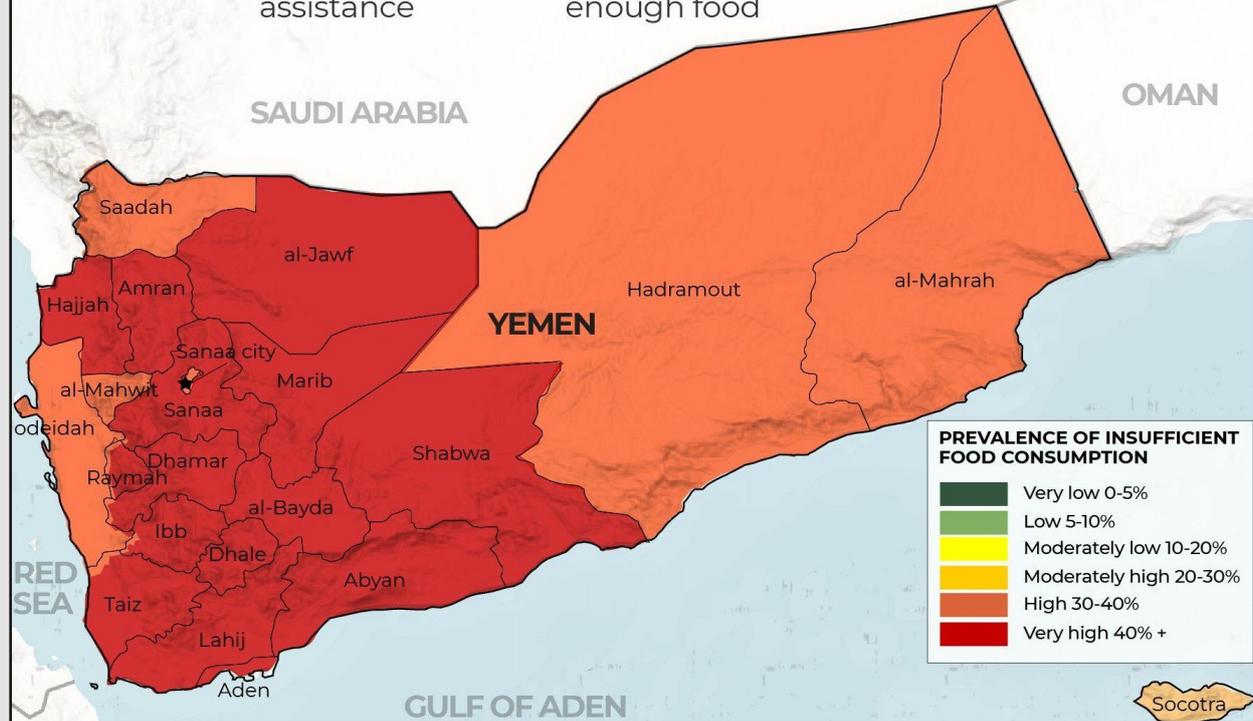
The UN has estimated the **war has killed 377,000 people** by the end of 2021, both directly and indirectly through hunger and disease. **Children account for 70 percent of deaths.**

**30**  
million  
population

**20**  
million in need  
of humanitarian  
assistance

**14.5**  
million do  
not have  
enough food

**4**  
million  
displaced



ceasefire and return to the battlefield as soon as possible or conclude they should come to the negotiating table now before the newly formed coalition threatens their current hold on territory.

Commenting on the formation of the council FOSY's Chairman Dr Abdul Galil Shaif said: "I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to the challenge of ensuring a lasting peace in Yemen and fostering a political process which brings to an end the suffering of the people." Shaif emphasised that FOSY supports the formation of the Presidential Council as a step in the right direction to bring about an end to this pointless war and find a political solution to the Yemeni crisis. The engagement of the STC and other forces will enhance the ability of the council to negotiate with the Houthis with strength.

The different players in the Council were previously at odds with each other but the new formation has united them under one common aim. The Houthis have been taken by surprise by the new developments, particularly the resignation of Hadi and Al Mohsin and will as a consequence more likely come to the negotiating table."

Shaif further explained that the peace plan put forward by FOSY almost a year ago can be the basis for a peaceful resolution to the war.

The Gulf states are now making a significant financial contribution to Yemen. Saudi Arabia which hosted the talks in Riyadh between March 29 – April 7th which prompted the formation of the new council has pledged \$3bn in new financial aid. Saudi Arabia will use part of the money, along

with the UAE, to inject \$2bn into the Central Bank of Yemen while \$1bn will be provided for petroleum products and development projects. The kingdom also announced it is giving \$300 million to the UN humanitarian relief fund for Yemen and called for an aid donor conference. The formation of the new council and the announcements to pledge funds have to some extent stabilised the local currency.

There have been a lot of comments in the media that the members of the council do not see eye to eye on Yemen's future and their opposition to the Houthis is the only thing that unites them. The naysayers will always raise their negative voices but it is clear that only the Yemenis can solve the country's seemingly intractable problems and all political leaders agree on the need for new initiatives to bring the cycle of violence to an end.

The ceasefire and the formation of the new presidential council are the first steps towards lasting peace and a meaningful all-inclusive political process. With hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced and on the brink of famine the desire for reconciliation, unity and an end to the fighting is widespread.

The journey of a thousand miles has to start with the first step and a very positive step has now been taken heralding a new dawn for Yemen.

Of course, there are many obstacles in the way of the new council but hope must prevail over the fear of failure. The war has cost Yemen far too much and its continuation threatens the fabric of Yemeni society.

## CHRONOLOGY

**Mar 16:** The UN was seeking \$4.27bn to help 17.3 million people – but raised only \$1.3bn at a pledging conference for Yemen with some major hoped-for donors not pledging any funds.

-The Houthis say they would welcome talks with the Saudi-led coalition if the venue is a neutral country, including some Gulf states, and that the priority is lifting "arbitrary" restrictions on Yemeni ports and Sanaa airport.

**Mar 17:** Saudi Arabia's Aramco chief Amin Nasser says the escalating attacks by the Houthis against oil installations in the kingdom should be a global concern.

**Mar 18:** Morocco deports 20 Yemeni refugees after they tried to enter the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

**Mar 19:** More than 160,000 people in Yemen will be affected by famine during the second half of this year – five times the current figure – several UN agencies and international aid groups have said.

**Mar 20:** The United Nations special envoy Hans Grundberg says he is seeking a possible truce in Yemen during Ramadan.

**Mar 21:** The Saudi-led Arab coalition says it is exercising "restraint" to make the intra-Yemen peace talks hosted by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) a success.

**Mar 22:** The Houthis strike the same oil storage tank in Jeddah they had previously hit a year and a half ago.

**Mar 23:** Major General Thabet Jawas and four soldiers were killed in a car bomb explosion when their vehicle was passing in an area north of Aden.

**Mar 24:** Oxfam warns Yemen could endure 'unimaginable suffering' if the war continues for another year, with the human cost 'rising sharply'

**Mar 25:** Yemeni freelance photojournalist Fawaz al-Wafi was found dead in his car in Taiz, with stab wounds to his chest and other parts of his body.

**Mar 26:** The Houthis announce a three-day truce and dangle the prospect of a "permanent" ceasefire if the Saudi-led coalition ends its operations in Yemen.

-Around 190,000 migrants in Yemen are in "dire" need of assistance, the International Organization for Migration warns.

**Mar 27:** The Houthis reach an agreement to exchange prisoners with Yemen's internationally-recognized government.

**Mar 28:** Yemeni rebel leader Abdelmalek al-Houthi warns the Saudi-led coalition against "missing" the chance for a ceasefire declared by the rebels two days earlier.

**Mar 29:** The Saudi-led coalition says it will halt military operations in Yemen starting on March 30th to help create a positive atmosphere during the holy month of Ramadan so negotiations between the Yemenis parties can succeed.

**Mar 30:** Yemeni-Yemeni consultations, are being held between

## Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council: Who's Who?



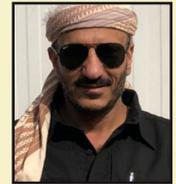
**Council leader Rashad al-Alimi** is a member of the General People's Congress and a former Minister of the Interior. He comes from Taiz, North Yemen, which the Houthis have blockaded since 2015. Al-Alimi received his bachelor's degree in Military Sciences from the Kuwait Police College in 1975 and another university degree in Arts from Sana'a University in 1977. He also holds a master's and doctorate degree in sociology both from Egypt's Ain Shams University, which he earned in 1984 and 1988 respectively.

**Deputy leader Aidrous Al-Zubaidi**, head of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), which wants an independent South Yemen. He is a former military commander from Dhale province engaged in armed struggle against the Northern regime since 1994. He was appointed by Abdrobo Mansoor Hadi as Governor of Aden in early December 2015, after the previous one, Major General Jaafar Mohammed Saad, was assassinated in a car bombing. He was instrumental in establishing the STC. He is supported by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.



**Abdullah Al-Alimi** (no relation to Rashad Al-Alimi) the director of Hadi's presidential office and a member of the Islamist Islah Party. He has played a major role in running the affairs of the president's office in Saudia Arabia. He is from Shabwa South Yemen. He was also engaged in the Arab spring uprising in 2011 against the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

**Tareq Saleh**, a military commander and nephew of late former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Tariq is a senior commander of the military brigades in Hodaidah. He is from Sinhan, North Yemen. He currently heads the Emirati-backed National Resistance Forces based in Mocha. A close ally of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saleh also enjoys good relations with the Saudis. He is also the close cousin of Ahmed Ali Abdulla Saleh currently residing in the UAE.



**Sheikh Sultan Al-Arada**, the governor of the oil-rich province of Marib, a key battleground in the conflict. He is a tribal figure who has worked closely with Islah in recent years. He graduated from Sanaa University's Faculty of Arts and has been involved in political work for the past four decades. He is from North Yemen and has been able to resist the Houthi takeover of Marib. He is supported by Saudia Arabia.

**Othman Mujali** a tribal sheikh from Saada who is close to Saudi Arabia and was likely included to balance out the geographical representation. He is a lawmaker. In 2003, he joined the General People's Congress and held several political positions, most notably Minister of Agriculture.



**Faraj Al-Bahsani**, the governor of Hadramaut and head of the Hadrami Elite Forces. Bahsini distanced himself from the STC over the past two years, and has stoked popular protests in Hadramaut over collapsing infrastructure, rolling blackouts and a collapsing currency. Al-Bahsani joined the national army in 1971. He is a major general commanding the second military region that operates in the province. He earned a bachelor's degree in artillery and missiles from the Higher Military College of the Soviet Union in 1975 and a master's degree from Russia's Frunze Military Academy in 1983 and went on to hold several positions in the army. He is from South Yemen.

**Abd Al-Rahman Abu Zaraa**, a South Yemeni from Yafa region. He is a commander of the Giants brigade that in January successfully pushed the Houthis out of territory in the provinces of Shabwa and Al-Bayda. He rarely makes media appearances and is believed to have close ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.



## FOSY WRITES TO FOREIGN SECRETARY



**FOSY's Chairman Dr Abdul Galil Shaif, sent the following letter to British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss:**

The start of a two-month ceasefire and the formation of a new Presidential Council on the seventh anniversary of the start of the war in Yemen heralds a new dawn for the beleaguered country which is experiencing what the UN has described as the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

I am sure you are aware that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has risen since last year, from 20.7 million to 23.4 million – around 80 percent of the population. The conflict is, of course, the main driver of the humanitarian crisis. The start of this year was

particularly brutal. January saw the highest number of civilian casualties since records began in 2018, with almost one civilian killed or injured every hour. So the conflict has intensified this year, and the innocent Yemeni people are bearing the brunt of it.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have pledged \$3 billion to Yemen and the kingdom has also announced it is giving \$300 million to the humanitarian relief and called for an aid-donor conference. At the end of March, the World Bank approved an additional \$300 million for the Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID 19 Response Project in Yemen.

One of the most positive developments is the formation of an eight-member Presidential Leadership Council made up of military and political leaders with direct roles on the ground. The leader of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) Aidrous Al-Zubaidi is the Deputy Leader of the Council. The STC has always supported the efforts of the international community and the United Nations to bring an end to the war and find a political solution to Yemen's seemingly intractable problems. At first it was side lined in peace negotiations but it is now rightfully recognised as one of the major groups in Yemen's political spectrum.

The STC's co-operation with the Gulf states, to some extent, resulted in its loss of support from the people of South Yemen who favour the establishment of their own independent state. But unlike the Houthis in the north who seized power and formed their own government the STC has worked with all anti-Houthi groups to find a political solution to Yemen's problems.

There are several spoilers in the country including Al-Qaida, independent war lords and others who want the war to continue for their own selfish and political ends. If the south is not developed and the STC is not supported as an important political entity, these extremist elements will become stronger and the challenge of converting the new developments to a political process that will bring sustainable peace may face big challenges.

South Yemen was a British colony for 130 years and it is incumbent on the British government to help end the war and help South Yemen economically to regain its rightful place in the world. A new partnership based on cooperation and economic mutual interest will be the best possible tool to eradicate extremism and terrorism. South Yemen is desperate for an economic partnership that delivers real benefits, such as jobs, for the masses. The boots we need on the ground are those of constructors.

Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) has put forward a three-stage road map to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yemen which is enclosed with this letter. I thank you for your kind attention and look forward our co-operation.

**FOSY also sent a letter to the Presidential Council urging its members to address the situation of the people, whose lives have become unbearable. They are struggling daily just to survive with poor, sometimes non-existent essential services. We do not want the militias to take power when conditions become unbearable and the people revolt while their leaders live safely abroad and prosper. You really have to alleviate the pain and suffering of the people. Please work for the good of the people in a serious, dedicated and honest way. May God help you.**



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March 29 and April 7, 2022 under the auspices of the GCC at the headquarters of the Secretariat General in Riyadh.

**Mar 31:** Saudi Arabia adds 25 people and entities from different nationalities to its terrorism list saying they are financing the Houthis.

**Apr 1:** A two-month truce in Yemen which starts today must be a first step in ending the country's devastating war, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says on the eve of the ceasefire.

**Apr 2:** According to al-Masirah television network run by the Houthis three deaths occurred as residential areas in the north-western Shada'a province came under heavy shelling despite the ceasefire.

**Apr 3:** A fuel tanker docks at Hudaydah port the first since a UN-brokered truce took effect.

**Apr 4:** President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi encourages the Houthis to start negotiating to end the war.

**Apr 5:** Yemen's warring parties trade accusations of violating a ceasefire agreement, three days after the two-month truce went into effect.

**Apr 6:** UN envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg announces the establishment of a new mechanism to monitor the 2-month truce between the country's warring rivals.

**Apr 7:** President Hadi announces the formation of a new Presidential Leadership Council.

**Apr 8:** The head of Yemen's new Presidential Council, Rashad Al-Alimi says he will end the war via a peace process.

**Apr 9:** The United Nations is seeking nearly \$80 million for an emergency operation to prevent a catastrophic oil spill in the Red Sea off Yemen from a 45-year-old tanker *FSO Safer*, used as a floating oil storage platform with 1.1 million barrels of crude on board which has been moored off the port of Hodeida since 2015, without being serviced.

**Apr 10:** Twitter suspends an account that belonged to the Houthis military spokesperson Yahya Saree for breaching its rules.

**Apr 11:** The UN Special Envoy for Yemen arrives in Sanaa for talks with the Houthis.

**Apr 12:** Around 30,000 Yemeni civilians have been displaced from their homes in war-torn Yemen in the past three months according to UNHCR.

**Apr 13:** *Ahlul Bayt News Agency* reports that the UAE has sent military planes to the Socotra.

- Yemen's Presidential Council promises to end the war and achieve peace through a comprehensive peace process that guarantees the Yemeni people all their aspirations.

**Apr 14:** The Delhi High Court refuses to direct the central government to negotiate the payment of payment of blood money to save Nimisha Priya, a Kerala woman who is on death row in Yemen for the murder of a Yemeni national.