

South Yemen Update

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



Talk on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen & the Path Toward Peace in the Gulf Arab club London 19 August

Good evening, everyone.

Today, I want to draw attention to one of the world's most devastating yet often overlooked crises: the humanitarian emergency in Yemen. After nearly a decade of war, Yemen is not only a battleground—it is a place where hunger, disease, and despair are daily realities for millions. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned, “Hunger in the 21st century is indefensible.” UNHCR

Stark Realities: Humanitarian Crisis by the Numbers



UN Humanitarian Aid parcels

The latest UN and IPC data lays bare the worsening plight in Yemen:

- Approximately 4.95 million people in government-controlled southern areas are in Crisis-level hunger or worse (IPC Phase 3+), with over 1.5 million reaching Emergency levels (Phase 4)—on the brink of famine IPCinfo.

- This figure is projected to rise to 5.38 million—over 53% of the population—between September 2025 and February 2026 IPCinfo.

- According to UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher, more than 17 million Yemenis are now going hungry, including over 1 million children under 5 suffering from life-threatening acute malnutrition. These numbers could rise to 18 million people and 1.2 million children respectively by September or early next year AP News.

- In western coastal areas like Hodeidah, UNICEF warns malnutrition levels have reached 33%, pushing communities toward catastrophe. Half of all children under five and 1.4 million pregnant and lactating women are malnourished. UNICEF urgently seeks \$157 million more for 2025, with only 25% currently funded Reuters.

- The Global Report on Food Crises (2024) charts a grim global trend: an increase in acute hunger, driven by conflict, economic shocks, and climate extremes—a trajectory that Yemen tragically exemplifies UNHCR.

Behind the Numbers: Human Suffering & Systemic Collapse

These numbers translate into heartbreaking realities:

- Families subsist on one meal a day.
- Mothers walk hours for food or water; children go to bed hungry night after night.
- As a refugee mother near al-Mukalla shared:

“We live on bread and tea. I’ve wished for death.” The Guardian.

The crisis stems from overlapping factors:

1. Relentless Conflict

Nearly ten years of war have destroyed hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and displaced millions, civilians trapped with little refuge.

2. Economic Collapse

GDP has halved since 2010; the currency is worthless; wages unpaid—basic staples unaffordable.

3. Climate Stress & Disasters

Droughts, flash floods—like the devastating 2024 flood season, which killed over 60 people and destroyed farmland—have collapsed agricultural output Wikipedia.

4. Supply Disruptions

Attacks on Red Sea routes further choke Yemen’s lifeline—nearly 90% of its food is imported.

5. Aid Fragmentation & Bureaucracy

In Houthi-controlled areas, humanitarian aid is monopolized under SCMCHA, restricting NGO access and diverting vital resources Wikipedia.

6. Peace Process Paralysis

The UN negotiations have stalled; root causes remain unaddressed.

Humanitarian Response vs. Resources

Agencies like WFP, UNICEF, and FAO are delivering life-saving aid: emergency food, nutrition services for children and mothers, and resilience-building support World Food ProgrammeFAOHome. But funds are drying up: aid meant for 3.6 million people in early 2024 dropped to 2.8 million by May 2025, with no further aid expected from mid-2025 onward IPCinfo. WFP warns that without funding, rations will be cut, leaving millions without a lifeline.



water shortages in south Yemen

A Political Solution is the Only Sustainable Path

Humanitarian aid may save lives now—but only peace can end Yemen's suffering. A durable political solution must address the deep divisions and aspirations within Yemen, particularly those of southerners who feel marginalized and excluded.

The Southern Transitional Council (STC) represents this voice. Founded in May 2017, the STC has gained political standing, holding seats in the Presidential Leadership Council, with a credible governance structure in southern territories. The STC has made notable progress in gaining recognition through the Riyadh Agreement (2019) and recent effective diplomatic outreach WikipediaIPCinfoAP News.

Importantly, the UN Special Envoy recently stated that “the case for South Yemen will be made in the negotiations agenda”—a significant acknowledgment

that southern demands are now considered legitimate political issues to be resolved through dialogue.

Vision for Peace: A Two-State or Federal Framework



North and South Yemen (Credit: PBS News Hour)

Experts suggest that lasting peace could emerge from a federal or two-state model:

A northern and a southern state, each with strong autonomy, sharing resources, trade, and security.

This structure could lessen friction, allow local governance to reflect identity, and enable tailored rebuilding.

While complexities remain—such as border definitions and resource-sharing—a creative political compromise is essential.

The international community, particularly Gulf states, the UN, and global partners, must transition from mere donors to peace guarantors—facilitating, not imposing—a Yemeni-designed future.

Closing

Yemen is not just a humanitarian tragedy—it is a political and economic collapse. Schools are empty, a generation is slipping away, and unless action is urgent, history may judge us harshly.

We must:

- Amplify humanitarian funding,
- Revitalize a serious peace process,
- Embrace political models that reflect Yemen's diversity.

As Secretary-General Guterres said of global hunger: “We cannot respond to empty stomachs with empty hands and turned backs.” UNHCR

Thank you. #

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19 August 2025



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Design: Yusef Alabbadi