

# 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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## The Role of the Southern Transitional Council in Shaping South Yemen's Future

Yemen's ongoing conflict is complex, with the political fate of South Yemen being a critical issue. The Southern Transitional Council (STC) is a major player in this context, gaining increasing recognition internationally as the representative voice for South Yemeni interests.

### Formation and Purpose of the STC

The STC was formed in 2017 with the aim of leading the territories of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen towards independence. This aspiration for an independent Southern state, strongly supported by the majority of Southern Yemenis, has gained renewed momentum since the civil war began in 2014, particularly after the STC's establishment. Originally, the conflict was between Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government, but it has since fragmented, leading to a complex network of alliances and rivalries that intensify Southern calls for independence.



*South Yemen Transitional Council President Aidarous Alzubaidi*

### Historical Background and Popular Support

The push for independence in South Yemen is deeply rooted in its history. Prior to unification with North Yemen in 1990, the South was known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The merger aimed to bring stability and unity but resulted in significant inequalities and marginalization of the South, fostering long-lasting resentment. Civil wars in 1994 and again in 2015 exacerbated these feelings, with many Southerners believing they have disproportionately suffered from the conflict's devastation without receiving adequate support or representation.

### STC's Mission and Goals

The STC positions itself as the legitimate advocate for South Yemen's aspirations. It supports the creation of a Southern federal state that acknowledges the South's unique identity and grants it greater autonomy. The council's primary goal is

to regain the independence lost in 1990. This ambition is evident in their political rhetoric, governance activities, and military operations. In the regions it controls, the STC has established administrative structures, including local governance bodies, security forces, and social services, demonstrating their capability to govern effectively and garner local support. The STC has also established a presidential council, a parliament and an advisory body.

### International Recognition and Controversies

Internationally, the STC is now recognized as a significant force in Yemen's conflict and politics. This recognition is due to their effective control over certain areas and their military strength, supported by alliances with regional powers like the United Arab Emirates. However, their aim of establishing an independent state conflicts with the Yemeni government's vision of a united country and poses a challenge for international stakeholders seeking Yemen's stability. The STC has representatives worldwide to advocate for their vision and gain international support, with President Al-Zubaidi meeting numerous global actors in this effort.

Domestically, the STC faces criticism from other Southern factions and political groups who accuse it of monopolizing the Southern cause and marginalizing other perspectives. This internal dissent challenges the STC's claim to represent all South Yemeni interests.

### Implications for Yemen's Broader Conflict

Addressing the North-South divide is essential for a comprehensive resolution to Yemen's conflict. The STC's push for independence underscores the deep-rooted grievances that must be addressed to achieve lasting peace. Any sustainable solution must consider the legitimate demands for autonomy and fair representation from the South.

The rise of the STC highlights the complexity of Yemen's conflict, where local issues intersect with regional and international interests. Inclusive dialogue and negotiation, involving all stakeholders, are crucial for crafting a political future that accommodates Yemen's diverse population.

The Southern Transitional Council plays a crucial role in shaping the future of South Yemen amidst the broader conflict. While it has gained international recognition as a representative of South Yemeni interests, it faces significant domestic and international challenges. The push for Southern independence reflects broader issues of governance, representation, and justice that are central to resolving Yemen's conflict. The STC's actions will be key in determining the path towards a peaceful and stable Yemen.

*Dr. Abdul Galil Shaif*

## Controversial Visit of PLC

On Saturday, Rashad Al-Alimi, President of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), arrived in Mukalla, the capital of the oil-rich Hadramout province in South Yemen, accompanied by Yemeni officials from Riyadh. This visit took place despite the Hadramout Inclusive Conference (HIC), a prominent tribal coalition in the province, announcing its opposition on Friday due to the dire living and economic conditions in the region.

A source for South24 Center revealed that PLC member Faraj Al-Bahsani, who also serves as the Deputy Chairman of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), chose not to accompany Al-Alimi. The source cited "a lack of prior coordination regarding the visit's details" as the reason. Al-Bahsani, a former governor of Hadramout, is a significant and influential figure in the province.

While Hadramout Governor Mabkhout bin Madi and other officials welcomed Al-Alimi at Riyan International Airport, citizens expressed their anger by chanting for his departure, as shown in a video recording. The official Saba news agency reported that Al-Alimi plans to hold meetings with local authorities and military, political, and security leaders "to brief them on the latest developments and enhance government institutions' efforts."



*PLC President Rashad Al-Alimi visit to Hadramout*

Al-Alimi expressed his happiness to be in Hadramout, stating that he would discuss "ways to support local authorities in meeting their essential commitments to citizens in various fields."

Observers have questioned the visit's timing, speculating a connection to the resumption of oil and gas exports from Hadramout as part of a Saudi deal with the Houthis, who have recently secured significant concessions from the recognized government.

In October and November 2022, the Houthis attacked the oil ports of Dabba in Hadramout and Nashima in Shabwa with drones. The attack on Dabba caused millions of dollars in damages and halted oil exports to this day. The Houthis demand that salaries for fighters and employees in their controlled areas in northern Yemen be paid from oil and gas revenues, resources concentrated in South Yemen, which the Southern Transitional Council deems a "red line."

## President Al-Zubaidi: "Any Negotiations Conducted Outside the Scope of the Joint Negotiating Team Will Not Be Accepted."

President Aidarous Qassem Al-Zubaidi, President of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and Vice Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), reiterated the urgent need to activate the joint negotiation team of the PLC and empower it to carry out its tasks, underscoring that this team should serve as the sole representative of all parties within the scope of the STC in any upcoming negotiations to end the conflict in Yemen.

This came during his virtual meeting on Sunday evening with H.E. Abda Sharif, the UK Ambassador to Yemen. The President stated, "We have a joint negotiating team that represents the various forces within the PLC. This team must be activated and empowered to carry out its tasks, and any negotiations conducted outside its scope will not be accepted or endorsed by the parties affiliated with the PLC."



*STC President Aidarous AlZubaidi and UK Ambassador to Yemen H.E. Abda Sharif*

In the same context, the meeting discussed the latest developments related to the economic situation in the country and its repercussions on humanitarian conditions, as well as regional and international efforts to mitigate the impact of these severe consequences on citizens in all governorates.

The meeting also reviewed the latest political developments in light of the efforts of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen and regional and international partners to end the conflict in the country. In this regard, President Al-Zubaidi pointed out that the Houthi militias continue their intransigence and rejection of all calls for dialogue, stressing that their ongoing escalation in the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and on the frontlines in a number of governorates proves their lack of seriousness in dealing with all calls for peace.

Separately, the meeting touched on the escalating campaigns of repression and violations by the Houthi militias targeting UN and international organization staff in their areas under their control. In this regard, President Al-Zubaidi reiterated his condemnation of the crimes committed by the militias against humanitarian and relief members, stressing the need for a firm international stance to compel the militias to release abducted staff members of UN-affiliated organizations and international and local humanitarian organizations.

For her part, the British Ambassador reaffirmed her country's support for all efforts aimed at ending the conflict and bringing about peace in the country, noting the importance of a comprehensive political process with zero preconditions.