

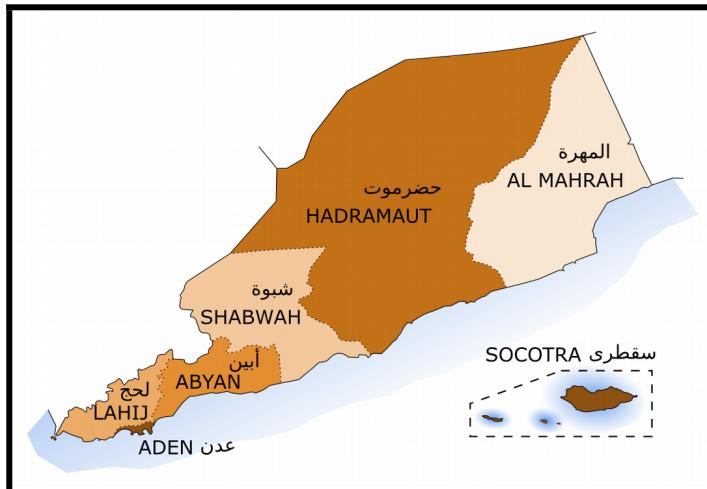
FRIENDS OF SOUTH YEMEN (FOSY)
2 Firhill Rd
Sheffield S4 7BB
United Kingdom
Telephone: + 44 7802 763711
Email: info@friendsofsouthyemen.org
Website: www.friendsofsouthyemen.org



PRESS RELEASE

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Independence – the only option for South Yemen



Yemen in reality as a state no longer exists and the only option for the south of the country is an independent state. That was the conclusion of an international zoom conference: The conference for southern statehood which was hosted by the UK – based Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) on 22 July 2020.

In his introduction to the conference FOSY's Chairman, Abdul Galil Shaif Kasim, said: “We are interested in Yemen as a whole but we are interested in establishing a South Yemeni state because we believe very strongly that the solution to Yemen’s problems and to end the destructive conflict is to have a two-state solution, one in the north and one in the south.”

Kasim emphasized that FOSY is anti-war. “We believe that the war in Yemen should end and that the humanitarian situation should be dealt with with immediate effect. No Yemeni child should die as a result of a war that is absolutely pointless and has no winners except those who trade in arms and the warlords who buy and sell people’s lives.”

After the overthrow of President Ali Abdullah Salih during the Arab Spring in 2011 Yemen has been devastated by a five-year civil war. The Iranian-backed Houthis who gained control of the north and the capital Sanaa are fighting the Saudi-led coalition backed militarily by the US, the UK and France. The coalition is trying to restore the internationally recognized government of President Abderrabbuh Mansur Hadi who lives in exile in Saudi Arabia. The southerners were originally part of the coalition but were alienated by Hadi when he dismissed the governors of the Southern regions . The STC controls Aden, Yemen's main commercial centre and is gaining increasing support in the south of the country.

Karen Dabrowska, FOSY's secretary pointed out that Yemen as country has ceased to exist as the Houthis control 70 percent of the north and the areas not under their control are being fought over. She emphasized that it is meaningless to continue to call the southerners 'separatists' as there is no longer anything to separate from. Five years of bombing has not dislodged the Houthis as they are hiding in the mountains and canyons and possibly gaining strength as a consequence. The war is destroying the country's infrastructure and many innocent people have been killed. Hadi will go down in history as the only president who makes an official visit to his own capital. But despite the realities on the ground the United Nations and the international community support the internationally recognized government. Peace talks between the north and the south have ended in failure and ceasefires are continually violated. The UN through a number of special envoys have failed to bring the conflict to an end.

Yemeni lawyer Linda Mohamed Ali Hussain described In her talk the marginalization and exploitation of the south after the failed unity in 1990.

- More than 200,000 soldiers, officers and security personnel were dismissed;
- More than 170,000 administrative employees and skilled workers in government ministries, factories, companies, economic institutions and the judiciary were dismissed;
- The businesses of southern merchants were handed over to the northerners with the consent of influential politicians;
- Denial of educational opportunities through discriminatory laws;
- Obliterating all cultural monuments, closure of theatres, cinemas, public libraries, museums, musical and theatre groups, and all forms of literary and artistic activities;
- Spreading of tribal cultural, nurturing tribal wars and fostering arms sales;
- Providing facilities for jihadists who fought in Afghanistan and giving their commanders high military ranks in the Yemeni army.

Hussain concluded that the Southerners demand a country based on peaceful coexistence with its regional neighbours and international partners whose foreign policy is based on combating terrorism. South Yemen is eager to utilise its strategic geographical location, its seaports, territorial waters, beaches, cities and airports to foster world peace, and integrated trade and investment between the countries of the region and the world.

The conference was also addressed by Adeni business woman Shabana Mohamed Shafi Abdulkarim who analytically described the economic and business opportunities in the South and its ability to be a self sufficient state economically. Journalist Hadeel Oueis from Washington DC explained in detail the role of the US in the conflict and the need for understanding the Southern case. She was clear that the US is not necessarily opposed to a Southern state but the administration requires a better understanding of the conflict.

There were more than 100 conference participants including nationals of North and South Yemen, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France, the USA, India and Sri Lanka.

FOSY will be meeting representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 25th August to discuss independence for South Yemen.

For further information contact Abdul Galil Shaif Kasim
Telephone: +44 7802 763711
Email: abdul@friendsofsouthyemen.org
Website: <https://www.friendsofsouthyemen.org>