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PRESS RELEASE

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Leave us alone: FOSY chairman's appeal to European and Gulf states

“Leave us alone.” This was the appeal of the Chairman of Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) Abdul Galil Shaif during a zoom conference with members of the European Parliament on December 13th.

Shaif said that the intervention of both European and Gulf states in Yemeni affairs after the coup in 2014 when the Houthis, a hardline Shia sect overthrew the internationally recognised government (IRG) of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi has not helped Yemen and contributed to what the UN describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The Houthis started the war in 2014 by over throwing the legitimate government and invading the south through military means. Consequently the Arab coalition led by the Saudis engaged in the war to successfully oust the Houthis from the south. The war is continuing, as the Houthis are entrenched in north Yemen. The UK, France and other European countries have supplied the coalition, mainly the Saudis, with sophisticated weapons whose use has had devastating effects on civilians.

“We don't want anything from the international community and the Gulf states until they let us decide our destiny,” Shaif said. “The Houthis have separated the north from the south in a coup and unity with them is impossible. Our goal is to restore our southern state with our own wealth, resources and abilities - foreign powers do not have the right to compound our problems.”

Shaif said that the least the European Union can do during a transitional period is to have a two region solution with a government in the south for southerners and a government in the north for northerners. This could be a federal solution to Yemen's political crisis.

In addition to the humanitarian crisis which sees one child die every 12 minutes Yemen is plagued by a political stalemate. Shaif believes that the formation of a new government in which the IRG and the southerners, represented by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) share power will not work. The new government which is expected to be announced this week, will consist of 12 ministers from the IRG and 12 from the STC.

“But the two sides do trust each other,” Shaif said. “The fighting between them will start again.”

The STC was assisting the IRG and the Arab coalition in the war against the Houthis but when Hadi fired the southern governors another front opened in the civil war with the STC, supported by the UAE, fighting the Saudi-backed forces of the IRG in Abyan and Aden. The Saudis are trying to resolve the conflict through the power sharing Riyadh Agreement signed in November 2019 which has never been implemented. The withdrawal of STC and IRG forces from Abyan and Aden has started but the ministers in the new government have not been announced.

Shaif believes the new government will be a Saudi creation which will not act in the best interests of the Yemenis and advocates a two-state solution to solve Yemen's intractable problems. He echoes message of the deputy leader of the STC Ahmed Saeed bin Breik to the regime in the north: “Let's be brothers and each of us look after their own house.”

