

FRIENDS OF SOUTH YEMEN (FOSY)

90 Westbourne Terrace
London W2 6QE
United Kingdom

Telephone: + 44 7802 763711

Email: info@friendsofsouthyemen.org

Website: www.friendsofsouthyemen.org



PRESS RELEASE

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FOSY Chairman addresses Next Century Foundation (NCF) meeting on the future governance of Yemen

A more creative role for the United Nations and an international body to look at economic development in Yemen was advocated by the Chairman of Friends of South Yemen, Abdul Galil Shaif. He also called for sanctions on anyone - especially politicians and tribal leaders - who are making money out of the Yemen war.

In his intervention at the *Next Century Foundation's side meeting held in conjunction with the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting on March 1st, Shaif emphasised there needs to be an international body that can help the UN Special Envoy on Yemen, Martin Griffiths, to look at the economic situation in Yemen as a whole, the north and the south.

“The new Yemeni government has now been in place for almost two months and they do not have an economic programme or a political programme”, Shaif said. “An international body needs to support the new government with all its deficiencies.”

Shaif went on to say that the focus should now be on economic development rather than donor conferences. “Yemen has enough resources if those resources are managed properly. There are 350000 oil barrels a day, sufficient gas to export, fisheries and substantial customs and tax revenues. If these resources are properly managed Yemen can sustain its own development. That is why I am advocating an international body to help Yemen develop economically. If the economic problems are sorted out a solution to the political problems will come eventually. An international body is a much better proposition than the current corrupt administration.”

Shaif, suggested that a two region solution may be a temporary solution to Yemen's seemingly intractable problems. “With the Houthis controlling almost 80 percent of the north it is impossible to talk about Yemeni unity which in reality does not exist at all. The Houthis control one part of the country and the STC and other players in the south control the other part. So a two region solution similar to Kurdistan may provide a temporary political solution. There needs to be a way out now from six years of a pointless war that has not saved the interest of the



Saudis, the Emirates, the Americans or the Yemenis. The biggest casualty has been the Yemenis themselves in terms of the humanitarian disaster.”

In response questions regarding divisions within the STC, Shaif said there are no divisions internally within the Southern Transitional Council (STC). “There are different political southern players including supporter of the President of the internationally government, Abduroba Mansur Hadi who are also southerners. The south also has a problem now with Shabwa and Hadramawt governorates but these could be dealt with in reconciliation between the different parties. The STC or any other group could not rule the south on their own because the environment is conducive to reconciliation and eventually democratic elections to decide on the leaders. The STC knows that in the south the environment is not conducive for an imposed government so they did not act like the Houthis and impose themselves on the people. The STC and Hadi’s people could organise elections the STC can become a political party and other parties can also take part in the elections.”

Shaif , rejected suggestions that the tribal structure is influencing politics in South Yemen in the same way as the North . “The tribal structure was almost completely destroyed by the Yemeni Socialist Party which ruled the south from 1968 until 1990. There are political factions in the south: there was a struggle between left and right, between socialists themselves . Since unity in 1990 an attempt was made to revive the tribal structure in the south but it has not materialised. When I worked as head of the Aden Free Zone I saw and an environment in the South ready for state structures and an elected government. The people want that. The south is not driven by conflicts of tribes, it is driven by conflicts of politics and political intransigence. If we can resolve that we can have a state in the south. A state in the South with economic development is the best weapon to get rid of the Houthis. If our Northern brothers and sisters see a functioning state in the south where people get paid and services are delivered they will get rid of the Houthis. The Houthis cannot be dislodged by an armed struggle. They have been through six wars with the Yemeni state before this war and with tribal and Iranian backing are very powerful.”

When the meeting discussed stopping arms sales to the Saudis, Shaif, called for an international embargo on arms sales to those countries that are involved in the war including Iran.” If weapons cannot be bought from the British they will be bought from the Chinese or the Russians. An international agreement is required to stop sales of weapons to all sides.

In this concluding statement Shaif said: “We as Yemenis all of us want this war to end as quickly as possible. This has to be the number one priority in any discussion on how to end the bullets and the bombs. I have every faith that Yemenis will come to a political solution. They have come to political solutions before, they are a strong people with a strong culture and civilisation and they are able to resolve their own problems eventually. Many of Yemen’s problems are caused by foreign interference. The less of that we get the better we can become as Yemenis.”

*The NCF is a think tank and track II diplomacy organisation that operates in various conflict zones, primarily the Middle East. It has observer status at the UN. The NCF submitted a written statement to the 46th session of the UNHRC and the Chairman William Morris made an oral intervention. FOSY is a member of NCF’s working group on Yemen. Morris requested Shaif to brief the meeting about the situation in the south and possible solutions for a way forward for Yemen out of the war and political stalemate.