

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



24th March 2021

A road map for Yemen

Friends of South Yemen proposes to the international community a three-stage plan to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yemen

Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) is proposing a road map to end the war in Yemen, find a way out of the current political stalemate and offer a vision for the future.

FOSY is an independent, self-financed organization set up in London in June 2020. Its main aim is to provide information about Yemen in general and the South in particular to help resolve the current crisis. Since there is almost an absence of any useful information in the English language about Yemen our website (www.friendsofsouthyemen.org) is one of the only independent news websites about Yemen which developed as an information resource about the country. First and foremost we are working hard to bring an end to the war and an equitable political solution for the whole of Yemen in which the rights of all Yemenis are respected.

Before presenting our three-stage plan we would like to draw attention to the following facts:

- The unification of the two regimes in 1990 failed to materialize for the benefit of Yemenis. Recent history and many grievances at all levels have revealed that the political class of Yemen has destroyed for now the dream of Yemeni unity, so dear to the hearts of the people. The Northern regime militarily invaded the South in 1994 and ruled Yemen through a dictatorship.
- The Houthis, supported by Iran, fought six wars against the ruling regime in Sanaa, took their opportunity militarily to overthrow this regime in 2015, deposing the legitimate government of President Abdorbo Mansoor Hadi and later assassinated ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2017. Their attempt to invade the South was unsuccessful because the Southerners, with coalition backing, resisted the Houthis' invasion. The Southern territory is now almost completely free from Houthi domination.



- The Houthis overthrow of the legitimate government of Yemen has resulted in a six-year bloody war. The Houthis, a radical Zaidi Shia sect, now control 80 per cent of the North and for the past months have waged a fierce war and are attempting to take control of the rich province of Marib, and attempt to take control of the whole of the North with the aim of strengthening their negotiating hand in international talks. UNSC 2216 was passed in 2015 putting Yemen under Clause 7.
- The war has resulted in the world's worst humanitarian disaster with reportedly 233,000 dead mostly from "indirect causes" such as lack of food, health services and destroyed infrastructure. Nearly 50,000 people are already facing famine-like conditions and a further 5 million are only one step away. Eighty-five thousand children have lost their lives.

The intensification of the war will lead to further loss of life.

- The war has also resulted in the displacement of nearly four million people.
- Additional disasters – mainly floods and the COVID pandemic – have also caused displacement and misery.
- At a recent UN donors' conference only \$1.7 billion, less than half of the \$3.85 billion requested, was pledged. As a consequence of the conflict, investors have taken their money out of Yemen to invest in other countries. Britain reduced its contribution by almost 50 per cent causing a public outcry in the UK.
- The economic consequences of the war are causing severe fuel, food and water shortages forcing people to turn to the black market where prices are up to two times higher than the official rate, all contributing to food prices that are climbing well out of reach for millions. Currency devaluation is also causing serious problems.

FOSY is calling for an immediate ceasefire and appealing to the international community to bring an end to the war and the continuing negative downward spiral which Yemenis find intolerable.

We hope the following three-stage road map to peace will lead to a solution acceptable to all sides in the conflict and an end to this brutal and pointless war.

Stage One (2021-2022)

Ending the war immediately and laying the foundations for peace

The first step must be the effective implementation of the Riyadh Agreement which resolved the conflict between the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) leading to the formation of the current power-sharing government. Despite our reservations about elements in this agreement it appears to be the only way forward available. It is critical that this government is given the opportunity to build trust between the two parties and ensure that the people in the liberated areas see some improvements in their living standards. Although it is fair to say that so far this government has failed to put forward a political and economic plan and improve people's lives.

- Peace talks held under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths should start immediately to build trust between the warring parties (the Houthis and the IRG/STC) to agree an immediate end to the war. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, the USA, the UK and other states should engage in the talks supporting all sides to reach a peace settlement.
- Imposition of UN sanctions, especially on politicians and tribal leaders, who are making money out of the war and refuse to engage positively in peace talks. The threat of financial and travel sanctions against those Yemeni politicians would yield positive results in our opinion.
- Formation of an international body to support economic development in North and South Yemen with a move away from reliance on humanitarian assistance. The power sharing government should focus on the payment of salaries, the provision of essential services and the presentation of a united front to reach a peace settlement with the Houthis.
- Injection of funds into the Central Bank for development to be used under international supervision and strict accountability and transparency measures. The government should immediately administer and put measures in place to bring in income from oil, gas, fisheries, taxes and customs directly into the Central Bank to prevent corruption and strengthen the local currency.
- Talks, preferably under UN auspices, between all political groups in the South to achieve national reconciliation and agree on the way forward for the Southern region and future relations with the North. The head of the STC, Aidarus Al- Zubaidi, and President Hadi could play a leading role in this initiative.

Stage Two (2022-2025)

Transitional stage with a possible two region solution, one region in the North of Yemen and the other in the South of Yemen

Yemen could have two constitutionally recognized autonomous regions, the Northern region and the Southern region, each with its own parliament, political parties, elections, executive, ministries, legislative and judicial powers, budget, internal security forces and police. A central administration headed by President Hadi would be responsible for defence, foreign policy and the allocation of an equitable share of national revenue to the Northern and Southern regions.

- Two autonomous regions should be set up under UN auspices with a new constitution. There should also be a strengthening of the role and responsibilities of local government with minimum disruption to the current governorate structure. The governorates in the north will form the Northern autonomous region and the governorates in the south will form the Southern autonomous region. Elections to local governments must be held with international observers present.
- A focus on long-term development projects and investment is needed. Yemenis living abroad must be encouraged to return and invest in their country. Improving the security situation in the two regions of Yemen will encourage and attract investors to return to their country.

- Southerners should eventually hold a Southern conference evaluating the experience of two autonomous regions, successes and failures and building trust between all Southerners on the way forward. The Northern political elite can also initiate their own conference and evaluate their successes and failures and build trust among themselves too.
- The two regions must cooperate politically and economically to heal the scars of war and serve all their people under international scrutiny. They must also hold elections under the constitution so the people can choose their future leaders.

Stage Three (2025-2030)

Decision on the future of Yemen based on the evaluation of the two-region solution

Following the evaluation of the transitional stage of the two-region solution a watershed in Yemen's history should come, when the people themselves decide whether to continue with the two autonomous regions or opt for two independent states. FOSY proposes one referendum in the North and one in the South to determine the future of the two regions.

There is every possibility that the Southerners through their referendum will want to establish their own state. There is income from oil, gas, fisheries and taxes and a strategic location which can revive their economy. No money will be required from external sources if proper state functioning institutions are developed. A UN-organized referendum on the independence of the South is required to enable this state to be re-established. Two states living side by side is better than one state destroying itself. If the South chooses independence close economic co-operation with the North would be required.

The alternative of the South voting for independence is a continuation of the two regions under central authority.

All past attempts to resolve the crisis have failed. The situation for the ordinary people of Yemen is desperate so a new initiative is desperately needed. We urge all interested parties and honest brokers to give our proposal their serious attention.