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Hans Grundberg
UN Envoy to Yemen

[By email]

Dear Mr Grundberg,

I had the pleasure of attending the webinar at which you spoke recently. Your enthusiasm to find a solution to Yemen's seemingly intractable problems was very inspiring and you were deeply influenced by your commitment to end the war and help Yemen face the many challenges it is facing now.

But in my estimate the plight and problems of the South have not been properly addressed by former UN envoys, and the international experience has shown that any initiative that does not take into consideration the issue of the South, economy development and addressing living problems does not work. In my opinion and appreciation, it is necessary for the United Nations to include equal representation of the south in its forthcoming initiatives.

Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) presented a three-phase road map, attached to this message, to provide a long-term strategy to end the war and promote much-needed economic support. We also offer suggestions on the government of the state and two territories or the two-state solution that takes into consideration the concerns and problems of the northern and southerners.

Clearly, Yemeni unity with increasing control of Houthi militias in the north is now impossible to implement and continuing to follow this strategy is very wrong and will only end with failure, frustration and disappointment for you and the millions of our citizens waiting for your initiative with high attention

What's missing right now is a clear vision of the envoy to move forward to get out of the current strangling crisis, and the UN has put you in a very difficult situation by not adopting a new strategy and a new resolution that corresponds to the facts on the ground. We hope our road map will be helpful in helping your new efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

As you know, the war in Yemen is a terrible humanitarian and economic tragedy Yemen is struggling with deep economic and social challenges, exacerbated by a useless war and an epidemic, but even more because of the lack of political will by Yemen's political elite. The international community should therefore adopt and implement targeted political negotiations and economic reforms demanded by the people.

Your appointment by the United Nations as a new special envoy to Yemen is a key moment for international decision makers to bring these regional leaders and partners together to end this war immediately and address the severe economic and social crisis that leads the whole country to war. It is also a moment for the international community and for you to stand by the country and its people - with urgent humanitarian assistance, and support the economy to lift Yemen from the brink of a complete economic collapse. The suffering of the Yemeni people is hard to understand.

Over the past months, FOSY has participated intensively with policy makers and state authorities in a number of forums, as well as with civil society and the international community, to develop a peace plan aimed at addressing the country's political crisis, the state's form and political structures, enhancing governance and accountability, and restoring confidence in the economy. Unfortunately these discussions did not yield results. We are ready to support you as a special envoy and redouble our efforts. But we need unity of purpose at the international and regional levels and an accelerated peace process that allows all partners to participate properly in the process including equal southern representation.

Soft diplomacy, in our opinion, with the intact Yemeni local leaders, does not succeed or produce results because they have become beneficiaries of the war. In our opinion, they are less concerned with peace and more concerned with prolonging the struggle for their selfish endeavours. We recommend that you put pressure on them to humiliate them by imposing a travel ban and freezing their international bank accounts and assets. This in our estimation will go a long way to force them to find a solution to the conflict. We look forward to meeting you soon to discuss our plan for peace in more detail.

Please accept my utmost respect

Yours sincerely,

Dr Abdul Galil Shaif
Chairman – Friends of South Yemen