



EMBASSY OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN  
Washington, DC

## ***SPECIAL REPORT***

# The US Congress and Yemen: **Background, Critical Issues and the Way Forward**



The US Congress and Yemen:

# **Background, Critical Issues and the Way Forward**

Special Report (April 2017)  
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Washington, DC

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*Message from the Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen – Washington, DC*

The Embassy of Yemen in Washington, DC would like to seize this opportunity to shed more light about Yemen for US Government bodies with a particular focus on the US Congress and how its interactions have been recently with Yemen; as well as to shape a better understanding (or develop a new learning for those unfamiliar) about Yemen – especially given the current context, the immediate concerns and the future considerations that will likely impact the US Congress in terms of its perceptions & positions on Yemen (both in the House of Representatives and Senate). This report is intended to provide information from the perspective of a strategic friend of the US Government that could have long-term implications or a profound effect on US foreign policy determinations & directions vis-à-vis Yemen that the US Congress will need to give significant attention to and to be closely involved with contemporaneously going forward.

This report will highlight and address very crucial issues regarding Yemen with an outlook concerning the US Congress in order to enlighten Members of the House and Senate or to further touch upon what may have already been imparted to them (though not focused on or stressed enough) from other available sources informing the opinion of foreign affairs Staff and Experts of the US Congress about Yemen.

The Embassy's final message to the US Congress with this report, and quite simply, is a sincere appeal to sustain the existing positive engagement in the quest to expand its constructive and friendly relationship with Yemen. The Embassy respectfully affirms to the US Congress, and in particular, the honorable & distinguished Members from key Congressional Committees (i.e., Foreign Affairs/Relations, Appropriations, Armed Services, etc., and their relevant Subcommittees) of the boundless value of working with the Embassy through ongoing communication and cooperation channels that will further deepen our existing strategic ties.

The Embassy also wishes to reiterate unstintingly to the US Congress that it is here to assist with the utmost of readiness to share knowledge, to clarify any misunderstandings & misconceptions and to provide any information that can be presented to it about Yemen on all relevant matters.

*Warmest regards,  
Ahmed Awad Binmubark (PhD)*



Yemen<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

After providing a general background about Yemen, as well as a brief about US-Yemen bilateral relations with information also on the US Congress germane to Yemen, this report will delve into a vital exposition on Yemen's recent events, recapitulating what arguably are the most important political and security related dimensions evinced in Yemen in recent years that have broadly engrossed the country and that have led to the US Government being engaged in Yemen on multiple fronts – including militarily in the war against Al-Qaeda and in the conflict against the Houthis and their allies; and by extension in the political settlement attempts to end the conflict, providing humanitarian assistance, etc., (as will be revealed later in this report).

Lastly, this report will conclude by advocating for renewed & robust support concerning Yemen emanating from the US Congress whose implementation will have positive and productive outcomes for Yemen and with long-term political, security and economic dividends for the United States. It shall also be suggested that the US Congress should harness mechanisms of engagement that it has established in order to deepen its relationship with Yemen and the growing Yemeni communities that are dispersed across the USA from coast-to-coast.

<sup>1</sup>- <https://openclipart.org/detail/273351/yemen-map-flag>



## Background

The Republic of Yemen, a developing country with a current population of over 27 million people, is located in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula. It is estimated to be double the size of the US State of Wyoming. Yemen's demarcated land border is contiguous with Saudi Arabia and Oman. In terms of geographic and demographic proportions in comparison with its immediate neighbors in the Gulf, Yemen is the second largest country on the peninsula in both dimensions. However, Yemen retains the highest birth rate in the Gulf; and it also retains the more fertile environment or climate with a mixed topography whose vast potential for abundant agricultural development, natural resources exploration & extraction, tourism growth, etc., has not been adequately invested.

Moreover, *Yemen's place on the globe is special and singularly significant.* Yemen is a country not only with a coastline and territories spanning from the Red Sea, through the Arabian Sea and reaching into the Indian Ocean; but Yemen also retains a sui generis geophysical location of paramount importance to the world being next to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, one of the most vital crossings for maritime traffic and trade with access to and from the Mediterranean Sea – and is the gateway to the Gulf of Aden which leads to East Africa, the Arab Gulf, all of Asia and beyond.



Indeed, Yemen also has the second longest coastline in the Gulf region. Yemen's seashore is merely a short leap across from Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia at the Horn of Africa. However, only Yemen straddles multiple nautical fronts and is positioned strategically with a transcontinental reach for shipping lanes and naval vessels unlike any other country in the Middle East & North Africa region.

Yemen is also endowed with navigationally convenient and natural deep sea harbors, especially the city of Aden in southern Yemen, that has been one of the busiest seaports in the world; *and on the western part of Yemen can be found the port of Al-Mokha (المocha) whose name is the origin for Mocha coffee*, which has been cultivated in the surrounding areas and is recognized as being the first internationally traded coffee around the world. Before the introduction of coffee plants to other parts of the world, Yemen was long the exclusive source for its commercial global distribution – from Al-Mokha.<sup>3</sup>

The Romans had referred to Yemen as Arabia Felix (Latin: "Fortunate Arabia") to distinguish it from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula which retains immense swaths of forbidding deserts and a harshly arid climate. By contrast, Yemen's ecological milieu is diverse. Yemen is blessed with areas of rich vegetation and verdant landscapes manifested from the higher levels of precipitation in contrast to the surrounding region of the Peninsula, and whose varied terrain also reaches higher levels of elevation more than its neighboring countries. Indeed, the city of Sanaa has an elevation of 7500ft and experiences multiple monsoon rains during the year. Whereas to the south, in the city of Aden, it is only 20ft above sea level and its resplendent bay & beaches are perennially sun drenched.

SANAA<sup>4</sup>



ADEN<sup>5</sup>



Yet, in spite of its historic felicity associated moniker, Yemen has been beset by economic, political and domestic challenges throughout its modern history that have beleaguered its government and society, fostering the attention and assistance of the international community (including the United States). Unfortunately, and due to multifarious influences, Yemen has become victim to both internal and external factors that have compelled the region (and the world at large) to dedicate resources as well as to devote other recourses to endeavor at resolving preeminent concerns (especially recently, as will be addressed later in this report).

3- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen>

4- Photo of Sanaa: <https://www.dreamstime.com/royalty-free-stock-photo-sanaa-capital-yemen-image13754075>

5- Photo of Aden: <http://nationalyemen.com/201416/02//endless-tales-of-aden-city/>

## Yemen's Economy

Yemen's economy historically has been divergent between North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic – YAR); and South Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Southern Yemen – PDRY). It was only after unification of the two states in 1990 that a seminal transformation took place, integrating two economies and commercial traditions with antithetical dogmas into a holistic and harmonized structure with an economic policy orientation (monetary & fiscal) that fully embraced the free market or capitalist system.

Post-unification, any vestiges of the controlled economy of South Yemen (PDRY) was eliminated whose centralized economic planning and socialist practices had limited economic growth and deterred foreign direct investment – although the PDRY had achieved much more profound advancements in the domain of education and social development.

Notwithstanding Yemen's underdeveloped predicament at the time of its bilateral merger, Yemen's new government remained steadfast in its commitment in the direction of reform even with the reverberations produced to the overall economy and society from its formative nature – and also in the face of the political and financial repercussions from the Gulf War (1990 – 1991) with the expulsion of over one million Yemeni expatriates working in the GCC countries. Consequently, this terminated a major source of income and revenue generation through remittances to Yemen (which was a collective shock that stressed its economic system early on and, at the time, strained regional governments relations).

Moreover, in spite of the substantial domestic political disputes that nearly severed the country back to its former two states (which in 1994 culminated in an short-lived internecine conflict between northern and southern aligned forces respectively), over the years Yemen has continued to pursue notable structural adjustment reforms and to embark on economic support packages from the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assist with its development and to be eligible for additional aid packages in the form of grants or concessional loans from these and other global institutions. The latter actions also made its economy further modernized and integrated with the rest of the world.

Meanwhile the United Nations, USAID and other donors or stakeholders have long been engaged in Yemen in the spheres of poverty alleviation, education, health, water, and other related development projects & programs, to help improve conditions with the assortment of Yemen's chronic economic, social and infrastructure challenges.

Indeed, Yemen remains one of the impoverished countries in the world and even among those in the designated category of low-income countries. In Yemen, GDP per capita in 2015 was slightly over \$1600. It was and over \$1400 in 2014. Yemen ranks 154th out of 185 countries in terms of GDP per capita (which even at purchasing power parity is only \$2,600) according to the WB/IMF.<sup>6</sup> In Yemen, 73 percent of the population lives in rural areas, where most are employed in agriculture and herding.

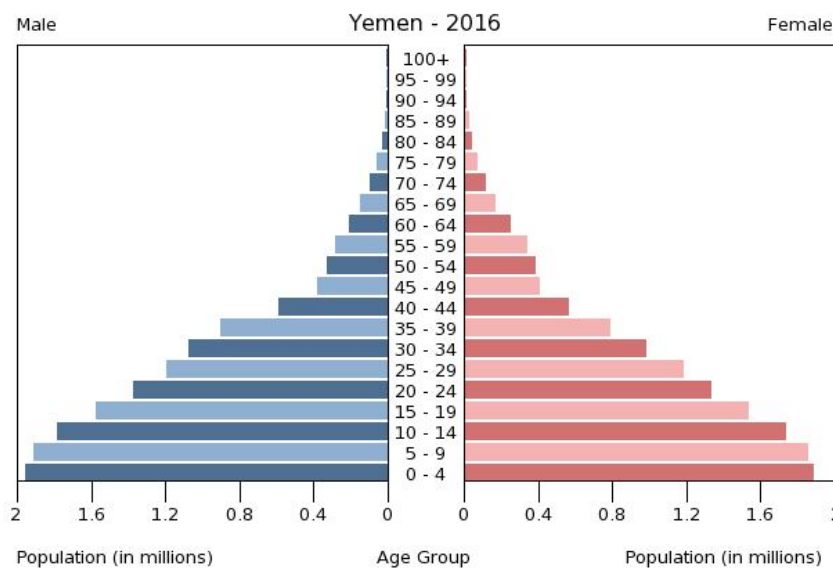
6- «GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)», World Development Indicators database, World Bank. Database updated on 16 December 2016.



Poverty levels are high, with 45 percent of the population living on less than \$2 per day.<sup>7</sup>

According to Yemeni Government statistics, the pre-conflict unemployment rate stood at over 40%, with the youth unemployment rate also bloated at over 40%, incorporating both those at the working ages who are unemployed and underemployed. Similarly, Yemen's overall youth population (under age 14) accounts for over 40% of the total demographic figure of 27.5 million, which has tremendous ramifications for the future of Yemen. Indeed, if Yemen's inveterate unemployment issues are not moderated, and if the job market is not mitigated to be conducive to creating more opportunities for its enormous youth and growing adult population, this will portend grave concerns for Yemen's future.

Yemen Population Pyramid<sup>8</sup>



In terms of certain elements of trade, Yemen is a net importer of all major products and other categories, but especially in food and livestock. Yemen imports more than 75 percent of its main dietary staple (i.e., wheat) as well as other basic agricultural goods and supplies. Yemen exports petroleum and liquefied natural gas; and prior to the current conflict in Yemen, the government drew 70% of its revenues from its hydrocarbon sector (oil and gas). However, unless there are new discoveries, its current oil and gas reserves are finite. The remainder of government proceeds were attained from sources emanating from fisheries exports, local agriculture production, tourism and domestic taxes & levies. Furthermore, Yemen has continued to face significant pressures from key multilateral institutions to implement further economic reforms to garner additional international financial support (most notably reducing food and fuel subsidies). Yet despite attempting to realize the recommended restructurings to the economy in tandem with better utilizing its notable oil and gas resources, reaching tangible results has been elusive. Yemen's economy has continued to perform insufficiently to support its people and to engender the wherewithal to address the basic challenges that have plagued Yemen's development.

On another matter, it cannot be denied that corruption has been a challenge in Yemen. Corruption is of course, an ubiquitous phenomenon and one that is observed at a practical level by distinguished

7- US Embassy in Yemen: <https://yemen.usembassy.gov/econgrow.html>

8- CIA World Factbook

independent organizations, such as Transparency International. Indeed, corruption in Yemen has been great in scale and in scope, which has accumulated from the over thirty years of power and the colossal lattice of patronage that was cultivated by ex-President Saleh.

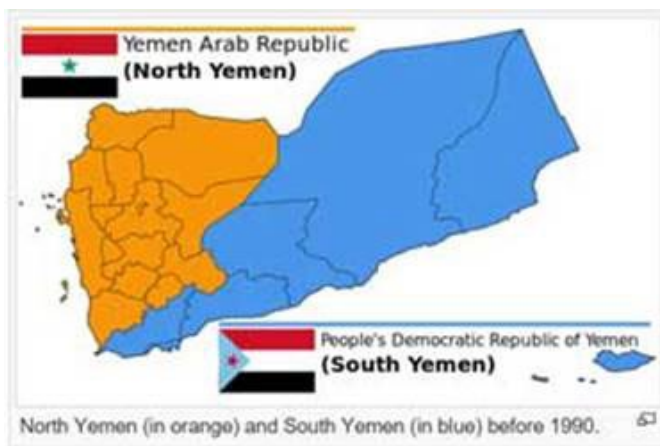
Nonetheless, the scourge of corruption has not received a blind eye by Yemen's government, which has been attempting to tackle the problem incessantly for a number of years – including with the establishment a government body called the Supreme National Authority for Combatting Corruption (SNACC) – whose mere existence and anti-corruption efforts has been a positive development. However, SNACC and other agencies will have to be abundantly empowered in order to effectively address the sundry aspects to corruption; and in order to alter the pervasive culture and deleterious effects that corruption has wreaked on Yemen's economy.

Going forward, having already been deemed a developing economy and lagging behind in a vast array of indicators, Yemen's economy will have to undergo the important modifications crucial for enhancing its economic future both at the macro & micro level; and to be properly rehabilitated from the trauma that it has recently endured from the devastating conflict. The prospects for such an outcome must be viewed through an optimistic prism and whose light must be shed on the range of facets to Yemen's economy – in addition to those dimensions concerning recovery and reconstruction. Over time, *Yemen must become less a locus for foreign interventions and become more a lynchpin for foreign investments.*

(For a further overview of Yemen's economy, please refer to the following Embassy Report: *"Economy of Yemen: Background, Challenges and Key Issues"*)<sup>9</sup>

## Politics & Government in Yemen

The Republic of Yemen was established on May 22, 1990 with the unification of the YAR and PDRY at the denouement of the Cold War. A dichotomy of political systems had merged together. Although the two states had been diametrically opposed ideologically, have had outbreaks of bilateral hostilities, and disparate permutations of development, they were able to finesse any outstanding differences to find common ground and to pave a new collective destiny – similar to East and West Germany, which had also accomplished an all-encompassing union later in the same year on October 1, 1990.



Previous Bifurcate Geopolitical Map of Yemen<sup>10</sup>



Flag of the Republic of Yemen (1990 to Present)<sup>11</sup>

9- Embassy of Yemen Report: <http://www.yemenembassy.org/wp-content/uploads/201702/Final-Eco.pdf>

10- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen)

11- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Yemen)

After agreeing on the new miscellaneous makeup of the new Yemen's political system, it has taken the shape of a presidential-parliamentary republic enshrined in a constitution that provides for a President who is the head of state; while the Prime Minister, appointed by the President, is the head of government. However, Executive power is exercised by the President.

Yemen's Cabinet contains 30 Ministries, that are led by Yemen's Prime Minister to manage the day-to-day government operations and to formulate the country's economic, foreign, defense & security, legal, social and domestic policies. Yemen's government includes some specialized ministries dedicated to matters or concerns important to Yemen's government including individual ministries for Fisheries, Tourism, Human Rights, Water, Higher Education, Planning & International Cooperation, etc..

In Yemen, the Presidential term is for 7 years (like in France). The Parliament's term is 6 years (similar to the US Senate); and members of the Supreme Judicial Council are also appointed for fixed terms by the President who exercise their adjudicative role within a federated system. The Judiciary is independent and whose legal foundations are rooted from various eastern & western codes of jurisprudence, but most notably from Islamic Law.

The Legislative powers are consigned to the House of Representatives of Parliament with 301 seats known as the "Majlis al-Nowab" (مجلس النواب), whose members are directly elected by popular vote through universal suffrage; and a Senate, called the "Majlis al-Shoura" (مجلس الشورى) also exists with 221 seats, but that serves exclusively in an advisory capacity for the Government whose members are appointed by the President. Yemen retains a vibrant multi-party system with over 30 parties officially registered. However, in Yemen, as in some other multi-party parliamentary systems, certain parties have tended to dominate the political scene (similar to the PRI party in Mexico), which for Yemen has been the General People's Congress (GPC). Nevertheless, in some instances, particular affinities have transcended party affiliations, with coalitions joining together for purposes of the passage of legislation or to achieve other political objectives in the normal course parliamentary activities.

The current President, His Excellency Mr. Abdo Rabu Mansour Hadi, has been in office since 2012, mandated to power by popular vote that has been widely acknowledged to be free & fair, replacing the erstwhile and long-time President Ali Abdullah Saleh – whose transition had forged the path for the first peaceful transfer of power in Yemen's modern political history under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism (as will also be noted later).



*President of Yemen: Mr. Abdo Rabu Mansour Hadi*

*President Hadi and his Cabinet is the sole internationally recognized and legitimate government of the Republic of Yemen that has been accepted and accredited by unanimous consensus among the community of nations and global entities around the world – and the latter status has only been fortified since the coup was perpetrated by the Houthi/Saleh forces on September 21, 2014.*

## **Friendly Yemen-US Bilateral Relations**

Indeed, official relations between Yemen and the United States date back to the 1940s, and they are characterized as warm, cooperative, and respectful. The United States was one of the first governments to recognize and to establish diplomatic relations with the nascent North Yemen in 1946; and the US also initially engaged ties in South Yemen in 1967. On May 22, 1990 North Yemen and South Yemen united to form one country, the Republic of Yemen. Over the years, both prior to and after unification, US-Yemeni relations have continued to evolve positively and to deepen amicably. They have included high level official visits on a bipartisan level from various US Administrations – including from the Honorable George H.W. Bush (as Vice-President) in 1986; to the Honorable Hillary Clinton (as Secretary of State) in 2011.





Reciprocally, there have been numerous official visits to the USA by Yemen's Presidents and senior cabinet officials that have strengthened bilateral relations and which have solidified mutual understanding and cooperation, facilitated in acquiring US development aid and security related assistance – and in realizing shared political, military and commercial national interests.



*The current Yemeni Government is fully engaged with the new Administration of President Donald J. Trump, and it is continuing its outreach and sustaining its communications with the US Congress through its Embassy in Washington, DC to bolster existing ties, to forge new links and to further deepen US-Yemen bilateral relations.*

It is worth mentioning that the Honorable Mr. Rex Tillerson is the first US Secretary of State to have ever visited Yemen or spent extended periods of time in Yemen prior to being appointed to such a position. Hence, he is very acquainted with its people and politics. The Government of the Republic of Yemen looks forward to its interactions with Secretary Tillerson and the rest of President Trump's Administration consistent with established (and any forthcoming) shared national interests with foreign policy engagements held firmly together with the bonds of friendship.

## **The Views of the US Congress on Yemen**

*“For a long-time, I have been urged to make this journey and see Yemen for myself. In recent years, two staff members in my office have visited your country. They told me of the warmth of the Yemeni people. They briefed me on your country's challenges and the need for international partners to provide support. Now I am here, and I look forward to working with you all as a partner to build a stronger relationship between our countries”.*

(Excerpt from remarks given at the US Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen by the Honorable Ms. Betty McCOLLUM, US Congresswoman (D) from Minnesota – February 19, 2011)<sup>12</sup>



*“Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to the recent parliamentary elections in Yemen. The Congress doesn't often pay attention to Yemen, but what transpired there on April 27 was impressive. In a country that recently experienced civil war, that is one of the poorest countries on Earth, and that is in a part of the world where elections are not the norm, Yemen's electoral experience is worth noting. On the spectrum of elections in the Arab world, these elections were perhaps the most positive outcome ever.”*

<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>- Photo of Congresswoman Betty McCollum: <https://www.congress.gov/member/betty-mccollum/M001143>

<sup>13</sup>- US Embassy in Yemen Press Release: <https://yemen.usembassy.gov/mvy.html>

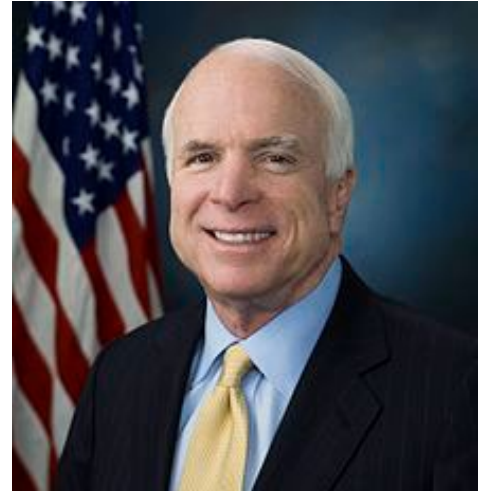
<sup>14</sup>- Photo of former Congressman Lee Hamilton: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/lee-h-hamilton>

(Excerpt from remarks on the Floor of the House of Representatives affirmed by the Honorable Mr. Lee HAMILTON, former US Congressman (D) from Indiana – May 13, 1997)<sup>15</sup>

*“An alternative Middle East strategy must also include a greatly enhanced effort to build the capacity of security forces across the region. . . . One bright spot is actually Yemen, which is engaged in a promising restructuring of its armed forces and internal security units and are conducting a national dialogue. In Yemen, for example, where a managed transition is proving more successful thus far than many could have expected, we must continue to provide assistance as requested.”*

16

(Excerpt from remarks given at the Brookings Institution by the Honorable Senator Mr. John McCain (R) from Arizona – June 6, 2013)<sup>17</sup>



*The aforementioned statements are a merely a select snapshot of the positive perceptions that have been viewed in the US Congress towards Yemen over the years. Indeed, there is a reservoir of bi-partisan and bi-cameral goodwill that exists for Yemen emanating from the US Congress. While there may be a preponderance of public statements critical of Yemen affirmed by Members of Congress, Government Officials, Experts, etc., that tends to drown out other communications due to salient concerns or circumstances affecting Yemen – in particular terrorism related threats from Al-Qaeda potentially impinging on US national security – it is important to note and to remind those working in the corridors of the US Congress and Government of the more propitious observations that have merited notice and inspired their countenance by Members of Congress for the public record.*

Moreover, it is especially gratifying to bear witness to favorable public declarations asserted from Members of Congress about Yemen because heretofore they have been relatively infrequent even though Yemen's government and people retain a long & good political standing with the US Government and American people.

Indeed, there are significant numbers of Yemeni-Americans living in prominent communities in various States, particularly in California, Illinois, Michigan, and New York with others scattered throughout the United States of America. There is even a significant Yemeni community that has emerged in the surrounding areas of Washington, DC. *As these constituencies throughout the USA deepen their engagement with their Member of Congress, it is hoped that the respective Representative will be more encouraged to entertain making more positive public comments about Yemen and to be willing to convey such remarks visibly and volubly.*

15- US Government Publishing Office: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GREC-199713-05-/pdf/GREC-199713-05-pt1-PgE8973-.pdf>

16- Photo of Senator John McCain: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_McCain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_McCain)

17- US Senate: <https://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/20136/post-1ad6cfa7-d60b-34294-c0505-f255ffbad2>

## Youth Revolution and Political Developments

*“After more than 33 years in power in Yemen, the President of Yemen was forced to resign from office in early 2012 as a result of the rising tide of a pro-democracy movement in Yemen. Since that time, Yemen has been in a period of political transition as the Yemeni people attempt to draft a new constitution, implement new electoral laws and move toward a more inclusive governing body by implementing a National Dialogue process.”*

(Excerpt from remarks by the Honorable Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R) from Florida, US Congresswoman and Chair of Subcommittee on the Middle East & North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs)<sup>18</sup>

The events that led to the Youth Revolution in 2011 were originally fomented almost two decades prior stemming from the ardent disgruntlement of the southern Yemenis defeat in the 1994 civil war, and the subsequent imbued negative perceptions that permeated the masses towards the government controlled by ex-President Saleh. For many in the South, that marked the period in which they absolutely lost trust and confidence in the central government in Sanaa and a movement in the south called Al-Hirak (الحراك) had spawned.

However, despite efforts to besmirch Al-Hirak's reputation for acts of political recusancy and resistance (for being allegedly linked to external powers aiming to redivide Yemen), in 2007, they had officially formed and had established a full scale recognition for their secessionist agenda calling for the resurgence of a separate and independent South Yemen (as evidenced in the PDRY prior to unification in 1990). Over the years, the Al-Hirak movement had evolved, grown and had been systematically targeted by President Saleh and the coterie of loyalists in his regime writ large.

Indeed, this movement was also an expression against the many injustices and legitimate grievances against the central government after the 1994 civil due to the systematic marginalization, blatant discriminations and other recriminations undertaken by President Saleh – including with expropriation of lands and the unfair distribution of wealth from the oil and other commercial resources which are located in the south of Yemen.

However, life was not any easier for many people in the north as well. The combination of corruption, bad governance and the lack of development left many in the north, as well as in the south, in a vicious circle of poverty.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a broad range of overwhelming socio-economic shortcomings had reached its peak, which in turn elicited the pique of the people.

In January 2011, shortly after the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, people (especially the youth) took to the streets to protest their grievances. People from everywhere in Yemen joined in (including the Houthis, among others). People at that time sympathized with the Houthis. They regarded them as a movement from the northern parts of Yemen which was targeted by the old regime for many years (from 2004 to 2010).<sup>20</sup>

18- Congressional Hearing: “US Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula”. Subcommittee for the Middle East & North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, First Session, November 19, 2013 Serial No. 113–84

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg85640/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg85640.pdf>

19- Embassy of Yemen Report: “Yemen's Crisis and Threatened Transition”, p. 2

20- Ibid., p.,2

After months of sit-ins and many sacrifices, and the country on the verge of another a civil war, and with the intervention of our neighbors, the Yemeni people on the November 23, 2011 found a way out through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism. The final signing and acceptance of this Initiative was achieved despite the former president Saleh many attempts to delay it.<sup>21</sup>

The people embraced the GCC Initiative as a means to a way out and a medium to a new beginning for Yemen that put an end to Saleh's 33-year rule. The Initiative superseded the constitution and provided for a transitional period of two phases. Phase one was forming a national unity government and electing a new president (something that no one has ever seen happen in Yemen before). And phase two consisted of conducting an all-inclusive National Dialogue Conference (NDC), drafting a new constitution, and finally setting the stage for general parliament and presidential elections in accordance with the new constitution.<sup>22</sup>

## National Dialogue Conference

*"Following the deposition of Yemen's long time autocratic ruler Saleh in 2011, the U.S. supported an inclusive transition process, via national dialogue, into rebuilding the country's political and governmental institutions and bridging gaps between groups that have had a long history of conflict". And while the national dialogue was initially viewed as successful, the process concluded in 2014 with several key reforms still not completed, including the drafting of a new constitution. The Hadi government had continued to face deep opposition for Yemen's northern tribes, mainly the Shiite Iranian-backed Houthi rebels."*

(Excerpt from remarks by the Honorable Mr. Ted Deutch (D) from Florida, US Congressman and Ranking Member of Subcommittee on the Middle East & North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs)<sup>23</sup>

The NDC was successfully concluded in January 2014—after 10 months of deliberating—during which even the most vulnerable marginalized groups that had no say what so ever in the past were included. The conference eventually adopted 1800 outcomes in all major issues. 565 delegates (20% youth; 30% women; and 50% from the south) discussed and debated for months nine major issues including the southern question and the Sadda issue (the Houthis' case). A new constitution was in the drafting process by an all-inclusive committee created in March 2014.<sup>24</sup>

Yemen's partners and cosponsoring countries referred to the Yemeni transition as a success story and cited the Initiative as an exemplary method to be followed by others in the region. Yemen was on the road to a new federal democratic state, one that not only would have fulfilled the people's aspirations for change, but also would have safeguarded the principles of the 1962 and 1963 revolutions as well. Yemenis were so full of hope as they witnessed history in the making and discovered a future's silver lining worth fighting for.<sup>25</sup>

21- Ibid., p. 2

22- Ibid., p. 2

23- Congressional Hearing: "Yemen Under Attack by Iranian Backed Houthis". Subcommittee for the Middle East & North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. One Hundred Fourteenth Congress, First Session, April 14, 2015, 2013 Serial No. 114-32

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg94179/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg94179.pdf>

24- Embassy of Yemen Report: "Yemen's Crisis and Threatened Transition", p. 2

25- Ibid., pp. 2 – 3



## The Coup and Aftermath

*“The tragedy of the current situation is that the political process that the Yemenis established in 2011 was achieving success and they had reason to believe that it would lead to a more open, democratic, and prosperous nation that was the goal of the Yemeni people. Regrettably, that transition has been sidetracked by the Houthi movement, aided and abetted by Ali Abdallah Saleh and his allies, who decided that they would seek to achieve by force what they had been unable to accomplish at the negotiating table.”*

(Excerpt from Statement given by the Honorable Mr. Gerald M. Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, US Department of State)<sup>26</sup>

Iran has found a proxy in Yemen with the Houthis, who along with their rebel affiliates situated in the upper northern parts of Yemen and allied with renegade army forces still loyal to former President Saleh, usurped power by overthrowing the legitimately elected government of President Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi in September 2014. They also sabotaged the implementation of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes and the realization of a new constitution that is constructive and conducive to more modern legal institutions and structures for good governance – and which would allow for the burgeoning of civil society in Yemen and further advancements in the dynamics of democracy. After months of fighting in Amran governorate (only 40 km north of the capital), the following month, the Houthis shifted their attention and focus towards the capital. On September 21, 2014, the Houthis with the assistance of forces loyal to Saleh staged a military coup and took over the capital city of Sanaa. President Hadi (at that time) sought to deescalate at any cost to preserve the people’s many achievements & sacrifices and agreed to form a new government with the consent of the Houthis to finish the successful transition period and forge a new Yemen as stipulated in the Initiative. However, the Houthis kept escalating and thwarting the transition process. They knew quite well that if a genuine political democratic process was to start, they would lose what they have gained by force.<sup>27</sup>

On January 17, 2015, the Houthis kidnapped the Secretary General of the NDC & Chief of Staff of President Hadi, along with the first draft of the long-awaited new constitution to prevent its consideration. Two days later, on January 19, 2015, the President and the new Cabinet were under house arrest by the Houthis. Three days later the President and the Cabinet resigned in protest. The Houthis, then, besieged the Parliament because they knew that it would, by the virtue of the constitution, be in control of the country. After that, and in less than a month, the Houthis abolished the Parliament altogether and announced what they called a “constitutional declaration” that put a “revolutionary committee” in charge of the whole country; hence, completely halting the transitional period.

On February 15, 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2201 denounced the coup and “strongly deplore[d] actions taken by the Houthis to dissolve parliament and take over Yemen’s government institutions, including acts of violence....” On February 21, 2015, President Hadi managed to escape from Sanaa to Aden where he later rescinded his resignation.

26- Congressional Hearing: “Yemen Under Attack by Iranian Backed Houthis”. Subcommittee for the Middle East & North Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. One Hundred Fourteenth Congress, First Session, April 14, 2015, 2013 Serial No. 114–32, p. 9

27- Embassy of Yemen Report: “Yemen’s Crisis and Threatened Transition”, p. 3

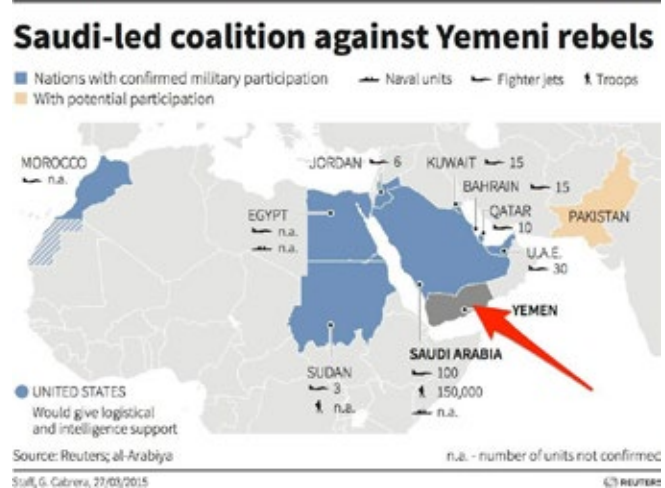
The Houthis and Saleh continued their aggression and ignored the call of the international community. In one year alone, from December 2014 till December 2015, there were 8458 people arbitrary detained including activists and journalists by the Houthis; 389 residential houses were demolished only because they belong to their opponents; 1077 cases of torture; and 2706 enforced disappearances perpetrated by the so called revolutionary committees. The Houthis and Saleh's forces even followed the President to Aden and used the national air force to target the presidential palace there. In March 2015, President Hadi was forced to move to Saudi Arabia after he had formally called for assistance from the GCC leaders including through a military intervention as a last resort. The Arab coalition forces led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on March 26, 2015, came and responded to the President's plea.

(For a more on Yemen's recent political dynamics, please refer to the following Embassy Report: *"Yemen's Crisis and Threatened Transition"*)

## Military Intervention in Yemen

On March 26, 2015, at the request of Yemen's President (who was forced to flee the country at the time after having been first besieged in the Capital in Sanaa at the onset of the coup on September 21, 2014 and placed under house arrest, who subsequently managed to escape to Aden in February 2015), a coalition led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched military airstrikes against Houthi militia and forces allied with and loyal to former President Saleh in a campaign called Operation "Decisive Storm" (عاصفة الحزم).

Notwithstanding the lexical semantics for the military operation, what is indisputable is the resoluteness of the international alliance to defeat the Houthi-Saleh forces that have also been receiving the material & military backing from the State of Iran. *Iran has been proving all forms of support. They are arming, training, financing and guiding the Houthis* who along with army, security and intelligence services units still loyal to former President Saleh had instigated the coup.<sup>28</sup>



In the current phase of the war called Operation "Restoring Hope" (إعادة الأمل) underway since April 21, 2016,<sup>29</sup> decisive victories have been achieved affording the Government of Yemen control of over 80% of Yemen's territory. Most recently, the port city of Al-Mokha was liberated; and the city of Aden had successfully rid of the Houthi-Saleh forces in July 2015, which has subsequently allowed for Yemen's Government to return therein – and to have an epicenter for government day-to-day functions (as will be highlighted later in this report).

28- <http://www.businessinsider.com/members-of-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen-their-contributions-2015->

29- sometimes incorrectly translated as Operation "Renewal of Hope"

Indeed, the Houthi-Saleh and allied forces no longer control the preponderance of Yemen's territory (as shown in the map below). The Houthi-Saleh forces are currently relegated to central and western parts of Yemen but they are being methodically encircled and encumbered. It may appear that the Houthi-Saleh forces are firmly ensconced in Sanaa and the surrounding regions. However, as Government forces and the Alliance continue to strangle the Houthis-Saleh forces, they will struggle to sustain their grip of control – and especially since the people living under their vicious clasp have begun to exhibit rumblings against their brutal governance and to decry the economic failures that they have begotten.

Territorial Control Map of Yemen



## Role of US Government in Current Conflict in Yemen

As announced at the time on the White House Website:

*The United States strongly condemns ongoing military actions taken by the Houthis against the elected government of Yemen. These actions have caused widespread instability and chaos that threaten the safety and well-being of all Yemeni citizens. The United States has been in close contact with President Hadi and our regional partners. In response to the deteriorating security situation, Saudi Arabia, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, and others will undertake military action to defend Saudi Arabia's border and to protect Yemen's legitimate government. As announced by GCC members earlier tonight, they are taking this action at the request of Yemeni President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi.*

*The United States coordinates closely with Saudi Arabia and our GCC partners on issues related to their security and our shared interests. In support of GCC actions to defend against Houthi violence, President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC-led military operations. While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support. At the same time, the United States continues to closely monitor terrorist threats posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and will continue to take action as necessary to disrupt continuing, imminent threats to the United States and our citizens.*

*We strongly urge the Houthis to halt immediately their destabilizing military actions and return to negotiations as part of the political dialogue. The international community has spoken clearly through the UN Security Council and in other fora that the violent takeover of Yemen by an armed*

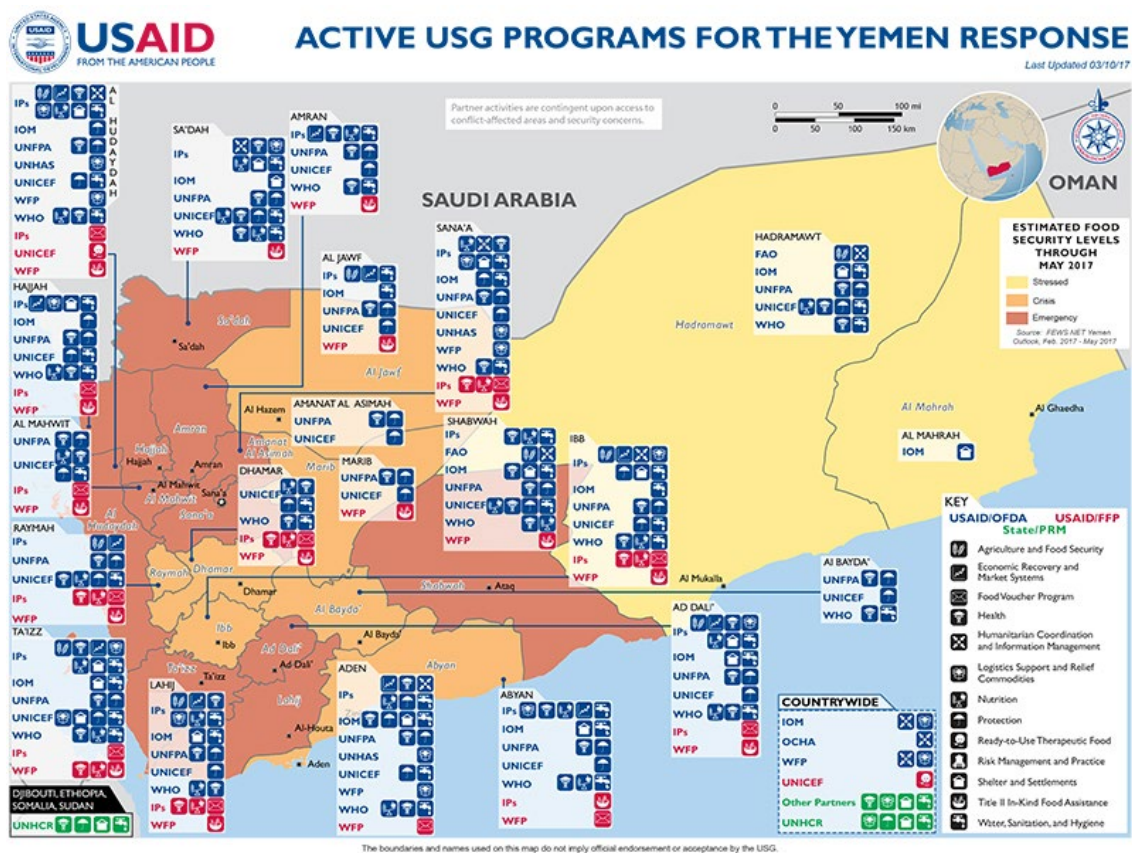


*faction is unacceptable and that a legitimate political transition – long sought by the Yemeni people – can be accomplished only through political negotiations and a consensus agreement among all of the parties.<sup>30</sup>*

Thus, the United States has taken a supportive role concerning its vital interests in the region by protecting its longstanding allies in the Gulf – which by extension includes helping to liberate Yemen from the clutches of the Putschists as embodied in the Houthis (who have been determined irrefutably are aided & abetted by Iran in addition to forces loyal to former President Saleh).

The United States Government is supporting the Alliance to help protect Saudi Arabia's territory, to protect its foreign policy interests in a manner compatible with its regional allies' considerations – and to help regain a modicum of stability in Yemen. This requires continuing to assist President Hadi's Government with the Alliance to purge the Houthi-Saleh forces from those areas still under unlawful occupation by those militias and military units controlled by the Houthi-Saleh forces – and to ultimately, restore the rightful dominion of Yemen's legitimate government in all of Yemen.

On another dimension, the United States has been largest Western donor of humanitarian relief to Yemen during this conflict leading or partnering together with other multilateral agencies. The US Government has dedicated over 400 million dollars towards emergency aid in light of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the coup and the conflict.



31

30- Obama White House Archives: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/statement-nsc-spokesperson-bernadette-meehan-situation-yemen>

31- <http://reliefweb.int/map/yemen/yemen-active-usg-programs-yemen-response-last-updated-031017>



## Yemeni Government Countermeasures

### • Relocation of Capital and Government Institutions

It is still constitutionally codified that Sanaa is the de jure capital of the Yemen, and wherein all domestic and foreign government bodies are supposed to be headquartered. However, in light of the occupation of Sanaa by the Houthi-Saleh forces and the mismanagement to the normal functions of government institutions that they have carried out, this has obliged the Government to exercise emergency contingencies or countermeasures – including by taking the extraordinary step to make Aden the de facto capital of Yemen until Sanaa is sooner or later liberated – and barring any further eventualities from the conflict that may alter the fate of Sanaa with further determinations and/or other designations on the final official location of Yemen's capital.

In the meantime, the Presidency, all Ministries, Agencies and Authorities of Government are now operating from Aden (what used to be labeled Yemen's "economic & commercial capital"). Aden was formerly the capital of the PDRY prior to unification with the YAR whose capital was Sanaa. The move to Aden is also intended to demonstrate the inviolability to Yemen's unity and to restore the integrity of the government's political, legal, financial and social institutions.

### • Yemen's Parliament

Indeed, *Yemen's legislative body or Parliament has been relocated to Aden (until further notice), and the Embassy of Yemen in Washington, DC has officially informed the US Congress to this effect* via the Office of the Speaker, the Honorable Mr. Paul Ryan; and via the Office of the Senate Pro Tempore, the Honorable Mr. Orrin Hatch, affirming the following in the letter to the US Congress:

*"I would like to take this opportunity to also announce to you and to officially apprise the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate of the new and important decision taken by my government, effective immediately, for the relocation of the Parliament of the Republic of Yemen to the city of Aden from its present location in Sanaa, which is currently occupied by the Iranian-backed Houthi militias and armed forces loyal to former President Saleh. This is a significant development (as noted in Presidential Decree No. 19 for 2017 dated January 28, 2017) made by the legitimate and internationally recognized government of Yemen in the interest of supporting the normalization of the government's operations and the unfettered functioning of Parliament – whose Members in the erstwhile headquarters' location had faced personal threats and harassments for their political stances or views from the aforementioned groups, and which had precluded them from executing their constitutionally afforded and democratically elected duties."*<sup>32</sup>

### • Central Bank of Yemen

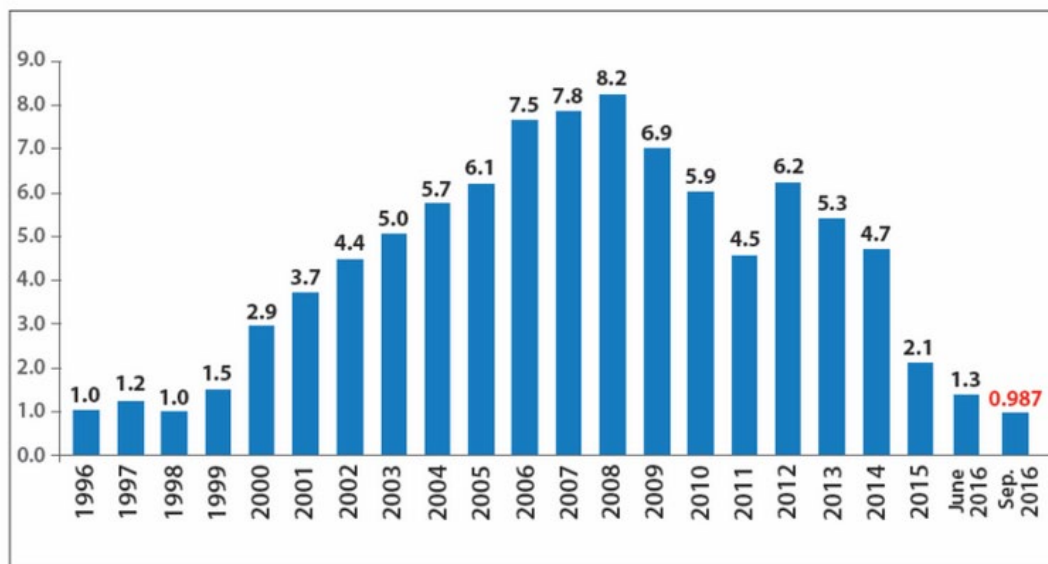
Prior to the coup, the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) had managed to preserve its balance sheet. In fact, foreign exchange net reserves were held at 5 billion US dollars at the beginning of 2013. However, reserves had fallen precipitously to nearly 600 million US dollars of net reserves by September 2016 (exactly two years from the start of the coup). Consequently, this had a corrosive effect on the public's faith in the government's fiduciary management of the banking system, thus ostensibly rendering the CBY incapable of continuing to perform its essential functions from Sanaa with the overriding presence of the Houthi militia, whose coercive role was undermining the integrity of the CBY.

32- Extract from the Ambassador of Yemen's official correspondence to the US Congress (dated January 30, 2017)

With the aforementioned background, along with the continued and unsustainable pecuniary conditions and the anticipated scenario of a calamitous outcome, in September 2016, *President Hadi took the courageous and highly prudent decision to relocate the CBY from Sanaa to Aden. This was executed in order to circumvent a total collapse of Yemen's banking system and to rescue the CBY from the detrimental hold of the Houthi militia* – whose institutional subjugation had plummeted Yemen's preciously limited foreign exchange reserves in order to fund their grossly gratuitous war efforts.

Furthermore, before the decision to relocate the CBY, the Houthis interference and compulsory policies on the CBY led to the depletion of banknote reserves, even reaching the point where the bank was strapped for cash leading to deficiencies in liquidity preventing the payment of salaries to the public sector since June 2016.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, the contraction of the CBY's foreign exchange reserves was no abstraction. This was a material manifestation that has been thoroughly documented and quantified by key global organizations, such as the IMF. Moreover, the misappropriation of funds and the objectionable modus operandi of the Houthis were tantamount to the actions of armed bank robbers – which is why in this context (among others), it is fitting to call them “*Houthieves*” – for the exploitative nature of their deeds in the CBY and the precarious predicament that they created with their monetary transgressions. The Houthis put the CBY on the precipice of ruin; and their actions would have (at the very least) yielded staggering fiscal pressures and concomitantly, deep compressions on the money flow and deficits to the salary bill.



Source: CBY, 2016.

### Yemen Foreign Exchange Reserves<sup>34</sup>

(For a full update on Yemen's Central Bank, please refer to the following Embassy Report:  
*“Situation Report: Yemen's Public Salary Disbursement Efforts”*)

33- Embassy of Yemen Report: “Economy of Yemen: Background, Challenges and Key Issues”, p.1  
 34- Ibid., p. 1

## US Strategic Partnership with Yemen (Counterterrorism, Security Cooperation, etc.)

The Republic of Yemen has been and continues to be a strategic & stalwart partner of the United States in the fight against global terrorism and violent extremism. The US Government has been closely consulting and collaborating with Yemen for many years to combat terrorist activity that threatens Yemen, the region and the United States – and which has had a causal nexus to Yemen's underlying instability.

It cannot be disputed that Yemen's government has faced terrorism related challenges that have disturbed Yemeni society and that have disconcerted its government as well as the international community. Due to historical lacks in complete central governance; and recently, due to lapses in territorial control in certain locations, such fragilities have ushered in the presence of terrorist groups and violent insurgencies who have taken advantage of ungoverned space while the country's government was in the midst of a sensitive political transition following a revolution – and later from confined power vacuums stemming from the current civil war. This has allowed for these fanatical adherents (who are vehemently spewing a twisted ideology and an appalling misinterpretation of Islam) to find havens to plan and to carry out attacks in Yemen and overseas. Also, these radicals and rebels have married their shared objectives to topple Yemen's government, and they have marred Yemen's image worldwide.

Further to the aforementioned, the Embassy takes this opportunity to affirm that public statements that have been made by purported independent Yemeni analysts (but who are actually clandestinely backing the Houthis and ex-President Saleh) should always be categorically rejected. It has been claimed that the purpose of the Houthis' attack and occupation of Aden (after having already converged on and attacked other parts of Yemen i.e., Al-Hudaydah, Ibb, Al-Jawf, Mareb, Taiz, etc., following the overthrow of the government in Sanaa) was because they went to the southern governorates to allegedly purge terrorist groups such as "DAESH" (داعش). This is a patently preposterous assertion, as it does not conform with universally accepted facts.

The real reason why the Houthis maneuvered their way towards the south was to attempt to take over the entire country after the fall of Sanaa. Similarly, the real reason why ex-President Saleh has allied with the Houthis was to find a means to return to power and to establish a dynasty of succession for his family after ruling Yemen for more than three decades. The Houthis had even used military jets to attack the presidential palace in Aden after President Hadi escaped from Sanaa. The Houthis had shelled the civilian population in Aden with heavy artillery causing major fatalities and destruction. In that vein, they have engaged in the same heinous actions in the city of Taiz and the surrounding areas:

*"Huthi/Saleh violations are the most egregious in the city of Taiz, where their fighters have enforced a full or partial blockade since, with devastating humanitarian consequences. They routinely interfere with the work of humanitarianists, at times demanding the diversion of aid to themselves or denying aid workers access to populations in need, revoking visas or even detaining them. They heavily tax all imports into their areas in part to finance the war effort and also run black market in fuel, enriching military elites while driving prices up for transport of vital commodities."*<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, just as the Houthis had impeded the flow of humanitarian aid to the residents of Aden at the time before its liberation, the Houthis have shamefully rendered the same awful actions on the populations living in and around Al-Hudaydah.<sup>36</sup>

Today, AQAP (i.e., Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula),<sup>37</sup> ISIL/ISIS/DAESH<sup>38</sup> (i.e., Islamic State in all its known delineations) and even Hezbollah (i.e., Party of God in Lebanon) along with other Iranian affiliated groups collaborating with the Houthis<sup>39</sup> are present in Yemen. The sheer presence of all these groups is sufficient to overwhelm even the most developed of countries. Yet Yemen, one of the world's most impoverished states has had to counteract these external and internal elements while being grappled by political turmoil to various proportions in recent years.

However, there is no destitution to Yemen's determination for combating terrorism (whether indigenous in nature or exogenous in origin) so that it is wholly routed and retreated from Yemen's society and territory. In terms of counterterrorism efforts, the Yemeni government's resolve and readiness has been evidently demonstrated to the US Government, and in spite of the current conflict.

Most recently, US military strikes and kinetic raids have been undertaken in Yemen in close cooperation and joint special operations with Yemen's Government to decimate suspected terrorist strongholds of AQAP; and in order to gather any intelligence to thwart any other plans or capacities to harm the United States or its allies.

*The Yemeni Government seeks to continue providing its unflinching support to the United States with the new Administration* as it has done for numerous years with its predecessors to rid Yemen of these malignant groups. Moreover, by maintaining our close consultation and intimate cooperation, we will achieve further successes together and minimize risks to US military personnel and Yemeni security forces. Furthermore, Yemen Government will continue to exert with its regional partners in counterterrorism efforts as has been rendered previously.

In April 2014, the Government launched a massive military campaign against AQAP in both Shabwah and Abyan governorates. However, those efforts were affected when the Houthis started escalating their aggression in Amran governorate leading to their military coup in September of the same year. In April 2015, AQAP exploited the vacuum created by the coup and captured the major port city Al-Mukalla in Hadramaut governorate (the largest governorate in Yemen). Al Qaeda, at that time, was able to raise unprecedented levels of resources by looting banks and extorting fees at the city's port and in the governorate in general.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, in April 2016, the Government and the Arab coalition forces, within a week, were able to recapture Al-Mukalla and defeat what was left of AQAP in the city. From then on, the Government has been sweeping the remaining pockets of Al Qaeda in many governorates (including Aden, Shabwah, and Abyan) and dismantling any other possible safe havens in Yemen.<sup>41</sup>

36- Op Ed: <http://www.newsweek.com/how-houthis-have-provoked-human-disaster-yemen-570957>

37- Al-Qaeda is also known as "Ansar Al-Sharia" (انصار الشريعة) or Supporters of Islamic Law

38- DAESH's presence in Yemen is nugatory compared to the number of fighters from AQAP

39- The Houthis are also known as "Ansar Allah" (انصار الله) or Supporters of Allah

40- Embassy of Yemen Report: "Yemen's Crisis and Threatened Transition", p. 4

41- Ibid., p. 4



## US Support for Yemen: Recent History and Data

From the outset of the present conflict that began in March 2015, the United States has augmented its humanitarian assistance to Yemen while halting virtually all other programs. On February 11, 2015, due to the worsening security state of affairs in Sanaa, the Department of State suspended embassy operations and U.S. Embassy staff were relocated out of the country. Moreover, the United States has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. Funds were provided to international aid organizations from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), USAID's Food for Peace (FFP), and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM).<sup>42</sup>

Table 1: Yemen Humanitarian Response

Account	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016/FY2017
IDA (USAID/OFDA)	14.974	29.574	36.987	34.858	62.029	107.588
FFP (USAID/FFP)	20.200	67.856	75.046	70.000	71.486	264.988
MRA (State/PRM)	22.500	19.738	18.885	8.900	45.300	55.050
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.346</b> (includes .672 from OTI)	<b>117.168</b>	<b>130.919</b>	<b>113.758</b>	<b>178.816</b>	<b>427.626</b>

Source: Yemen, Complex Emergency—USAID Factsheets.

In terms of bilateral assistance to Yemen, U.S. bilateral economic funding supports basic education, maternal health, and agricultural assistance programs. Unfortunately, in light of the situation in Yemen, its allocated military, security assistance directed through the US Departments of State and Defense had also been suspended. Indeed, “in June 2015, the Department of Defense notified Congress that it was redirecting \$45.04 million worth of military equipment (obligated in FY2012, FY2013, and FY2014) to Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon.”<sup>43</sup>

Table 2: U.S. Bilateral Assistance to Yemen: FY2014 – FY2016

(in millions of dollars)

Account	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
ESF	13.000	19.200 (OCO)	29.300 (OCO)
Global Health	9.000	9.000	5.000
FMF	20.0	—	—
IMET	1.109	0.127	—
INCLE	3.000	1.000	1.000 (OCO)
NADR	3.920	3.150	6.000
DoD (1206/2282)	64.000	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>114.029</b>	<b>32.477</b>	<b>41.300</b>

Source: USAID Country Narrative

42 “Yemen: Civil War & Regional Intervention” Jeremy M. Sharp, Specialist on Middle East Affairs, March 21, 2017, p. 16

43- Ibid., p. 16

It is unfortunate that there has not been any Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and the Department of Defense (DoD) appropriations for Yemen over recent years. Indeed, for FY215 and FY2016, the situation had not changed and Yemen has not received any defense, security, or counterterrorism related funding from the US Government. The Embassy has been briefed by the Pentagon, and it has been affirmed that what has stymied the disbursement of funds, most recently, has been the closure of the US Embassy in Yemen – and by extension the absence of US government personnel to be able to coordinate with the Yemeni Government. However, the Embassy hopes that this issue can be resolved and that the US Government will again resume the disbursement of funds for training and supplies for counterterrorism efforts in the order of magnitude received in years past.

*“In 2010, the United States provided an estimated \$179.8 million in training and assistance to Yemen’s key counterterrorism and related law enforcement units. Specifically, through 1206 section funding, DOD has helped build the capacity of Yemen’s military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations with programs that provide training and equipment to Yemen Special Operation Forces, Yemen Coast Guard, Border Security Forces, and the Yemeni Air Force.”<sup>44</sup>*

*“We also know that Yemen faces many resource challenges that negatively impact good governance, the delivery of services, and the effectiveness of the security architecture that is needed to effectively combat terrorism.”<sup>45</sup>*

### **Importance of Foreign Aid to Yemen (economic, development, military, etc.)**

When it comes to Foreign Aid Appropriations for Yemen, they have been enormously important and impactful spanning a broad range of development issues through targeted interventions that are tailored at the local community level. They have covered:

- Education (i.e., Literacy – particularly for females, Trainings, Cultural Exchanges, etc., )
- Health (i.e., Vaccinations, Maternity, Disability, etc., )
- Poverty (i.e., Entrepreneurship, Microfinance, Women’s Empowerment, etc.,)
- Governance (i.e., Aid Effectiveness, etc.,)
- Environment (Clean Water, Agriculture Production & Extension Services, etc.,)

There is a plethora of “success stories” to Yemeni development that have been borne from US Government funding either directly through the US Embassy in Yemen and the US Agency for International Development (USAID); or indirectly under the supervision of the World Bank and the United Nations.<sup>46</sup> *The United States has been able to positively impact countless lives and communal spaces. In more than can be put into words, the people of Yemen are profoundly grateful.*

The focus and trajectory of US development assistance in Yemen can be subsumed into the thematic domain of capacity-building; and this also includes the security sector. Indeed, *providing Yemen with assistance to its military and security apparatus is cohesive to the overarching refrain of “diplomacy, development and defense” that has undergirded US foreign policy engagement.*

44- Excerpt from Testimony Submitted by Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, US Department of State. Hearing on US Policy in Yemen. Senate Subcommittee on Near Eastern, South Asian and Central Asian Affairs. Committee on Foreign Relations, 112th Congress, First Session, July 19, 2011

45- Ibid

46- US Embassy in Yemen: <https://yemen.usembassy.gov/sucsto.html>

Indeed, the latter pursuit has comported with US policy towards Yemen and they have been complementary to positively affecting Yemen's stability. Now, Yemen's needs have been magnified immeasurably due to the cumulative ravages of the conflict, and Yemen will require assistance from the international community that will be sine qua non to its recovery and reconstruction in all development sectors.

## Threats posed by Houthis (global and regional)

The slogan propagated by the Houthis in Yemen states:

*"Allah is Great  
Death to America  
Death to Israel  
Curse be on the Jews  
Victory for Islam"*



47

Such extremist, violent, and malevolent rhetoric is totally deplorable and is categorically repudiated by Yemen's government. Regrettably, this has been wholeheartedly embraced by the Houthis in their propaganda; and they have engaged in brutal practices with ordinary Yemeni citizens with terror and persecution for any dissent or opposition to them. Moreover, such a slogan is inspired and has been proliferated by the Iranians since their 1979 Revolution – and whose affiliates or supporters in the region (such as Hezbollah) have adopted or pursued with the determination to realize in some manner. The Houthi slogan is incontrovertibly anathema to the peaceful values of Islam, and is blatantly contrary to the good will that the people of Yemen harbor towards the United States.

However, the Houthis (as remonstrated in the first line of their slogan) aim to harm the United States; and they have clearly manifested their antagonistic intent by committing belligerent actions against US interests in the region, such as the attack on the US Navy (USS Mason) operating in the Red Sea in October 2016 that was targeted three times in seven days by missiles off the coast of Yemen, and that subsequently invited the appropriate military response from the US Government.

*Let us recall that the USS Cole was attacked in Yemen in October 2000 by Al-Qaeda. Now, the USS Mason was targeted by the Houthis in October 2016. The Houthis have also attacked and penetrated the US Embassy in Yemen.*

Moreover, the Houthis also continue to act as a menace to maritime activity in the region, which threatens international trade. Freedom of navigation and the world's oil transiting via the Bab al-Mandeb strait cannot be put at risk because of the reckless and brazen actions of a militia and the hegemonic ambitions of Iran in the region.



Moreover, it is crucial for the US Congress to know that further to the odious slogan of the Houthis herein mentioned, they have begun to make preparations for the practice of indoctrinating (on an mandatory basis) young children with their revile hatred for the United States and a barefaced antisemitism within the education system for the Yemeni populations residing under the imperium of the Houthis in the areas still controlled by them – which is under the ostensible rubric of a political authority known as the “salvation government” that the Houthis have devised.

It is absolutely reprehensible that the Houthis have considered immersing in their educational methodology & materials, content filled with the detestation for another people and even another fellow Abrahamic religion. Indeed, this contemptible pedagogical consideration will be noticed by the international community.

Furthermore, serious objections should be raised to call for the elimination of this academic curriculum on young children to instruct such teachings (starting at the elementary school level), because it will be terribly injurious to their educational growth and to their overall psychological development.

In addition, allowing for such an outrageous form of inculcation on children by the Houthis will be harmful to US national security in the future because a new generation who will be nurtured who are uncompromisingly antagonistic to the United States and unwaveringly anti-Semitic. Indeed, the specter of this development should raise further alarms to the US Government about the true nature of the Houthis as a régime.

Pro-Houthi/Saleh Rally in Sanaa<sup>48</sup>



48- Photo: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN10W0S2>



## Yemen's Support for Congressional Legislation against Iran

It has been announced that new legislation will be introduced in the US Congress called the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps. (IRGC) Terrorist Designation Act, which will also be sponsored in the Senate by the Honorable Senator Ted Cruz (R – Texas), a Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee; and in the House of Representatives by the Honorable Congressman Michael McCaul (R – Texas), Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security. The Embassy of Yemen in Washington, DC has communicated to the two honorable aforementioned members of Congress on behalf of the Government, its formal and complete support for this legislation against the IRGC – and we hope that it will achieve passage soon in order to apply pressure on Iran to cease its support for the Houthis.

Moreover, there should be language in the legislation to designate the Houthis as one of the terrorist groups supported by the IRGC. Yemen retains a long-standing and close partnership with the US Government in crucial counterterrorism efforts against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and this should now apply to the Houthis. Yemen has been a victim of Iran, not only from its pernicious meddling in our internal affairs, but also in its hostile military & material support for groups that have wreaked havoc in our entire political and security landscape – while also perpetrating serious crimes and human rights violations against the Yemeni population (including against women and children).

*Indeed, it is not in the interests of the Houthis to be potentially designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US Government.* If the Houthis know of the prospect of this legislation, this will apply leverage on the Houthis to abandon its ties with Iran, to disavow its hostilities, to seek peace and to engage as a conventional political organization in Yemen rather than as an unrestrained militia.

## Prospects for Peace in Yemen (Three References, Negotiations, etc.)

Despite the conflict, Yemen's government has demonstrated and continues to aspire for a peaceful, just and conclusive resolution to this conflict. It is firmly hoped that during the 115th Session of the United States Congress, we will finally be able to achieve peace in Yemen and to have a sustainable outcome to begin post-conflict reconstruction, which will buttress post-conflict reconciliation.

However, peace in Yemen will have to be based on the Three References that are the underpinnings to the formulation of any agreement and final settlement to the conflict, namely:

- 1) *The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and Implementation Mechanism*
- 2) *The National Dialogue Conference Outcomes*
- 3) *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216*

Further to the three references, there have already been three attempts at peace talks that have had abortive results due to the intransigence and intractability of the positions held by the Houthis and ex-President Saleh.

In round one in Geneva (June 15-19, 2015), nothing was accomplished. In the second round in Biel of Switzerland (December 15-20, 2015), the parties agreed to confidence-building measures includ-

ing ceasefire and release of political and other prisoners; but the talks failed because the Houthi-Saleh delegations did not honor their commitments. The third round in Kuwait (from April to August 2016) lasted for 115 days and yielded no results simply because the Houthi and Saleh delegations refused every proposal presented by the UN Envoy.<sup>49</sup>

The Government towards the end of the talks in Kuwait made a major concession for the sake of peace and accepted a UN plan in which the government agrees to allow the Houthis to withdraw from three initial governorates (Sanaa, Al-Hudaydah, and Taiz) in return for a unity government to be formed after 35 days. The Houthis not only refused to accept this proposal, but also announced the formation of the so-called “political council” while their delegation was still participating in the peace talks. Later on, they also announced their illegitimate “salvation government” and attempted, with no quorum, to convene the Parliament in violation to the constitution.<sup>50</sup>

Notwithstanding the aforementioned experiences, the Government is still keen on peace and is ready to accept any proposed solutions which are in accordance with the three references; i.e. the GCC Initiative, the NDC outcomes, and the relevant UNSC resolutions, especially resolution 2216. The Government is bound to defend the principles stated in the constitution and safeguard the accomplishments of the 2011 youth revolution. It will also continue to be committed to fighting terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations.<sup>51</sup> The Government stands ready to engage positively and work with the international community and the new United States Administration to reach a comprehensive sustainable solution for the Yemeni crisis. It further reaffirms its continued support for the efforts of the UN Envoy in this regard.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, the Government will only accept a solution that adheres to the three references mentioned above. Any solution which is not based on these references would only prolong the crisis and result in legitimizing the coup. And that will destroy any hope for a new civil democratic state; one that could build the foundations of a just society where every citizen has the right to have a free and dignified life.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, and as an additional reminder to the Houthis – in the interest of attaining peace and accelerating reconciliation – the Government of Yemen wishes to emphatically reaffirm to the Houthis that they will be permitted to again operate as a political party or organization in Yemen as they exercised before, during and after the National Dialogue provided that they surrender all weapons seized by them belonging to the state and that they renounce violence to achieve political ends.

For more insight on recent political developments, please refer to the following Embassy report:  
*“Yemen’s Crisis and Threatened Transition”*)

49- Embassy of Yemen Report: “Yemen’s Crisis and Threatened Transition”, pp. 5 – 6

50- Ibid., p. 6

51- Ibid., p. 6

52- Ibid., p. 6

53- Ibid., p. 6

## Resumption of Diplomatic & Development Operations in Yemen

With the extant relocation of Yemen's capital to the city of Aden, and with the demonstrable improvements in the security situation on the ground in the vast majority of Yemen's territory under the full control of the legitimate and internationally recognized government, further stability has been achieved in Yemen. Hence, it is now safe enough for foreign personnel, organizations and companies to work from Aden, where the government is also currently headquartered.<sup>54</sup> There are international flights and commercial aviation safely operating to and from Aden.

*The Embassy exhorts US diplomatic and US development entities to resume their operations and presence in Yemen.* In particular, the US Congress could support opening a US Government Coordination Office in Aden to allow for the release of military and security assistance intended for Yemen for purposes of counterterrorism efforts rather than depriving Yemen of such aid, and then relegating or reallocating it to another country (as has unfortunately taken place). Moreover, the US Government would be able to coordinate on the ground with the Yemeni Government until the US Embassy officially reopens again in Yemen (where deemed appropriate).

Indeed, the advent of a US Government Coordination Office in Aden will send positive signals to the world about Yemen's stabilization efforts. In addition, USAID could also establish a position in the city of Aden to oversee all humanitarian and development assistance that is being streamed to Yemen at this juncture and for the future.

## Invitation for US Congressional Delegations to Yemen

On February 17, 2015, the United States Embassy in Yemen closed and all American diplomatic personnel had departed the country due to the dangerous and deteriorating security situation in Sanaa with the coup that transpired on September 21, 2014 by the Houthi-Saleh forces. Indeed, the coup of September 2014 led to the closure of numerous embassies in Sanaa, most notably those belonging to the G18<sup>55</sup> member states. Additionally, most international organizations closed their offices and departed the country, including the World Bank Group and USAID.<sup>56</sup>

However, the situation on the ground has now changed and improved. The Government of Yemen cordially invites and enthusiastically encourages Members of Congress to come to Aden as part of a US Congressional Delegation (CoDel) as it has done in the past to Sanaa from Members of both Chambers (House & Senate).

As noted earlier in this report, Staffers and Members of Congress have previously visited Yemen and have come away with indelibly positive impressions, and we would like to replicate this experience with visits to Yemen by more Staffers and members of Congress as soon as possible.

*The Embassy of Yemen stands ready to help facilitate any CoDel trips to our homeland that may be envisaged by the respective Member(s) of Congress and his/her Staff.*

54- Ibid., p. 6

55- G18 Member countries comprise of the states from Gulf Cooperation Council; the five Permanent U.N Security Council members (i.e., China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States); and Egypt, Germany, Netherlands, Turkey and Japan

56- Embassy of Yemen Report: "Economy of Yemen: Background, Challenges and Key Issues", p.5

## Support for the Establishment of Congressional Caucus “Friends of Yemen”

It is commonly defined that a Congressional Caucus is a group of members of the United States Congress that meets to pursue common legislative objectives. Formally, caucuses are referred to as Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs) through the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate and governed under the rules of these respective chambers. In addition to a caucus, there are coalitions, study groups, task forces, or working groups. Moreover, “CMOs exist to affect public policy, either directly through policy advocacy for a region or an issue, or indirectly by attracting media attention, or through the socialization and orientation of their Members.”<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, “there are 800 informal Member organizations listed in the Congressional Yellow Book or registered with the Committee on House Administration. There are 703 in the House and 87 in the Senate. The House’s 703 informal Member organizations had from 1 to 294 members, with an average membership of 21, and the Senate’s 87 informal Member organizations had from 1 to 71 members, with an average membership of 9.”<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, CMOs have existed since 1970s, and the following encapsulate the traditional six distinctive CMO group sorts:

- I. **Intraparty** to promote the policy views of like-minded Members within a political party;
- II. **Personal Interest** to focus on a broad or single concern, such as the environment or children, that is often under the jurisdiction of more than one Committee;
- III. **Industry** to advocate the interests of a particular industry;
- IV. **Regional** to champion the interests of a particular region;
- V. **State/District** to advocate the interests of a particular state or district; and
- VI. **National Constituency** to advocate the interests of particular constituencies, such as women, minorities, and veterans.<sup>59</sup>

Since then, diplomacy CMOs have expanded and they have been classified as their own category. It is noted that “48 of the 300 CMOs registered with the Committee on House Administration during the 114th Congress concerned themselves with improving foreign relations with another country or region of the world”.<sup>60</sup>

However, when it comes to Yemen, there has never been (neither formal nor informal) a congressional caucus (or coalition, study group, task force, working group, etc., ) registered or associated for diplomatic tendencies vis-à-vis Yemen. With the presence of a significant and growing Yemeni-American community in the USA – with constituencies largely concentrated in California, Illinois, Michigan, and New York (as well as other constituencies strewn throughout the USA) across Districts represented by both Democratic and Republican Party Members of Congress – *the Embassy strongly encourages the US House of Representatives and US Senate to establish a diplomatic CMO that concerns Yemen*, whether it is formal or informal in its incarnation. Since there already are CMOs for Egypt, Iraq, Sudan & South Sudan, Tunisia (among others), we hope that there can also soon be a Yemen CMO.

57- “Congressional Member Organizations: Their Purpose and Activities, History, and Formation”, Matthew E. Glassman, Analyst on the Congress, January 26, 2017, p. 1

58- Ibid., p. 1

59- Ibid., p. 5

60- Ibid., p. 5



Indeed, the Embassy hopes that there can be serious consideration given to this proposal; so that from a mere notion it can lead to motion, and eventually, the formation of a Congressional Caucus on Yemen can be realized. The latter can be named the “Friends of Yemen” Caucus or the “Yemen Working Group”, etc.. We also hope for bipartisan representation and with Members who are passionate or concerned about Yemen (especially for those who represent districts with significant Yemeni-American communities) – in order to help support Yemen in all possible ways and to advance sound US foreign policy towards Yemen.

The Government of Yemen cherishes and wishes to strengthen continuously its bilateral ties with the United States of America; and its Yemeni diaspora is also of paramount importance.



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## FINAL REMARKS

The Embassy hopes that the thrust of this candid report has prevailed in informing the reader (for those either with a dearth of knowledge or for who already have a sophisticated understanding about Yemen) of the importance of the US Congress to Yemen expressed herein from the truthful perspective of the Yemeni Government – which is a strategic partner of the United States.

Indeed, we hope to have successfully conducted the following:

- provided an essential background about Yemen;
- indicated a useful summary of the recent course of events;
- elucidated clearly the Yemeni government's pertinent positions;
- raised awareness on a host of issues concerning the Houthi-Saleh coalition, including by revealing their nefarious nature and actions that have contributed to the deaths and displacement of Yemeni citizens en masse; as well as the devastation and desolation to Yemen's economy and infrastructure;
- suggested new mechanisms that can be exercised for developing bilateral relations;
- recommended new initiatives concerning US-Yemen government matters; and
- conveyed the imperative of US interests with and foreign aid to Yemen.

In concluding this special report, the Embassy of Yemen would like to further underscore the final aforementioned point, because it is a central matter that binds and bestows upon our relationship to its core.

As is the general consensus and has been noted communicated by experts on Yemen, taking the view that helping Yemen to obtain assorted forms of assistance is crucial to stabilize the country in the near-term, while concurrently working with the international donor community to support Yemen to lay the ground work for a sustainable future.

*“Yemen is confronting myriad political, economic, social, security, and governance challenges and the current political crisis has exacerbated systemic issues such as unemployment, lack of opportunities for a large youth bulge and rapidly growing population, unequal development, political marginalization, widespread corruption, weak state institutions, declining government revenues, growing natural resource scarcity, and terrorism. Consistent with United States national interests, we have been working to help Yemen address these challenges.”<sup>62</sup>*

*For the United States, helping Yemen is consistent with US national interests – especially for its long-term national security – whose principled aspirations are commensurate to:*

- eradicating terrorism, violent extremism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Semitism;
- promoting democracy;
- achieving an enduring and overall stability to the region;
- supporting trade & economic opportunities for American businesses to flourish in the Middle East; and
- ensuring freedom of navigation and the safe flow of global maritime commerce.

62- Excerpt from Testimony Submitted by Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, US Department of State. Hearing on US Policy in Yemen. Senate Subcommittee on Near Eastern, South Asian and Central Asian Affairs. Committee on Foreign Relations, 112th Congress, First Session, July 19, 2011

Indeed, the United States retains imperative (and geostrategic) political, security and economic interests directly & indirectly from Yemen. Ultimately, the aim for Yemen with the assistance of the US and international partners is to attain a stable, secure, prosperous, and an effectively governed country for its people. This is a vital goal that will demand an enduring engagement and coordination with Yemen, expanding our shared and mutual interests.

Unquestionably, the United States will retain a pivotal position to undertake a role to help shape Yemen's future and one that will foster tangible impacts across a gamut of domains touching upon political, security, economic, social, and governance issues over the long-term while addressing immediate concerns to the United States in the short term.

Over the course of past US Congressional sessions, the United States has dedicated resources to assist Yemen to ameliorate its development at the macro and micro level in terms of education, employment generation, increasing the delivery of health services, improving local governance and widening civic participation. However, as you will probably concede and concur, that the amounts typically allocated for Yemen have not been in line with the needs that exist.

It is implored that US foreign aid and appropriations (as ultimately decided upon by the US Congress) should be expanded and sustained for Yemen in conjunction with any upcoming post-conflict aid from the international community.

At the right timeframe, the United States, Yemen's neighbors, European countries and multilateral organizations will have to come together to assist Yemen in dealing with the massive and multitudinous challenges in the political, economic, and security areas because of the conflict. As the process for harvesting more emergency aid and subsequently gathering additional assistance for Yemen from the global community begins to cultivate, it is hoped that the United States can take a leading role (as it has performed on the humanitarian assistance front). In this regard, it is most important to help marshal the extensive price-tag from the international community to aid Yemen in its recovery and reconstruction efforts with all regional and global partners & parties concerned with Yemen's future.

While further successes will be achieved over time in the military front to liberate those other parts of Yemen still occupied by the Houthi-Saleh forces with their domestic and foreign allies supporting them, it is hoped that a peaceful and durable settlement will be reached even before this inevitable eventuality – so that the mechanics for reconstruction & reconciliation can begin and a new promising future for Yemen is engineered. Indeed, there is an indispensable role for the US Congress to partake in this momentous endeavor for the way forward.

THANK YOU

## NOTABLE SOURCES

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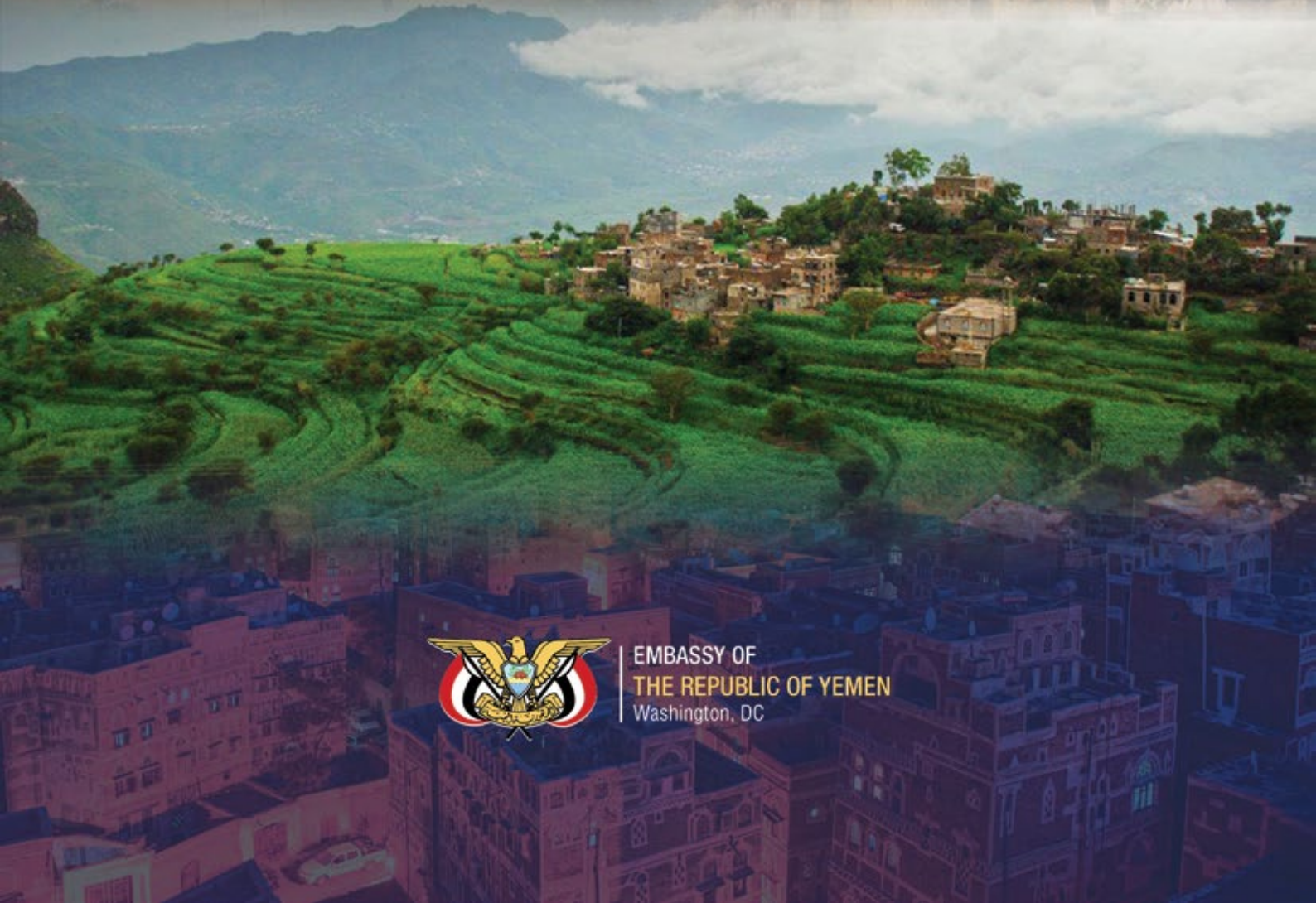


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## The US Congress and Yemen: **Background, Critical Issues and the Way Forward**



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