

Saudi Arabia in Focus

Update from the Saudi mission to the European Union



Special February 2017

Yemen

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From the ambassador

Yemen is one of the Arab world's poorest countries. Over the past two years, it has been devastated by fighting fuelled by forces allied to the Houthi rebel movement, who violently overthrew the internationally recognised government of elected President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.

Alarmed by the rise of a violent rebel group on the other side of its borders, Saudi Arabia launched an international coalition to restore Yemen's legitimate government to help implement the UNSC Resolution 2216.

Almost two years later, the situation is dire. Despite the coalition's advances, the Houthis failure to respect ceasefire terms, and continued blocking of humanitarian aid has displaced millions of Yemenis and brought famine-like conditions to the country. The war has also killed hundreds of Saudi citizens.

We are committed, alongside our international partners, to quickly resolving the humanitarian crisis on both sides of the border by restoring Yemen's rightful government in a peaceful, Yemeni-led transition process.



Abdulrahman S. Alahmed

Ambassador and Head of the Mission to the European Union

Addressing the Crisis in Yemen



Displacement site in Khamer in Amran Governorate, Yemen. Credit: OCHA / Philippe Kropf

For nearly two years, Yemen has been devastated by a conflict instigated by the Houthi rebel movement and supporters of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. These rebel groups failed to cooperate on launching a political resolution to the situation. It was in the wake of the violent Houthi overthrow of Yemen's legitimate and internationally recognised government in 2015 that a coalition of concerned Gulf Cooperation Council states, led by Saudi Arabia, intervened to eradicate the threat to Gulf security and respond to an express request from the elected President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi for "support, by all necessary means and measures, including military intervention, to protect Yemen and its people from the continuing Houthi aggression." This conflict has since taken over 10,000 lives and displaced 3.11 million civilians.

The Houthis' record speaks for itself. Their disregard for international law continues today. Extremist Houthi rebels sent three suicide boats to attack a Saudi frigate off the west coast of Yemen earlier this month, killing two Saudi brothers. Such reckless acts only serve to undermine international efforts to reach a political solution and to hinder the flow of humanitarian and medical aid to 18 million Yemeni citizens in need.

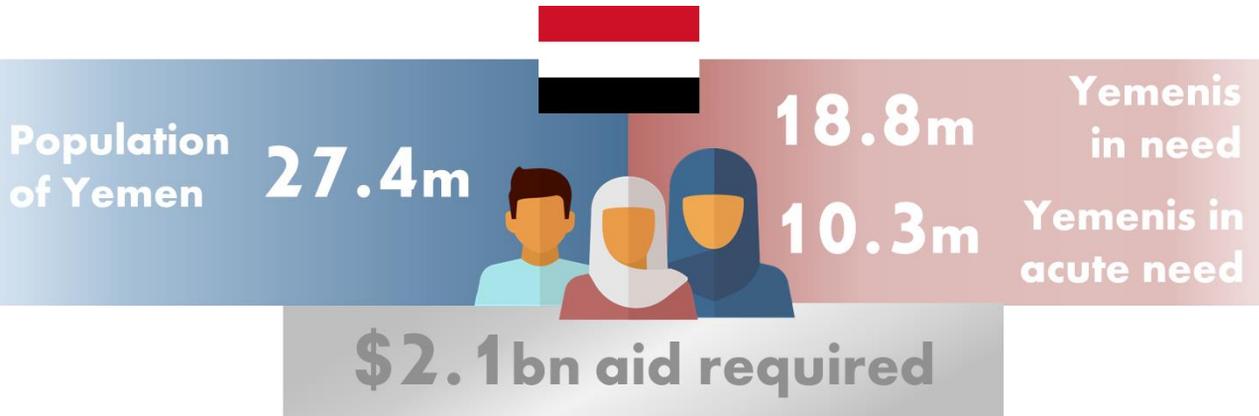
The situation is nothing short of deplorable. But, alongside its international partners including the US, UK and France, Saudi Arabia is striving to be part of the solution – a nonviolent, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for peaceful change and meaningful political, economic and social reform.



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The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen was launched in February 2017. It shows that nearly 70% of all Yemenis are in need of aid. Over a third of the population are in acute need.



UN agencies report that the number of food insecure people in Yemen has risen by 3 million in seven months, with an estimated 17.1 million people now struggling to feed themselves

Saudi Humanitarian Action in Yemen



Since its inception in 2015, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre has spared no effort to assist those in need across all Yemeni governorates, and has provided aid worth around €430 million to some 26 million Yemeni civilians.

The most important projects implemented by the centre and its partners have focussed on women and children. One of the centre's first projects involved providing medical care to more than 7,600 children and mothers living as refugees in Djibouti. This project was carried out in cooperation with UNICEF, with a total expenditure of €309,652.

Another project was put in place in response to an urgent UN flash appeal for immediate humanitarian assistance to Yemen; this €26.2 million project was again carried out in coordination with UNICEF. The project provided food, therapeutic and preventative interventions to save the lives of children under the age of five, and also provided protection for the health of pregnant and nursing mothers. The challenges that KSrelief faces are the same as those faced by all relief organisations.

The UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen confirms that the Houthi Rebels and Saleh forces are currently controlling the vital ports of Hodeida, As Salif and Ras Isa on the Red Sea coast. The rebels are blocking activity in the ports in an effort to damage the Saudi-led Coalition's reputation whilst pocketing the black market income it generates.

Access to Yemen has therefore proven difficult, with great risk to relief conveyed and very challenging geography. Given these challenges, KSRelief is proud that the centre in Yemen has been able to reach all regions of the country, irrespective of who is in control. KS relief work equally in the north and the south and is proud to have been able to show to the international community that Saudi Arabia is impartial, and complies with international humanitarian law.



The threat from Al-Qaeda in Yemen

The intransigence of Houthi rebel militia in Yemen has left a power vacuum, which has allowed the Al Qaeda terrorist network to raise its ugly head in the Arab Peninsula.



Al Qaeda detonates a suicide bomb in Mukalla, Yemen, May 2016. Over a year of devastating civil war in Yemen has given al-Qaeda and ISIS unprecedented freedom to operate. *Photo Credit: Al Arabiya*

As the UN recognised in Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), illegal Houthi activity in Yemen is having concerning side effects. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is benefiting from the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen, where, the growing number and scale of the attacks by AQAP are a continuing source of worry.

Only this month, the UN noted that “the exploitation by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL of the vacuum created by the war could be laying the foundation for terrorist networks that could last years. This is why the Saudi-led international coalition, supported by US forces, is continuing to work to retake AQAP-controlled areas of the country and eradicate this terrorist scourge from Yemen.

An example of the Kingdom’s contribution can be seen in the liberation of the city of Mukalla, on Yemen’s southern coast: The Saudi-led coalition’s support through military strategy and intelligence, preparatory airstrikes, its training of forces and supplying of arms and equipment, was key to taking back the strategically important port from Al-Qaeda, who had terrorised the city’s inhabitants for over a year.



The Path towards Peace in Yemen

They said...

>>“Saudi Arabia is a pillar of stability in the region besides being a key in the fight against terrorism.”

Antonio Guterres
UN Secretary-General

In Brief

Houthi Mines constitute a heinous War Crime against all Yemeni People

The planting of "antipersonnel" landmines in Yemen constitutes a major challenge for the Yemeni government,, after Houthis left thousands of mines in the governorates they have abandoned. These mines have already claimed the lives of many innocent Yemenis and prevented the return of many more displaced who homes are sometimes encircled by the mines which are illegal under international law. The King Salman Centre for Relief and Humanitarian Aid is making great efforts to support and establish injuries and prosthetic rehabilitation centres, as well as psychological support for victims of mines, most of them children and women.

According to reports of international and domestic Yemeni organizations, Houthi militias are directly responsible for the installation of these mines in the violation of international laws and they are hard to be demined over time.

Human Rights Watch has confirmed over five cases of people suffering with deformities due to anti-personnel mines in Taiz since March 2016, including a man who was returning to his home with his brother after months of displacement from their village, which has been controlled by Houthi militias.



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres with Saudi Foreign Minister H.E. Adel Al-Jubeir, addressing a press conference on 12 February, *Photo Credit: SPA*

The newly elected UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres used his first visit to Riyadh to thank Saudi Arabia for its contribution to countering terrorism and its efforts to bring stability to the region.

Mr Guterres lent his support to the factions in Yemen that are willing to reconcile and reach a political solution to the bloody conflict within the framework of the UN resolutions and GCC-brokered initiative. Guterres also strongly backed the efforts of UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, saying that the UN envoy has the full support of the UN.

The Secretary-General also recounted the UN's concerns over the issues affecting the peace and security of the region as a whole. He appealed to the warring factions in Yemen not to hamper the relief efforts and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Earlier this month, the legitimate and internationally recognised President of Yemen President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi reiterated his thanks to and appreciation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf

States and King Salman Centre for Relief and Humanitarian Works for all aid provided.

For his part, Minister Al-Jubeir deplored the situation in Yemen saying, “We have made many agreements with Houthis and the faction led by Ali Abdullah Saleh, but they have failed to implement any of the agreements. The Kingdom and the GCC acted to help Yemen and its government within the framework of the article 51 of the UN charter.”

In a speech this month, legitimate Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi said that his project is a new Federal Yemen, a Yemen of justice, equality and citizenship. “The blood of our martyrs will not go to waste. We will build a new federal Yemen and raise our dear flag over the mountains of Amran.”

This ambitious vision for Yemen is dependent on Houthi withdrawal from cities, surrender of heavy and medium weapons, leaving the ministries they are illegally occupying and applying the GCC initiative and the outcome of the national dialogue.

