



**Office of the Special Envoy  
of the Secretary-General for Yemen**

**Briefing by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the UN Security Council**

**15 Oct 2024**

Merci **Madame le Président**, Thank you, **Madame President**, as I address you today, the military escalation in the Middle East that we have witnessed for a year now, keeps intensifying and risks spiraling out of control. Countless lives have been lost and pain and sorrow have spread through the region as hopes for progress seem distant. Regrettably, Yemen is part of this escalation and risks being further dragged in.

During this period, the safety of United Nations personnel has been increasingly at risk. It has been a particularly difficult year for United Nations personnel in the region. In Yemen, Ansar Allah continues to hold United Nations personnel, civil society workers, and staff of diplomatic missions in arbitrary detention. With all this said, I echo the urgent call of the Secretary-General: an immediate ceasefire and regional de-escalation is needed to halt this widening conflict.

**Madame President**, Yemen and its people are already feeling the impact of this escalating regional conflict. Since my last briefing to this Council, Ansar Allah has continued their attacks on international shipping and made multiple attempts to target Israel with missiles and drones. These repeated attacks, including the recent strikes on tankers have significantly increased the risk of an environmental disaster—a disaster that was narrowly avoided after the attack on the MV Sounion. Such attacks on civilian shipping are wholly unacceptable and must cease immediately. The Red Sea is a global waterway, and it should be a safe passageway for the benefit of all.

In response to these attacks, there have been U.S.-led airstrikes on four Yemeni governorates, as well as Israeli airstrikes on Hudaydah. The reports of casualties in Hudaydah and damage to the city's critical infrastructure are concerning. This cycle of retaliation is pulling Yemen deeper into the regional conflict, jeopardizing its hopes for peace and stability. Moreover, it distracts from the urgent need to address Yemen's own internal crisis.

Yemenis continue to yearn and work for peace after more than nine years of conflict, which has ravaged the country, displaced millions, separated families, and shattered the economy. And yet, they see their space for meaningful engagement and peacebuilding under attack, with arbitrary detentions, death threats, and intimidation, especially in Ansar Allah controlled areas. I call on Ansar Allah to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained, including 17 United Nations personnel—four of whom are women and one of whom is from my own team

—and to end their campaign of detentions. I am counting on the support of this Council in sending this clear message.

**Madame President,** I recently spoke with several civil society organizations, women’s groups, activists and local peacemakers and they told me how deeply they have been affected by the latest wave of Ansar Allah arbitrary detentions. These detentions, compounded by vague and false accusations and the total lack of any due process, aim to tarnish reputations and create a climate of fear and mistrust. The latest reported referral of some of the detained to so called ‘criminal prosecution’ is a further blow to our collective efforts to build peace and stability in Yemen. I have repeatedly told Ansar Allah these kinds of actions do not signal an interest in negotiating peace.

Civil society actors and human rights defenders continue to play a critical role in addressing the urgent humanitarian needs and fostering social cohesion. They deserve strong protection measures and international support to continue their work safely.

**Madame President,** since my last briefing to this Council, I have engaged in constructive discussions with Yemeni and international stakeholders during visits to New York, to Tehran and to Moscow. In addition to requesting support for the release of the detained, my engagements have reaffirmed two critical messages that I wish to share with this Council. First, a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Yemen is not only the most viable way forward but more importantly, it is definitely achievable. Second, the Yemeni people require sustained and unified international support, and we must collectively keep the focus on making peace a reality.

These are not just mere aspirations. We have the elements and the tools to prepare the ground. And allow me therefore to elaborate:

First, we have the commitments made by the parties towards the establishment of a roadmap, including a nationwide ceasefire, addressing humanitarian and economic needs and preparing for an inclusive political process. Despite the escalation, these commitments remain essential building blocks for peace in Yemen and the reference points for our discussions with the parties. In support of such discussions, this month, my office initiated political dialogue sessions with Yemeni political party representatives and components, as well as civil society organizations, with the meaningful participation of women and youth.

Second, on the military front, we have relative calm on the frontlines, despite occasional flare-ups that remind us of the fragility of the situation. Communication channels with senior military leadership through the Military Coordination Committee remain active, reinforcing the message that the groundwork laid now will be critical to ensuring the stability of a future ceasefire and other security arrangements. Recently, we hosted a delegation from the Government of Yemen to plan and prepare for the nationwide ceasefire mechanism, and we hope to hold additional sessions with Ansar Allah and other relevant partners.

Third, on the economic front, we have identified options at the technical level and are working to convince the parties that collaboration on economic issues is the only way to achieve economic viability and stability. We remain in close contact with key stakeholders, particularly in the banking sector, where the potential collapse of a major commercial bank highlights the urgent

need for cooperation. Madame President, let me to be clear. The tools are there. I call on parties to demonstrate the necessary will, and to put the needs of Yemenis first. I am, in this regard, looking forward to the briefing of Dr. Najat Jumaan.

**Madame President**, as we mark the anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, we must acknowledge the immense burden Yemeni women continue to carry in this conflict and recognize their bravery. Yemeni women have been at the forefront in driving peacebuilding efforts for years, and, now more than ever, it is crucial to amplify their voices. I call on all parties to ensure that women are empowered to shape the decisions that will pave the way for lasting peace in Yemen.

To support this, my Office, in partnership with UN WOMEN have to date held specific consultations with over 400 Yemeni women and men to advance a vision for an inclusive peace process in Yemen. The consultations aim to achieve the meaningful inclusion of women in negotiations, and to lay the foundations for a more inclusive and sustainable peace. These efforts reinforce our commitment to enhancing women's direct participation across all tracks of the peace process.

**Madame President**, my office remains steadfast in pursuing every opportunity for peace in Yemen. The parties must demonstrate their commitment to peace through meaningful actions, including the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained. The need for unity of purpose in and on Yemen has never been greater. I want to underscore again that, despite the broader regional conflict, peace in Yemen is still achievable, and we must remain focused on making this a reality.

This Council carries the hopes of the global community—that conflicts can be resolved through international collaboration and diplomacy. As Special Envoy for Yemen, I convey the expectations of the Yemeni people and urge this Council to unite in stopping the bloodshed and supporting every effort to bring peace to a region in desperate need of it. Thank you very much **Madame President**.