



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

Briefing by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the UN Security Council

12 Sep 2024

Thank you, **Mr President**.

Mr President, it has now been over one hundred days since Ansar Allah commenced a wave of detentions, targeting Yemenis engaged in critical efforts related to humanitarian assistance, development, human rights, peacebuilding, and education. I reiterate the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights' unequivocal demand for Ansar Allah to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained. This includes United Nations personnel, members of civil society, staff of diplomatic missions, private sector employees, and individuals from minority religious communities. The continued detention of these individuals is a profound injustice to those who have dedicated their lives to the betterment of Yemen. These detentions are shrinking civic space and negatively impacting humanitarian efforts critical to Yemenis. I call on Ansar Allah to do the right thing, to release those detained immediately and unconditionally, and refrain from any further arbitrary detentions.

Mr President, in these difficult circumstances, my primary objective remains the mediation of a sustainable and just resolution to the conflict in Yemen. Unfortunately, the ongoing war in Gaza, and the regional escalation associated with it, complicates my efforts. I echo Under Secretary General DiCarlo in her recent call to this council for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages, and a massive scale up of humanitarian aid to Gaza, as the war continues to inflict unspeakable suffering on hundreds of thousands and has extended its destabilizing effects across the broader region. These destabilizing effects, Mr. President, have also affected Yemen negatively. Ansar Allah has continued attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, threatening regional stability and international maritime security. In response, the United States and the United Kingdom have continued to strike military targets inside of Yemen. I reiterate my concern over this escalatory trajectory and repeat my call for the parties to put Yemen first and to prioritize a settlement of the conflict in Yemen.

A development of particular concern is Ansar Allah's recent targeting of the Greek-flagged oil tanker M.V. Sounion, which forced the abandonment of the ship, and raises the imminent threat of a catastrophic oil spill and environmental disaster of unprecedented scale. An oil spill on this scale would have dire consequences for both Yemen and the broader region. I therefore express my gratitude to those Member States, in particular from the region, who are currently working against the clock to bring about the urgently needed salvage operation, and I will take this

opportunity to strongly urge Ansar Allah to end their dangerous targeting of civilian vessels in the Red Sea and beyond.

Mr. President, allow me to turn now to the situation inside of Yemen. Unfortunately, the military situation is unimproved from my last briefing. We continue to witness worrisome military activities along the frontlines and escalatory rhetoric between the warring sides. While levels of violence still remain below the pre-2022 truce period, clashes in Al-Dhale', in Hudaydah, Lahj, Ma'rib, Sa'dah, and Shabwa and Ta'iz, are often resulting in unnecessary and tragic loss of life. The current dynamic is a stark reminder that the threat of a return to full-scale war remains ever-present.

On the economic front, the understanding reached between the parties on the 23rd of July on economic de-escalation has staved off an acute crisis. Yet the status quo is untenable, and the economic situation of most Yemenis continues to decline. Adding to these challenges, the Yemeni people have been suffering from natural disasters that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, regardless of their alignment in the conflict. The recent severe flooding in Hodeidah and Hajjah governorates is a tragic example of this, and I extend my deepest condolences to the families who have lost loved ones in this disaster. The magnitude of this loss underscores the importance of remaining focused on the needs of the Yemeni people. It is also crucial that Yemenis work collaboratively across conflict lines to respond to such emergencies with urgency and without allowing political considerations to impede life-saving efforts.

Despite and indeed because of the complex challenges before us, my office remains resolute in its commitment to engage with all parties involved in the conflict to find immediate and longer-term solutions. In recent weeks, my colleagues and I have engaged in extensive discussions with key interlocutors in Aden, Taiz, al-Dhale' Muscat, Riyadh, Cairo and London. These engagements have been constructive across various areas, including economic matters, where we seek to use the 23 July understanding as a steppingstone to de-politicize the economy and shift the parties away from a zero-sum mindset to one of collaboration. We have also had constructive discussions on the release of conflict-related detainees—a vital issue that remains a top priority. While I commend the parties for their constructive engagement in recent discussions, I must stress that positive signals alone are insufficient. We expect that priority be given to the Yemeni people and that positive signals be followed by concrete actions that contribute to de-escalation and the advancement of peace.

Moving forward, I will continue engagements with unwavering determination. Specifically, my office will work to assist the parties in implementing the July understanding on de-escalation in the banking sector and Yemenia Airways, through continued engagement with relevant representatives and with the objective of convening the parties without preconditions to address important economic issues. We will also continue regular communication with military commanders, to ensure that any future ceasefire mechanism can function effectively.

In parallel, my office is also preparing for further consultations with political parties and civil society to promote a vision for an inclusive peace process in Yemen. To date, these consultations have gathered several hundred Yemenis, including women, youth, tribal leaders, human rights defenders, and vulnerable groups. I remain deeply committed to such consultations to ensure that

the voices of all segments of Yemeni society are heard, and in this regard I look forward to the briefing by Ms. Linda Al-Obahi from the Peace Track Initiative.

Mr President, International Peace Day, which we will honor on the 21st of September, highlights our shared responsibility to prioritize peace and promote stability in Yemen. This is not just a symbolic occasion; it is a call for action. The Yemeni people deserve the peace they have long been waiting for. I remain steadfast in my belief that despite the numerous challenges we face, it is only through sustained and focused engagement on fundamental issues—such as the economy, a nationwide ceasefire, and a comprehensive and inclusive political process—that Yemen can achieve lasting peace. These elements were central to the commitments toward a roadmap made by the parties in December of last year, and they continue to be as vital now as they were then.

As always, I continue to count on the Council's steadfast support for my efforts, especially in seeking the release of detained UN personnel and also in refuting baseless accusations against the UN such as those made recently against UNICEF, UNESCO, and other humanitarian partners. These allegations have been firmly refuted by the United Nations. Let me be absolutely clear: the United Nations through all its agencies will continue to work relentlessly for the well-being of the Yemeni people. I count on this Council's support and unified approach in this regard. It is more important now than ever. Thank you very much **Mr President**.