



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

UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg's Briefing to the Security Council

Open session

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Thank you Mr. President.

Mr. President, it has been a deeply volatile and unpredictable period in the region marked by shifting dynamics and fragile hopes for de-escalation. We all welcomed the ceasefire between Iran and Israel, hoping it would create the space needed for diplomacy to regain momentum, including in Yemen. But against the backdrop of negotiations for a ceasefire in Gaza, we have witnessed multiple missile attacks by Ansar Allah against Israel during the reporting period. And we are now with grave concern seeing an escalation in the Red Sea with attacks on two commercial ships earlier this week by Ansar Allah, resulting in civilian loss of life and casualties as well as the potential for environmental damage. These were the first attacks on commercial vessels in over seven months. In response, Israeli air strikes have hit Sana'a earlier in the reporting period as well as the ports of Hudaydah, Ras Issa and Salif and a power station on Sunday.

Freedom of navigation in the Red Sea must be safeguarded, and civilian infrastructure must never become target of conflict. Above all, Yemen must not be drawn deeper into regional crises that threaten to unravel the already extremely fragile situation in the country. The stakes for Yemen are simply too high - Yemen's future depends on our collective resolve to shield it from further suffering and to give its people the hope and dignity they so deeply deserve.

Mr. President, whilst by and large the frontlines in Yemen continue to hold, the situation remains fragile and unpredictable. There has been a continuation of military activity in governorates such as Al Dhale'a, Al Jawf, Ma'rib, Ta'iz and Sa'dah. I am also concerned about troop movements towards Al Dhale'a, Ma'rib and Ta'iz. And I recognise that for some – on both sides of the conflict – the appetite for a military escalation remains. A military solution, however, remains a dangerous illusion that risks deepening Yemen's suffering. While negotiations may not be easy, they offer the best hope for addressing in a sustainable and long-term manner, the complexity of the conflict. However, it is urgent to move forward as time is not on our side. The longer the conflict is drawn out, the more complex it becomes. There is a risk that divisions could deepen further and therefore it is important for both sides to not engage in any unilateral activity to the detriment of all Yemenis. Both sides must signal a genuine willingness to explore peaceful avenues and create conditions for lasting stability.

And an important signal in this regard would be the release of all remaining conflict-related detainees – a process that has stagnated for over a year. There is nothing strategic in prolonging the suffering of families that have already waited far too long for the return of their loved ones. The parties agreed on all-for-all release, and now it is time for them to fulfill that commitment.

Turning to the economy. Across Yemen, the little money people do have in their pockets is either falling in value or literally falling apart. Concern amongst citizens and across the private sector over the dire country-wide economic situation is increasing. Also increasing – tragically – is the food insecurity and threat of famine.

The economy has, in effect, become the most active frontline. But, as I have said before, the economy is an area where practical collaboration between the parties can create meaningful change and immediately and positively impact the lives of Yemenis. In recent weeks we've welcomed the opening of the Al Dhale'a Road that has increased freedom of movement and expanded avenues for economic activity. This demonstrates what is possible. I call on the parties to engage in moving forward on tangible and practical measures that would facilitate the full and timely payment of salaries, increase the purchasing powers of Yemenis, improve service delivery and stimulate the economy. This was the focus of my discussion with the newly appointed Prime Minister, Salim Bin Buriek, when I was in Aden last week, and includes enabling the Government of Yemen to resume oil and gas production and exports.

Mr. President, in the coming months, a positive shift towards greater stability in the region would certainly be welcome and could create an environment for Yemen to move forward — but this cannot be a precondition for change. Yemen must advance regardless, moving from simply managing shocks and volatility to developing practical steps that lay the groundwork for lasting solutions. To make this possible, three core areas must be prioritized:

- First, supporting de-escalation along the front lines and working with the parties on the parameters for a nationwide ceasefire. My office will continue its active engagement through the Military Coordination Committee and with other senior military and security representatives to promote an inclusive security dialogue that can build trust between the parties at national and local level.
- Second, establishing a path for talks between the parties. The elements of the Roadmap are familiar to you: alongside a ceasefire are economic and humanitarian measures and a political process. My office will continue to work with the parties at all levels on options to advance progress on these issues. We will also continue expanding our engagement to ensure the broader concerns and aspirations of the Yemeni people are heard and reflected.
- Third, I will continue to work with the region and international community on the broader security guarantees that are needed, including on freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. First and foremost, Yemenis need to have confidence in any agreement reached. The region and international community, however, also need to have confidence that their concerns are met. This is how we build a durable support structure for a negotiated settlement.

Mr. President, within Yemen, civil society – and their ability to effect change – will also be an important part of that support structure. When I was in Aden, I met with a diverse group of women political representatives, civil society leaders and grassroots activists. It is their bold and courageous voices – and those of many across Yemen – that compel me to reiterate today the urgent need to preserve and expand civic space. This is critical for the future of Yemen.

I end by reiterating my call for the unconditional and immediate release by Ansar Allah of all those arbitrarily detained from the United Nations, national and international NGOs, civil society organizations, and diplomatic missions. The number of cases requiring urgent medical attention are increasing. They need access to medical assistance. They need to be home with their families. We will not let this issue drop. Our detained colleagues are not forgotten, not by me or my mission, nor by all of us in the United Nations working tirelessly for the sake of the Yemeni population.

Mr. President, I remain deeply grateful to the members of this Council for your steadfast support for Yemen and for my mediation efforts. A consistent and coordinated message from this Council strengthens the international community's resolve to pursue a negotiated settlement. Your continued backing is essential to reinforcing the tools of diplomacy and fostering an environment where compromise, dialogue and ultimately lasting peace can take root.

Thank you very much Mr. President.