

Monthly Forecast	Country and Regional Issues	Thematic and General Issues	About the UN Security Council	About SCR What's In Blue Past Publications Press Release	Home Contact Resources Donate
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October 2015 Monthly Forecast

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MIDDLE EAST

Yemen

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Expected Council Action

In October, Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and the chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Raimonda Murkmokaite (Lithuania), are expected to brief the Council, followed by consultations.

No outcome is currently planned.

Key Recent Developments

Since taking Aden in July, the Saudi-led coalition, supporting transition President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, deployed thousands of ground forces, equipped with armoured vehicles, tanks and helicopters. Advancing north from Aden, the coalition offensive has driven the Houthis and security forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh out of much of the south and into central Yemen. Coalition forces and Yemeni soldiers trained abroad have also entered Yemen from Saudi Arabia, massing in Marib governorate for a possible offensive on the capital, Sana'a.

In September, coalition advances stalled. Heavy fighting continued in Taiz, Yemen's third largest city. On 4 September missile strike in Marib killed 52 Emirati, ten Saudi and five Bahraini soldiers. Since the missile strike, Qatar confirmed that it was deploying ground troops to Yemen, and media reports have cited other coalition members, including Egypt and Sudan, as planning to contribute ground forces. On 14 September, the coalition announced it had secured Marib City and had commenced an offensive to take Sana'a, approximately 100 miles to the west. Meanwhile, Aden is reportedly plagued by rampant lawlessness.

Amidst this fighting, the conflict continues to take a devastating toll on civilians and on Yemen's infrastructure. Coalition airstrikes on 18 August severely damaged the port of Al-Hudaydah, the main port for delivering humanitarian aid to Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen. A 30 August airstrike on a bottling factory in Hajjah reportedly killed 34 people. Suicide bombings at mosques in Sana'a, claimed by an Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)-affiliated group, killed 32 people on 2 September and at least 25 on 24 September. On 28 September, coalition airstrikes killed as many as 135 people at a wedding party near Mokha. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of 24 September, there have been 2,355 confirmed civilian deaths and 4,862 injured since 26 March. Actual casualties are believed to be much higher. The coalition's use of cluster munitions in Saada and elsewhere has been documented by NGOs, while the Houthis have laid landmines as they retreat. More than 80 percent of Yemen's population, 21.1 million people, require humanitarian assistance. Coalition restrictions on shipping, creating a de-facto blockade, have severely limited commercial goods deliveries, such as food, fuel and medicine, posing the threat of famine and creating difficulties in running hospitals and pumping ground water.

Almost five months after pledging to fund fully OCHA's \$273 million emergency appeal, Saudi Arabia concluded eight of the nine memoranda of agreements with UN agencies in mid-September for use of the money, resulting in the disbursement of \$244 million of the pledged funds. As of 18 September, the UN's \$1.6 billion humanitarian response plan was 38 percent funded.

Ould Cheik Ahmed last briefed Council members in consultations on 10 September. He reported that the Houthis and the General People's Congress (the GPC, Saleh's political party) committed in discussions in Oman to implement **resolution 2216**, which requires the Houthis to withdraw from territory and relinquish arms they have seized. He also said that Hadi agreed to the government's participation in direct talks, which the Special Envoy intended to start ahead of the Eid. The following day, Council members issued a **press statement** welcoming the upcoming talks. Two days later, however, the Yemeni government announced it would not attend, and has called for a Houthi public commitment to implement resolution 2216. Regarding the humanitarian situation, OCHA head Stephen O'Brien briefed the Council on 19 August on his visit to Yemen and Djibouti from 9 to 13 August.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee considered the midterm report of the Yemen Panel of Experts in a meeting on 17 August. Committee members criticised the report, feeling it lacked specific information that could provide a basis for Committee action. Due to similar criticisms expressed previously, it seems that the Committee intends to maintain greater interaction with the Panel to ensure that it provides the type of information it needs. In October, the Committee is expected to follow up with the Panel on its findings on financial sanctions and international humanitarian law issues.

On 25 August, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Yemen Crisis, Amer Daoudi, **briefed the Committee** on the recent agreement between the UN, the Yemeni government and the coalition to establish a UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to increase commercial goods deliveries. Daoudi explained that a UN Verification Center (UNVC) in Aden would review all planned shipments to ports not under the government's control. Ships will either be cleared to proceed or flagged for inspection, and the UNVC will report all inspections to the 2140 Sanctions Committee in accordance with resolution 2216. Consideration of the issue by the Committee seemed to reflect concerns that the coalition has not properly implemented the arms embargo established by resolution 2216. At press time, the UNVIM had not started operating due to a funding shortage.

An open briefing for member states was held on 1 September to raise awareness about the Yemen sanctions regime. Murkmokaite and the new Coordinator of the Panel, Ahmed Himmiche, briefed.

The Committee also held a **joint meeting** with the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 18 September with the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict Leila Zerrougui. Zerrougui noted that during the second quarter of 2015 coalition airstrikes were responsible for 73 percent of child deaths and injuries. She also highlighted the use of child soldiers by the Houthis and other parties to the conflict.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Commenting on the conflict's impact on civilians, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said during his opening statement at the 30th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) that credible allegations of human rights violations by all parties to the conflict should be thoroughly examined by an independent and comprehensive body.

The HRC considered the High Commissioner for Human Rights' **report** on the situation in Yemen (A/HRC/30/31) during its 30th session. The report, which covers 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, notes concern over the continued escalation of violence in Yemen and related allegations of violations of international humanitarian law, some of which may amount to war crimes; recalls that the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in resolution 2216 should not result in restrictions of the right to freedom of movement and trade in commercial goods, including fuel; and calls for the establishment of an international independent and impartial mechanism to investigate alleged violations, among other recommendations.

On 24 September, the Netherlands submitted a draft resolution to the HRC calling for a UN fact-finding mission to report on abuses and conflict-related crime in Yemen.

Key Issues

A key issue is how the Council can press the parties to the conflict, in particular the Yemeni government and its allied Saudi-led coalition, to engage in negotiations, avert what would probably be a bloody and destructive offensive on Sana'a and obtain a ceasefire.

Yemen's humanitarian crisis remains an additional immediate concern.

Other issues include the risk of the country's north-south partition, expansion of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the emerging presence of ISIS.

Options

The Council may undertake a visiting mission to the region, including to Saudi Arabia and Oman, in support of mediation efforts, reminding the parties that resolution 2216 calls on the sides to resume and accelerate UN-brokered negotiations and highlighting that resolution 2216 can be implemented gradually.

The Council may consider adopting a new resolution that:

- calls on all sides to engage in UN-brokered negotiations without preconditions;
- requests an immediate cessation of hostilities;
- expresses its intention to establish a UN-monitoring mechanism in case of a ceasefire and any political agreement to verify compliance; and
- re-states the Council's resolve to impose sanctions on those who impede humanitarian access.

It could also express disappointment that the Yemeni government continues to place preconditions on negotiations in contradiction to the Council's calls and express serious concern about the escalation of airstrikes on Sana'a and Saada and civilian casualties.

Another option is to hold a meeting on civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation to consider how the Council can more fully uphold its responsibility to protect and to address the war's toll on civilians.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition, which appear to be most responsible for impeding negotiations and determined to defeat the Houthis militarily, have repeatedly cited **resolution 2216** as justifying their actions. They have characterised their intervention as enforcing the Council's demands in the resolution (though no enforcement measures were created by resolution 2216 other than those related to the arms embargo). They have further framed their potential participation in negotiations as being only to discuss the implementation of resolution 2216, having stated previously that they will not engage in talks unless the Houthis withdraw from seized territory and begin disarming. Jordan, a member of the Saudi-led coalition, champions these positions. It was the penholder for resolution 2216, which some members have privately expressed regret over having adopted.

Yemeni government and coalition positions overlook the fact that resolution 2216 called on the parties to resume and accelerate UN-brokered negotiations. It is a point that the Council has recalled in its press statements while calling on the parties to engage in UN-brokered negotiations "without preconditions". The US has said during consultations that resolution 2216 should not be a precondition for negotiations and can be implemented gradually.

However, despite members' agreement on the need for a political solution and concern about the humanitarian crisis, the Council has not put significant pressure on the government and coalition to negotiate without preconditions or publicly correct their interpretation of resolution 2216. This appears to be due to many members' relationship with Saudi Arabia and other coalition members, and a desire to not be too critical of coalition countries who are traditional allies. Russia has been the most willing to challenge the coalition, most recently proposing a press statement expressing deep disappointment in the failure for the latest announced talks to materialise, but then withdrawing the text after it claimed the message was watered-down by Jordan's amendments.

Members have been discussing a possible visit to the region, proposed by the UK, the penholder on Yemen. Lithuania has sought to use the 2140 Committee as a forum to address issues that have been difficult to discuss in the Council due to political sensitivities. Oman is the lone Gulf Cooperation Council member that did not join the coalition and has been facilitating negotiations with the Houthis and the GPC.

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UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN

Security Council Resolution	
14 APRIL 2015 S/RES/2216	This resolution established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.
Security Council Press Statements	
24 SEPTEMBER 2015 SC/12056	This press statement condemned a terrorist attack at a mosque in Sana'a.
11 SEPTEMBER 2015 SC/12042	This press statement welcomed the announcement of upcoming talks between the Houthis, GPC and the Yemeni government.
4 SEPTEMBER 2015 SC/12036	This press statement condemned the 2 September terrorist attacks in Sana'a and the killing of two ICRC staff.
Security Council Meeting Record	
19 AUGUST 2015 S/PV.7507	This was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien following his 9-13 August visit to Yemen and Djibouti.
Human Rights Council Document	
7 SEPTEMBER 2015 A/HRC/30/31	This was a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report on Yemen, which recommended establishing an international mechanism to investigate alleged human rights violations.

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SCR Past Publications

relating to Yemen

Chronology of Events

relating to Yemen and referred to in Security Council Report publications

Key UN Documents

relating to Yemen and referred to in Security Council Report publications

Fact Sheet on Sanctions

relating to Yemen

jump to:

October 2015 Monthly Forecast

Overview
In Hindsight: Security Council Decision-Making and the Veto
Working Methods
Women, Peace and Security
Security Council Elections 2015
Mali
Status Update
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Syria
Haiti
Somalia
Notable Dates
Yemen
Israel/Palestine
Lebanon
Counter-terrorism
Sudan (Darfur)

view all:

Monthly Forecasts