

Increasing Yemeni Women's Involvement in the Joint Declaration Negotiations



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جميعنا شركاء في صنع السلام

"We are all partners in making peace."

Lysistrata: In the last war we were too modest to object to anything you men did – and in any case you wouldn't let us say a word. But don't think we approved! We know everything that was going on. Many times we'd hear at home about some major blunder of yours, and then when you came home we'd be burning inside but we'd have to put on a smile and ask what it was you'd decided to inscribe on the pillar underneath the Peace Treaty. And what did my husband always say? 'Shut up and mind your own business!' And I did.

Stratyllis: I wouldn't have done!

Magistrate [ignoring her – to Lysistrata]: He'd have given you one if you hadn't.

Lysistrata: Exactly – so I kept quiet. But sure enough, next thing we knew you'd taken an even sillier decision. And if I so much as said, 'Darling, why are you carrying on with this silly policy?' he would glare at me and say, 'Back to your weaving woman, or you'll have a headache for a month. "Go and attend to your work; let war be the care of the menfolk."

Magistrate: Quite right too, by Zeus.

Lysistrata: Right? That we should not be allowed to make the least suggestion to you, no matter how much you mismanage the City's affairs? And now look, every time two people meet in the street, what do they say? 'Isn't there a man in the country?' and the answer comes, 'Not one'. That's why we women got together and decided we were going to save Greece. What was the point of waiting any longer, we asked ourselves. Well now, we'll make a deal. You listen to us – and we'll talk sense, not like you used to – listen to us and keep quiet, as we've had to do up to now, and we'll clear up the mess you've made.

—From 'Lysistrata' by Aristophanes (c.447 B.C.- c. 385 B.C.)

"So let me be clear: for women, violence is not a rightful or inevitable cost of participation in politics. Participation in politics is the way we end violence against women."

Madeleine K. Albright, first woman to serve as the United States Secretary of State





Map No. 3847 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS
January 2004

Figure

Figure 1. Map of Yemen.

**Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section**

Figure 1: Map of Yemen, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Figure 1: Map of Yemen, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

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Thank you to the women in my personal and professional life who have shown me how to be empowering, faithful, curious, and courageous. This report is my commitment to pay it forward.

Client

This report is prepared for the US Department of State Yemen Affairs Unit (YAU) Political Section. The YAU maintains the US' diplomatic engagement with the Yemeni government.

The author would like to note that she has interned virtually for the YAU since 2019.

Disclaimer

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency.

Additionally, this report reflects the situation in Yemen and its peace process as of April 14, 2021.

Honor Statement

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received help on this assignment.



Acronyms

AQAP - Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CSO – Civil Society Organization

GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council

GBV – Gender-based violence

IS-Y – Islamic State Yemen

KSA – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

NDC – National Dialogue Conference

ROYG – Republic of Yemen Government

OSESGY – Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to Yemen

STC – Southern Transitional Council

TAG – Technical Advisory Group

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WNC – Women National Committee

WPS – Women, Peace, and Security

YAU – Yemen Affairs Unit



Glossary

Abdradduh Mansour Hadi: has served as the President of the Republic of Yemen since 2012. He served as vice president under President Saleh.

Ali Abdullah Saleh: served as President of North Yemen from 1978 to 1990 and then as President of the Republic of Yemen from 1990-2011.

Civil Society Organization (CSO): a non-profit, volunteer and/or community group that complements the work of government and business.

Gender-based violence (GBV): a targeted, harmful acts against an individual based on their gender.

Mediator: a third-party that guides, structures, and assists two or more opposing parties reach an agreement to address a conflict.

Muhamasheen: are a marginalized minority that trace their origin to either Abyssinian lineage or to the Red Sea coastal plain. The UN estimates there are about 3.5 Muhamasheen in Yemen.

Negotiator: someone who represents one of the opposing parties in formal dialogues.

Observer: someone who monitors and watches a Track I negotiation.

Signatory: an individual, who is a representative of the conflicting party, an observer, a witness, or a regional ally, who directly signs the agreement.

Southern Movement: the political, societal, and economic mission to achieve South Yemen sovereignty; it is also known as al-Hirak.

The Three References: three international, regional, and national documents the Republic of Yemen Government refers to in the peace process as fundamental to the state. They include the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, UN Security Council Resolution 2216, and the National Dialogue Conference.

Track 1 Diplomacy: the events, communications, and avenues used by government officials and diplomats to carry out foreign policy.

Track 2 Diplomacy: the channels that informal actors use to engage with and influence foreign policy.

Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda: any document that references including women in the political, conflict resolution, or security sectors.

Zainabiyat: a Houthi-led all-female police force that is tasked with managing, controlling, and often, suppressing Yemeni women in Houthi-controlled territories.



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Executive Summary

The Yemen conflict is entering its sixth year of fighting. There have been no substantial, lasting national peace agreements to quell the conflict, transition into a post-conflict government, and begin reconstruction. Even more, there has been limited inclusion of Yemeni women in these national dialogues and peace processes. The Houthis and the Republic of Yemen Government currently participate in the United Nations-led Joint Declaration process to reach a nationwide ceasefire and an agreement on continued political conversations, raising the urgency of creating and implementing a strategy to include women.

Women's inclusion in peace negotiations and the post-conflict government is one critical step to ensure that the peace agreement is both comprehensive and lasting. When women are formally and meaningfully included in the peace process, the deal is more likely to hold over the following years. The agreement is also more likely to have public support, as women are seen as honest brokers. In Yemen, women have been instrumental in mediating local conflict, delivering humanitarian aid across the front lines, and advocating for their participation at the national and international levels.

Bearing in mind its specific mandate and diplomatic tools, the US Embassy Yemen has the opportunity to lead international efforts for women's inclusion in the peace process.

This APP uses four criteria to evaluate each alternative: alignment with US embassy objectives, political feasibility, effectiveness, and safety and security.

This APP evaluates five alternatives:

1. Supporting an UN-led quota for Yemeni women as negotiators in the Joint Declaration,
2. Updating the Integrated Country Strategy for Yemen,
3. Issuing an internal quota for embassy meetings,
4. Helping create a Yemeni Youth Parliament, and
5. Meeting regularly with the Women National Committee,

After evaluating each of these options, this APP recommends supporting an UN-led quota for Yemeni women as negotiators in the Joint Declaration *and* updating the Integrated Country Strategy for Yemen. These alternatives will be the most effective and politically feasible in supporting women's direct involvement in the Joint Declaration process. Through these alternatives, the embassy can also allow women to be as public as they would like with their participation in the peace process. These alternatives are also effective, as they help instigate and support long-term support in Yemen while amplifying Yemeni women's voices.



The Problem

As a fractured Yemen enters its sixth year of fighting, women continue to be systematically unrepresented and barred from peace processes. There were no women formally involved in the Stockholm Agreement and the Riyadh Agreement negotiations, brokered by the United Nations and Saudi Arabia, respectively. As an informal influence in negotiations and a supporter of strong governance and women's empowerment, the U.S. Embassy to Yemen must define its strategy to support Yemeni women in the formal peace negotiations and interim government.

The Yemen Affairs Unit Political Section

The Department of State seeks to advance US interests through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance. To accomplish these goals, the US Embassy Yemen (Yemen Affairs Unit-YAU) looks to understand the political, economic, and security environment. The YAU Political Section covers a vast portfolio of topics, working with the Economic, Public Diplomacy, Defense, and US Agency for International Development sections to provide a wholistic approach. The YAU works closely with the United Nations and regional partners to reach a political solution to the current conflict. US Special Envoy to Yemen Timothy Lenderking serves as a liaison between the UN-led peace process and the US government, complementing the work of US Ambassador to Yemen Henzel and the YAU team.



Background

International Efforts and the Role of Women in Peace Processes

The prior 75 years have brought monumental and fundamental changes to how the international community supports and includes women in initiatives and policies. Established in 1946, the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women formally solidified international efforts dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality. The 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights further included women as equals. An increase in women's rights movements over the following two decades led to the creation of the Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, a critical international document that urges national action plans to address gender-based violence (GBV) (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, n.d.). Leading up to the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, international conversations about women's empowerment primarily focused on gender and sexual-based violence that occurred in conflict zones. In 1995, the conversations on women's involvement in political and peace processes expanded the ways in which the international community began to consider how to empower women.

In 2000, the UNSC passed Resolution 1325, the first document that required signatories to support women's participation in the peace process and post-conflict society, protect women and girls from wartime gender-based violence, and prevent the breach of women's rights (What Is UNSCR 1325?, 2020.). Subsequent UNSCRs recalibrated the lenses through which the international community viewed conflict and women's roles in supporting peace efforts, but there remains a large gap in women's participation in such spaces [Appendix A].

An analysis of 156 peace agreements from 1989 to 2011 found that when women formally participate in the peace process as an observer, negotiator, mediator, or signatory, the agreement is 20 percent more likely to hold over the next two years and 35 percent more likely to hold over the next fifteen years (Stone, 2014). Similarly, when civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, participate formally, the peace agreement was 64 percent less likely to fail (Nilsson, 2012). In 2012, UN Women reported that women made up two percent of mediators, four percent of witnesses and signatories, and nine percent of negotiators in formal post-conflict talks from 1992 to 2011 (O'Reilly et al., 2015). In 2019, UN Women concluded that from 2012 to 2019, women as negotiators increased by four percentage points, from nine percent in 2011 to 13 percent (*Women's Participation in Peace Processes | CFR Interactives*, n.d.).

In addition to increasing the likelihood of sustainable peace, women in peace talks create a consensus-building environment that helps bring the peace talks to the final stages, often when discussions have stalled or faltered (UN Women, 2015). Women have also been noted to build diverse coalitions across political, sectarian, and religious lines.

The Council on Foreign Relations notes that women are seen as honest brokers in negotiations. Due to their systematic exclusion from formal processes and operation outside of pre-existing government and societal structures, women are often seen as impartial. Based on an analysis of forty peace processes since 1990, women's organizations were not recorded to have led negotiations astray (*Women's Participation in Peace Processes | CFR Interactives*, n.d.).

Women in formal roles during the peace process have been praised for their ability to broaden the agenda and make the agreement text more inclusive. With their lived experiences, women are often able to raise social issues in the negotiations, addressing many sources of the conflict directly. While there have been few women at the table, there have also been few references to women and



gender-based violence in the peace agreements. An analysis of 1,168 peace agreements from 1990 to 2014 showed that only 210 (18 percent) and 46 (4 percent) of agreements referenced women or gender-based violence, respectively (*How Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution Advances U.S. Interests*, 2016.).

In addition to including gendered language, women at the table can influence how the interim-government and political landscape may look following an agreement. There have been agreements in which a quota for the future composition of candidates, local leaders, and interim-government ministers represented by a certain percentage of women, paving a way for nationwide women's representation in government [Appendix B]. Women's political participation is important both to inspire the next generation but also because has been associated with low levels of conflict relapse (Stone, 2014).

U.S. Policies on Women, Peace, and Security

The US plays a critical, supporting role in advancing the rights of women and girls globally while maintaining cultural integrity and autonomy. At the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, then-First Lady Hillary Clinton declared that women's rights were human rights, launching international efforts to empower women more intently.

The Obama Administration initiated landmark foreign policy to include women and girls more centrally. In 2009, Melanne Verveer was appointed as the US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues to direct the Office of Global Women's Issues, a position she served in until 2013. In 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explicitly outlined the importance of including women and girls in US foreign policy. The following year, the US announced its National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, intertwining women and girls' experiences into US foreign policy (*US National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security*, 2011.). The US was one of 69 countries to launch a National Action Plan to address women's involvement in the peace and stabilization process. The Obama Administration established the White House Council on Women and Girls to implement this strategy with the Departments of State, Justice, Treasury, Homeland Security, and Defense, along with the US Mission to the UN, the USAID, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Office of the US Trade Representative.

In 2017, the Women, Peace, and Security Act was signed into law and highlighted the continued, critical link between lasting peace and women's participation. The Trump Administration's US Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (2019) replaced the landmark National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2011) and provided further guidance on how the US government planned to implement the WPS Act (2017). The National Security Strategy states that political empowerment and equality includes the "end state whereby women can meaningfully participate in preventing, mediating, and resolving conflict and countering terrorism, in ways that promote stable and lasting peace, including in conflict-affected areas" (*National Security Strategy*, 2017). US missions and bureaus then developed the WPS Agenda and Implementation Plan (2020) to include an annual review of the department's effort to support the plan.

The Biden Administration established the White House Gender Policy Council in 2021, which coordinates efforts among the government to address gender equality and equity (Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council, 2021). The Biden Cabinet has the greatest degree of gender parity of any presidential administration, highlighting the immense change that a leader can make by directly creating formal space for women at the table.



Additionally, Secretary of State Blinken has stated that women and girls' empowerment are a critical pillar of US foreign policy.

However, these US and international commitments have been tested as they respond to the war in Yemen. Since early 2015, the Republic of Yemen Government and the Houthi movement have been fighting for control in north and central Yemen. Clashes also occur across the south with various southern separatist groups, but most notably the Southern Transitional Council [Appendix C]. From six years of fighting, about 20.7 million people of Yemen's 30.5 million population need humanitarian assistance, with at least 17 million in need of urgent food assistance (*Yemen Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*, 2021.). The conflict has led to at least 100,000 casualties directly from the various types of violence. An additional 130,000 casualties are attributed to indirect causes, such as lack of food, medical care, and infrastructure. There are an estimated 4 million internally displaced persons and 137,479 refugees and asylum seekers in the country (*Yemen Complex Emergency Fact Sheet*, 2021.). There are also an estimated 16.2 million people that are acutely food insecure, primarily in northern Yemen. Fuel shortages, price increases, delayed salary payments, and low remittances due to Covid-19 have placed an additional strain on Yemen's economy.

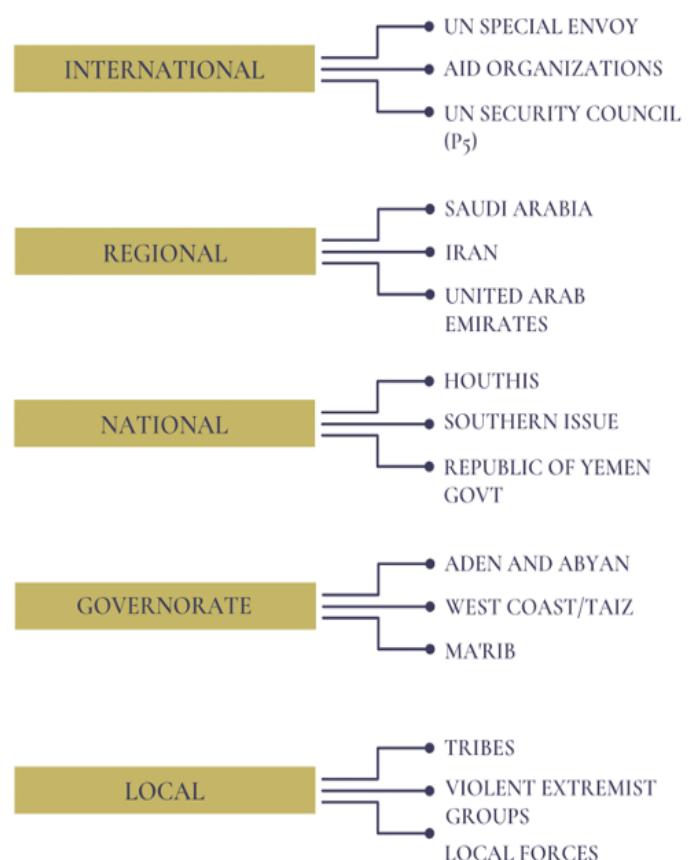


Figure 2: The Five Layers of the Yemen Conflict

Previous Attempts for Peace in Modern Yemen

In 2011, protests across the Middle East broke out, calling for more transparent governments, stronger economic policies, and greater societal freedoms. Protests occurred in Sana'a, where people gathered in Change Square to demand that President Ali Abdullah Saleh step down. Following President Saleh's resignation in November 2011, Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi, the vice president under President Saleh, was elected as the interim president of the Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG). Since 2011, there have been six high-level events to try and find a political solution to the conflict. Throughout these six events, Yemeni women have hardly been included in formal, substantive roles.

1. The National Dialogue Conference

The National Dialogue Conference, from 2013 to 2014, was the first reconciliation process in Yemen following the Arab Spring protests. The NDC outlined the structure of the new Yemeni government. The NDC Preparatory Committee was prepared by a team with 19 percent women representation. The NDC committee outlined quotas for each participant group: 30 percent for women, 20 percent for youth, and 50 percent for the southern movement (Schmitz, 2014.). In addition to the quotas, Yemeni women had an independent delegation of 40 seats (Schmitz, 2014.).



The NDC consensus committee was 25 percent female, which was significant as women involved in negotiations often carry the task of building consensus across warring parties (UN Women, 2015).

2. UNSC Resolution 2216

In December 2014, the Houthi movement took over government buildings in Sana'a, forcing the ROYG to re-locate to Aden. After Sana'a fell, fighting escalated between the ROYG, supported by its regional partners, against the Houthis, and its regional support, which created the need for new peace accords to meet the changing environment. The UNSC adopted Resolution 2216 (2015) in effort to bring all parties to a ceasefire and to implement all previous resolutions. The resolution document requested that women be included in the political process.

3. Kuwait Talks

In 2016, the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security were invited to the Kuwait talks by the United Nations Special Envoy but were not directly involved. Following these discussions, three of the 34 ministers were women, and two of the women previously had held a ministerial position (OSESGY, 2020).

4. The Stockholm Agreement

The Stockholm Agreement of 2018, brokered by the UN OSESGY and between the Houthis and the ROYG followed intense battles in Hudaydah, a critical port and region on Yemen's west coast. At the negotiations, UN Envoy Griffiths incorporated the Technical Advisory Group, a Yemeni women's group supported by the Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy to Yemen (The UN Special Envoy for Yemen Consults with the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group, 2020). Through the TAG, eight women were proximate to the agreement but were not formally involved.

5. The Riyadh Agreement

In 2019, Saudi Arabia brokered the Riyadh Agreement between the ROYG and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), following an escalation of fighting between the two parties in Aden, the de-facto capital of the internationally recognized government. No women formally observed, participated in, or signed the Riyadh Agreement. As part of the agreement, the ROYG and STC were tasked with creating a joint cabinet. In the joint cabinet, there are no women ministers. In 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor released its 2020-2022 National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security, but it remained proximate to the peace negotiations and was never integrated or adopted into the new cabinet (*Yemen NAP for Implementing UNSCR1325.Pdf*, 2020.).

6. The Joint Declaration

The UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, is currently brokering the Joint Declaration between the ROYG and the Houthi movement in Amman, Jordan. The Joint Declaration will enact a nationwide ceasefire and permit political negotiations to resume. There are no women involved in the formal Joint Declaration process. Special Envoy Griffiths has not publicly announced if the TAG is involved in these negotiations. The Joint Declaration leaked draft does not address gender-related issues or women's formal involvement in the political negotiations.

Regional Actors and International Alliances

Behind these previous attempts for peace are alliances that play a critical role on both sides of the Yemen conflict (Sharp, 2021.). To varying degrees, these regional actors also have ears of the



warring parties, making them essential in bringing parties to the table or implementing a deal. The ROYG receives financial, security, and political support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is recognized by the international community, including the US. A majority of the ROYG is situated in Riyadh in exile, although some ministers have begun to return to Aden, the de-facto capital. The United Arab Emirates supports the Southern Transitional Council. Iran and Hezbollah provide varying degrees of support to the Houthi movement based in Sana'a. Oman, close with and to Al-Mahra Governorate, has offered mediation support in the peace process.

US-Yemen Relations

While it works with regional partners to find a political solution, the US maintains a bilateral security relationship with Yemen. Since 2000, following the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula attack on the USS Cole in the Port of Aden, the US has supported training and capacity building in Yemen's security sector. The US then expanded its counterterrorism (CT) portfolio, including Yemeni women's training to conduct CT operations. In 2015, the US offered military and intelligence support to Saudi Arabia to help protect its territorial integrity from the Houthi movement based along the Yemeni-Saudi border. The Trump Administration's first year in office brought an increase in military events, but those subsided over the following three years. The Trump Administration emphasized the role of regional players

in the conflict, compared to the Obama Administration. However, both administrations were proximate to prior peace negotiations, but not directly mediating and coalescing.

Complementing its policies, the US Department of State presents annually the International Women of Courage Award to women leaders ("Secretary Antony J. Blinken at the International Women of Courage (IWOC) Awards Ceremony," 2021.). The Obama and Trump Administrations have honored four Yemeni women for their work to promote peace and alleviate suffering, highlighting the intersection of US policy in Yemen on women's empowerment [Appendix D].

In 2021, President Biden appointed Timothy Lenderking as US Special Envoy to Yemen to aid in increased efforts to support a political solution to the conflict through the UN ("U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Lenderking's Trip to the Middle East," 2021.). The US envoy's work complements that of the Yemen Affairs Unit (YAU) led by Ambassador Christopher Henzel.

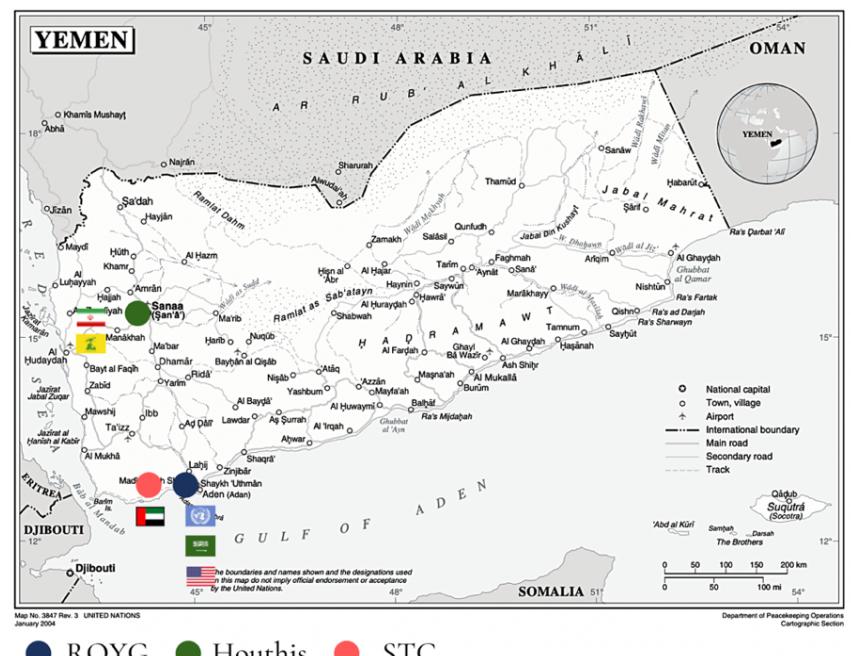


Figure 3: International Alliances in the Current Conflict



Why Aren't Women at the Table?

Contributing Factors

There are several contributing factors to Yemeni women's absence in the peace process, ranging from Yemen's social fabric and the status of women before conflict began to the perception of women's roles in conflict zones and systematic barriers.

1. Social Norms

Women account for 49.7 percent, about 15 million people, of Yemen's total population. Yemeni women face disproportionate levels of discrimination and violence in a society that is informed by religion, social and political traditions, and culture (The Struggle of Yemeni Women between War and Harmful Social Norms - Yemen, 2021.). A UN Population Fund survey noted that 71 percent of respondents in Sana'a, Aden, Lahj, and Taiz see a husband's violence against his wife as justified, noting that "a woman deserves to be punished by her husband if she leaves the house without his permission." (UNFPA, 2021.). With a civil war, men are on the frontlines, either fighting, injured, or killed. Yet, women remain at home with limited outside support, aiding in a difficult cycle to break.

2. Pre-conflict Inequality

Before the conflict, Yemeni women already experienced the highest degree of widespread, unequal treatment. Yemen received a parity score of 0.459 in 2006 from the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, ranking 115 out of 156, which was based on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In 2021, the same report ranked Yemen 155 out of 156 countries (Global Gender Gap Report 2021.). Yemen's parity score is 0.492, with economic participation (0.282), education attainment (0.717), health and survival (0.968), and political empowerment (0.001) declining. Under political empowerment, the women in parliament, women in ministerial positions, and years with female head of state each received a score of zero. It is clear there were systemic barriers preventing women from freely participating in political life, and the conflict has only worsened those hurdles.

3. Peace Process Structure

Another contributing factor to Yemeni women not being formally involved in the peace process is the structure of the process itself. Scholars Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabhaín, and Thania Paffenholz write that "If the goal of a peace process is only to end violence, then women—who are rarely the belligerents—are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants. If the goal is to build peace, however, it makes sense to gain more diverse inputs from the rest of society." This notion applies to how the current UN process is perceived, and arguably, how prior negotiations have occurred. This notion also helps explain the "wartime cabinet" mentality among the ROYG. The ROYG cautiously, if at all, includes women in the negotiating delegation and current cabinet because it's a wartime scenario, which the inclusion of women would detract from the "strong male response" perception and the men's ability to solve the conflict.

Political Barriers

Including women in the peace process requires overcoming several political barriers that have prevented significant work at each level. Women's participation in the peace process and the post-conflict government is politically salient among certain parties.



The ROYG has had to balance its efforts between the northern-based Houthi front and the Southern Movement. The current parliament is divided both within and between parties, and many members of parliament live in exile (*Yemen Relationship Matrix*, 2020.). Additionally, the Women National Committee of Yemen, a government-affiliated body founded in 1996, and the Supreme Council for Women, and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood coordinate gender-focused policies between local and national leaders (*Women National Committee*, n.d.). However, the conflict has diverted financial and personnel efforts from these institutions and lessened the political will to support pre-existing bodies that address women and gender topics.

The Southern Transitional Council has long advocated for southern Yemeni statehood and international legitimacy. The group's leaders recognize the difference women make in the negotiation and value the prior South Yemen priority of seeing women as equals. The STC has supported women in government to varying degrees previously, so this may serve as an opening, but the party may not be willing to create this space if it detracts from the likelihood of it joining the UN-brokered talks.

The Houthis' political will to include women in the peace process likely depends on their perceived opportunity to maintain legitimacy. The Houthi movement does have a Women's National Committee and women in its leadership ranks. However, the organization has been losing significant leaders due to COVID-19 or other undisclosed causes. It has also been reported that there are schisms within the Houthi leadership, raising concern about the group's sustainability as is. International actors that had maintained closer relations to the group are becoming less supportive of the group. In sum, the Houthis could be willing to adopt the inclusion of women in the formal peace process, but there remain several uncertain directions.

Another political barrier is that the conflict has become increasingly internationalized. As time progresses, regional actors cemented their support for their respective party. Now, to find a solution between the warring parties also equates to needing regional support to push the parties towards an agreement or serve as an oversight for its implementation.

Yemeni women have been stepping up since the conflict's start [Appendix E]. Formal participation in the peace process is of high political salience with Yemeni women, even if they have differing political beliefs.



Consequences

There are several consequences to consider if Yemeni women are not included in the Joint Declaration talks, subsequent political considerations, or Stockholm Agreement (2018) and Riyadh Agreement (2019) implementation agreements. These consequences include, but are not limited to, witnessing a disconnect between the local and national leadership, a continuation of increased gender-based violence against women, and a continuation of armed conflict across the country.

Disconnect Between National and Local Leaders

The Yemeni presidential cabinet appoints governors, which have much more influence over local society and affairs than the national government. Female appointment opportunities may be more significant with women in peace negotiations and interim government, influencing both the national-gubernatorial relations and the connection between governors and constituents. Yemeni women are inconsequential to local governance and stability, as they have local context, networks, and access (O'Reilly et al., 2015). For example, Ma'rib tribeswomen have significant influence, as their gossip will focus on men who do not take revenge to solve a conflict. These women are then able to influence tribal leaders who have the authority to arbitrate resolutions. Tribal traditions and women's roles in tribes vary, but it is critical to note how Yemeni women have mitigated conflict locally (Women and Conflict in Tribal Yemen, 2020). A consequence of not incorporating Yemeni women in the national interim government and peace negotiations is losing a vital connection between local and national women leaders (O'Reilly et al., 2015).

Continued Gender-Based Violence

Of the 1,187 agreements signed between 1990 and 2017, about 60 contain provisions addressing gender-based violence (Hudson et al., 2009). Reports of gender-based violence (GBV) in Yemen increased by 36 percent from 2016 to 2017, with two million women and girls were at risk of GBV, and 52,000 women were at risk of sexual violence, including rape (United Nations Population Fund, 2019). Additionally, about 17 percent of women ages 15-19 are part of a forced or early marriage (United Nations Population Fund, 2019). With no women at the negotiating table, conflict-related GBV accountability is not likely to be addressed, continuing the disproportionate harm women face (O'Reilly et al., 2015). GBV victims are then left with no national advocate or accountability mechanism (O'Reilly et al., 2015).

Negotiation Fatigue and Continued Armed Conflict

Women's participation in the peace process makes the agreement 20 percent more likely to hold in the following two years (Paffenholz et al., 2016.). Fifteen years later, the deal is 35 percent more likely to be in place if women are involved (Paffenholz et al., 2016.). The Republic of Yemen Government called the Stockholm Agreement (2018), which had six women proximate during the negotiations, ineffective and out of touch. With Yemeni women not participating, the negotiated peace lacks legitimacy, support, and representativeness. By not including women in the formal peace process, Yemen's government severely risks continuing the war.



The Economic Costs of Not Including Women in the Peace Process

Yemen will incur dramatic costs if the war continues because women are not included in the peace process. The United Nations Development Program estimates that Yemen will lose \$181 billion in economic output if large-scale fighting continues through 2022 (United Nations Development Program, 2019). The costs incurred by the Yemeni government as a result of continued conflict may be challenging to recover from financially and may place spending constraints in sectors that could help advance women's issues. Women at the peace table may be able to direct interim government funding and policies towards alleviating financial burdens on families who have lost their primary income source from the war.

Equity Concerns

Several equity concerns arise from the consequences of not including Yemeni women in peace talks. First, the Yemeni penal code and Islamic Sharia law do not protect and often punish the LGBTQ+ community (Yemen LGBTI Resources | Rights in Exile Programme, n.d.). Yemeni LGBTQ+ rights advocates face punishment from other governments in the region, even if they are outside of Yemen (Saudi Arabia, 2020). While there is sparse information on the effects, the consequence of not including women in the peace process to address gender-based violence at a national level may only exacerbate and exclude the LGBTQ+ community.

The home governorate of Yemeni women who can participate in peace negotiations is an equity concern to consider. Yemeni women who were involved in public life before the conflict are more likely to continue to be involved in public life during the conflict, which is mostly observed in Aden, Al-Jawf, coastal Hadramawt, Sana'a, Shabwa, and Taiz (USAID Yemen Gender Analysis, 2020.). Whereas, women who were not involved in these efforts continue to not be involved, even during the conflict, which is most notable in Al-Bayda, Al-Dali', and Wadi Hadramawt (USAID Yemen Gender Analysis, 2020.).

The continued conflict may lead those who have the economic means to leave Yemen for an extended time may do so for safety, health, and well-being. Yemenis, with a financial advantage, may leave the country to avoid a worsening conflict. Conversely, the diaspora of Yemeni women may not be viewed with legitimacy by women in the country, since they have had different lived experiences during the current conflict (USAID Yemen Gender Analysis, 2020.).

A vulnerable, marginalized population in Yemen are the Muhamasheen, who operate outside of the Yemeni tribal and social structure, which has compounded into extensive discrimination ("The Historic and Systematic Marginalization of Yemen's Muhamasheen Community," 2019.). The UN estimates that there are about 3.5 million Muhamasheen currently living in Yemen. The war has exacerbated systemic discrimination against Muhamasheen. Women in the peace process are known to bridge systemic barriers for other populations to participate, which would allow for a greater effort to include Muhamasheen leaders.

Last, Yemeni women negotiators may be able to discuss protection efforts for Yemenis living with disabilities. The World Health Organization estimates that about five million Yemenis have a disability, accounting for about 15 percent of the country's population (*Excluded Living With Disabilities in Yemen's Armed Conflict*, 2019). Yemeni women have started non-profits to elevate the voices of Yemenis with a disability, signaling that this area of inclusion could be discussed in peace talks or subsequent policy conversations.



Literature Review

The peace process timeline can be an informative organizational tool through which to consider interventions and supporting policies. This literature will review the overall data that informs WPS-focused agenda and the ways in which women were active, formal participants at a particular stage in the process. This is to recognize the substantive role that the agreement text holds, but to emphasize the fluid nature of openings to include women formally.

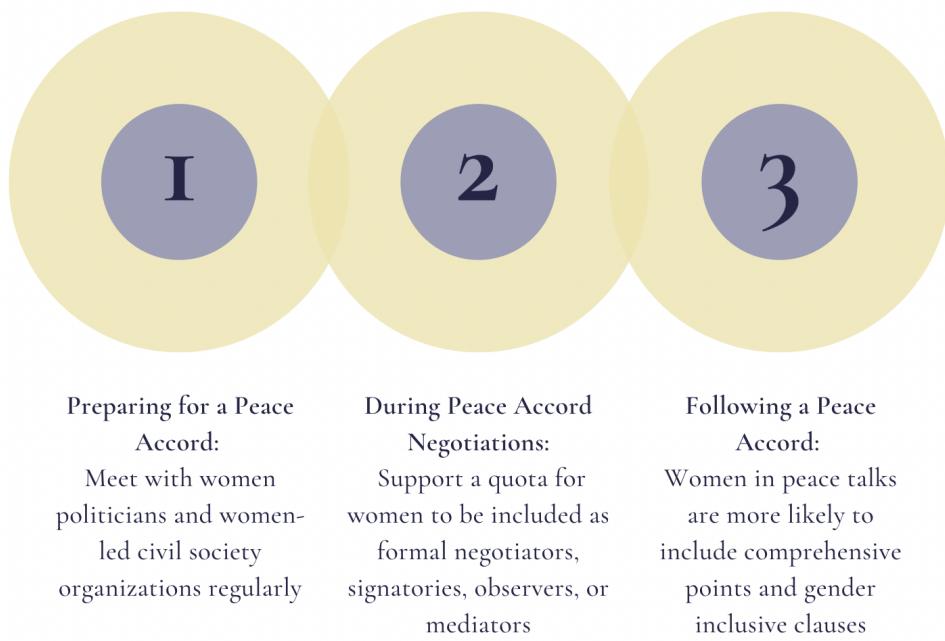


Figure 4: Entry Points for Women in the Peace Process

Preparing for a Peace Accord: The Inclusion of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a unique role in peace processes, as they often represent a wide array of interests and voices. The inclusion of CSOs in the peace processes is often referred to as “Track II” diplomacy, compared to “Track I.” Regardless of track, peace accords are 36 percent more likely to succeed when CSOs participate (Nilsson, 2012). Local and international organizations often lobby for CSO participation, rather than the mediating or negotiating parties, leading for some conclusions to be inconclusive (Paffenholz et al., 2016.). The role of women-led CSOs is highly debated, as the time, an invitation, and context vary and matter (Paffenholz et al., 2016.). Women-led CSOs are often seen as tangential to formal peace negotiations, and there is little evidence to show the significance of them participating in the formal peace talks (Paffenholz et al., 2016.). However, CSOs capture the role of local and national contexts in the peace process, which provide for a greater representation of lived experiences in the conflict. One gap that the literature leaves is the degree of experience, connection, and organization of effective CSOs in the peace process.

The 2015 peace negotiations in South Sudan enabled CSOs to play a pivotal role in transitioning conflict to an interim deal, and eventually, into a long-term peace accord in 2018 (South Sudan | CFR Interactives, n.d.). Created in 2014, the Women’s Bloc of South Sudan formally observed and signed an agreement that included a 35 percent quota for women in transitional executive institutions. It is essential to acknowledge that South Sudanese women accounted for 30 percent of the negotiators and 20 percent of signatories in the 2015 agreement. In the 2018 agreement, 33



percent of the delegates were women, 20 percent of the signatories were women, and women CSO leaders were official observers (South Sudan | CFR Interactives, n.d.). This CSO bloc may have primed the environment for women to participate in the peace process as part of the two parties, not in proximate roles, and primed an environment that was welcoming for more inclusive participation. Women-led CSO participation in South Sudan is significant, given that the bloc was a formal observer in Track I efforts, allowed for greater public accountability, and did not face aggression from traditional parties [Appendix E].

During Peace Accord Negotiations: Quotas

During a negotiation, quotas are used to cement either the negotiation team or the post-conflict government. Quotas guarantee women a space in the post-conflict government to practice policymaking, networking, and coalition building, providing a certain momentum that has not been replicated elsewhere (UN Women, 2015.).

Yemen's National Dialogue Conference quotas for the participant groups helped bring women to the table, as 28 percent of all participants, 161 of 565, were female (UN Women, 2015.). The NDC quotas were influential in bringing women to the table and discussing topics such as the minimum age of marriage, a quota in parliament, and the right to education and work. However, the armed conflict soon broke out after the accord, so the quotas' long-term effects are inconclusive. While challenging to isolate the immediate effects of the NDC quotas, they remain significant as women did participate (Schmitz, 2014).

The International Crisis Group's March 2021 report, *Why Should Peacebuilding in Yemen Become More Inclusive?*, highlights the challenges in implementing a quota in the Yemen context. Building on the importance of women and civil society being included in "day zero" conversations, the report rightly highlights the diversity among Yemeni women, noting their roles as political party members, armed group members, independents, and civil society leaders. The Crisis Groups highlights previous attempts to implement a thirty percent quota by the previous UN special envoy and the critical role that Western diplomats had in supporting Yemeni women (*Why Should Peacebuilding in Yemen Become More Inclusive?*, 2021). While hard to capture quantitatively, the ways in which diplomats support the quota adoption and implementation is critical to its success. The Crisis Group amplifies the lived experiences and aspirations of Yemeni women to be involved in politics, which is perhaps more convincing than the data itself.

During Peace Accord Negotiations: Female Negotiators

The success of peace processes is reflective of the degree of inclusivity of the negotiating parties. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted about six percent of signatories, 6 percent of mediators, and 13 percent of negotiators in significant peace processes (*Why Should Peacebuilding in Yemen Become More Inclusive?*, 2021). However, the inclusion of women at various stages and in a myriad of roles is nuanced. The Council of Foreign Relations Women in Peace program houses data only on women's role as official delegations in the final round of peace talks. This methodology excludes the role women play throughout the process and does not account for any prejudice or exclusion women face as the warring parties come closer to a peace deal. Nevertheless, this data profoundly shows how few women, on average, have a formal role in the peace process as an agreement becomes more tangible.



Several states helped broker Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 to bring an end to the Bosnian War. There were no women negotiators, mediators, representatives, or signatories during these talks, despite U.S. Ambassador to the UN Madeline Albright's call for such participation (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Even though Bosnian women began to form political parties, the overwhelming display and desire for nationalism from male-dominated parties overpowered the female policymakers' inclusion. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Council of Ministers has four females of 67 appointed positions, and the central government does not have a woman minister. The state remains relatively weak and decentralized (Feminist-Reinterpretation-Dayton-Peace-Accords.Pdf, n.d.). The low representation of Bosnian women in government may be attributed to the absence of female negotiators, mediators, and signatories in the Dayton Peace process. Bosnia and Herzegovina shows the difficulty of including women in a post-war government if women are not included in the formal peace agreement process in an official role.

Following a Peace Accord: Post-Conflict Elections

A study of 98 peace accords from 2000 to 2016 showed that allocations in the peace document could lead to a nine percent increase in female political representation post-conflict (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020.). Perhaps this data over-simplifies the local context in which shifts like this may occur or does not signal the additional steps taken to ensure this was implemented; however, it is important to consider the monumental impacts the text of an agreement could lead to. This data also suggest that the peace negotiations' topics can include long-term goals of the country to make its political environment more welcoming, or at least more accessible, to women candidates. Despite the nuances that each environment holds, the opportunity to not only include women in the peace talks but also pave a path for continued participation is critical to consider.

Literature Review Conclusion

These examples serve as a menu of ways in which women have been supported to join formal peace negotiations. First, understanding the sophistication of the negotiations can provide guidance on best practices for the YAU to implement. The current data sources and WPS scholars are clear in definition, methodology, and analysis, which provide a comprehensive foundation from which to learn. There will always be local contexts, histories, and events that cannot be captured with quantitative data, which is why personal accounts and qualitative data can provide compelling evidence for a certain program. Third, the complexities of negotiations highlight the openings in which the YAU or the envoy could interject or lobby for a change. Perhaps the most important takeaway is that these initiatives take intentional and consistent action for change to settle and take place.



Criteria

Bearing in mind the variety of interventions that could occur during the peace process, the following criteria will be used to assess the alternatives presented to the US Embassy in Yemen Political Section. These criteria include alignment with US objectives in Yemen; political feasibility; effectiveness; and security.

Alignment with US Objectives in Yemen

The US Embassy Yemen values finding a political solution to the war in Yemen. It aims to find lasting peace between the warring parties and lasting relief to the Yemeni people. Alongside the UN and regional partners, the US looks to create a ceasefire and then support negotiations for a peace settlement. This criterion will examine how the alternative matches the US objective in Yemen to find a political settlement. The special envoy has indicated he hopes to have a cohesive response across the executive and legislative branches, so the alternatives will be measured against the multiple bureaus' country plans and strategies. This will primarily be done by comparing the language from the bureaus to the alternatives. Additionally, the 2017 Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security will be used to provide additional information on the Department of State's strategy in the WPS space to assess the alternatives for this project.

Political Feasibility

The political feasibility criterion will examine how the inclusion of women in the formal peace process may be received by the involved parties. This criterion must consider the complex relations among and within Yemeni political parties and the internationally recognized government. It should also consider how the Houthis and the Southern Transitional Council may accept the inclusion of women in the formal negotiating process. Additionally, this criterion will also consider the willingness of the US and UN delegations to adopt the alternative. This criterion will also examine the alternative's ability to be carried out in the absence of regional and international actors. An important aspect of the conflict's resolution is putting Yemeni voices at the center of any decision. This criterion will be measured on a scale of low, medium, and high interest to adopt the alternative. The analysis will include why a party is more likely to adopt the alternative, and what, if any, political ramifications may occur. This criterion will use stakeholder analysis to determine how successful the alternative may be among the involved parties.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion will consider the degree to which women are included in the formal peace process as a result of the alternative. The percentage of women as part of the formal negotiation delegations will be one metric to measure this criterion. The root of the problem is that there are no women involved in the current formal peace talks or in the interim, internationally recognized government. Therefore, an effective alternative would lead to women formally involved in those roles. It could be argued that effectiveness should measure if a peace deal is reached, but that issue is outside the scope of the current issue and may be one that female representation may solve. The effectiveness criterion will also consider how men counterparts are included and worked with to show the importance of meaningfully including women in the formal process. The effectiveness criterion should be measured on a direct or indirect scale. Direct meaning that it would create a clear, uninterrupted path for Yemeni women to formally participate



in the peace process. Indirect meaning that the alternative elevates the voices of Yemeni women, focusing on additional measures related to peace talks.

Safety and Security

A US foreign policy pillar is to do no harm. This criterion will consider the safety and security of women who are involved in the peace process. When women have been formally included in the peace process or post-conflict government in conservative societies, they may face continued discrimination. This may be measured by the likelihood that they receive verbal or nonverbal threats towards them directly. Moreover, the Joint Government's return to Aden in December 2020 was met with a Houthi-instigated and intentional explosion to deter, harm, and instill fear in the government. This incident may influence future conventional threats, placing those associated with the internationally recognized government in harm's way. This particular type of threat is difficult to predict, as the airport attack came as a surprise, but it is something to monitor, in addition to the verbal threats the women may receive.

Absent Criteria

The criterion absent from this list is financial costs. There is little information on the financial cost associated with addressing the inclusion of women in the formal peace process directly. Much of the incurred costs may be associated with the work of the diplomats, as this falls under their portfolios. There may be costs associated with programs that development organizations conduct to support women in the political space, and there are costs associated with the negotiations, neither of which are clear nor available.



Alternatives

Based on the literature, the conflict, and the YAU's role, the following alternatives should be considered to include women in the formal peace process and post-conflict government: UN Envoy-Sponsored Quota, updating the US Government Integrated Country Strategy for Yemen, implementing a quota for internal embassy meetings, supporting the establishment of a Yemeni Youth Parliament, and coordinating with and supporting the Women National Committee.

United Nations Envoy Work

This alternative asks the US Special Envoy to Yemen and the US Ambassador to Yemen to work with the UN Special Envoy to Yemen and their respective teams to establish a quota to mandate that Yemeni women are formal participants in the Joint Declaration negotiations. This would have to be agreed upon by the involved Yemeni parties. Even more, the exact percentage of female representation should be determined by the negotiating parties. In prior peace negotiations, 30 percent has been the benchmark used to signify the percentage of women that should be at the table and has been a reflection of the goal of having at least three women at the table.

This alternative would require that the US envoy and UN envoy work with the warring parties to determine, solidify, or modify the peace talk negotiation composition, as talks are already underway. Specifically, the process should be made clear if the current negotiations are between the Houthis and the Republic of Yemen Government, or if other parties are included. The Southern Transitional Council makes up half of the Yemeni government cabinet, but it is not clear the degree to which it participates in the peace negotiations.

Internal Embassy Objectives

Within the US Embassy Yemen, the embassy staff and ambassador should consider including the women, peace, and security agenda into its country strategy. This would require the work of the embassy, the Department, and the US government for approval. The language of this particular point should be determined by the ambassador and the officers at post, noting that the country strategy will be shared across the inter-agency. The country strategy is updated with each administration and is a routine process to reflect the mission of the US embassy. The timeline for this alternative is immediate.

Regular Meetings with Yemeni Women Political and CSO Leaders

The US Ambassador should consider holding regular meetings with Yemeni female politicians to build connections, establish trust, and stay current on their policies and works. This would require coordination with embassy staff and the women. This alternative allows the ambassador and those in attendance to listen to the ideas of the women. For example, the Yemeni Women Solidarity has circulated its ceasefire plan for escalations in Ma'rib, central Yemen. The ambassador could meet with the group on their specific plan during the regular meeting, as it is a topic the international community is concerned about at present. In this alternative, the embassy can either publicize these meetings on its social meeting platforms or through department-wide press statements or it can keep these meetings out of the public eye. The meetings signify the US resources and time spent listening to Yemeni women and hearing their policies.



Establishment of a Yemeni Youth Parliament

The embassy and its UN partners should begin to set the foundation for a Yemeni Youth Parliament. This parliament will be tailored towards Yemeni youth ages 16-25. A similar youth parliament exists in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Youth Parliament (AYP) with 122 members from the country's 34 provinces. The demographics of the parliament include 33 percent female, three percent disabled persons, and one percent each Hindu and Sikh. The parliament is a democratically elected organization and has a speaker of the parliament at its head. The body elected Florence Daqiq as their speaker, highlighting the support for women's leadership in this space. On the impact of the parliament, Mr. Daqiq stated "The AYP program taught me to be tolerant of other people's ideas. Through peaceful debate; we can resolve and settle our differences." (*Youth Parliament Takes on Conflict | Archive - U.S. Agency for International Development*, n.d.) The parliament is supported primarily by the United Nations Population Fund and the USAID Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project.

This would be an initiative that the US would have to bring to the UN and work within the organization to get started. It would also require the UN to conduct outreach through Yemeni sources to reach interested youth populations. The Afghanistan Youth Parliament took one month to set up, which the UN bodies should consider a similar time frame for Yemen.

Supporting the Women's National Committee

The WNC, founded in 1996, integrates and coordinate the national leadership with local authorities, serving as a unique connector. Since the conflict, the WNC has not been able to convene at its fullest capacity. However, with its mandate to implement the CEDAW and the Yemeni National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security for 2020-2022, the WNC plays a critical role in both combatting GBV but also connecting local governance with national platforms (*National Action Plan*, 2020). The WNC previously led influential workshops and conferences that many ROYG ministers and government officials have attended. The WNC is also affiliated with the ROYG, allowing for broader coordination among the other ministries to be more inclusive of women. This alternative would request that the YAU work with the US and UN Envoys to include the WNC in the peace process considerations. In addition to the targeted inclusion of the WNC in the Joint Declaration, the YAU should consider including the organization in its regularly scheduled political affairs meetings to receive consistent updates on WPS topics and serve as a form of accountability.



Assessment of the Alternatives

United Nations Envoy Quota

This alternative asks the US Special Envoy to Yemen and the US Ambassador to Yemen to work with the UN Special Envoy to Yemen and their respective teams to establish a quota to mandate that Yemeni women are formal negotiators and signatories in the Joint Declaration and its subsequent political consideration talks. This would have to be agreed upon by the involved Yemeni parties. Even more, the exact percentage of female representation should be determined by the negotiating parties. In prior peace negotiations, 30 percent has been the benchmark used to signify the percentage of women that should be at the table, and the UN Special Envoy has stated that “It strives to mainstream gender analysis and gender considerations in activities, planning and engagements, including by ensuring a minimum 30% representation of women in all OSESGY-led meetings and initiatives.” (Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, 2021). This alternative would require that the US envoy and UN envoy work with the warring parties to determine, solidify, or modify the peace talk negotiation composition, as talks are already underway. The Yemeni Women Solidarity Network has repeatedly recommended that within the 30 percent women quota, 50 percent are from southern Yemen and 20 percent are younger women.

Alignment with US objectives in Yemen

The US has made clear it will work alongside the UN Special Envoy to Yemen to help bring a political solution to the conflict. Through this support for the UN Envoy, who has stated that the office aims to ensure a 30 percent representation of women, it is clearly in the US’ interest to support establishing a quota for the Joint Declaration and its subsequent political considerations.

Political feasibility

The quota has a wide consensus among UN-affiliated organizations and partners, making it politically feasible to carry out. However, considering the diversity of Yemen’s political environment, the quota will have to be discussed with both sides: the Houthi movement and the Republic of Yemen Government. Based on how this is presented to the Houthi movement, the quota may be impossible to implement, as the group does not support women’s political participation. Additionally, the UN envoy has worked with the “bloc” which is a representative group of six Yemeni political parties to ensure women’s participation in the peace process. The involved parties include the Yemeni Socialist Party, Nasserite Party, General People’s Congress, Islah, Rabita, and Justice and Construction Party, which indicates that this platform has a broad consensus (Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, 2021).

Effectiveness

The quota mandates that women make up a portion of the delegation’s formal negotiating party for the Joint Declaration, effectively including women in the peace process. The quota is widely used, rendering it effective in making space for women at the negotiating table. However, the caveat for the quota’s effectiveness is the possibility that the women are prevented by their colleagues from participating significantly, making their presence fill a requirement rather than enhance peace talks. The quota does not address the inclusion of women in a post-conflict, transitional government; however, the UN envoy may decide to encourage the application of the quota into the next stages of Yemeni governance and its constitution. Moreover, with women formally participating on behalf of a negotiating party, they are more likely to include clauses on women’s inclusion moving forward, which makes this policy option highly effective.



Safety and security

The Joint Declaration negotiating parties and the content are relatively quiet and not publicized. This may hold true if the quota were to be mandated, which would lead to low security and safety risks for Yemeni women. However, Yemeni women may face various threats and harassment during the negotiations and generally if they are known to be associated with the talks. Therefore, the security and safety risks of the women due to quotas are inconclusive.

Internal Embassy Objectives

Within the US Embassy Yemen, the embassy staff and ambassador should consider including the women, peace, and security agenda into its country strategy. This would require the work of the embassy, the Department, and the US government for approval. The language of this particular point should be determined by the ambassador and the officers at post, noting that the country strategy will be shared across the inter-agency. The country strategy is updated every three years and is a routine process to reflect the mission of the US embassy. The timeline for this alternative is immediate.

Alignment with US objectives in Yemen

This alternative is directly related to US interests, as it is defining how the US agencies will approach its Yemen policy. By updating the country strategy, the US government can seamlessly and explicitly integrate the women, peace, and security agenda into its foundational policy platform. This document helps coordinate different sector's approaches, too. The embassy's efforts are complemented by the US defense, economic, and development sectors, which can only strengthen and target various elements through which women can be empowered and included.

Political feasibility

This alternative may have a wide consensus among the US government, especially as the Biden Administration has explicitly highlighted the need to make equal rights of women and girls a US foreign policy priority. This alternative does not necessarily involve Yemeni actors, but they may, and should be aware, that the US is clearly supporting women in the formal peace process.

Effectiveness

While this alternative does not directly create space for women in the formal peace process, updating the country strategy is effective in providing an authoritative precedent on why the US is advocating for these changes. This policy may be effective as it could open additional opportunities to formally include the women, peace, and security agenda in US-Yemen policy. For these reasons, this strategy is moderately effective in providing the groundwork for the US to advocate for women in the formal peace process.

Safety and security

The modifications to the US integrated country strategy for Yemen do not place Yemeni women in direct danger. There remain potential retaliatory risks that Yemeni women may face.

Quotas for Embassy Meetings

The US Ambassador should consider holding regular meetings with Yemeni female politicians to build connections, establish trust, and stay current on their policies and works. This would require coordination with embassy staff and the women. This alternative allows the ambassador and those



in attendance to listen to the ideas of the women. For example, the Yemeni Women Solidarity has circulated its ceasefire plan for escalations in Ma'rib, central Yemen. The ambassador could meet with the group on their specific plan during the regular meeting, as it is a topic the international community is concerned about at present. In this alternative, the embassy can either publicize these meetings on its social meeting platforms or through department-wide press statements or it can keep these meetings out of the public eye. The meetings signify the US resources and time spent listening to Yemeni women and hearing their policies. The US may consider implementing a quota for these meetings. For example, the embassy may consider creating a procedure that states that 30 percent of all meetings will be with women-led delegations.

Alignment with US objectives in Yemen

The US' interests in Yemen extend beyond finding a political solution; it is mindful of the economic and security situation in the country as well. With women intersecting at each of these policy issues, the embassy may find that it is in its interest to meet with a broader network of Yemeni leaders in the political, economic, and security sectors. This alternative is not restrictive to only political meetings, perhaps encouraging a comprehensive relationship with Yemeni women.

Political feasibility

This option may be politically feasible, but it largely depends on how supportive US embassy and envoy staff are to the procedure of ensuring a quota for meeting attendees. Among Yemeni parties, there may be informal discussions about this procedure, but it largely would be coordinated behind the scenes. Moreover, because Yemeni political parties and its women members are already meeting with the UN envoy, this option is politically feasible, as similar meetings are already taking place outside of the embassy.

Effectiveness

This policy option is not effective in including women in the formal peace process, but it is effective in providing exposure of women leaders and their policies to embassy and envoy staff. This can also be effective, as it provides a level of capacity building, institutional awareness, current programs and movements, which men are predominantly more exposed to. This indirect path may prove effective, as embassy and envoy staff are more familiar with Yemeni women leaders who cover a variety of policy issues, making the transition from embassy meetings to formal peace negotiations and transitional government discussions more malleable.

Safety and security

The US embassy staff, in this policy option, have the autonomy to determine how much to share on its channels publicly, which allows for an adaptive approach to the safety and security of Yemeni women. Similarly, Yemeni women may have the autonomy to determine if they share their embassy meetings with their channels, allowing them to do what they are comfortable with.

Yemeni Youth Parliament

The embassy and its UN partners should begin to set the foundation for a Yemeni Youth Parliament. This parliament will be tailored towards Yemeni youth ages 16-25. A similar youth parliament exists in Afghanistan with 122 members from the country's 34 provinces. The demographics of the parliament include 33 percent female, three percent disabled persons, and one percent each Hindu and Sikh (United Nations Population Fund, 2010). The parliament is a democratically elected organization and has a speaker of the parliament at its head. The parliament is supported primarily by the United Nations Population Fund, along with other donors. This would be an initiative that the US would have to bring to the UN and work within the organization



to get started. It would also require the UN to conduct outreach through Yemeni sources to reach interested youth populations. The Afghanistan Youth Parliament took one month to set up, which the UN bodies could consider the same time frame or an extended one.

Alignment with US objectives in Yemen

At present, the US objectives do directly align with an initiative such as the Yemeni Youth Parliament. There is recognition that empowering girls and boys is important for long-term development, but the youth parliament does not directly feed into the efforts to find a political solution in the country. Secretary Blinken has noted the importance of ensuring equal rights for both women and girls, which may shift US embassy policy. Therefore, at present, this policy option is ambiguous with US objectives in the country.

Political feasibility

The creation of the youth parliament may be politically feasible, as the international community and Yemeni stakeholders are concerned about nonviolent options for youth to join. However, the current Yemeni parliament is partially in exile, so there are fundamental, logistical concerns about where the youth parliament would occur. The Afghan Youth Parliament received support from the USAID Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project, and the Yemeni Youth Parliament would require similar US and international support (*Youth Parliament Takes on Conflict | Archive - U.S. Agency for International Development*, 2010.)

Effectiveness

While encouraging early political participation, the Yemeni Youth Parliament does not directly lead to women in the formal peace process. However, based on the Afghan Youth Parliament's composition is 30 percent women and has representation from youth with disabilities and religious and ethnic minorities, this is an effective option to not only encourage early political participation but also create an inclusive environment for the next generation of Yemeni leaders. The parliament also fosters critical conflict management, relational, and coalition building skills early in youths' career, making it an effective outlet.

Safety and security

With the ongoing conflict, there remain security risks for gatherings supported by the international community. For example, the Joint Government's return to Aden in December 2020 was met with a Houthi-instigated and intentional explosion to deter, harm, and instill fear in the government. This incident may influence future conventional threats, placing those associated with the internationally recognized government in danger. This particular type of threat is difficult to predict, as the airport attack came as a surprise, but it is something to monitor, in addition to the verbal threats the women may receive.

Supporting the Women National Committee

Through more regular meetings between the YAU and the WNC, there is a concerted effort to discuss women's inclusion and empowerment at a government-to-government level. This alternative differs from internal embassy meeting quotas, because this is a specific government organization. Given the war and the new cabinet under the Riyadh Agreement, the WNC's capacity and operating status is uncertain, so the targeted effort to work with the Yemeni government to renew the organization's work is critical.



Alignment with US Embassy Objectives

This alternative is aligned with the embassy's objectives to maintain government-to-government relations and support a political solution to the conflict. Independent from the aforementioned alternatives, this recommendation should be aligned because the WNC is affiliated and overseen by the ROYG. However, the addition of WPS language to the US Integrated Country Strategy only increases the WNC's importance to the YAU and department's objectives.

Political feasibility

This alternative is politically feasible because the YAU already maintains government-to-government relations with the ROYG. Additionally, within the Yemeni government, the president, prime minister, and government officials have varying roles and commitments to the WNC, making the organization part of their job responsibility. Previously, government officials have participated in WNC programming, making this option more politically feasible. However, it is not clear at this time how the conflict may have shifted government and local authority willingness to participate in WNC programming or include the organization in its plans. Additionally, the WNC's structure may not be seen as fully informed or inclusive among Yemeni women, so there could be a challenge in working with the infrastructure to ensure women's voices and concerns are reflected accurately.

Effectiveness

Through increased support by the YAU and the ROYG, the WNC is an effective long-term proposal to include women in formal decision-making processes at the local, governorate, and national government levels. This alternative may be effective in including women in the formal peace process by it serving as an organizing mechanism through which the women gather, coalesce, and coordinate. If the organization is bare, due to the conflict, then it will not be an effective option to increase women's participation in the peace process. However, the WNC has the possibility to serve as an effective coordination infrastructure for YAU and ROYG policies.

Safety and Security

The WNC and its affiliated employees can be a target for those against women's participation in conflict resolution, society, and government. There appears to be some flexibility for the degree of transparency in its employee base, providing an option for protection. Overall, the WNC has medium high security risks.

Recommendation

Based on the evaluative criteria, the US Embassy Yemen Political Section should first prioritize working with the UN Special Envoy to Yemen to mandate a 30 percent women quota for formal Joint Declaration discussions. As the Joint Declaration is a ceasefire agreement and political considerations will follow, the UN and US must decide when to announce this mandate and how to work with and communicate this change with the involved parties. The tradeoff with this alternative is that it is a temporary solution, whereas meeting regularly with Yemeni women and the WNC, recalibrating inter-agency goals, and supporting the creation of a youth parliament address long-term concerns. Another tradeoff with this alternative is that a quota does not ensure equal, meaningful participation in the talks, despite representation. Noting the US' urgency to finding a political solution and the influential role women play in creating sustainable peace, the quota mandate should be prioritized, because there is the opportunity to create change and elevate Yemeni women's voices at the most formal level of government. While working this avenue, the YAU should also begin to incorporate the WNC and other women's organizations and leaders into its regular scheduling.



An Evaluation of the Alternatives for the UN-led Joint Declaration Negotiations

	Alignment with US objectives in Yemen	Political feasibility	Effectiveness	Safety and security
Peace talk delegation quotas	Quotas jumpstart the inclusion and participation of women and is therefore clearly linked to US objectives in Yemen.	Quotas are feasible with the UN and US procedures but may not be received well by the Houthi movement. The STC may be inclined to adopt a quota but its involvement is unclear.	The quota directly creates a space for women's formal participation in the Joint Declaration.	Based on the publicity of the negotiating parties' delegation compositions, the included women
Internal embassy objectives	This policy supports US objectives in Yemen clearly, as it notes the role women can make in lasting peace, which is a goal of the US.	Departments of State and Defense, alongside USAID, contribute to the country strategy, presenting internal, bureaucratic considerations, rather than Yemeni political concerns.	Therefore, this policy is classified as indirect, because it does not formally include women in the peace talks.	This policy only references Yemeni women generally, making it a low risk for Yemeni women political figures.
Embassy meeting quotas	Equal meetings with Yemeni men and women political figures are indirectly aligned.	This may not be politically feasible, based on the bandwidth of the embassy staff. It will be politically feasible with Yemeni women political figures.	These meetings do not directly lead to more Yemeni women formally included.	There are medium security risks.
Yemeni Youth Parliament	A Yemeni Youth Parliament and the inclusion of women in negotiations and post-conflict government is ambiguous.	This is politically feasible but requires coordination across several US agencies and departments.	While it may help include Yemeni women in politics over time, this will not directly lead to Yemeni women formally included.	There are medium high security risks.
Support the Women's National Committee	This policy supports US objectives in Yemen clearly.	This option is moderately politically feasible but requires significant bureaucratic will.	This supports the formal, systematic inclusion of women in the ROYG.	There are medium high security risks.

Figure 5: An Evaluation of the Alternatives for the UN-led Joint Declaration Negotiations



Implementation Plan: Quota for Women Negotiators and Signatories

As the Joint Declaration is a ceasefire agreement and political considerations will follow, the UN and US must decide when to introduce the 30 percent quota mandate and how to communicate this change with the involved parties.

Stakeholder Analysis

Involved in the Joint Declaration negotiations are the Republic of Yemen Government representatives and the Houthi movement representatives. The latter two are the official parties negotiating, and UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths and US Special Envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking are also involved in the negotiations. UN Special Envoy to Yemen Griffiths has received push back from the Republic of Yemen Government for conceding too much to the Houthi movement in exchange for very little, jeopardizing his credibility and the negotiation flow. However, there has been a momentum increase with the new US special envoy to Yemen joining the Joint Declaration initiative, proving useful for building trust among the parties. The envoys are responsible for providing structure to the negotiations, for serving as

While the US and UN special envoys are advocates for including women in the formal peace talks, the Republic of Yemen Government and the Houthi movement are ultimately responsible for moving the 30 percent quota forward. They are responsible for organizing their delegations and communications internally to meet this requirement. Both negotiating parties have women within their ranks that could participate if they wanted to. These delegations are also responsible for ensuring that the women included are not pushed to the sidelines.

Perhaps most important are the women who would be participating in the formal negotiations. These women hold a vast array of political beliefs and lived experiences. They are the ones who have been advocating for a seat at the table and have been consistently excluded. The negotiating parties would need to show their support for women's substantive participation in the Joint Declaration process as a sign of honesty and integrity.

US Embassy Steps to Move the Quota Forward

First, this recommendation will have to be shared up through the embassy lineage to the ambassador and envoy. This can be done almost immediately through the appropriate messaging or meeting tools. The envoy would then coordinate with the UN envoy at the earliest convenience. The envoys should propose to the delegations a phased-in timeline that accounts for the notification and reasoning, a draft of their women participants, and when the complete delegation is expected to arrive in Amman, Jordan, where the negotiations are taking place. Throughout this time, the US embassy and the UN office should consider providing additional support if the delegations need assistance reaching out to the women, coordinating travel arrangements, or understanding why this is a shift in negotiation composition. The envoys should aim to have each delegation, including 30 representation from women, present in Amman within the next by the end of May, or as soon as possible.



A Potential Timeline to Implement the Quota Recommendation

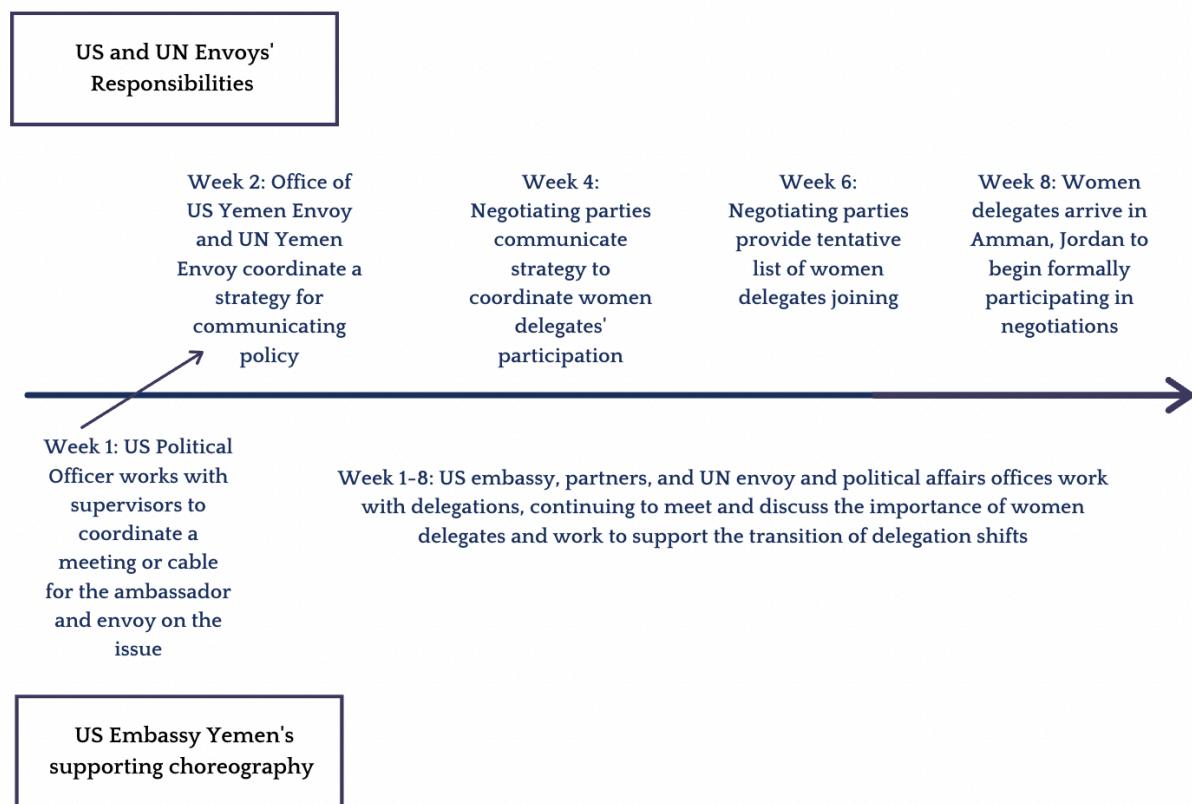


Figure 6: A Potential Timeline to Implement the Quota

Challenges

Both the Republic of Yemen Government and the Houthi delegations will likely be hesitant to accommodate this request because they do not have an interest in including women in a “wartime” situation. There are likely individuals within each delegation that will be more supportive of this policy relative to other members, making them natural partners for the US and UN to work with on including women. Similarly, Yemeni women who want to be part of the negotiations are not a monolith, and they have differing views on the degree to which they are included.

However, the tallest hurdle to overcome in implementing a 30 percent quota is showing the representatives how important, and consequential, it is for women to be formally involved in the negotiations. The current mindset is that the negotiating parties are acting on behalf of a country at war, and therefore, women should not be involved. There is a deep, urgent need to portray that when women are formally involved in the peace process, not only is the country’s population better represented, but the deal that women help reach is more likely to be effective and sustainable.

Practically, with the expansion of the delegations, the concerned parties will have to provide the resources to house the women participants in Amman. The funds for this should be provided by the UN Special Envoy’s Office, UN Women, or donors, so that the financial burden of delegations including women is not a barrier to their participation. The UN and relevant parties could also consider providing financial support to the women’s families to make their absence less of a hardship. This consideration should be supported by the UN and relevant parties but should



prioritize the women participating to have a say in these decisions, otherwise there is a risk of misreading the context and creating more harm and discomfort in the situation.

The US embassy, along with its British, French, Scandinavian, Omani, and Jordanian counterparts, can work with its contacts in the Yemeni government and Houthi movement. These consistent, systematic conversations are critical to always making the topic of women's inclusion a priority. Through these interactions, embassy officials are able to meet Yemeni men where they are, build rapport and trust, and show how it is beneficial for Yemen to empower women in this manner.

Another challenge is that the negotiations are fragile, and the parties want fundamentally opposing outcomes. The Houthis desire to maintain legitimacy and control, and the government does not want that post-conflict composition, which may increase resistance to any new proposal.

Conclusion

At the highest levels of involved negotiators, the quota recommendation is clear, requiring the delegations to include women to account for 30 percent of their party. However, the choreography behind the scenes is more informal, more fluid, and perhaps, more time-consuming to achieve the level of understanding and support from Yemeni men to make this recommendation meaningful. With the delicate negotiations and increased attention on the topic, there is an opportunity to respond with intention and focus, showing other US government posts how to support the inclusion of women in the peace process in a complex crisis.



Conclusion

In June 2020, Muna Luqman wrote, “Yemeni women are truly the everyday heroes.” In the current conflict, Yemeni women are a driving force to promote peace, mediate conflict, advocate for inclusion, and alleviate suffering unconditionally. They hold the power, will, and experience to inform a lasting peace in the country. Yemen has also shown that it has some semblance of bureaucratic infrastructure to support the inclusion and expansion of women in government, but there is an urgent need to provide the necessary support for this to occur. The YAU and the US government have the responsibility and the privilege to support Yemeni women in an integrative, consistent, and inclusive manner.



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Appendices

Appendix A: United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security

The most notable UNSC resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security. There are additional country-specific resolutions that include clauses on WPS.

Resolution name	Formal Citation	Date	Content
Resolution 1325	S/Res/1325	31-10-00	The first resolution that calls on the increase of women's representation in peace and security efforts.
Resolution 1327	S/Res/1327	13-11-00	Calls for the protection of women in armed conflict
Resolution 1820	S/Res/1820	19-06-08	Demands that parties to the conflict end sexual violence
Resolution 1888	S/Res/1888	30-09-09	Urges members to increase women's representation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding
Resolution 1889	S/Res/1889	05-10-09	Focused on post-conflict peace building
Resolution 1960	S/Res/1960	16-12-10	Suggests mechanisms to hold sexual perpetrators accountable
Resolution 2106	S/Res/2106	24-06-13	Include women's participation in combating sexual violence
Resolution 2122	S/Res/2122	18-10-13	Notes the importance of inviting women to participate in the peace and post-conflict process
Resolution 2272	S/Res/2272	11-03-16	Calls on parties to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict areas
Resolution 2331	S/Res/2331	20-12-16	Links trafficking in persons and sexual violence to acts of violent extremist groups
Resolution 2467	S/Res/2467	23-04-19	Calls for a "survivor-centered" approach to conflict zone sexual violence
Resolution 2493	S/Res/2493	29-09-19	Recommits to adopting WPS Agenda



Appendix B: Peace Agreement Text Examples

Text references to women and gender from 585 peace agreements from 1990 to 2009, adapted from UN Women:

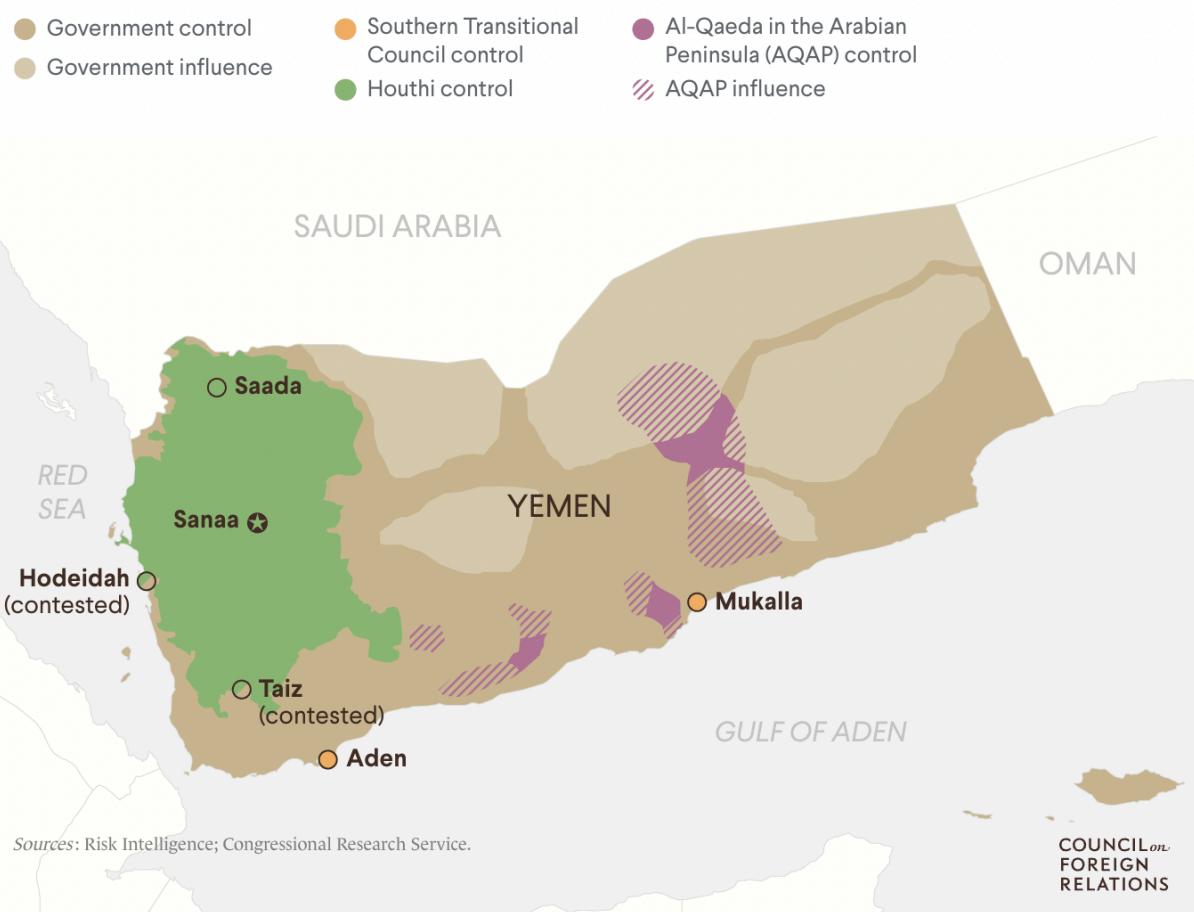
A general reference to political and legal equality on the basis of gender or non-discrimination	25
Reference to social equality or worker's rights with specific mention of women or gender	17
Explicit reference to sexual violence	17
Need to protect women's human rights or ensure the application of humanitarian law to women	16
A general reference to 'effective participation of women in politics or gender balance in appointments	15
Promotion of women's role in the implementation of the peace agreement (sometimes by insisting on the appointment of women to implementation bodies)	13
Reference to women and/or women's needs in rehabilitation or reconstruction	12
Promotion of women's organizations	9
Reserve seats or quotas for women in legislative or executive bodies	9
Reference to gender-based violence or violence against women	8
Needs of women and girl combatants in DDR process	7
Representation of women in the judiciary	4
Establishment of specific institution for women or gender equality as part of the new institutional configuration	4
Sexual violence as a ceasefire violation	4



Appendix C: Map of Yemen's Areas of Control

Yemen's Front Lines

Territorial control and influence as of February 2021



Appendix D: Yemeni Women Awarded the International Woman of Courage Award

The following women were awarded the Department of State's International Woman of Courage Award. These are only four of the many Yemeni women advocating for inclusion and peace.

Yasmin Alqadhi

In 2020, Yasmin al Qadhi, a Yemeni woman, was a recipient for her work through the Mareb Girls Foundation, an organization she and her sister founded in 2015 to combat child recruitment. She studied journalism in Sana'a, following the protests in Change Square in 2011.

Fadia Najeed Thabet

In 2017, Fadia Najeeb Thabet, a human rights activist and child protection officer, received the award. Her work focuses on supporting children who have experience trauma, in hopes of preventing them from joining the Houthi movement or Al-Qaeda.

Nihal Ali Al-Awlaqi

Nihal Ali Al-Awlaqi, a Yemeni lawyer and the Minister of Legal Affairs from 2016 to 2020, received the award in 2016 for her work in the legal sector. Nihal was a member of the National Dialogue Conference's State-Building Working Group and Constitutional Drafting Committee. She was part of the government's negotiating team in Geneva, Switzerland.

Reem Al Numery

In 2009, Reem Al Numery received the award for her work to combat child marriage. She has named to the *Time Magazine* 2010 100 Most Influential People in the World. Reem was forced to marry a relative at age 12 but was granted a divorce.



Appendix E: Yemeni Women-led CSOs

Name of Organization	Location	Led by	Purpose	Comment
Peace Track Initiative	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	Rasha Jarhum	A regional organization aimed at increasing women's inclusion in the peace process. PTI houses a Yemeni women's experts database.	
Mareb Girls Foundation	Mareb, Yemen	Yasmin Alqadhi	A development NGO concerned with women and girls participation in peace processes.	
Yemeni Women Journalists Network	Sana'a, Yemen	Cultural Media Center	An NGO affiliated advocating for women's rights in journalism.	The organization is a hub for those in the industry.
Women Solidarity Network	Online	Peace Track Initiative	This organization houses a directory of Yemeni women involved in politics, peace efforts, and civil society.	This organization was founded by Rasha Jarhoum and Muna Luqman, and it works closely with PTI.
Women 4 Yemen Network	Sana'a, Yemen		An advocacy-focused NGO on women in media and human rights	
Yemeni Women Pact	Aden, Yemen or Amman, Jordan	UN Women	The pact has at least 60 members and collaborates with the UN OSESGY.	Seven women from the Pact traveled to the Kuwait talks.
Food4Humanity	Sanaa, Yemen	Muna Luqman	An organization focused on humanitarian aid delivery	
Mothers of Abductees	Taiz, Yemen	Dr. Amat Al Salam	It prioritizes raising awareness of those forcibly displaced and negotiating prisoner exchanges	This organization helped negotiate the largest prisoner exchange in the current conflict.

