

Political Transition in Yemen

April 25, 2022

In April 2022, a truce went into effect between the Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG) and the *Ansar Allah* movement (aka the Houthis); the first nationwide truce in six years. Yemen's president subsequently resigned, reportedly under pressure from Saudi Arabia, which leads a coalition backing the ROYG in its fight against the Iran-backed Houthi movement. Congress may review the status of the Yemen conflict during its consideration of the Biden Administration's request for \$46 million in FY2023 foreign assistance funding for Yemen and through its oversight of the Administration's regional policies, including a potential nuclear agreement with Iran and defensive support to U.S. partners.

Military Developments: Nationwide Truce Begins

On April 1, U.N. Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg announced a truce between the ROYG and Houthi forces for a two-month period between April 2 and June 2. [Saudi Arabia](#) and the [United Arab Emirates](#) (UAE) endorsed the truce. In addition to halting all military operations, the agreement establishes several humanitarian measures:

- 18 fuel ships will be permitted entry into the Houthi-controlled ports in Hodeidah.
- Two commercial flights per week in and out of Sana'a airport.

The truce may reflect a [military impasse](#) between Houthi and ROYG/Coalition forces as well as increasing economic stress. In early 2022, the deployment of forces backed by the UAE to Shebwa and Marib governorates reversed Houthi gains in the north. Subsequently, soaring global commodity prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine worsened [economic conditions](#) in both ROYG and Houthi-held areas, and the Saudi-led coalition's maritime and air blockade exacerbated severe fuel shortages for the Houthis. The truce represents a freeze of the present conflict lines but is not a formal ceasefire, and it [lacks](#) external enforcement or monitoring mechanisms.

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include Tariq Saleh, nephew of the late President Saleh, and Aydarous al Zubaidi, president of the Southern Transitional Council (STC).

Regional Response. Following the council's establishment, Saudi Arabia and the UAE [announced](#) that they would provide \$1 billion each to Yemen's central bank; Saudi Arabia would provide an additional \$1 billion to purchase oil products and support development projects. The countries previously had [declined to pledge any funding](#) for Yemen at a U.N. donor conference in March 2022, citing recent Houthi attacks. The U.N. Security Council also issued a [press statement](#) welcoming the creation of the PLC.

Outlook

U.N. Envoy Grundberg has [stressed](#) that the parties should use the truce period to negotiate a more lasting ceasefire, rather than preparing for additional fighting. [According to one PLC member](#), "Our first option is peace, but we are ready for war. We believe the council is in a position, with the coalition support, to score a decisive military victory." [Some analysts](#) have noted that newly aligned anti-Houthi forces that comprise the PLC have the potential to "more aggressively pursue peace and more aggressively pursue war," suggesting that the expiration of the truce in June could usher in a period of intensified fighting. Either worsening economic conditions or renewed fighting could exacerbate needs for humanitarian assistance and generate requests for U.S. contributions.

U.S. Policy

The Biden Administration [welcomed](#) the [truce](#) and the [formation of the PLC](#). Successive Administrations have sought a political settlement to the conflict and have called on both sides to facilitate humanitarian access. The United States continues to maintain a "[small number](#)" of U.S. military personnel in Yemen to conduct operations against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State. Houthi ballistic missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE in 2022 prompted the Biden Administration to authorize additional deployments of U.S. forces and [equipment](#) to the region.

New Maritime Task Force. On April 13, the commander of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet [announced](#) the establishment of Task Force 153 under the Combined Maritime Forces Command, based in Bahrain. The new task force will patrol the waterway between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait to the waters off the Yemen-Oman border. The announcement did not specifically mention the Houthis, who have long used the waterway to smuggle weapons from Iran in addition to seizing a UAE-flagged vessel in early 2022.

Possible Issues for Congress

Chairs of both the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) and the [House Armed Services Committee](#) welcomed the truce and the associated humanitarian measures, expressing hope that negotiators would use the truce to make progress towards a political settlement. Many Members remain concerned about Iranian support to Houthi forces—including the [provision of weapons such as ballistic and cruise missiles](#)—with [some Members arguing](#) that a U.S. return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement with Iran would provide Tehran with additional resources to finance the Houthis. Members may continue to debate U.S. support to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the PLC-led ROYG in the context of consideration of the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act, FY2023 appropriations for defense and foreign assistance, and any proposed major arms sales.

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