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Yemen: In Brief

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Yemen: Unresolved Conflict, Regional Tensions, and Global Risks

Yemen has been politically, economically, and militarily divided for more than a decade; its slow-burning internal conflicts are at risk of reigniting amid multisided confrontations between regional and global actors. Yemen descended into conflict in 2014 prompting years of foreign military interventions, regional security disruptions, and lingering confrontations that have posed national security challenges for the United States and its partners. As of 2026, the Iran-backed Ansar Allah movement (aka the Houthis, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization) and its aligned de facto government control the national capital, Sana'a, and much of western Yemen, home to most of Yemen's population. A Saudi Arabia-based, internationally recognized government (IRG) nominally administers non-Houthi held areas at the direction of a Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), whose members represent anti-Houthi forces with distinct agendas.

Until January 2026, the PLC included leaders of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), an independence-seeking coalition of southern Yemeni forces backed by the United Arab Emirates. That month, Saudi military strikes halted an STC campaign to assert security control across the south, leading to the expulsion of STC figures from the PLC and simmering IRG-STC tensions. With Saudi support, the IRG is seeking to unify Yemeni factions and consolidate command and control over forces in non-Houthi held areas. As of April 2026, the IRG's reach remains limited, local authorities and armed groups remain influential, and STC supporters continue to call for self-determination.

Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Israel all act in Yemen in pursuit of what their governments perceive to be their national interests. As the leader of an anti-Houthi multilateral coalition and now chief sponsor of Yemen's residual national government, Saudi Arabia has played a prominent if inconclusive role in Yemen's politics and security. Differences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE within the Saudi led anti-Houthi coalition, including over UAE support to the STC, resulted in confrontation and Saudi military intervention in Yemen in late 2025, followed by the UAE's exit from Yemen and increased Saudi engagement across non-Houthi held areas. Saudi-Houthi talks, brokered by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, have continued in Amman, Jordan, but no new steps toward implementation of a UN-sponsored conflict resolution roadmap have been announced.

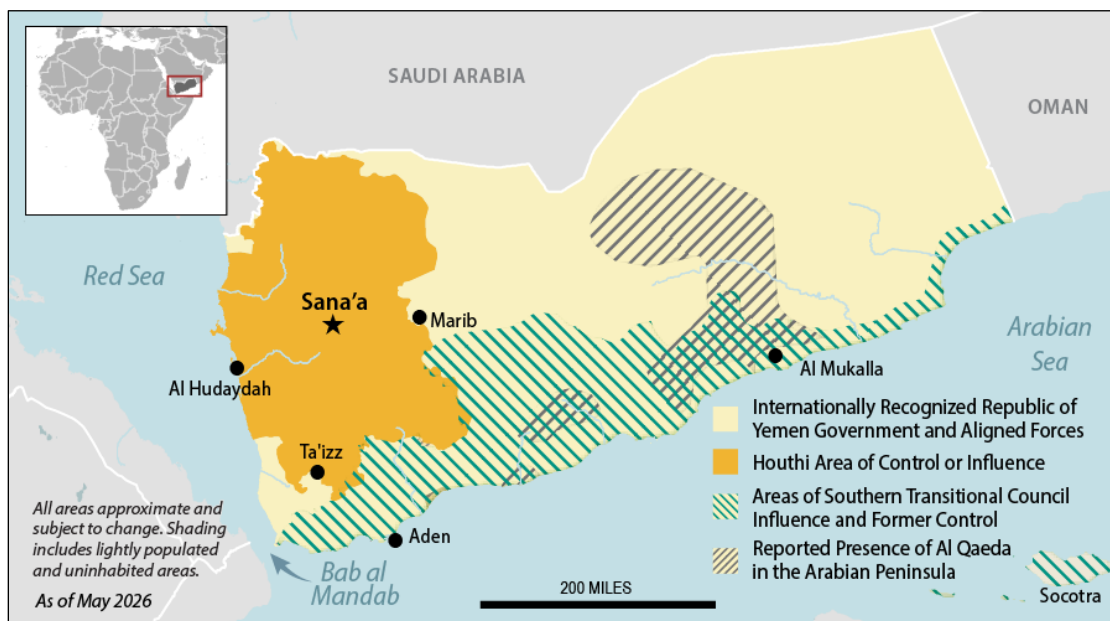
From 2023 to 2025, the Houthis disrupted shipping in the Red Sea corridor by launching drone and missile attacks against commercial and naval vessels, along with hundreds of attacks on Israel. Since 2025, the Trump Administration has sought to manage Houthi disruptions through force, sanctions, and limited negotiation. From March to May 2025, the Administration launched Operation Rough Rider, a campaign of strikes on Houthi targets that degraded but did not eliminate the Houthis' missile and drone capacities. A May 2025 U.S.-Houthi ceasefire ended Houthi attacks on U.S. vessels, but maritime transit had not returned to pre-crisis levels even before the U.S.-Israeli military operations against Iran began in February 2026.

As of May 2026, the Houthis had conducted limited new attacks on Israel in the context of the 2026 U.S./Israel-Iran conflict but had not resumed strikes on vessels. Disruptions to transit in the Strait of Hormuz increased the importance of the Red Sea corridor for international energy markets. These conditions could make renewed Houthi attacks on targets in Gulf States and/or vessels near Yemen more consequential. As the Houthis weigh their possible leverage, they may consider Iran's support capacity, likely U.S. and regional responses, and the risks of renewed conflict.

Regional pressures are mounting, and Yemen’s economy has continued to decay after more than a decade of war and disruption. De facto division and a years-long interruption of oil exports have weakened national finances. Perennially dire humanitarian conditions are deteriorating further as the Iran conflict threatens critical imports and imposes new costs.

For the United States, conditions in Yemen present short-term and long-term risks. In the context of the 2026 conflict with Iran, evident dangers include the potentially compounding effects of any renewal of Houthi attacks on commercial vessels, U.S. military assets, and/or energy and other targets in neighboring countries. Beyond these immediate concerns, worsening humanitarian conditions, unresolved confrontation between the IRG and STC, and the continued weakness of state institutions pose broader risks to Yemen and regional security, which may prompt calls for U.S. engagement or action. The fragmented nature of Yemen’s anti-Houthi coalition and differences among key regional actors may limit the options available to the United States and other international actors, prolonging Yemen’s instability.

Figure I. Yemen at-a-Glance



Area	527,968 sq. km (almost four times the size of Alabama; roughly twice the size of Wyoming)
People	Population: ~41.7 million (2025 UN est.), 19 million in non-Houthi-held areas (IRG 2026 est.) Religions: Muslim 99.1% (65% Sunni and 35% Shia, 2020 U.S. est.); .09% other. (2020 U.S. est.)
Economy and Reserves	Gross Domestic Product (GDP): \$17.35 billion (current \$U.S., October 2025 IMF est.) GDP per capita: \$401 (October 2025 IMF est.); Real GDP Contraction Rate (2014-2024): 27% (2025 IMF est.) Inflation (2014-2024): 30% (2025 IMF est.); Remittances: \$1.97 billion (2025 IMF/IRG) Gross Foreign Reserves (\$U.S.): \$113 million (2026 IMF proj.) Reserves in Months of Imports: 0.1 (2026 IMF proj.)
Oil and Oil Products	Crude Oil Production: 19,000 barrels per day (bpd, 2025), 67,000 bpd (2019) (IMF/IRG 2025) Refined Petroleum Consumption: ~58,000 barrels per day (U.S. est. 2023)

Sources: CRS, using ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, December 2025, ESRI, UN Panel of Experts, and U.S. State Department data. At-a-glance information from UN Population Fund, U.S. CIA, *World Factbook* (August 2025), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) *World Economic Outlook*, October 2025, and IMF *Datamapper*, April 2026; and IMF, *Yemen Article IV Report*, April 2026.

Background

The Houthi movement (formally known as Ansar Allah or Partisans of God) is a predominantly Zaydi Shia revivalist political and insurgent movement formed by the Houthi family in northern Yemen in 2004.¹ The group espouses anti-American, anti-Zionist, and anti-Jewish beliefs. From 2004 to 2014, it consolidated local power in Yemen's northern Saada governorate (**Figure 2**), at times warring with neighboring Saudi Arabia and the former Yemeni central government. After a 2012 popular uprising that ousted former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Houthis rejected the results of a national dialogue intended to form a new national government. In 2014, the Houthis resumed their insurgent posture, seized the capital, Sana'a, and later advanced on Aden, the south's largest city and port, where interim leaders had relocated.

In March 2015, Yemen's then-interim leaders fled and requested international intervention. That month, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia began a counter-Houthi military campaign, which the United States supported logistically and with information, training, and advisors.² Houthi cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE grew in complexity and scope over time with deepening material and advisory support from Iran. In 2018, a coalition-backed advance by anti-Houthi forces was halted south of the Houthi-held port of Hodeidah (alt. Al Hudaydah) on Yemen's Red Sea coast amid worsening humanitarian conditions. UN-supported talks produced a negotiated local ceasefire agreement and UN monitoring arrangements, contributing to further talks that, over time, reduced the intensity of Yemen's internal conflict.³

Since the onset of the conflict, Yemen's anti-Houthi coalition has struggled to maintain unity given its diverse makeup and its members' at times conflicting priorities. The coalition has included figures associated with the General People's Congress (GPC) party that formed the core of the former Saleh government's support; members of the Sunni Islamist Islah movement; tribal figures, local leaders, and Salafist groups from northern and southern Yemen; officials of the former government of South Yemen; and, until early 2026, supporters of the independence-seeking Southern Transitional Council (STC).⁴

Over time, STC-led initiatives to secure autonomy or independence for southern governorates have clashed with IRG leaders' insistence on maintaining Yemen's territorial integrity and political unity and with the Islamist priorities of the pro-IRG Islah party. In 2022, these tensions resulted in clashes that led to the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) as a

¹ The International Crisis Group describes Zaydism as "a form of Shiism that in rites and practices is closer to Sunnism than to the Twelver Shiism predominant in Iran and Iraq." For background on the Houthis, their origins, their ideology, and the history of their confrontation with other Yemenis and Saudi Arabia, see, for example, International Crisis Group (ICG), *Yemen: Defusing the Saada Time Bomb*, May 27, 2009, and *Truce Test: The Houthis and Yemen's War of Narratives*, April 29, 2022; and Nadwa Al Dawsari, "The ideological underpinnings of the Houthis' Red Sea attacks," Middle East Institute, January 22, 2024.

² See CRS Report R45046, *Congress and the War in Yemen: Oversight and Legislation 2015-2021*, by Christopher M. Blanchard and Jeremy M. Sharp.

³ The UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) ended in March 2026; Houthi obstruction had limited its effectiveness since its establishment in December 2018. The mission's ceasefire monitoring and other responsibilities are being transferred to the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg.

⁴ For background on the Islah party and Salafist groups in Yemen, see Manuel Almeida and Laurent Bonnefoy, "The Role of Muslim Brothers, Salafis, and Jihadis" in Stephen W. Day and Noel Brehony eds., *Global, Regional, and Local Dynamics in the Yemen Crisis*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; and Bonnefoy, "Sunni Islamist dynamics in context of war: What happened to al-Islah and the Salafis?" Project on Middle East Political Science Studies (POMEPS) 29, *Politics, Governance, and Reconstruction in Yemen*, 2017.

forum for joint consultative leadership and attempt to hold the anti-Houthi coalition together. An uneasy PLC-Houthi truce in 2022 froze conflict lines (**Figure 1**) and brought an end to coalition strikes on the Houthis. Since 2022, intermittent clashes between the Houthis and various anti-Houthi forces have continued along lines of contact south of Hodeidah, near the city of Taiz, and in areas that approximate the former north-south boundary between Yemen’s predecessor states.⁵

Figure 2. Yemen: Administrative Map



Source: CRS, using data from ESRI, the U.S. State Department, and the United Nations.

Notes: Areas and boundaries are approximate.

⁵ Today’s Republic of Yemen is a product of the 1990 unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (an Ottoman province, turned Zaydi Shia-ruled kingdom, then republic—alt. “North Yemen”) and the Aden-led People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (a British colony turned Marxist republic—alt. “South Yemen”). A brief civil war in 1994 ended in the defeat of southern forces.

Developments since 2023

Houthis Disrupt Red Sea Shipping, Endure After U.S. and Israeli Strikes

The Houthis launched numerous attacks on international shipping after the onset of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023 until December 2024, before pausing these attacks for months in early 2025.⁶ U.S. maritime security operations and intermittent strikes on Houthi targets began in January 2024; from March to May 2025, U.S. forces expanded strikes against the Houthis, launching Operation Rough Rider seeking to compel a lasting end to Houthi maritime attacks. The U.S. campaign ended under a May 2025 agreement brokered by Oman in which the Houthis reportedly agreed to cease targeting U.S. vessels and the United States reportedly agreed to halt strikes on the Houthis, according to media accounts.⁷

The Houthis resumed attacks on some non-U.S. ships in July 2025 and continued to launch long-range strikes against targets in Israel, ostensibly to compel Israel to end its war with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization. From August 2024 to August 2025, the Houthis conducted 220 missile and drone attacks on Israel.⁸ Israel in turn expanded its own strikes against Houthi targets, destroying port, airport, military, and electricity infrastructure and killing the prime minister and other civilian and military officials of the Sana'a-based Houthi government.⁹ Damage to ports from Israeli airstrikes that took place in 2024 and 2025 has affected imports of goods, food, commodities, and fuel to Houthi-held areas.¹⁰

The Houthis paused attacks on Israel after the October 2025 Israel-Hamas ceasefire and carried out a limited set of attacks on Israel in late March and early April 2026 in the context of the U.S./Israel-Iran conflict. The Houthis have not claimed attacks on U.S. targets or neighboring Arab states since the U.S./Israel-Iran conflict began in February 2026. Following the announcement of the April 2026 U.S.-Iran ceasefire and U.S.-Iran talks in Pakistan, Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al Houthi said on April 10, “Should the enemies resume escalation in this round against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries of the Axis, our position will remain steadfast through active participation within an escalating course of military operations.”¹¹

The Houthis relationship with Tehran has for years been marked by assistance from Iran and a leading role for the Houthis in Iran’s “Axis of Resistance,” but it has not resulted to date in major action by the Houthis since the onset of the U.S./Israel-Iran conflict. On April 15, Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Maj. Gen. Ali Abdollahi warned that if a U.S. blockade of Iran-linked shipping “creates insecurity” then “Iran’s powerful armed forces will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Red Sea.”¹²

⁶ CRS In Focus IF12581, *Yemen: Conflict, Red Sea Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

⁷ Reuters, “Oman says it mediated a ceasefire between U.S., Yemen’s Houthis,” May 6, 2025.

⁸ UN Document S/2025/650, Yemen Panel of Experts Final Report, October 17, 2025.

⁹ Samy Magdy, “Israeli airstrike kills Houthi rebel prime minister in Yemen’s capital,” Associated Press (AP), August 30, 2025.

¹⁰ Maritime Executive, “UN Confirms Level of Damage to Yemen’s Ports,” January 22, 2025; and FEWS Net, “Damage to critical infrastructure reduces Red Sea ports’ operational capacity,” December 2024; and “Conflict and its impacts on the economy are resulting in Emergency outcomes,” October 2025.

¹¹ Saba Net (Houthi-run Yemen News Agency), “Speech by Leader Al-Sayyid Abdul Malik Badruddin Al-Houthi on Latest Developments,” April 10, 2026.

¹² Erika Solomon, “Iran War Live Updates: Iran Threatens Retaliation Over U.S. Blockade,” *New York Times*, April 15, 2026.

The IRG and PLC Chairman Rashad Al Alimi have condemned Iranian attacks on Arab states. In a March 2026 meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Steven Fagin, Alimi called for “maintaining maximum pressure on the Iranian regime and its proxies to ensure the security of waterways in a sustainable manner through enhanced bilateral cooperation, strict enforcement of sanctions, choking off funding networks, controlling weapons smuggling and dismantling its militias.”¹³

The Houthis and Iranian Support

According to the U.S. Intelligence Community’s 2026 global threat assessment, the Houthis “remain a resilient challenger to U.S. and partner interests in the region, and their military capabilities and strategic location on the Red Sea allow them to try to extort concessions from the international community.”¹⁴ Houthi forces have suffered losses of equipment, weaponry, and personnel as a result of foreign strikes since 2023, but have launched maritime and long-distance attacks on Israel since mid-2025 that demonstrate that they retain the capacity to carry out attacks beyond Yemen’s borders. In 2024, Yemeni government officials estimated that Houthi forces may then have numbered as many as 350,000 fighters.¹⁵ The Houthis have displayed weapons with ranges up to 2,150 kilometers (1,344 miles).¹⁶ The Houthis also possess anti-ship ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with ranges up to 1,000 miles.¹⁷

Iran has provided the Houthis with components and technical knowledge to construct long-range missiles and rockets and UAVs.¹⁸ Houthi fighters have trained at an Iranian naval academy and received instruction from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).¹⁹ Houthi personnel also have travelled to Iraq in coordination with Iran-backed Iraqi armed groups.²⁰ In January 2024, Iran deployed an aging frigate in the Red Sea ostensibly to escort Iranian ships, but some observers suspect it provided the Houthis with assistance in planning attacks and with “tactical intelligence.”²¹ In the 118th Congress, the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 118-31) amended annual reporting requirements to Congress on Iran to include reporting on Iranian support to the Houthis.

Iranian material support to the Houthis may provide Iran with influence over some of the group’s capabilities and decisions. Houthi leaders and officials also may act independently and contrary to Iranian government preferences in some circumstances. In addition to expressions of support for the Iran-led “axis of resistance,” Houthi rhetoric also variably reflects Yemen-focused, pro-Palestinian, and pan-Islamic views. Houthi awareness of other Yemenis’ local and national priorities and the religious differences between the Houthi movement’s Zaydi Shia core constituency and the Iranian government’s Twelver Shia ideology also may shape Houthi leaders’ considerations about cooperation and coordination with the government of Iran. Iran itself has also suffered significant military and economic losses in 2026 that may further affect the relationship.

Anti-Houthi Forces Clash: IRG and PLC Reorganize Under Saudi Sponsorship

Latent IRG-STC tensions re-erupted in conflict in December 2025 when STC-aligned forces moved to assert security control across southern and eastern areas of Yemen with reported support

¹³ Saba Net (IRG-run Yemen News Agency), “President al-Alimi: It’s important to go on pressurizing Iranian regime, dismantling its armed militias,” March 10, 2026.

¹⁴ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, March 2026.

¹⁵ UN Document S/2024/731, Yemen Panel of Experts Final Report, October 11, 2024.

¹⁶ UN Document S/2025/650, Yemen Panel of Experts Final Report, October 17, 2025.

¹⁷ Colin Demarest, “How Iranian tech empowers Houthi drone, missile attacks in the Red Sea,” C4ISR.net, January 8, 2024.

¹⁸ U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, *Iran: Enabling Houthi Attacks Across the Middle East*, February 6, 2024.

¹⁹ Melanie Swan, Danielle Sheridan, and Susie Coen, “Houthi rebels who attacked British ship trained at elite Iranian academy,” *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2024.

²⁰ Sary Mumayiz, Michael Knights, Hamdi Malik, “Update on Houthi Involvement in Iraq,” February 26, 2025.

²¹ Andrew England, “Who Are the Houthis?” *Financial Times*, January 10, 2024.

from the UAE.²² UAE forces had long maintained partnerships with armed groups, military units, and political forces across southern Yemen, including the STC, for counterterrorism and counter-Houthi purposes.²³ The UAE also has opposed the activities in Yemen of the Sunni Islamist Islah Party, an influential component of the IRG coalition.

As Saudi-UAE tensions over Yemen mounted, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed “concern” and said, “We urge restraint and continued diplomacy, with a view to reaching a lasting solution. We are grateful for the diplomatic leadership of our partners, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and remain supportive of all efforts to advance our shared security interests.”²⁴ In late December 2025, Saudi military intervention followed, with airstrikes on some STC positions and military caches in eastern Yemen reportedly linked to shipments from the UAE.

Following these confrontations, UAE forces and personnel withdrew from Yemen, the PLC expelled two STC leaders from its ranks, and STC leader and former PLC member Aidarous Al Zubaidi reportedly fled to the UAE.²⁵ Saudi Arabia invited some remaining STC members to convene in Riyadh for a proposed dialogue on the future of southern Yemen; some pro-STC sources have raised questions about these southern delegates’ decisions and freedom of action.²⁶ The PLC in January announced its intent to form a Supreme Military Committee to coordinate IRG-aligned forces with the Saudi-led Joint Forces Coalition. The Saudi intervention has left the kingdom as the principal Arab state actor in Yemen, with related implications for Saudi diplomatic, financial, and security commitments.

In February 2026, the PLC reorganized (**Table 1**) and expanded the IRG cabinet to include additional southern figures and to reinstate women.²⁷ In March, it appointed two Salafist commanders to lead the IRG-affiliated National Shield forces.²⁸ Saudi Arabia also announced new financial support for the IRG, including \$346.6 million for IRG public sector salaries. Dr. Shaya Mohsen Al Zindani, a southerner, senior Yemeni diplomat, and recent IRG finance minister, now leads the IRG cabinet as Prime Minister. Some senior IRG leaders and some PLC members are based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, reflecting the uncertain security conditions prevailing in the IRG’s provisional capital, Aden.

²² AP, “Separatist group in Yemen threatens to rekindle civil war,” December 10, 2025; and Jon Gambrell, “Saudi Arabia bombs Yemen port city over weapons shipment from UAE for separatists,” AP, December 31, 2025.

²³ For background on UAE support to armed groups in southern Yemen, including the STC, see Peter Salisbury, *Yemen’s Southern Transitional Council: A Delicate Balancing Act*, International Crisis Group, March 6, 2021; and Eleonora Ardemagni, “UAE-Backed Forces Regroup in Yemen,” *Yemen Review*, Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies Quarterly: July-September 2024, October 16, 2024.

²⁴ Secretary of State Marco Rubio, “U.S. Welcomes Saudi and Emirati Leadership Supporting Yemen’s Sovereignty and Regional Security,” December 26, 2025.

²⁵ AP, “Yemen anti-Houthi council expels separatist leader and says he faces treason charges,” January 7, 2026; SABA News, “Presidential Leadership Council Decree No. (3) to dismiss membership of Faraj Salmayn al-Bahsani,” January 15, 2026; and, *Arab News*, “Aidarous Zubaidi’s political social media post from Abu Dhabi sparks controversy,” February 11, 2026.

²⁶ Abdullah Al-Shadli, “Three Months After the STC Delegation Left for Riyadh: Outcomes and Changes,” South24 Center, April 16, 2026.

²⁷ Maysaa Shuja Al Deen, “Can the New Government Seize A Critical Opportunity for Success?,” Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, February 13, 2026; and, Rim Mugahed et al., *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Yemeni Women in Diplomacy*, Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, April 21, 2025.

²⁸ In March 2026, the PLC named Bassam Mihdar Ahmed Ali Al Sanabi as Commander of the National Shield Forces and Abdulrahman Saleh Hassan Al Lahji as Chief of Staff, promoting both officers to the rank of Major General. SABA News, “President al-Alimi Appoints General Commander, Chief of Staff for Nation Shield Forces,” March 21, 2026.

Since January 2026, influential figures from southern Yemen have appeared divided over whether or how to engage with Saudi Arabia and the Saudi-backed IRG cabinet, with some counseling a strategy of engagement and cooperation, and others advocating for rejection of Saudi involvement and calling for UN engagement in support of self-determination for south Yemen.²⁹ Some STC figures reject claims that the STC has disbanded and assert that STC cadres, offices, and aligned forces remain active and organized.³⁰ Mass demonstrations have occurred illustrating continuing popular support for the STC and southerners' priorities generally. IRG-aligned security units have responded with force to some STC supporters' protests and attempts to occupy public buildings, resulting in some deaths and injuries and accusations of the use of excessive force and unlawful detention.³¹ STC figures have demanded accountability and IRG officials have called for investigations, as well as compensation in some cases.³²

Table 1. Yemen: Presidential Leadership Council Membership

As of April 2026

	Affiliation/Position		Affiliation/Position
Rashad Al Alimi	General People's Congress (GPC)/PLC President	Abdelrahman Al Muharrami (alt. 'Abu Zara'a')	Commander, Southern Giants Brigade
Major General Sultan Arada	Governor, Marib Governorate	Abdullah Al Alimi Bawazeer	PLC Negotiations Team
Brigadier General Tareq Saleh	Commander, National Resistance Forces	Mahmoud Al Subaihi (<i>appointed February 2026</i>)	PLC Adviser for Defense and Security Affairs/Former Minister of Defense
Sheikh Othman Hussein Megali (alt. Mejalli)	GPC/Local Leader from Saada Governorate	Salem Al Khanbashi (<i>appointed February 2026</i>)	Governor, Hadramout Governorate

Source: Public profiles of PLC members from official and media sources.

Yemen Truce Holds, But UN Envoy Warns of Pressures from Regional Conflict

On April 14, 2026, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg briefed the UN Security Council and noted the IRG's renewed attempts to stabilize the economy. He warned, however, that regional conflict could increase pressure on Yemenis at a time when "Yemen has little margin to absorb more shocks."³³ Grundberg assessed that post-2022 de-escalation arrangements among Yemenis were holding in spite of regional pressures, but he cited "worrying indications, including reports of troop movements" and exchanges of fire that caused civilian casualties. Grundberg reported that negotiations between the Houthis and their rivals over conflict detainees continued in Amman, Jordan. At the briefing, U.S. Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs Ambassador Jennifer Locetta criticized the Houthis' renewal of missile and drone attacks on

²⁹ Timour Azhari, "Saudi Arabia deploys cash and clout in Yemen after ousting UAE," Reuters, February 5, 2026.

³⁰ Reuters, "UAE-backed Yemeni Southern Transitional Council denies disbandment rumors," January 10, 2026; and CRS discussion with STC delegation, Washington, DC, April 2026.

³¹ Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Apparent Excessive Force Against Protesters," March 17, 2026.

³² Yemen Monitor, "Yemeni President Orders Investigation Into Mukalla Events and Compensation For Victims," April 5, 2026.

³³ Briefing by UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg to the Security Council, April 14, 2026.

Israel and called on all states to “abide by resolutions to deprive the Houthis of the resources needed for their destabilizing activities.”³⁴

Yemen-based Terrorist Threats Reportedly are Evolving

Insecurity in Yemen has created opportunities for an estimated 2,000-3,000 Yemen-based Al Qaeda members, who maintain a “covert pragmatic relationship” with the Houthis and an “alliance” with the Somalia-based Al Shabaab that supports a “logistical and operational network across the Gulf of Aden,” according to a February 2026 UN monitors’ assessment.³⁵ The same UN report stated that “Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—under its leader, Saad ben Atef al-Awlaki ...—appeared to be increasingly asserting its ideological and operational leadership of the global Al-Qaida network” posing an “increasing” but “opportunistic” threat of external attacks. AQAP remains most active in remote areas of Abyan, Shabwa, Marib, and Hadramout governorates of southern and eastern Yemen (**Figure 2**). AQAP leaders reportedly leverage ties to local Yemeni populations to sustain the group’s activities. The UN monitors’ report stated that the Houthis also have “limited collaboration” with Al Shabaab.

Humanitarian Conditions Worsen and External Pressures Increase

Yemen has long faced humanitarian difficulties exacerbated by internal conflict. Warnings by UN-related entities and individuals have suggested that needs may be approaching previous high levels amid new pressures imposed by regional conflict. According to the UN Yemen Humanitarian and Response Plan for 2026, 22.3 million people in Yemen (more than half of Yemenis) are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, 5.2 million are internally displaced, and 18.3 million face acute food insecurity.³⁶ In April 2026, a senior UN official described the situation in Yemen as a “catastrophe” and warned the Security Council that Yemen’s “health system is collapsing,” while hunger and malnutrition worsen.³⁷

In March 2026, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization assessed that “Yemen’s food security outlook remains extremely dire across all governorates,” and projected that “regional instability, elevated global food prices, falling household incomes and localized access constraints” will amplify related risks.³⁸ The Famine Early Warning System Network expects that Emergency/IPC 4 levels of food insecurity will persist through September 2026 in several areas of western Yemen due to reduced operational capacity at Red Sea ports and “exorbitant taxes imposed by” the Houthi-led government.³⁹ IPC 4 is the emergency level of food insecurity characterized by “large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality.”⁴⁰ Emergency conditions also are expected in some IRG-controlled areas as economic disruption and rising costs weigh on households.

³⁴ U.S. Mission to the United Nations, Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Yemen, April 14, 2026.

³⁵ UN Document S/2026/44, Thirty-seventh report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, February 4, 2026.

³⁶ UNOCHA, *Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026*, March 2026.

³⁷ Briefing to the UN Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Yemen by Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director, Crisis Response Division, UNOCHA, April 14, 2026.

³⁸ FAO, *Yemen Market and Trade Bulletin*, February 2026, issued March 15, 2026.

³⁹ FEWS NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network, *Yemen – Key Message Update March-September 2026*. “Shipping surcharges expected to increase prices, despite control measures.”

⁴⁰ FEWSNET. The five-phase Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system “provides common global scales for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition.”

In April 2026, a UN official reported that since Yemen “imports nearly everything,” including 90% of wheat and the fuel to mill it, Yemen’s food supply is particularly susceptible to international shocks such as disruptions to maritime commerce and projected increases in energy, agricultural input, and commodity costs resulting from disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.⁴¹

Limits on movement and bureaucracy constrain humanitarian access and affect aid delivery, largely in Houthi-controlled areas, where the Houthis have detained and continue to hold more than 70 UN and aid workers. The World Food Programme (WFP) reports that the agency is prioritizing assistance in IRG-controlled areas given Houthi interference in its operations. Overall, WFP reports that reductions in donor funding “have forced WFP to reduce the number of people receiving food aid in IRG areas from 3.4 to 1.7 million as of 2026.”⁴²

UN humanitarian appeals for Yemen have been reduced in programmatic scope since 2019 and donors repeatedly have not provided requested funds to meet annual UN plan financing goals. In December 2025, UN agencies reported that a “severe gap” in humanitarian funding during the year forced providers “to scale back critical services despite escalating needs.”⁴³ The UN Humanitarian Response Plan appeal for Yemen sought \$2.4 billion for 2025; as of April 28, 2026, it was 29% funded, with some additional funding provided by donors in parallel.⁴⁴ The 2026 UN appeal for humanitarian assistance for Yemen seeks \$2.16 billion and was 12.9% funded as of May 4, 2026.⁴⁵ If conflict in Yemen grows, then the fragile humanitarian situation presumably could deteriorate further and UN agencies and other relief entities may seek additional international assistance or intervention to increase access.

Yemen, the Trump Administration, and Congress

The Trump Administration’s policy toward Yemen has focused on the Houthis and reducing threats they pose to regional security and U.S. interests. The Administration has used sanctions and military force against the Houthis and redesignated the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in March 2025.⁴⁶ Since 2025, a series of sanctions designations have targeted nodes of the Houthis’ financial support and material procurement networks, highlighting the group’s global relationships and reach. Yemen’s long borders and coastlines and its adjacency to established trade routes linking countries along the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and Horn of Africa complicate efforts to combat smuggling and bolster maritime security.

Since February 2015, the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen and a Yemen Affairs Unit (YAU)/U.S. Embassy to Yemen have been based at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Steven Fagin leads the Yemen team in Riyadh and engages there and in Aden with IRG and PLC officials and representatives of the Saudi-led coalition.⁴⁷ The Administration has not named a Special Envoy for Yemen, although Special Envoy for the

⁴¹ UNOCHA Crisis Response Division Director Wosornu Briefing to the UN Security Council, April 14, 2026.

⁴² WFP, Yemen Situation Report #2 (16 February - 16 March 2026), March 21, 2026.

⁴³ UNOCHA, Yemen Humanitarian Update - December 2025, January 4, 2026.

⁴⁴ UN FTS, Yemen, at <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/248/summary/2025>, accessed May 7, 2026. For comparison, the 2023 and 2024 appeals were 62.1% and 54.5% funded, with parallel donor support outside the plans.

⁴⁵ UNOCHA, *Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026*, March 2026; and <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/248/summary/2025>.

⁴⁶ President Trump previously designated the group as both an FTO and an entity subject to sanctions under the “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” (SDGT) program in January 2021. President Biden revoked both designations in 2021, and, in February 2024, redesignated the Houthis as an SDGT. See CRS In Focus IF12882, *Yemen: Terrorism Designation, U.S. Policy, and Congress*, coordinated by Christopher M. Blanchard.

⁴⁷ Through January 2026, Ambassador Fagin also led the Gaza-focused Civil-Military Coordination Center.

Middle East Steve Witkoff engaged in indirect talks with the Houthis through the government of Oman, and Special Adviser for African and Arab Affairs Massad Boulos met with PLC President Alimi in January and February 2026.

Members of the 119th Congress have expressed varying views of Operation Rough Rider and its outcome, with some Members praising the operation for degrading Houthi capabilities and others questioning the President's authority to initiate the operation without formal endorsement from Congress.⁴⁸ President Donald Trump, like President Joe Biden, has asserted authority to direct military operations in Yemen pursuant to the President's "constitutional authority as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive to conduct foreign relations."⁴⁹

The 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 8368, P.L. 119-60) authorizes the U.S. military to treat as U.S. stocks any weapon or materiel intended for the Houthis obtained by the United States in transit or otherwise and to use them for drawdown purposes, including transfer. In July 2025, U.S. officials announced that the IRG-affiliated National Resistance Forces had seized 750 tons of munitions and hardware intended for Houthi use. The ultimate disposition of the weapons has not been reported. The act also requires regular assessment of "the capacity and overall professionalism of the Yemeni coast guard, including their capability to expand oversight of Yemen's territorial waters and carry out lawful anti-piracy and interdiction efforts."

The FY2026 defense appropriations act included more than \$267 million for the reimbursement of partner countries' enhanced border security operations. In prior fiscal years, some similar funds and some State Department-administered funding have supported border security operations and training for Oman. The State Department's request for FY2027 foreign assistance funding includes a request for \$200,000 for International Military Education and Training assistance for Yemen. As of April 2026, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia had organized a Yemen Maritime Security Partnership initiative to provide training to the IRG-affiliated Yemen Coast Guard with the support of the European Union, United States, and Japan.

In May 2026, President Trump issued a one-year continuation of the national emergency with respect to Yemen declared in Executive Order 13611 (May 2012). The continuation notice states that, "The actions and policies of Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthis, in threatening Yemen's peace, security, and stability continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

On March 3, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security published a notice in the *Federal Register* of its termination of the designation of Yemen for Temporary Protected Status, effective 11:59 PM, May 4, 2026, stating that "Yemen no longer meets the statutory requirements for designation for TPS."⁵⁰ Congress could redesignate Yemen for TPS through legislation presented to the President for signature.⁵¹ Some House Members wrote to the Trump Administration arguing for an extension and redesignation of TPS for Yemen.⁵²

⁴⁸ See e.g., Office of Senator Lindsey Graham, "Graham: I Continue To Support All Members Of President Trump's National Security Team," March 26, 2025; and, Office of Rep. Pramila Jayapal, "Jayapal, Khanna, Hoyle Demand Answers Over Unauthorized Military Strikes in Yemen by Trump Administration," April 9, 2025.

⁴⁹ President Donald J. Trump, Letter to Congressional Leaders on United States Military Operations in Yemen, March 28, 2025.

⁵⁰ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Termination of the Designation of Yemen for Temporary Protected Status*, March 3, 2026, 91 FR 10402; and, DHS Terminates Temporary Protected Status for Yemen, February 13, 2026.

⁵¹ See CRS Report RS20844, *Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure*, by Jill H. Wilson.

⁵² Office of Rep. Rashida Tlaib, "Tlaib Leads Lawmakers Demanding Trump Administration Redesignate and Extend TPS for Yemen." April 14, 2026.

In the House and Senate, companion versions of a Houthi Human Rights Accountability Act (H.R. 1848/S. 3451) would require recurring determinations of sanctions eligibility on the Houthis for the restriction of delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen; engagement in the human rights abuses, and hostage-taking or wrongful detention of U.S. nationals.

Outlook

Yemen's internal political complexity, its economic and social challenges, and the pressures of regional conflict and intervention may continue to frustrate efforts by the United States or others to forge comprehensive solutions or lastingly address Yemen-based security threats. The United States and other international actors may consider how to approach longer term negotiations on Yemen's political future in light of continuing north-south divides, Islamist-secularist disputes, competing demands for centralization and decentralization, and the Iran-backed Houthi movement's demonstrated capacity to threaten international shipping and restrict access through the Bab al Mandab, the strait connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Whether or not the Houthis might play a political role in Yemen's national governance arrangements, the group may pose a continuing if at times latent risk to maritime security in the region. Expanded maritime security and interdiction operations could be required to durably reduce Iran's ability to resupply Houthi forces, but the complexity of regional trade patterns and Houthi smuggling operations to date suggest that multi-jurisdiction operations and coordination would be required to consistently disrupt weapons flows. If southern Yemenis continue to demand self-determination and/or independence, then Saudi-backed efforts to rebuild centralized state institutions may falter.

In this context, Congress may examine what tradeoffs new U.S. or partner maritime security or interdiction operations would entail, how security assistance to Yemen and neighboring countries is structured, and how U.S. policy may adapt to confront potential long term regional security risks. Congress also may assess whether or how apparent Saudi-UAE competition in Yemen, Israeli operations against the Houthis, and Iranian support to the Houthis are evolving in light of the 2026 U.S./Israel-Iran conflict and its aftermath.

In conducting oversight and in considering possible supplemental appropriations for FY2027, Congress may examine the results of Operation Rough Rider, subsequent Houthi efforts at recovery, prospects for mutual support between Iran and the Houthis, relations between the IRG and other anti-Houthi forces, and the outlook for the U.S.-Houthi ceasefire. Looking ahead, the prospect of renewed direct U.S. confrontation with the Houthis poses risks of disruptive conflict, additional operational costs, and uncertain outcomes. Accepting the status quo could forestall conflict and related side effects but extend uncertainty and the inherent security and humanitarian risks. Alternatively, U.S., regional, or Yemeni negotiation with the Houthis could yield new political or security arrangements, but may contribute to legitimizing the Houthis' role in Yemen's governance. Parties pursuing engagement with the Houthis would likely face persistent questions about whether such engagement was contributing to stability and limiting potential threats.

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