



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

**SE Grundberg's Briefing to the UN Security Council  
13 February 2025  
Open Session**

Thank you, **Mr. President**.

**Mr. President**, since I last addressed this Council, we have witnessed a significant, albeit fragile, development in the Middle East with the ceasefire in Gaza. We have also seen a cessation of attacks by Ansar Allah on vessels in the Red Sea and targets in Israel. This tentative reduction in hostilities, along with the release of the crew of the Motor Vessel *Galaxy Leader*, is a welcome relief. We must build on this opportunity as a foundation for further de-escalation. Yet, while we welcome this reprieve, we must also acknowledge the magnitude of the challenges still facing Yemen.

**Mr. President**, a deeply troubling development is the fourth wave of arbitrary detentions of United Nations staff, conducted by Ansar Allah last month. These detentions are not only a violation of fundamental human rights but also a direct threat to the United Nations's ability to provide humanitarian assistance to millions in need. Even more deplorable is the death, while detained by Ansar Allah, of a UN colleague working for the World Food Programme, and I join the Secretary-General in calling for an immediate, transparent and thorough investigation of his death and for those responsible to be held accountable. I also echo the Secretary-General's strong condemnation of these detentions and call for their immediate and unconditional release, along with the rest of the United Nations, NGO, civil society, and diplomatic mission staff arbitrarily detained. I appreciate the support of this Council to the United Nations during this difficult time. Allow me also to express my deepest condolences to Ahmed's family and to the World Food Programme.

Regrettably, we have also seen a continuation of military activity in Yemen with reports of the movement of reinforcements and equipment towards the frontlines, and shelling, drone attacks and infiltration attempts by Ansar Allah on multiple frontlines including Abyan, al Dhale', Lahj, Ma'rib, Sa'dah, Shabwa and Ta'iz. I call on the parties to refrain from military posturing and retaliatory measures that could lead to further tension and risk plunging Yemen back into conflict. My Office remains in regular contact with the parties, urging them to de-escalate tensions and take concrete confidence-building measures through the Military Coordination Committee.

**Mr. President**, I am deeply concerned about Yemen's rapidly deteriorating economic situation. These hardships are felt across all of Yemen. In government-controlled areas, residents have

endured prolonged blackouts sometimes for over 24 hours. Last week, Aden went three consecutive days without electricity, which led to people taking to the streets. That this is happening in winter—when energy demand is lower—speaks to the severity of the crisis. Moreover, the continued depreciation of the Yemeni Riyal has sent the cost of essential goods soaring, making simply surviving a challenge for millions. For many families, even the most basic necessities—food, medicine, and fuel—have become unaffordable. This economic hardship is not limited to government-controlled areas. In Ansar Allah-controlled territories, ordinary Yemenis also struggle to afford basic commodities. These hardships are symptoms of the failure to achieve a sustainable political resolution. Without the prospect of peace, there can be no prosperity. My Office continues its engagement with the parties to the conflict to advance sustainable, achievable and practical solutions that will benefit the Yemeni population.

As part of our continued political dialogues, my Office has also recently engaged with civil society representatives—including youth and women—from Aden, Abyan, al-Dhale', Lahij, and Shabwa, to incorporate local-level perspectives into the peace process. We also heard first-hand from Yemeni businesswomen across the country. Despite their potential to unlock economic growth and opportunities in Yemen, they are faced with growing impediments preventing them from fully participating in the economy. Including, regulatory constraints, and limited access to banking. Women also continue to face similar challenges in engaging meaningfully in the peace process.

**Mr. President**, while clarifications are sought regarding the upcoming US designation of Ansar Allah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, it is important that our efforts to advance the peace process are protected. I am committed to carrying out my duties in accordance with the mandate from this Council to end the conflict in Yemen. Over the past month, I have continued my active engagement with all regional and international actors, most recently in Washington. My message to all remains that only a political settlement of the conflict will support the Yemenis in their aspirations for lasting peace. It is achievable, it is possible, and it is pragmatic.

The elements of the Roadmap already provide a framework for this path forward. The parties committed to a nationwide ceasefire as the first step toward stability, recognizing that only an end to hostilities can create the conditions necessary for meaningful dialogue. This would pave the way for a structured political process in which Yemenis can determine their own future through inclusive negotiations under UN auspices. It is critically important that my Office maintains appropriate space for engaging in effective mediation. Moreover, addressing Yemen's economic crisis through sustained dialogue and concrete measures will be vital for rebuilding the country and preventing further hardship for its people.

In this regard, I urge the parties to seize the opportunity created by the recent regional de-escalation to build confidence through meaningful actions. The unilateral release of 153 conflict-related detainees by Ansar Allah is a positive step, and I encourage further progress. It is high time the parties make the necessary compromises to reach an agreement for the release of all those still held in relation to the conflict.

**Mr. President,** let me conclude with this: Yemen stands at another critical juncture. The choices made today will determine the course of its future. A sustainable resolution to this conflict is still possible. I am not naïve; this won't be easy, it requires commitment, courage, and action from all sides. The parties must engage in good faith and take the necessary steps to turn commitments into reality. I am aware that some think that they could get a better outcome through the resumption of full-scale military operations. I want to be clear: this would be a mistake for Yemen, and a mistake for the stability in the wider region. The responsibility to create the space for a mediated solution does not rest on the Yemeni parties alone. Regional and international stakeholders also share a duty to support diplomacy, de-escalation, and inclusive dialogue. A genuine and lasting peace must be fostered through collective efforts. This requires resolve and coordinated action. I remain fully committed to confronting challenges head-on with a clear, structured, and relentless approach. Thank you very much **Mr. President.**