



THE YEMEN TREND

**Jan-Feb
2019**



RESEARCH . ANALYSIS . ADVISORY

The Yemen Trend is a monthly digest that highlights Yemen's key economic and humanitarian trends and political and military developments, providing context and analysis where necessary in order to facilitate informed discussion deeply rooted in the facts.

Executive Overview

More than two months after Yemen's warring parties met in Sweden to agree to a series of measures to begin paving the way for a peace settlement, Yemenis are more than ever reliant on the largest aid effort in the world. According to the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 24.1 million Yemenis – 80 percent of the population – require one or more forms of humanitarian assistance, marking a significant deterioration from 2018. In order to meet these needs, the United Nations requested an unprecedented \$4.2 billion from donors at the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, held in Geneva on February 26. The UN fell short of its goal, only securing \$2.62 billion in pledges (but still about 30 percent more than was offered last year). Meanwhile, the value of the Yemeni riyal continued to weaken in February to around YER 600 per \$1, after rebounding from a record low of around YER 820 in October 2018 to YER 400 in November.

On the political front, the prisoner exchange committee met twice in Amman, Jordan following the Sweden Consultations. Despite short spurts of progress – including a trade in late January of one Saudi POW for seven Yemenis held in Saudi Arabia – major hurdles remain. Following the second meeting in February, both parties indicated a willingness to swap a number of bodies of fighters killed in hostilities. However, a large-scale prisoner exchange does not appear imminent. Both Houthi and government negotiators continue to accuse one another of admitting to know the whereabouts of only a fraction of the detainees they want their opponent to release.

In Hodeidah, initial optimism about the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC)'s ability to work cooperatively towards a goal of demilitarizing the port waned throughout January as deadlines for troops to pull back passed and joint meetings between the warring parties turned into individual consultations. Finally, on February 17, the UN announced the RCC – which resumed face-to-face meetings earlier in the month – had reached an agreement on the first phase of a redeployment plan. Phase one would see the Houthis pull back from Hodeidah Port and the ports of Saleef and Ras Isa to its north; government and coalition-aligned forces would decamp from their position on the eastern edges of the city. By the end of February, however, this momentum had not yet yielded action on the ground.

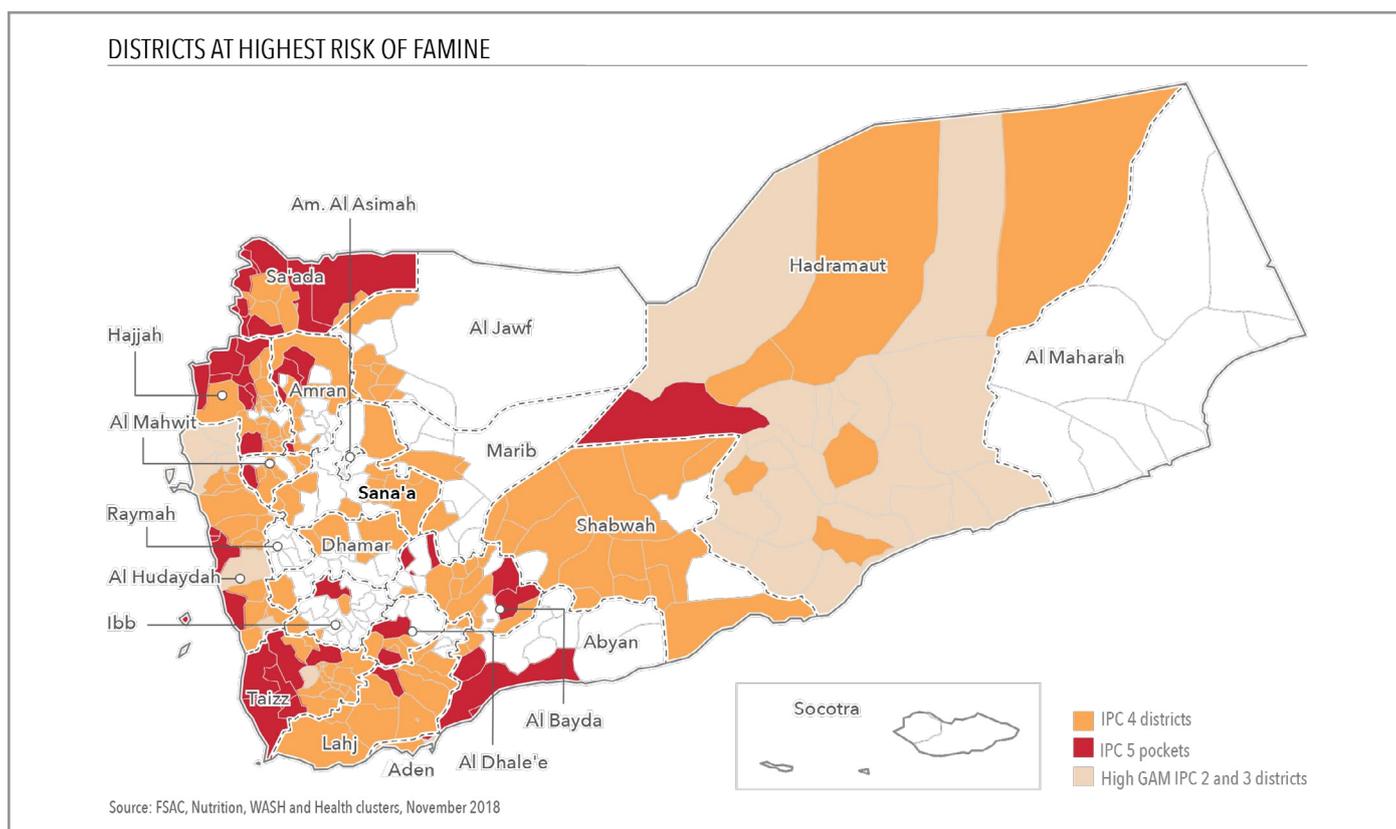
Timeline

- Jan 08 Houthi drone attack kills intelligence official and others at Al-Anad Air Base in Lahj governorate
- Jan 09 UN Envoy Martin Griffiths briefs the UN Security Council after meeting Abdulmalik Al-Houthi in Sana'a and President Hadi in Riyadh
- Jan 13 Houthi representatives boycott Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) meeting in Hodeidah with government counterparts
- Jan 15 Food aid reaches the districts of Tuhayat and Duraihimi in Hodeidah the first time since June
- Jan 16 UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2452, creating the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)
- Jan 16 Government and Houthi representatives meet in Amman to negotiate prisoner exchange agreement
- Jan 17 A bullet strikes a convoy of cars in Hodeidah transporting the head of the RCC, Gen. Patrick Cammaert – attacker unknown
- Jan 25 A fire, believed to have been caused by a mortar attack, breaks out at the Red Sea Mills in Hodeidah
- Jan 29-30 In limited prisoner exchange, one Saudi POW is traded for seven Yemenis held in Saudi Arabia
- Jan 31 Lt. Gen. Michael Anker Lollesgaard is appointed head of the RCC and UNMHA
- Feb 3-7 Government and Houthi RCC members resume joint talks on ship off of Hodeidah's coast
- Feb 5-8 Prisoner exchange committee holds second meeting in Amman
- Feb 17 First phase of troop redeployment in Hodeidah is announced without an implementation timeline
- Feb 19 Griffiths tells Security Council that troop redeployment from Hodeidah could begin within days
- Feb 26 The World Food Program reaches the Red Sea Mills for the first time in six months
- Feb 26 Donors pledge \$2.6 billion of \$4.2 billion needed for the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan

Humanitarian and Economic Trends

A total 24.1 million people – 80 percent of the population – require some form of aid, according to the [2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#). The annual report, released by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is based on data collected from 7,000 locations in all but two of Yemen’s 333 districts. In his February [briefing](#) to the UN Security Council, UN relief chief Mark Lowcock said the numbers of those in need “are considerably worse than last year,” whether it be food

for those facing famine or malnutrition or services for those who have been internally displaced. “Conflict and a failure to respect international humanitarian law, together with the economic collapse in mid-2018, are the driving forces behind the deterioration,” Lowcock said. The number of food insecure Yemenis rose 13 percent in 2018 to about 20.1 million people, [according](#) to OCHA, leaving about 230 out of Yemen’s 333 districts at risk of famine.



Source: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (based on data from FSAC, Nutrition, WASH and Health clusters, November 2018).

Donors pledged \$2.6 billion for the 2019 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP). To enable UN agencies to scale up operations to meet the growing humanitarian needs in Yemen, the UN [asked](#) the donor community for \$4.2 billion to fund the UN-coordinated [YHRP 2019](#). At the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, held in Geneva on February 26, 40 countries offered funding. Although the UN tallied only a little more than half of the amount requested, it is still around [30 percent more](#) than donors pledged last year. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates [pledged](#) the most money at \$750 million dollars each. The United Kingdom offered the second most at \$262 million. The US pledged \$24 million.

The World Food Program (WFP) reached the Red Sea Mills in Hodeidah for the first time in six months but warned that sustained access is needed to assess and distribute the stock of food stored at the facility. The mills contain a quarter of the WFP’s entire in-country wheat supplies, enough to feed almost 4 million people for a month. Due to ongoing fighting, the food relief body had been unable to reach the mills since September and voiced concern that wheat at the facility was rotting. The WFP [announced](#) the breakthrough in access at the end of February, saying it was a result of negotiations led by the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC). Earlier in February, UN Envoy Martin Griffiths and Lowcock [issued](#) a joint statement saying that the

urgency to reach the site was compounding by the day as millions of Yemenis were at risk of famine.

In a separate statement, Lowcock [said](#) that Houthi-affiliated forces had blocked passage to the mills, citing security concerns, but urged them to immediately facilitate safe transport to the site. Coalition forces seized the mill facility from the Houthis in November. The Houthis were widely accused of rigging the area with land mines. In January, mortar fire is believed to have caused a [fire](#) in two of the mills' silos. The UN did not name a source of the mortar fire, though Emirati state news [blamed](#) the Houthis for shelling the facility. Meanwhile, the Houthis [alleged](#) that coalition forces fired on a demining team near the mills in January, killing one of its members. Agence France-Presse journalists embedded with coalition forces who visited the granary at the end of January [witnessed](#) "government loyalists, including Sudanese soldiers, scouring the vast complex with metal detectors amid fears rebels were sneaking in to plant new booby traps."

A partial ceasefire deal allowed for aid to reach Tuhayat and Duraihimi, marking the first time in over half a year that remote areas within these districts of Hodeidah were safe to enter. This is "thanks to an inconsistent de-escalation over recent days following the December peace talks in Stockholm, Sweden," a spokesperson for the WFP [said](#) in mid-January. Still, access to the sites remained severely limited, as Lowcock [told](#) the Security Council on January 9 that "de-facto authorities" were blocking aid delivery from their jurisdiction to areas under government control. Lowcock said there was also concern that these authorities increased the advance notice time required for aid organizations to move supplies from 48 hours to 72 hours.

UN relief officials strengthened their call for armed groups to halt to the diversion of aid. The WFP [said](#) an estimated 1,200 metric tons of food aid were diverted from seven distribution centers in Sana'a between August and September, which is about one percent of all food provided monthly nationwide. A spokesperson for the agency said aid is being diverted across Houthi-controlled areas and to a lesser extent in areas under government control. Relief organizations in Yemen have been privately raising concerns that the diversion of aid may be more widespread, [according](#) to the Guardian newspaper. It quoted an unnamed senior aid official as saying food security surveys, which inform the UN's famine

classification system, may have been manipulated "to the benefit of Houthi-controlled areas and to the detriment of starving civilians in other parts of the country."

Background: A stronger stance against relief corruption

At the end of 2018, the World Food Program (WFP) issued an unusually strong [public statement](#) condemning the Houthis' diversion of food aid. The relief body said it had evidence of food being illicitly removed from food distribution centers and local officials manipulating beneficiary lists, among other corrupt practices. WFP's executive director, David Beasley, said that unless the group takes immediate steps to cease the diversion of food relief, "we'll have no option but to cease working with those who've been conspiring to deprive large numbers of vulnerable people of the food on which they depend."

The Associated Press [reported](#) that Beasley sent a letter to Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, saying that only 40 percent of the eligible beneficiaries in Sana'a are being reached. "If you don't act within 10 days, WFP will have no choice but to suspend the assistance... that goes to nearly 3 million people," the AP quoted the letter as saying. In [response](#) to the allegations, the Houthis "welcomed" an investigation into the issue but at the same time accused the UN body of playing into the hands of foreign political interests and alleged that it was shipping rotten food to Yemen.

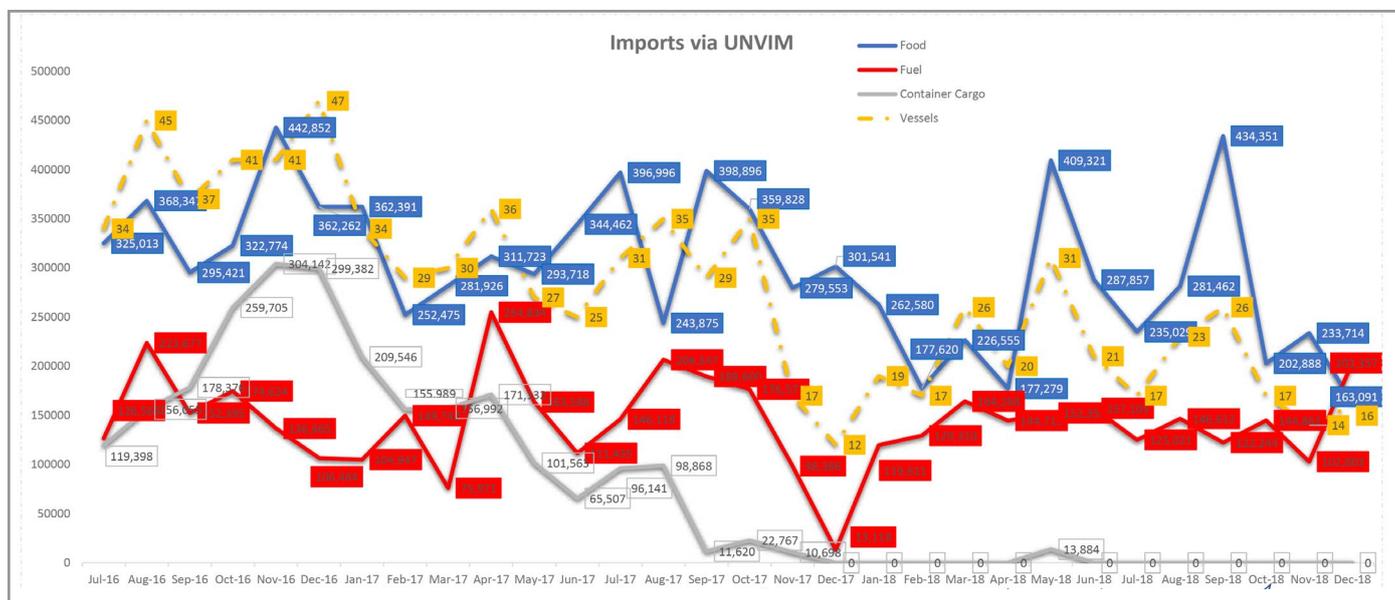
See the [December 2018 issue](#) of the Yemen Trend for more background details.

Another contentious issue related to the diversion of humanitarian assistance, is the recent implementation of a biometric database for aid distribution in Houthi-controlled areas. This has become particularly controversial as the WFP weighs introducing cash-based transfers in targeted locations. But a WFP spokesperson [said](#) the agency has made it clear that these type of desirable cash transactions would not move forward in the absence of a biometric system that relies on personal data, such as an iris scan, for identification. A biometric system has already been introduced in areas under government control.

Data released in January shows that commercial food imports via Hodeidah dropped to their lowest level since monitoring by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) began in 2016. UN OCHA's [commodity tracker](#) shows that in December only about 163,000 metric tons of

food commodities entered through Hodeidah, which meets only about half of the country's monthly needs, as calculated by the UN. On a more positive note, more commercial fuel was imported via Hodeidah in December than during any other time in the last 15 months. Still, it only met 37 percent of Yemen's monthly fuel import requirements. As the UN relief chief Lowcock relayed in his January [briefing](#) to the Security Council, "average monthly commercial

food imports are now 25 percent lower than they were a year ago," and no commercial containerized imported cargo has entered the port in over a year. Further south at the Port of Aden, the UN noted, there are problems with congestion. Lowcock said that 500 WFP containers are "stuck" at the port. Some loads, he added, are being re-routed through Oman to be delivered overland, which is more expensive and less safe.



Source: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (based on data from FSAC, Nutrition, WASH and Health clusters, November 2018).

The Yemeni rial is once again in a downward spiral, dropping in February to roughly YER 600 to \$1 in February. The rial reached its lowest point at the beginning of October 2018, when it fell to YER 820 to \$1. In large part due to currency injections by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in November, the rial gained considerable value. It peaked at about YER 400 to the dollar. But by early January, the value of the rial had dropped to YER 520 to \$1, [according](#) to UN officials. "Without intervention, the International Monetary Fund estimates that the exchange rate is likely to slide to more than 700 rial to the dollar this year," UN OCHA's Lowcock warned.

The Yemeni Cabinet approved the 2019 state budget. Public revenue from all 22 governorates is [estimated](#) to amount to YER 2.16 billion in 2019, with oil and gas exports forecasted to account for about 32 percent of this total. Meanwhile, public expenditures are expected to reach YER 3.11 billion, including salaries for all public sector workers across the country based on the 2014 payroll, leaving a deficit of approximately 30 percent. The Higher Committee for Budgets drafted the long-awaited financial blueprint.

The Cabinet approved the document February 20 in Aden at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Muin Abdulmalik Saed.

The Houthis are allegedly illegally detaining women in secret detention facilities. The [accusations](#), made by rights activists to the Associated Press, include several examples of female detainees being tortured. An AP [investigation](#) in December reported severe cases of torture in Houthi-run prisons but made no mention of female detainees. The Houthi-controlled Ministry of Interior in Sana'a has denied the allegations. Meanwhile, in a January report mandated by the US Congress, the Department of Defense [denied](#) that American interrogators witnessed instances of torture at secret prisons in Yemen run by the UAE and allied Yemeni forces. The AP has produced several [reports](#) documenting inhumane and torturous treatment of detainees in these secret prisons. According to the wire service, the US confirmed that Americans have been involved in the questioning of detainees thought to have information regarding designated terror organizations like Al-Qaeda. But officials maintain that US interrogators were unaware of any mistreatment at the prisons.

A string of landmine deaths brought renewed focus on a need for expanded demining efforts. Five international experts working for Saudi demining project MASAM were killed in an accident in Marib on January 20. [According](#) to the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), they died when a device accidentally exploded while they were transporting them to a remote location to be destroyed. In a separate incident, the Associated Press [reported](#) that two landmines in Al-Baydha governorate killed five soldiers and one child at the end of January. These incidents shortly followed a [call](#) from Doctors Without Borders for demining organizations and the Yemeni government to step up efforts to remove unexploded devices from civilian areas, including agricultural fields in southwestern Yemen where discarded landmines continue to kill and injure citizens. [According](#) to the pro-government Yemen Executive Mine Action Center, the Yemeni army removed about 300,000 landmines from across Yemen between 2016 and the end of 2018.

Researchers discovered the probable source of Yemen's cholera epidemic, considered the largest in modern history. "Genomics enabled us to discover that the strain of cholera behind the devastating and ongoing epidemic in Yemen is likely linked to the migration of people from eastern Africa to Yemen," [according](#) to one of the researchers. The [study](#) was conducted by scientists at the British Wellcome Sanger Institute and French Institut Pasteur. Yemen experienced an initial cholera outbreak between September 2016 and April 2017. Later that month, a second wave began to spread at an alarming rate. [According](#) to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of December 2018, over 1.4 million cases have been reported since the initial outbreak and have been linked to almost 3,000 deaths. The study's researchers said their findings indicate both waves of the outbreak came from the same strain.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) called for a review of an investigation into one of the coalition's airstrike on a cholera treatment facility, saying the report made false allegations against the aid agency. The coalition's investigatory body, the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT), conducted a review of the June 2018 attack and [relayed](#) its findings at a press conference in January that MSF said was held without prior announcement. In February, the aid organization [said](#) the coalition's report falsely claimed that MSF did not request the cholera treatment center —located in Abs, Hajjah governorate —be placed on a no-strike

list. MSF also said the center was bombed in June 2018 despite having three visible MSF logos on display and that the organization had shared details about the center's location at least 12 times with the coalition. "We demand that the results of the investigation be reviewed and false allegations against MSF be withdrawn," the international organization said. No one was killed or injured in the strike but it damaged the center to the extent that it could no longer take patients, MSF said, adding that the coalition has hit five of its facilities since the war started.

The government intends to double its daily oil production in 2019, Minister of Oil Aws Abdullah Al-Awd [told](#) Reuters. The minister said he aims to increase production to 110,000 barrels per day (bpd), up from the 2018 average of around 50,000 bpd. Al-Awd said Yemen would be capable of exporting 75,000 bpd with the intention to build a new pipeline connecting oil fields in government-controlled territory to the Arabian Sea. The oil sector has been slow to recover in government-held Yemen since the war started. Current production falls far short of the 127,000 bpd produced pre-war in 2014.

Political Developments

The prisoner exchange deal remains fraught with challenges, but the UN Special Envoy Griffiths said an initial set of exchanges is "not far off." The joint prisoner exchange committee, formally called the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoner Exchange Agreement, has met twice in Amman since talks concluded in Sweden. The committee is comprised of both government and Houthi representatives and is co-chaired by the Office of the Special Envoy (OSESGY) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The following key developments have taken place:

- Negotiators met on [January 16](#) in Amman, Jordan to discuss proposed prisoner lists, as well as the logistics of an exchange. The ICRC shortly after confirmed it was making [preparations](#) for an exchange, including "rehabilitating the locations where detainees will be gathered before being transported to the airport... [and] preparing two planes, each with a capacity of 200 passengers, to shuttle detainees between Sana'a and Seiyoun."
- A limited prisoner swap took place on January 29 and 30. The ICRC [transported](#) a Saudi man from

Yemen back to Riyadh, and the following day the ICRC flew seven sick and injured Yemenis from Saudi Arabia to Yemen.

- The prisoner exchange committee [met](#) a second time in Amman from February 5-8. Following the meeting, representatives from the warring parties [said](#) they intend to release 1,000 bodies of those killed during the conflict, while they continue to negotiate the lists of prisoners to be exchanged. A Houthi negotiator [told](#) Reuters that the talks were limping along because neither side acknowledges holding as many prisoners as the other side is demanding be released. Indeed, both sides have recognized holding only a fraction of the names on their opponent's list. The Houthi negotiator Reuters quoted claimed that only about a third of the names the government submitted are legitimate.
- Despite negotiators leaving Amman without a binding plan that would set an exchange in motion, Griffiths told the UN Security Council during his February 19 [briefing](#) that the release of an initial set of prisoners was “not far off.”

The UN bolstered its efforts to de-militarize Hodeidah and surrounding areas. Under pressure to preserve the Hodeidah ceasefire and redeployment agreement reached in Sweden, the UN Security Council voted unanimously on January 16 to adopt [Resolution 2452](#) (2019), creating the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). With an initial mandate of six months, the 75-person political mission is designed to support and expand the [Redeployment Coordination Committee](#) (RCC). The RCC, which includes representatives from both warring parties, had working to codify a plan for a troop withdrawal from Hodeidah under the direction Dutch General Patrick Cammaert since December. That is until [Danish Lt. Gen. Michael Lolloesgaard](#) took over Cammaert's posts as head of the RCC and UNMHA at the end of January.

Prior to leaving his position, Cammaert had succeeded in bringing the RCC together [twice](#) to discuss redeployment plans. But in mid-January, his efforts hit a snag and the two delegations refused to continue meeting jointly, forcing Cammaert to travel back and forth between representatives in Hodeidah in an effort to salvage discussions. The UN [confirmed](#) that shortly after this, an armored car in Cammaert's vehicle convoy sustained a round of “small arms fire” from an unknown source after the general left a meeting with government representatives from the RCC.

Armed troops in Hodeidah remained in limbo at the end of February, even though the government and the Houthis reached an agreement mid-month on the first phase of a military pull back in the area. At the beginning of February, the RCC held “cordial” discussions on a UN ship off the coast of Hodeidah, [according](#) to the UN. On February 17, the UN [announced](#) the RCC consented to a plan to begin the first phase of redeployment. Phase one calls for the Houthis to pull back from the main port of Hodeidah, but also the ports of Saleef and Ras Isa (which are used for grain and oil respectively).

In exchange, government forces are expected to decamp from their stronghold on the edges of eastern Hodeidah city. No new deadline has been established for the completion of phase one but Griffiths [told](#) the Security Council during his February 19 briefing that deployment could begin within the week. Sources [told](#) Reuters at the end of February that the Houthis were meant to begin their retreat from the Saleef and Ras Isa Ports on February 26 by stepping back 5km (3 miles). However, at the pledging conference in Geneva that same day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [acknowledged](#) that “significant challenges remained” to realizing demilitarization in Hodeidah.

Denmark is halting weapons sales to the UAE, as European countries face increased scrutiny over arms deals with coalition member states. Officials in Denmark [announced](#) it had shifted its arms policy because of the UAE's involvement in the war in Yemen. In a similar move, Denmark halted arms sales to Saudi Arabia last year, as did [Germany](#) and [Finland](#). In February, the Guardian [reported](#) that UK officials urged Germany to reconsider its ban on future arms exports to Saudi Arabia, saying that Germany's decision could have “consequences for Europe's ability to fulfill its NATO commitments.”

Still, Reuters [reported](#) that the UAE had no difficulty procuring military equipment from a host of other contractors. At a defense conference at the end of February, it spent \$5.5 billion on military contracts that included deals with US companies like Lockheed Martin. At the same time, a British parliamentary committee [report](#) suggested that the UK halt some of its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, [arguing](#) that lawmakers were not doing a good enough job of ensuring that weapons sold to Saudi Arabia are not being used in Yemen in violation of international law.

Meanwhile, the coalition backing the war effort in Yemen against the Houthis, experienced internal fraying. Moroccan officials [announced](#) that their country, one of the original Arab nations that provided support for the coalition, was no longer militarily involved in the conflict.

Lawmakers in the US are trying to detangle America from the conflict in Yemen. In February, the US House of Representatives [voted](#) 248-177 in favor of passing the War Power Resolution, which would curb Washington's ability to continue providing military assistance to Saudi Arabia in the war. Now, the measure must pass the Republican-controlled Senate, which passed a similar resolution last year. President Trump has staunchly [opposed](#) the legislation and vowed to veto the bill if it survives a Senate vote. The Trump administration maintains that the US is not directly involved in combat operations and thus the measure is unnecessary and could make the conflict even worse. The US [stopped](#) mid-air refueling services for coalition aircraft late last year.

Military and Security Developments

Clashes continued in Hodeidah despite the December 18 ceasefire, albeit at a reduced intensity. Hostilities were recorded throughout the governorate in January and February, although it is widely noted that there has been a reduction in clashes between Houthi and government forces. UN Envoy Griffiths [told](#) the Security Council in early January that “unsurprisingly” clashes endured but that they were “remarkably limited compared to what we saw in the weeks before the Stockholm consultations.” Without naming a culprit, the UN [confirmed](#) that an artillery shell killed eight bystanders and injured 10 others in a market in the Tuhayat district of Hodeidah in mid-February. Both [government allied forces](#) and the [Houthis](#) continue to accuse one another of attacks on civilians but without robust international oversight in Hodeidah, there is no neutral source to verify claims and the UN has shied away from blaming one side over the other.

At the beginning of January the Associated Press [reported](#) that the warring parties were reinforcing their troops in the southern part of the Hodeidah where coalition allies were preparing to mount an offensive in December before the peace negotiations in Sweden

began. Fighting appeared to intensify as the month went on, with anonymous security forces [telling](#) the AP on January 24 that the day's hours long fighting was the most intense since the ceasefire came into effect in December. Some on the ground described the situation in Hodeidah as just as dire as before the official ceasefire was declared in December.

The Houthis are surreptitiously receiving fuel from Iran to finance their war effort, according to the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen. “The Panel has identified a small number of companies, both within and outside Yemen, that operated as front companies under false documentation to conceal a donation of fuel for the benefit of a listed individual,” reads the Panel's [final report](#). “The revenue from the sale of that fuel was used to finance the Houthi war effort. The Panel found that the fuel was loaded from ports in the Islamic Republic of Iran under false documentation to avoid detection by inspections of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism.” Relatedly, the UN Security Council [voted](#) in favor of renewing four-year-old financial and travel sanctions against individuals accused of undermining peace efforts in Yemen. Resolution 2402 calls for a one-year extension of a travel ban, an arms embargo and a suspension of assets for identified spoilers.

A Houthi drone attack on a military parade killed a senior government official, in what was seen as a display of the group's increasingly sophisticated aerial attack capabilities. The drone, rigged with explosives, killed at least seven people gathered at a military parade at the Al-Anad Air Base in Lahj governorate on January 10. Intelligence Chief Brig. Gen. Saleh Tamah was wounded in the attack and [died](#) several days later from injuries. A spokesperson for the Houthi-aligned armed forces [said](#) the attack was in response to “continuing” coalition raids and the “escalation” at various fronts, while government officials [pointed](#) to the attack as evidence the Houthis are not committed to upholding the Stockholm agreement. The AP [reported](#) that Yemeni and coalition officials said the Houthis have been using increasingly more sophisticated drones in their attacks, some of which resemble Iranian models.

In an apparent response, the coalition stepped up strikes in Sana'a, hitting the Al-Dulaimi Air Base, which a Saudi-owned TV station [referred](#) to as a drone storage and military training site. These overnight raids on January 20 are [believed](#) to be the first in Sana'a since the consultations in Sweden. Residents

[told](#) Reuters they were particularly intense, “the likes of which we have not seen for a year” and that at least two civilians were killed and several homes destroyed. Less than two weeks later, state-run Saudi media [reported](#) the coalition had struck another alleged drone storage facility east of Sana’a in retaliation for the Houthis’ drone attack on the Al-Anad Air Base. A similar operation was [reported](#) in February.

Fighting concentrated around the Hajour area of Hajjah governorate intensified in a localized uprising against the Houthis. Local tribesmen and Salafis opened up the fighting front in early February. Clashes have [taken](#) a heavy toll on civilians in the area. There are unverified [reports](#) of dozens of civilian deaths, as well as heavy military [casualties](#). The Hajour area in eastern Hajjah has been under Houthi control since 2014. Unlike other contiguous fronts against the Houthis, the local uprising in Hajjah has garnered intense attention from those who see it as an unprecedented local rebellion against the Houthis.

A US drone strike killed Jamal Al-Badawi, an alleged planner of the USS Cole bombing. US Central Command [said](#) the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militant was killed in a strike in Marib governorate on January 1. The US targeted AQAP and ISIS-Yemen in a total of 36 airstrikes in 2018, Central Command also [announced](#) later in January. The majority of the airstrikes took place in the first four months of 2018 and tapered off mid-year, with no announced strikes taking place between October and December.

A bomb exploded at a market in the town of Mocha, killing at least six people. Dozens of others were injured in the January 28 attack, according to [several](#) news [reports](#). Mocha is located on the coast of Taiz governorate, and is controlled by UAE-sponsored Yemeni fighters. Quoting Emirati state media, the Associated Press [reported](#) that an Emirati cameraman was killed in the attack and another reporter was injured.

Recommended reading:

Journalistic articles

- Following a meeting of Yemeni and MENA region private sector representatives, a blog post for the World Bank explains how [Yemen’s private sector is teaming up to support humanitarian and recovery efforts](#)
- In a series of short audio narratives from the BBC, [five Yemeni women talk about their various experiences during the ongoing conflict](#), ranging from planning a wedding to living in Mukalla after the departure of Al-Qaeda
- In a critical look at a Saudi-funded rehabilitation center in Marib, the New York Times writes that [For Yemen child soldiers, a refuge mixes play with Saudi propaganda](#)
- The founder of the Antiquities Coalition, Deborah Lehr, speaks to NPR about how [Yemen’s loss of antiquities is ‘robbing them of their future’](#)
- On CBC Radio, a security analyst gives his take on [How Yemen’s cyberwar could shape future conflicts](#)
- Written in collaboration with OCHA, a short article describes [How a Yemen water plant helped cut cholera by 92 percent](#).
- A story about a Yemeni man and a small group of volunteers who are [helping remove bodies from the front lines of the war](#) and return them to families for burial
- In a CNN investigation, [Sold to an ally, lost to an enemy](#), coalition member states are said to have breached agreements with the US by allowing American-made weapons to be passed onto militias and individuals that the US has linked to Al-Qaeda.

Longer reports

- The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released its [Famine Prevention Plan](#), detailing the interventions it will implement during the first half of 2019 as part of the larger UN-coordinated effort to keep famine from spreading in Yemen.
- In an investigation, Amnesty International writes the [UAE recklessly supplying militias with windfall of Western arms](#)
- An International Rescue Committee report on the protection, participation and potential of [Women and girls in Yemen’s war](#).



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