



THE YEMEN TREND

**June
2017**

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

The world's worst humanitarian crisis entered new depths in June as the cumulative total of reported cholera cases more than doubled throughout the month to a quarter of a million, with over 1,400 associated deaths. More than 5,000 new cases were reported daily, on average, and health officials deemed it the "worst cholera outbreak in the world." Compounding the crisis, over one million government employees continued without pay and of the \$2.1 billion required for the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan, by mid-June only 29 percent had been funded.

On the political front, the Hadi government said it is "fully prepared to discuss" the proposals put forward by the UN envoy in May, which are geared at avoiding a military operation on Hodeidah port and resuming salary payments to public employees. The Houthi/Saleh government said Ould Cheikh is "not welcome" anymore, but in a presidential statement the UN Security Council reaffirmed its backing of the envoy and called on the warring parties to engage with his proposals. Meanwhile, former vice president and prime minister Khaled Bahah returned to Hadhramout and Hadi sacked three governors who had joined the recently formed Southern Transitional Council.

Army forces aligned to Hadi made moderate gains in Taiz city and Serwah district of Marib throughout June, but Houthi/Saleh forces held their positions elsewhere in the country, including in western Taiz, where Operation Golden Spear appears to have lost steam. In addition to Taiz and Marib, clashes continued in Hajjah, Shabwa, Sana'a, Al-Jawf, Al-Bayda, and Sa'ada. In Aden, Fourth Military Region commander Fadhel Hassan denied reports that around a dozen brigades have been ordered to relocate to various other governorates.

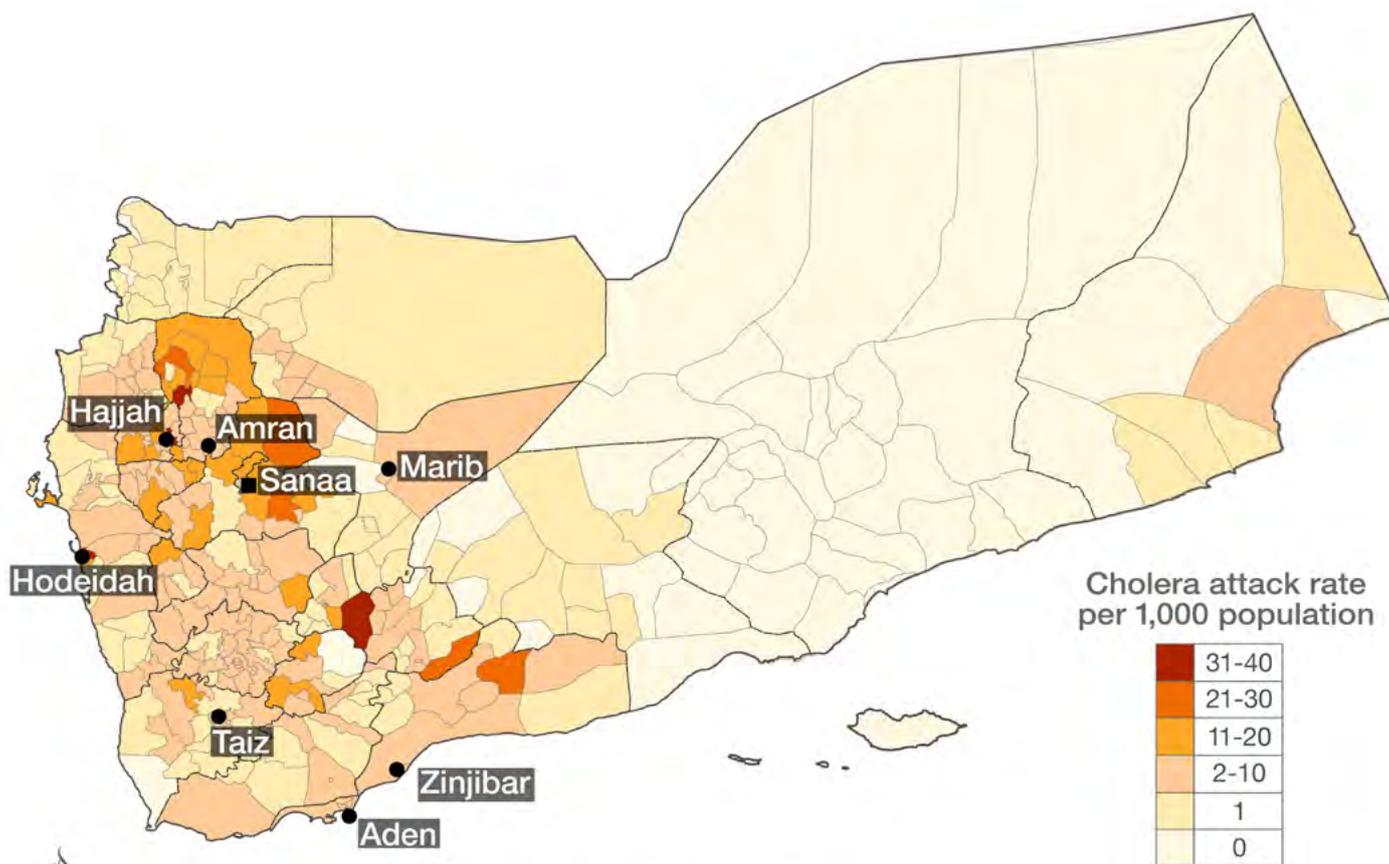
Timeline

- 5-Jun** Hadi government confirms “full support” for envoy’s proposals in a letter to the UN
 - 12-Jun** The Presidential Palace in Taiz city is taken under the control of Hadi-aligned army
 - 15-Jun** UN Security Council adopts a presidential statement on Yemen
 - 17-Jun** A coalition attack on a market in Sa’ada kills at least 23 civilians
 - 26-Jun** Former prime minister and vice president Khaled Bahah returns to Hadhramout
 - 28-Jun** President Hadi replaces the governors of Hadhramout, Shabwa, and Socotra
 - 29-Jun** WHO announces 224,989 cumulative cases of cholera reported, 1,416 associated deaths
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- Oct 2016** Beginning of cholera outbreak in Yemen (start of cumulative count)
 - April 27** Beginning of current surge. From Oct 2016 – Apr 2017, about 26,000 cases reported
 - May 18** 23,425 new cases since April 27, cumulative total of 49,495
 - June 7** Cumulative total of suspected cholera cases is 101,820
 - June 15** Cumulative total of suspected cholera cases is 140,116

Humanitarian and Economic Trends

The cumulative total of suspected cholera cases more than doubled in June, with 224,989 cases reported by the end of the month and 1,416 associated deaths, [according](#) to the WHO. Around 40,000 cases were reported in a single week from June 22-27, marking unprecedented growth since June 7, when the WHO [reported](#) a total of 101,820 suspected cases. “We are now facing the worst cholera outbreak in the world,” UNICEF and the WHO said in a joint [statement](#) on June 24, adding that on average 5,000 new cases were being reported each day. The initial outbreak began in October 2016 and the WHO considers the current spike to be part of an ongoing surge since April.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [warned](#) “officials fear an extremely high death toll as the outbreak continues to spread,” and Save the Children emphasized the toll the disease is having on children. Of the estimated 5,470 new suspected cases reported daily, Save the Children [estimates](#) 46 percent are children under 15. This means on average one child in Yemen contracts cholera every 35 seconds. Ahmed Zouiten, the WHO’s senior emergency advisor for Yemen, [expressed](#) cautious optimism health authorities are making progress as the fatality rate is decreasing and the warring parties are permitting emergency supply trucks to reach areas in need.



Source: World Health Organization | Last updated: July 3, 2017

UNICEF is paying the salaries of many Yemeni health workers in an effort to manage the cholera crisis and prevent the further collapse of the health sector. [According](#) to Geert Cappelaere, the agency's MENA region director, doctors and nurses are being paid through daily stipends about 70 percent of what they would normally be paid. The payments started in mid-April, and UNICEF is borrowing the money from an emergency fund. "It's not a common practice at all," Geert told the New York Times. "That's also a practice I would not want to see sustained." A UNICEF spokesman [told](#) the National Public Radio (NPR) the stipends, or "incentives," are for "at least 1,500 health workers in 512 cholera treatment centers and 27 diarrhea treatment centers for a period of three months."

Only 29 percent of the \$2.1 billion required for the humanitarian response plan has been funded, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, [said](#) in mid-June. Describing the "famine-like conditions" that have resulted from the humanitarian crisis, McGoldrick said for nearly a year over one million government employees have gone without pay. Furthermore, two million more people have become in need of humanitarian assistance and protection since the beginning of 2017, bringing the total to over 20 million people, equal to more than 70 percent of all Yemenis.

The first policy brief of the Development Champions Forum was issued, providing international and local stakeholders with practical short-term recommendations on addressing Yemen's most critical challenges. The Forum brings together a range of Yemeni social and economic development experts as part of the "Rethinking Yemen's Economy" initiative being implemented by DeepRoot Consulting, the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS), and the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO). The [policy brief](#) is based on discussions that took place in Amman, Jordan, between April 29 and May 1, 2017, and the recommendations are related to the three ongoing crises in food security, the banking industry, and basic service delivery. Some of the key recommendations for each category are:

- Regarding the food crisis, the international community should promptly fulfill all aid pledges, and whenever possible aid should be cash-based rather than in-kind assistance. The logistical and financial obstacles impeding the importation and distribution of food and medical supplies

should be removed by all parties to the conflict, and the management of major commercial entry points, such as the ports of Hodeidah and Aden should be improved.

- Regarding the banking sector, all parties should work toward a united and functioning Central Bank of Yemen (CBY), and all public revenues should be deposited in CBY accounts. Additionally, to facilitate food and medicine imports, international aid funds should be directed to support Yemen's foreign exchange holdings.
- Regarding the delivery of basic services, emphasis should be placed on supporting and empowering local authorities and building their capacity to deliver public goods. Furthermore, the Yemeni diaspora should be engaged in supporting critical service sectors, and international and local NGOs should be encouraged to provide key services where required.

Political Developments

The Hadi government is "fully prepared to discuss" the proposals put forward by the UN envoy during his meeting with President Hadi on May 11, according to Khaled Alyemany, the government's permanent representative to the UN. In a [letter](#) addressed to the UN Security Council in early June, Alyemany said the proposed arrangements "would provide for the militias to withdraw from the province of Hodeidah in accordance with the peace consultations that took place under United Nations auspices in Kuwait last year and were approved by the Yemeni Government." The letter also states a technical committee of financial experts would be established to develop a mechanism to handle public employee salaries and manage revenues from Houthi/Saleh-controlled territory.

Background on the peace process

At the end of April the UN envoy [said](#) he hoped "to enter a new round of talks before Ramadan," and that he planned to have a meeting with the Houthis in Oman in May to discuss options for moving forward with the peace plan. However, after meeting President Hadi and travelling to Sana'a throughout May, by the end of the month he had little progress to report to the UN Security Council. "I will not hide from this Council that we are not close to a comprehensive

agreement," he said in his [briefing](#) on May 30, a few days after Ramadan had begun. "The reluctance of the key parties to embrace the concessions needed for peace, or even discuss them, remains extremely troubling."

The envoy told the Security Council his focus has been to reach an agreement to avoid a military operation to retake the port of Hodeidah, "that should be negotiated in parallel with an agreement to ensure the resumption of salary payments nationally to all civil servants." In a [media stakeout](#) following his briefing, the UN envoy explained the plan has two main components: A military committee made up of officers who have not participated directly in the conflict and who are respected by both sides, which would "manage the security and the military aspects of Hodeida," and a financial committee focused more directly on the chamber of commerce and Yemeni businessmen.

On May 30 Reuters [reported](#) Oman was mediating between the two camps, and that Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi, Yemen's foreign minister and lead delegate for the peace process, was in Muscat. Quoting an anonymous Yemen official, Reuters said "the Omani side have informed Al-Mekhlafi in talks on Monday [May 29] that the Houthis were ready to agree to Ould Cheikh Ahmed's plan in full." However, subsequent developments in June would indicate otherwise, as did events the week prior. In his May 30 briefing, the UN envoy said during his visit to Sana'a from May 22 to May 24, "the Ansarallah [Houthi] – General People's Congress delegation in Sana'a did not meet me to discuss the framework for such an agreement."

Ould Cheikh is "not welcome" anymore, Saleh Al-Samad, the president of the Sana'a-based Supreme Political Council, said in early June. Accusing the envoy of being biased in favor of the coalition, Al-Samad [said](#) neither the Houthis nor the GPC would have any contact with him. The Houthi delegation spokesman, Mohammed Abdulsalam, backed Al-Samad and [wrote](#) the envoy had become biased and not committed to the UN Charter. Hisham Sharaf, the foreign minister of the Houthi/Saleh government, in a similar vein dubbed the envoy's plan for Hodeidah an "unjust proposal."

The UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement on Yemen on June 15. Drafted by the UK and approved by all 15 members, it was the first presidential statement since April 2016. In the [statement](#) the Council reaffirmed its backing of Ould Cheikh and called on "all parties to engage

constructively with the Special Envoy's latest proposals." In addition to calling for an immediate agreement on the modalities for a ceasefire, the presidential statement:

- Says the envoy's proposals include "increasing commercial and humanitarian shipments through Red Sea ports including new arrangements for the management of Hodeida port and city," and urges the parties to reach an agreement with the UN envoy to resume paying government salaries.
- Calls on the warring parties to agree to deploy more UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) monitors; to install cranes at Hodeidah port and increase the capacity of all ports more generally; and to enable "increased access to Sana'a Airport for lifesaving humanitarian supplies and movement of urgent humanitarian cases."
- Does not address the recent steps taken by the Southern Movement (Hirak) to form the Southern Transitional Council, other than to say "the Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen."
- Was welcomed by a group of 11 NGOs who wrote a [letter](#) of response, but they said it "falls short of addressing issues that could offer the peace process real political impetus." The NGOs further note their "concern that UNSC members are highlighting this man-made crisis whilst continuing to supply the weapons that fuel the conflict."

Neither the Presidential Statement nor the envoy's briefing explicitly call for the withdrawal of Houthi/Saleh forces from Hodeidah governorate, which Yemeni government representative Khaled Alyemany said is a component of the proposed arrangements. Furthermore, neither the statement nor the briefing call for Sana'a airport to be re-opened to regular civilian travel, although the envoy did say in his media stakeout that he had wanted to discuss this with the Houthi/Saleh delegation during his May trip to Sana'a.

Khaled Bahah returned to his native Hadhramout on June 26, where he [announced](#) Al-Riyan airport in Mukalla would be re-opened after being closed for more than two years. Bahah, who served as prime minister and vice president under Hadi earlier in the war, flew in on a private UAE jet and was met at the airport by Emirati officials. While

it remains unclear why Bahah has returned, there is speculation that with UAE backing he will build his influence in Hadhramout and become more involved with the Southern Transitional Council. Al-Riyan airport is currently being used as a prison by the UAE, and reports in June by the Associated Press and Human Rights Watch (detailed in the following section) allege torture and other abuses have occurred at the facility.

Hadi replaced the governors of Hadhramout, Shabwa, and Socotra on June 28. The governors were all members of the recently formed Southern Transitional Council, a political body opposed by the internationally recognized government. Hadi [appointed](#) Major General Faraj Salmeen Al-Bahsani as governor of Hadhramout, and said he will also maintain his position as commander of the Second Military Region, based in Mukalla. Al-Bahsani replaces Ahmed Saeed Bin Buraik, who is a powerful figure in Hadhramout, although he is currently in Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, Hadi appointed Ali Bin Rashed Al-Harethi governor of Shabwa and Ahmed Abdullah Ali Al-Socotri as governor of Socotra.

Analysis: A new way forward?

By his own admission, Ould Cheikh has achieved little progress in recent months to bring the warring parties back to the negotiating table. The Sana'a-based authorities say they will no longer deal with the envoy and efforts to pressure the Houthi/Saleh alliance to the table have failed to materialize. In coastal Taiz and Hajjah, coalition and Hadi-aligned ground forces have been unable to advance on Hodeidah, where it was hoped an operation to retake the port would force the Houthi/Saleh alliance to make concessions. "The Houthis will not accept dialogue unless they are forced into talks by a change on the ground," Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi, foreign minister and delegation head of the Hadi government, [said](#) of Operation Golden Spear during its advance in January.

As both mediation and military efforts appear deadlocked, developments in southern Yemen signal a new direction in the political landscape. Khaled Bahah, who served as prime minister and vice president under Hadi earlier in the war, returned to his native Hadhramout at the end of June, ahead of an expected meeting in Mukalla of the Southern Transitional Council. Formed on May 11, the Transitional Council has brought some of the most

powerful figures in the south under a single banner. These include most notably former Aden governor Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, a longtime separatist who serves as the Council president, and former Minister of State Hani Bin Buraik, a Salafi sheikh who serves as his vice president. Many believe the UAE is playing an ever increasing role in shaping developments because Bahah, Al-Zubaidi, and Bin Buraik are all close to the UAE.

Given the Houthi/Saleh alliance's refusal to engage with the UN envoy and the shifting power dynamics in territory nominally controlled by the internationally recognized government, it may be time for a rethinking of the UN-mediated peace process. In order for renewed peace talks to address the underlying causes of the conflict and include the diverse actors directing the course of the fighting, it is necessary to have mediators acceptable to both sides who are able to structure a more inclusive and adaptive process.

Military and Security Developments

In Taiz city, forces aligned to Hadi made moderate gains in June. At the beginning of the month soldiers in the Taiz Axis, which oversees all Hadi-aligned army brigades in the governorate, took the western side of the presidential palace, a key compound used by Houthi/Saleh forces to shell downtown Taiz. Alsharq Al-Awsat, which spoke to army spokesman Brigadier General Abdu Majali, [reported](#) the Presidential Palace was fully liberated on June 12.

The Tashrifat military camp in eastern Taiz was reportedly retaken as well, and Brigadier General Sadeq Sarhan, commander of the 22nd Brigade in the Taiz Axis, [said](#) his forces were besieging the Houthi/Saleh-held Special Security Forces (SSF) camp. Sarhan said once the camp is taken he plans to move on to Al-Hawban area, which is on the eastern edge of Taiz city. The main road linking downtown Taiz to the international airport runs east through Al-Hawban, then continues north to Ibb governorate and eventually Sana'a. The strategic area was taken under the control of SSF forces early in the conflict, and it remains under the Houthi/Saleh alliance's control.

Hadi forces reported gains in Marib governorate in the last week of June with the backing of coalition airstrikes. Army units loyal to Hadi captured territory in the Al-Makhdara area of Serwah district, a mountainous area [described](#) by an aide to the Marib governor as being “a lifeline supply route where Houthis use its main road to get aid and reinforcements from Sana’a to Helan mountain and other locations in Serwah.” At the end of June, fighting at the Al-Makhdara front was focused on the strategic Marthad mountain, which overlooks the center of Serwah.

Reports of an agreement to relocate Aden-based brigades outside the governorate were denied by the commander of the Fourth Military Region, Fadhel Hassan. On June 26 it was widely [reported](#) by local news that an agreement was reached between President Hadi and the UAE to relocate brigades in the Aden-based Fourth Military Region, which oversees the governorates of Aden, Lahj, Abyan, Al-Dhale and Taiz. However, Commander Hassan claimed in a June 27 [interview](#) he had not received orders to do so from Hadi. The rumored deal was further shrouded in uncertainty because multiple military spokespeople, including the spokesman of the Fourth Military Region itself, Mohammed Al-Naqeeb, said a deal had in fact been reached.

A US airstrike in Shabwa on June 16 killed Abu Khattab Al-Awlaki, [described](#) by the State Department as “the emir for AQAP’s terrorist stronghold in Shabwa governorate.” Two other alleged AQAP militants were also said to have been killed in the attack. The statement by the US is contradicted by local news [reports](#) that Abu Khattab is a brother of Saad Bin Atef Al-Awlaki, the real leader of AQAP in Shabwa. International media that spoke to local military sources, including Chinese state media [Xinhua](#) and the [Associated Press](#), also reported contrary to the State Department claims. At the end of June, leaflets ([pictured](#)) were reportedly dropped over Shabwa offering a \$5 million reward for information on four AQAP leaders, including Saad Atef Al-Awlaqi, indicating he is still believed to be alive.

A coalition attack on a market in Sa’ada killed at least 23 civilians on June 17. Jamie McGoldrick, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, [said](#) at least 22 civilians were killed and injured in the attack, including six children. “There were no reported military targets in the proximity of the market at the time of the attack, and no warning was issued to civilians in the area,” he said. A follow

up [report](#) by the UN human rights commissioner confirmed at least 23 civilian deaths “as a result of an airstrike, helicopter attack and shelling on a house and nearby market.”

Sudan will send another batch of troops to Yemen, [according](#) to Sudanese Minister of Defense Major General Ali Salim. The announcement of further troop deployments came shortly after Houthi/Saleh forces [claimed](#) 83 Sudanese soldiers were killed near Midi district in Hajjah. Speaking to the Sudan Tribune, Sudanese military sources [denied](#) those claims but admitted 21 troops were killed, including four officers – the highest recognized toll since Sudan joined the war in 2015. In mid-June Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, who is indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Darfur, [visited](#) the graves of his soldiers in Saudi Arabia. According to an April [report](#) by the Small Arms Survey, as of early 2017 several thousand of Sudan’s Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had been sent to Yemen. The RSF is a paramilitary group comprised in part of fighters implicated in the genocide in Darfur.

US lawmakers voted against a resolution to bar a major arms sale to Saudi Arabia on June 13. Senate Joint Resolution 42 ([S.J.Res.42](#)), “Relating to the disapproval of the proposed export to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of certain defense articles,” if passed would have blocked a \$510 million military sale. The vote was close at 53-47 against, demonstrating opposition among US lawmakers to arming Saudi Arabia has increased as the war in Yemen drags on. The Kingdom’s use of American weapons in Yemen is at the center of the debate, and senators [voiced](#) disagreement whether Saudi Arabia is intentionally targeting civilians.

Recommending Readings:

- Positioning the conflict as being primarily between local actors seeking to gain control over key economic resources, Rafat Al-Akhali writes for the London School of Economics about [The battle to Control the 'Commanding Heights' of the Yemeni Economy](#).
- In a Foreign Policy [article](#), Mukalla-based journalist Saeed Al-Batati speaks with the (now former) governor of Hadhramout about his battle against AQAP in the governorate.
- [Bickering while Yemen burns: Poverty, war, and political indifference](#), a report by Peter Salisbury for the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW), explains the underlying causes of and changes to the ongoing economic and humanitarian crisis, and offers recommendations for international policymakers on how to address it.
- The Yemen Polling Center, in cooperation with CARPO and Saferworld, conducted a study called ['Women nowadays do anything.' Women's role in conflict, peace and security in Yemen](#). The study looks at the impact of the war on women in the governorates of Ibb and Aden, particularly regarding the security-related issues they face.
- Yemeni journalist Masyaa Shuja Al-Deen writes in Al-Monitor about how the [Gulf rift sends tremors though Yemen](#), explaining the complex alliances between Qatar, the Islah Party in Yemen, and various regional and local players.
- The New York Times uncovered that an [Aid Coordinator in Yemen Had Secret Job Overseeing U.S. Commando Shipments](#).

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