



Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

Interactive Session Report

“Current Situation of Yemen”

3rd January 2019



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**Opening Remarks by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI (M),
(Retd) – President CGSS**



The Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) organized an “Interactive Session on Current Situation of Yemen” on 3rd January 2019. The session was chaired by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI (M), (Retd) – President CGSS. On the behalf of Centre for Global & Strategic Studies, he extended his warm welcome to the worthy participants for their active participation and offered special gratitude to honorable guest speaker Mohammad Mutahar Alashabi – Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen.

In the opening remarks, Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI (M), (Retd) – President CGSS stated that Yemen has been of great importance to all the great powers due to its strategic location as it is located at the mouth of the Red Sea. Yemen had great intellectuals and philosophers and it had been of greater interest to the explorers like Ibn-e-Battuta. He mentioned that Yemen has given us a lot and has a lot to offer. In the Second World War, Aden was the second most important port in the world after New York. The Island of Socotra which was detached from Africa is of the great interest to the great powers.



Moreover, it has been More than three years, Yemen has been locked in a seemingly intractable civil war that has killed nearly 10,000 people and pushed millions to the brink of starvation. He also talked about the history of the Yemen Civil War that it began in 2014 when Houthi insurgents – rebels and a history of rising up against the government took control of Yemen’s capital and largest city, Sanaa and demanding lower fuel prices and a new government. Followed by failed negotiations, the rebels seized the presidential palace in January 2015, the leading President Mansour Hadi and his government to resign. At the beginning of 2015, a coalition of Gulf States led by Saudi Arabia launched a campaign of economic isolation and air strikes against the Houthi insurgents, with the United States logistical and intelligence support. In the near past talking about the year 2016, the Houthis and the government of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, ousted in 2011, after nearly thirty years in power, announced the formation of a “political council” to govern Sanaa and much of northern Yemen. However, he mentioned, in 2017, Saleh broke with the Houthis and called for his followers to take up arms against them, where Saleh was killed and his forces were defeated within two days.

However, the conflict continues to take a heavy toll on Yemeni civilians, making Yemen the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. The United Nations estimated that the civilian casualty toll has exceeded 15,000 killed or injured. Twenty-two million Yemenis remain in need of assistance, eight million are at risk of famine, and a cholera outbreak has affected over one million people. All sides of the conflict are reported to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law. By concluding his remarks, he stated that Yemen has great opportunities and we have to avail it. We should pray for the peace and prosperity of Yemen. After brief remarks, Major General Syed

Khalid Amir Jaffery HI (M), (Retd) – President CGSS invited Mohammad Mutahar Alashabi for the keynote session.

Speech/Presentation by His Excellency Mohammad Mutahar Alashabi – Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen

The guest speaker thanked the Center for Global and Strategic Studies for inviting him and extending an opportunity to address the worthy participants on the topic of “Interactive Session on Current Situation of Yemen”. His Excellency started his speech by giving a brief historical overview of Yemen and its issues. He briefed about the major issues in Yemen from 1990 till 2010 including the Southern issue, Al-Houthi issue, and Counter-terrorism issue. The terrorism issue escalated after 1990 and especially after 2001. He highlighted the situation of Yemen before 2001



in terms of political, economic and security aspects.

Youth Peaceful Uprising in February 2011 Yemen:

He presented the demands that were put forward by the revolution. The revolution demanded:

- A change
- Wanted Saleh to step down

- But the price of this change was quite high as the actors involved both internal and external didn't want it to happen.

The Youth Peaceful Uprising in February 2011 in which Houthi and Southern movements joint the youth revolution besides the Political parties and Salehi rivals had their own interests. Every part of this component has his own aim which they wanted to get done.

- The movement faced by Saleh forces and his loyalists with life bullets (sometimes) especially in the major cities though, which infuriated the public in general which increase the sealing of demands and in large demonstrations.

As a result of this confrontation, the army split and it raises the concern regionally and internationally.

GCC initiative and Transitional Period

He then talked about the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative and the transitional period. In his presentation, he mentioned that this chaotic situation is the reason that GCC countries proposed an initiative called GCC initiative and its mechanism. It is based on three principles:

- A peaceful transition of power from Saleh to the newly elected president
- Forming a new national consensus government based on 50:50 ratio
- Accordingly, In February 2012 the election of the President (H.E. Abduraboh Mansour Hadi) and starting the national comprehensive dialogue (NCD)

Later in January 2013, UNSC meets in Sanaa and the NCD started and re-structuring of the military institutions.

National Comprehensive Dialogue (NCD):

His Excellency then talked about the start of NCD. In February 2012, president (H.E. Abduraboh Mansour Hadi) was elected and started the National Comprehensive Dialogue (NCD), from March 18, 2013, to January 24, 2014. Houthis, Saleh, Southern movements representatives and all political, social actors including women, Youth, minorities were represented in this NCD. This NCD ended by the January 2014 and there were some obstacles faced by this NCD that were

placed by Houthis and the President. All these arrangements and steps were supported by UNSC. Houthis and their allies perpetrated the Coup d'état in September 2014 and completed it in January 2015. The President requested for Arab Collation support according to Yemen constitution after Houthis rejection for the completion of NCD. The outcome of this NCD was a new draft of the constitution.

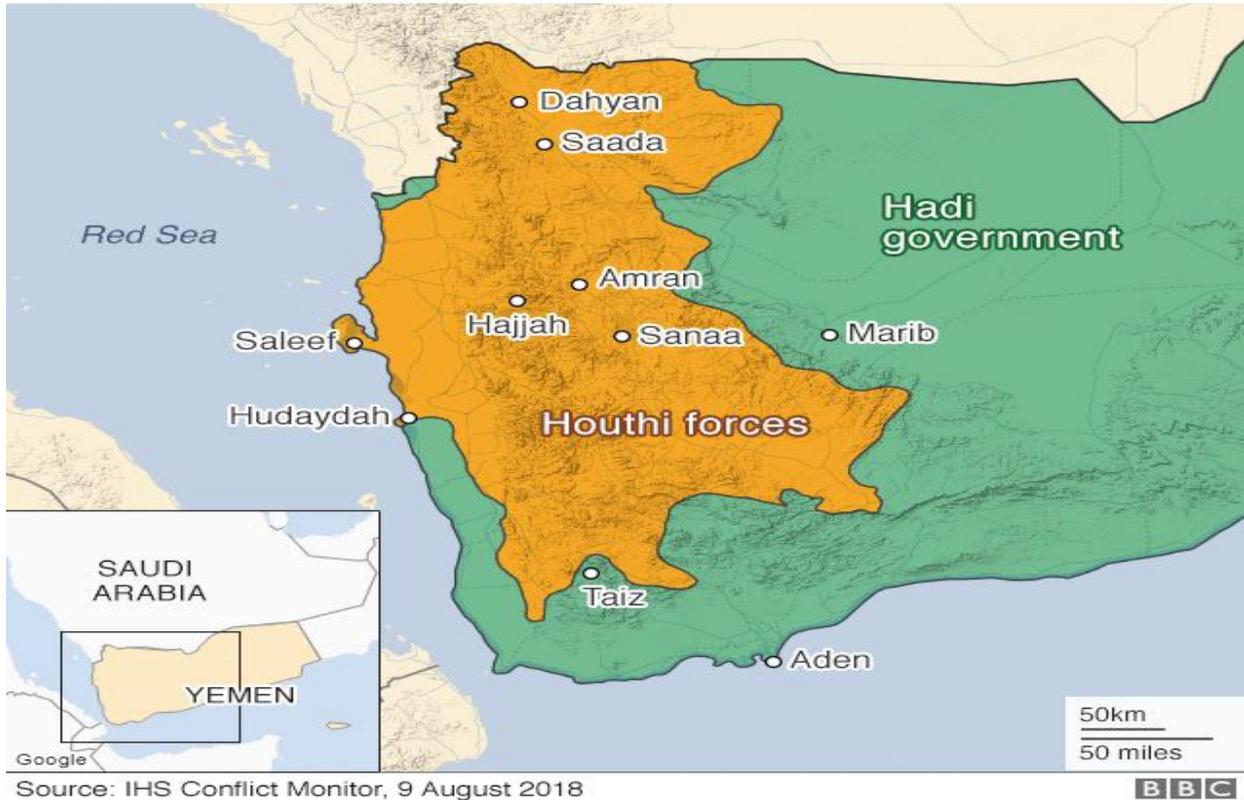
2014–15 Coup d'état

Talking about the Coup d'état, during the transitional period, the Houthis kept their selves methodically towards the capital even though they were in NCD with the support of Saleh who formed with them alliance for the purpose of derailing the transitional period among other things. Saleh wanted to return to power so he lent his support to them and paved the way to the capital. Further, Houthis and their allies perpetrated a military Coup d'état in September 2014 and completed in January 2015 and they snatched the draft constitution, and they put the President and Prime Minister and the government under the house arrest. Then, President Hadi escaped from his house arrest to Aden and calling for negation to complete of the transitional period to avoid the military conflict. But unfortunately the Houthis tasted the last of power and money and they continue advancing to other governorates towards Aden. Saleh tried to use Houthis to regain the



power, and revenge from those who raised against him. But they used Saleh and won. Their alliance continued till December 2, 2017, when Houthis killed Saleh.

Areas of control in Yemen



Arab Coalition support

His Excellency also briefed about the Arab coalition support and he said that after there was no solution to stop the Coup and mass aggressive military chaos made by Houthis militia and pro Saleh forces, and their refusal for peace calls by presidents; the President invoked his right as democratically elected President of Yemen and made a hard decision to call for help from Yemen's brotherly neighbors in the Gulf cooperation council to intervene military and restore state. He said that there was a request done for Arab Coalition support after Houthis rejection for the completion of NCD. The government held firmly these objective and appreciated the Arab Coalition's commitment and support thus far. This support had enabled the government to free Aden and other governorates from Houthis and restore 80% of the land and squeezed the rebellions to 20%.

Humanitarian crises and hindrance of relief

The Ambassador highlighted the problems faced by people in Yemen. He told the audience about the medical conditions, diseases and the aid given to them. He talked about the Breaking out of some diseases, cholera, and dengue due to the bad services in the health sewerage system. Houthis only invest on the agony of the people in the area under their control. He then appreciated the Arab Coalition especially Saudi Arabia and UAE responding for the government call for the humanitarian emergency relief; Besides the assistance by the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia, the Arab coalition financed and delivered the most humanitarian relief and assistance to the Yemeni People through the seas from Aden ports and from the land through East of Yemen. He added, but unfortunately; the humanitarian aid distribution has been mismanaged and/or some of them confiscated by Houthis in the areas which were under their control.

What is the Southern Yemen Problem?



The Southern Yemen Problem has been briefly defined by the Ambassador as a bad government efficiency and as a result of political parties' conflicts which led to armed conflicts ended in 1994 between the rivalries and the separatist's attempt. Saleh who won the war did not look to the war causes and after years of the

unification and he did try to rehabilitate the Yemeni house and continued to grip the power. This strategy and negligence deepened the presentiment and infuriation among the Yemenis in the south which has been grown up until 2007 then they declared the opposition against the government.

Houthis as the biggest disaster for Saadah Governorate

His Excellency described who al-Houthis are and what their pretended demands are. Not All Zaidies are Houthis but most of the Houthis are Zaidies. He stated that in 1990 a movement called (Al- Shabab ALmomen) started. The goal of this movement at its early stage was educational,

cultural, and religious in nature according to the politicians and analysts. According to Mohammad Azzan, one of the founders for this movement, this movement came after the presence of Sunni Salafi center established in Saadah by Muqbil AL-Wadai, a Salafi scholar from Saadah who founded the Salafi Da AL-Hadith in Dammaj center in 1979. However, the movement was transformed into a more radical and ideological one. Hussein al-Houthi was a parliament member and GPC member of Saleh party and he was captive by the Iranian model under Khomeini regime and Hizb Allah, after his consequence visit to Iran and Lebanon. 2004 was the year when the first clash between the Houthis group in Saadah and government started. The war with Houthis went on to the years 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009 (the fifth and sixth war was in 2009). And the Houthis by that time had transformed into a military movement and started a rebellion movement in Saadah. They also started embracing the antigovernment and anti-American rhetoric. In this war, Hussain AL-Houthi had been killed and replaced by Abdul Malik Al-Houthi. And later, from arch enemies from 2004 to 2010 they became unscrupulous allies in 2014-2017. In 2010, Houthis captured Sadaah city. In February 2011 anti-Saleh regime movement developed and expanded through the country. Yemen before the Youth Peaceful Uprising in February 2011 faced Saleh forces with light bullets which caused more expansion for the uprising and split the army into two groups (traditional and elite army). In 2011 Al-Houthi joined the youth peaceful revolution and later on, joined the NDC process.

Houthis Internal Aggressive Violation Forms and Types

His Excellency mentioned different violation forms and types used by Houthis.

Terrifying people to subjugate them through:

- Killing on the spot at the beginning of their coup, to terrify the people and opponents.
- Kidnapping
- Blowing up and bombing of the opponents' resident houses, opponents, mosques, buildings, and their schools
- Arbitrary detention
- Torturing people including journalists

- Enforce disappearance of citizens, political opponents as well as individuals who refused in participating in their war against their brothers' Yemeni people or refuse to shout and repeat their slogan; Death, curse.
- Enforced immigration in Dammaj and Taiz etc.
- Sieging communities, districts, civilians, and Taiz is an example.
- Shelling neighborhood and targeting the communities and endangering the life of civilians.
- Forcing opponents to leave their houses and being displaced and some confiscating many opponents' properties.
- Sieging civilian's particular in Taiz.
- Forcing immigration in some area and people.
- Violations against freedom of thoughts and the right to the freedom of movement.
- Denying medical facilities and medical assistant caused a lot of death of many Yemenis.
- Raiding and looting many rural hospitals and taking control of the hospitals and their medical stuff.
- Selling the fuel and other energy resources by a very high price, while they are talking it from Marib.
- Confiscating part of the humanitarian aid and relief goods and selling them in the black market and causing hunger:
 - a) WFP demands action after uncovering misused of food relief intended for hunger Yemeni in Yemen by Houthis in Sana'a and other cities.
 - b) Through controlling the humanitarian aid to deprive their opponents.
 - More taxes and Levies on imported goods come through the area under the government control.
 - Recruiting children and taking youngsters by force to the front line of war.

- Changing curriculum and controlling the education and academic institutions and replace them with their elements.
- Continuous attempt to destroy the social fabric and national harmony

Government response for peaceful efforts

The government spares no efforts for peace to end the conflict /war as:

- 2015 June consultations: in Geneva: failed
- 2015 December consultations: in Biel Switzerland: Again Failed
- 2016 from May up to August in Kuwait consultations which lasted for 115 days: Again failed to achieve peace.
- 2018: in November consultations: in Stockholm

Recommendations for the Political Solution of the Conflict

His Excellency presented some of the recommendations as well. The government believes that no military solution, but the only a peaceful solution and it's very keen toward this option. Therefore, it avoided the military confrontation when Houthis militias started toward the capital. But Houthis will not go for peace as experienced without military pressure. The followings are the steps toward peace:

1. Preserves there three references for peace.
2. Readiness and transform Houthis militias to a political peaceful party and live and recognize the coexistence and no supremacy for any party on the Yemeni society especially the proclaimed racial supremacy.
3. Handing over the state institutions in the area they control.
4. Focus on restarting the peace talks by engaging the parties “whose decision can contribute to bringing an end to this war”.

5. Agree on confidence-building measures including the reactivation of the de-escalation and coordination committee, their release of all political prisoners including journalists and activist and the assurance of unfettered humanitarian access to all areas in Yemen.

6. Address the fragmentation issues.

Thanks to Pakistan

His Excellency concluded his speech extended his gratitude for political and moral stand towards Yemen, its legitimate leadership of H.E. The President Abdurabuh Mansour Hadi, government, Yemen unity, territorial integrity, stability, and peace.

