

**Yemen Safe Passage Group statement to help inform the Parliamentary debate on Yemen scheduled for Wed 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

This short statement raises four issues, each also covered in the *House of Commons Briefing Paper Yemen Update June 2017*. Potential questions for debate are highlighted in bold.

The first three issues are raised by the UN Security Council Presidential Statement of 15 June 2017 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12873.doc.htm>). We are broadly aware of the state of HMG thinking and actions in each of these areas, but in no case has practical agreement yet been reached. Meanwhile the Yemen situation continues inexorably to deteriorate towards total economic collapse, epidemics and famine. There is a sense of drift, lack of urgency and lack of fresh thinking while HMG continues to support and fuel a war which has become both counterproductive and ethically indefensible.

**What action will HMG take at the Security Council to ensure active follow up to the June UN Presidential Statement?**

**What lessons are HMG taking away from the current stalling of the negotiations around a safe port in Hodeidah, and how are these being addressed?**

*Background: Hodeidah as safe port*

YSPG welcomes the fact that the potential attack on Hodeidah has been put on hold, but Hodeidah as safe port has yet to be secured by a formal agreement. The UK should redouble its active support for the UN in this endeavour and use the skills of a maritime nation to support the running of a safe port. This would extend the important work of the UN's Verification and Inspection Mission (UNVIM) on the clearance of commercial food imports and certification against arms smuggling. Hodeidah remains vital for ensuring adequate food and medical supplies reach most of the population in need who live in Houthi/Saleh controlled areas. YSPG has been active in outlining how a UN Transitional Port Authority in Hodeida could work in practice.

**What ongoing support is HMG giving to the proposals for a Yemen Emergency Trade Finance Facility? What lessons are learnt from the current slow progress, and what role is it playing to urgently break the impasse?**

*Background: Collapse of Central Bank and lack of financial liquidity*

The absence of foreign exchange, the collapse of central banking functions and the split of the central bank between Sana'a and Aden has led to civil servants (including health workers) not being paid and the suspension of social welfare payments, pushing millions into further poverty and vulnerability. Lack of liquidity has led to an exchange rate collapse and higher prices for imported staples at a time when Yemenis can least afford it. The international financial institutions have proposed a mechanism, the Yemen Emergency Trade Finance Facility, to help circulate vital hard currency into the economy.

**Following recent terrorist attacks in Britain, what fresh thinking is being brought to bear by the government to encourage the multiple parties to this complex conflict to the negotiating table?**

*Background: The Yemen war is supporting extremist groups, harming our national security*

There is increasing evidence of western arms ending up in the hands of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Pragmatic but unholy alliances are being made on the ground between our allies in the Coalition and AQAP - for example in Taizz. AQAP is gaining local acceptability where it can rebuild local services, destroyed or collapsed in the fighting. Islamic State (IS) is also on the rise in Yemen, similarly thriving on the insecurity and brutalisation of war. We understand the political dynamic facing HMG and the need to maintain influence with the key players. But sadly, the 'reset'

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of HMG policy developed during the last parliament, has yet to show any evidence of the urgent breakthrough needed towards peace, and on the reasonable compromises necessary.

**While awaiting the judgements of the Judicial Review, what steps are HMG taking to proactively and independently review the genuine impact of UK arms sales and the continuing conflict on the Yemeni people, and to look at alternative ways both to address legitimate concerns of the parties to the conflict and bring the war to an early end?**

*Background: UK arms are fuelling the Yemen war*

After two years of conflict there can now be no doubt that this tragic war has led to massive loss of livelihoods and the collapse of Yemen's already fragile economy. In addition, apparently indiscriminate air strikes are prolonging the misery of the Yemeni people, disrupting the movement of supplies and destroying much needed infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and port equipment.

YSPG believes HMG needs to urgently reconsider its position on arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Providing the military support that is prolonging this war is no longer acceptable, given the sheer desperation of 20 million of some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. We urge the government to put in place a moratorium on *offensive* weapons. There are other ways to deal with the Coalition concern about weapons smuggling, including through comprehensive satellite monitoring of shipping and overland desert routes which does not require airstrikes against civilians. We urge HMG, along with our allies who are also main donors to Yemen, to ask the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia to demonstrate the leadership that his new position demands and to look conscientiously for a sustainable political settlement which recognises the legitimate concerns of Yemen's disparate regions. Such a settlement would ultimately be in the Kingdom's own interests.

*About the Yemen Safe Passage Group <http://www.yemensafepassage.org>*

*The Yemen Safe Passage Group was formed in mid-2015 as an informal grouping of senior professionals, all acting in their personal capacity, who have worked in Yemen for substantial periods and who share a concern about the well-being of its people. The group brings together a wide range of expertise – international politics and diplomacy, security, trade and the economy, port operations, infrastructure, livelihoods and humanitarian operations. This is coupled with an understanding as to how this expertise might realistically be applied to the Yemen situation. The group has a wide range of contacts in Yemen on every side of this complex conflict, and this helps keep our recommendations rooted in reality. We have grown to over 40 individuals comprising three sections: former British diplomats and defence personnel, including three former ambassadors; prominent British academics working on Yemen, including four professors; and senior development and community workers.*