

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
WASHINGTON DC

OFFICE OF THE AMBASSADOR



سـمـارة
الإمارات العربية المتحدة
واشـنـطـون

مكتب السفير

June 27, 2018

The Honorable Mike Gallagher
1007 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4908

Dear Representative Gallagher,

On behalf of the Arab Coalition to Support the Legitimate Government of Yemen, I want to provide you with an update on recent developments in the effort to liberate Hodeida from the Houthi rebel militias. I particularly want to highlight the comprehensive humanitarian efforts underway.

The Coalition's priorities regarding Hodeida are clear: maintain the flow of humanitarian assistance and minimize the impact on the civilian population while maintaining pressure on the rebels to enter into meaningful political discussions. The Coalition's carefully calibrated military pressure is working. After three years of intransigence, the Houthis are re-engaged in talks with the UN Special Envoy.

The humanitarian efforts are also working. The port remains open – more than 25 ships have unloaded food aid over the last four weeks. The Coalition is delivering aid to villages and areas now under Yemeni Government control. A large-scale and comprehensive contingency plan to provide aid into Hodeida is also in place. The Coalition has prepositioned tens of thousands of tons of supplies in and along the Red Sea with airplanes, trucks and ships ready to move into a liberated Hodeida. (Additional detail on the humanitarian efforts are below and in the attachment.)

On the diplomatic front, the UAE and the Coalition strongly support the UN Special Envoy's ongoing effort to secure a negotiated outcome that will involve the peaceful handover of the port and the city by the Houthis to the legitimate Yemeni government. This is consistent with the mandate of the Envoy and the coalition under UN Resolution 2216 – which explicitly calls for the Houthis to disarm, evacuate urban areas and recognize the legitimate Yemeni Government.

There is urgency to the Envoy's efforts. The people of Hodeida are calling for liberation, especially as the Houthis purposefully worsen conditions inside the city. UN and local reports continue to highlight Houthi human rights violations including the use of children soldiers, shelling civilian areas, forced evacuations, executions, human shielding, indiscriminately planting mines and IEDs, placing tanks and snipers in residential areas, and the destruction of the water system.

Increasing pressure at Hodeida and in other areas of Yemen is also designed to stem the flow of sophisticated Iranian weapons. As documented by the UN and by independent groups like Conflict Armaments Research, Iran is providing direct support to the Houthis, enabling them to target Saudi Arabia with ballistic missiles, to improve IEDs, and to threaten international navigation with anti-ship missiles.

The United States has a clear stake in the Coalition's success in Yemen. The US shares the Coalition's priorities to meet the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people, avoid civilian casualties and restart the political process. At the same time, the Coalition is also advancing other critical and common security objectives with the US: destroy AQAP, confront Iran, and maintain freedom of navigation into the Red Sea and Suez Canal.

For now, the immediate priority is to maintain the flow of humanitarian assistance into Hodeida. The port remains open and continues to receive and unload ships. Due to the efforts of the UN, the Coalition and others, there are now more than 100,000 metric tons of food stockpiled in Hodeida – sufficient to meet the needs of 6 million people for the next month. Tankers are in port now unloading fuel. Another ship is at Al Saleef port unloading 53,000 tons of wheat. According to international aid groups, these supplies continue to be distributed utilizing existing networks and channels.

The Coalition has also put in place a comprehensive contingency plan to send aid into Hodeida if the port is damaged by the Houthis or otherwise disrupted. Teams of port operations and logistics experts, along with ship-to-shore cranes and heavy equipment, are already positioned in the Red Sea. More than 35,000 tons of additional food and medical supplies are also in position in and around the area. Shore landing craft and smaller vessels have been readied to move supplies. Large quantities of aid are stockpiled in Aden and Mokha and 100 trucks have been contracted and are available to move supplies north by road. Cargo aircraft have also been prepared to establish a humanitarian air bridge.

Additionally, the UAE and the Coalition have developed alternative networks and routes for the delivery of aid to Hodeida and points beyond, to be implemented should there be an attempt by the Houthis to damage or destroy Hodeida's port, existing aid distribution networks, or other infrastructure.

With the Houthis placing sea mines around the port, the Coalition's plans also include mine-clearing operations to allow for the urgent resumption of large ship movements. The Coalition has requested additional mine clearing assistance from the U.S. and France.

The Coalition is working closely with the UN and other international organizations to meet the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing from Houthi-controlled areas. Locations for temporary shelters and medical facilities have been identified and prepared.

The Houthis' indiscriminate use of land mines is complicating aid efforts and causing great suffering to the civilian population. Yemeni and Coalition experts have already cleared more than 20,000 landmines.

Indisputable evidence of mining and other abuses has been provided through images and first-hand reports provided by people still in Hodeida, by the media, by Coalition reconnaissance imagery, and by international organizations remaining in the city.

The well-documented litany of Houthi offenses committed in Hodeida over the last month include:

- the indiscriminate placement of landmines and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), often disguised as everyday objects making them a grave danger to innocent civilians now and into the future;
- the wholesale use of sea mines which threaten to impede critical deliveries of humanitarian aid;
- the positioning of heavy weapons and sniper nests in and among residential buildings, neighborhoods and villages;
- blocking the evacuation of civilians from conflict areas;
- the purposeful destruction of the water system; and
- the theft and diversion of humanitarian aid further enabled by the forced removal of surveillance cameras from storage facilities managed by international aid groups.

These abuses should be condemned by the US and the international community. At the same time, the UAE and the Coalition have listened carefully to the perspectives, concerns, and recommendations of Congress, the Administration, the UN, NGOs, and other humanitarian actors. The UAE, Coalition and Yemeni Government military operations around Hodeida have been carefully calibrated and targeted to avoid civilian casualties and minimize damage to vital infrastructure (including the port). This is in conformity with international humanitarian law, and to provide the Houthis with the greatest possible opportunity to withdraw peacefully from Hodeida.

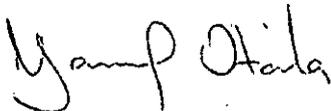
The UAE's current humanitarian efforts in Yemen are not new. The UAE has been one of the largest historic aid providers to the country. In just the period from April 2015 to May 2018, the UAE contributed USD \$3.7 billion in aid to Yemen. In 2018, the UAE pledged USD \$465 million to support the UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen, in addition to the USD \$34 million pledged to restore Yemen's sea and airports.

The situation in Hodeida is a critical turning point in the three-year Yemen conflict. The military pressure is creating a new dynamic by bringing the Houthis to the negotiating table. The humanitarian efforts are also paying off with aid continuing to flow into the city and to the rest of Yemen.

We share Congress' view about the need to end the conflict and redouble efforts to address Yemen's many challenges. We remain strongly supportive of the UN Envoy's work to achieve these goals.

My Embassy team and I will continue to update you regularly on developments but please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Yousef Al Otaiba