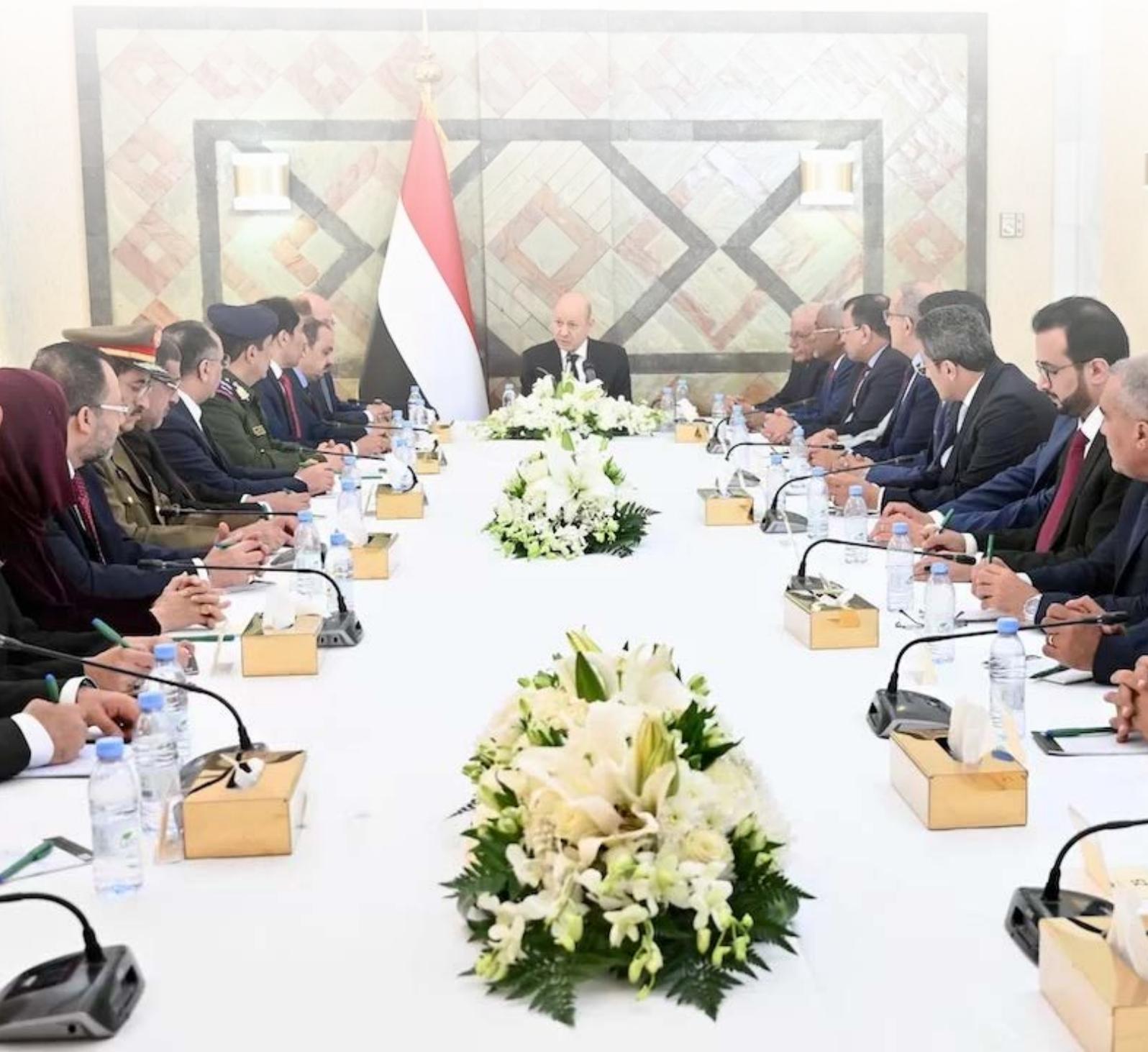


# Can the New Government Seize A Critical Opportunity for Success?

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February 13, 2026

**By:** Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen

**Cover photo:** Presidential Leadership Council head Rashad al-Alimi chairs the first meeting of the new cabinet in Riyadh on February 9, 2026 // Photo credit: Saba Net.



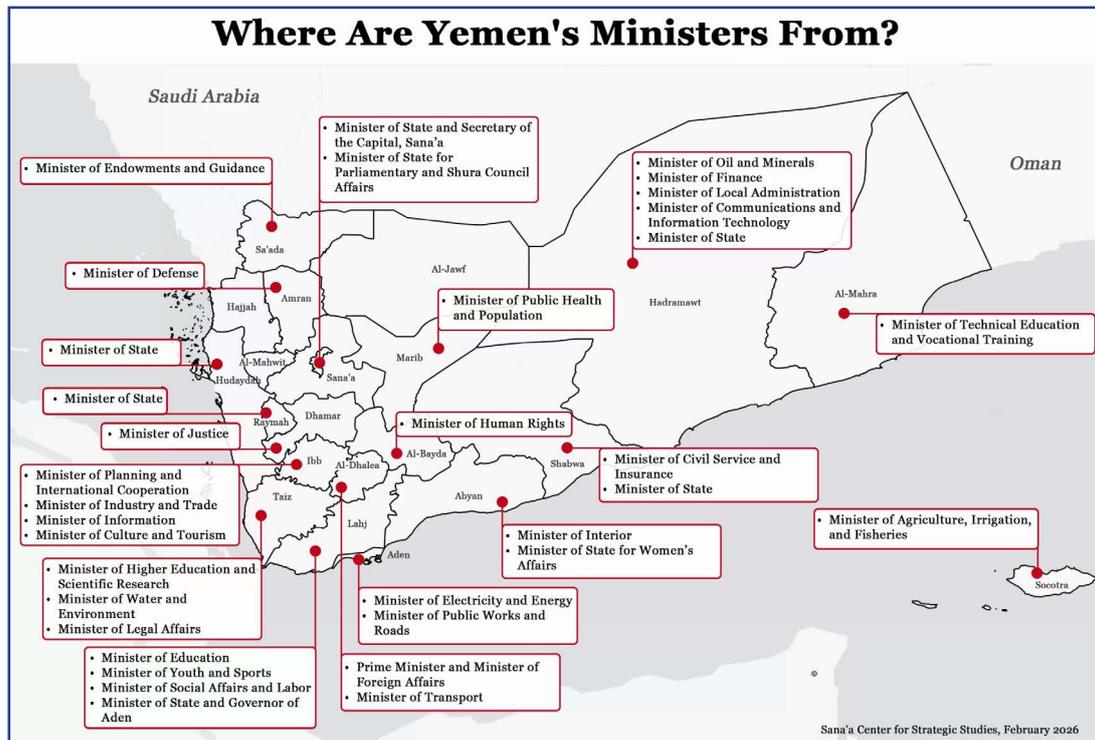
The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies is an independent think-tank that seeks to foster change through knowledge production with a focus on Yemen and the surrounding region. The Center's publications and programs, offered in both Arabic and English, cover political, social, economic and security related developments, aiming to impact policy locally, regionally, and internationally.

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Three weeks after Prime Minister Shayea al-Zindani was tasked with forming a government, a notably large cabinet was announced, comprising 35 ministers, including eight ministers of state (see graphic below). Since the start of the war, Yemen has seen successive changes in the premiership without corresponding changes in the government, and the formation of quota-based cabinets in which the prime minister lacked the authority to appoint or dismiss ministers. Both factors have contributed to the weakness of successive governments.

Although Prime Minister Al-Zindani was formally tasked with forming the government, he had little control over the new cabinet's composition. Decision-making authority rested largely with Saudi Arabia and Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) head Rashad al-Alimi, with only limited influence from other political actors. The process sparked an open debate over quotas for the representation of political parties, with critics arguing that they affect the competence of nominees. In the past, parties prioritized loyalty over merit, contributing to low levels of public trust. Notably, the quotas for regional representation established for this government did not elicit similar objections, despite potentially being more dangerous, as they risk reinforcing the country's division along regional lines.

The notion of a technocratic government has been advocated since 2014, yet it remains politically unrealistic in Yemen. In practice, government work lies at the heart of political activity, and it is possible to strike a balance between political loyalty and competence. The presence of political parties and other political actors has helped prevent unilateral decision-making and the reckless appointment of unsuitable nominees. Collective decision-making remains necessary, even if it lengthens and complicates the process.



## A Distortion of Governance

Yemen's war, now entering its second decade, has produced distortions in how public office and public engagement are perceived and practiced. First among these is the growth of rent-seeking by public officials, in which posts are treated as privileges devoid of responsibility. This partly explains the large number of ministers. This condition is also a product of the government's prolonged presence abroad, as well as of the way those at the top have treated public office as a means of cultivating loyalty and rewarding certain individuals.

Second, influence in the public sphere is increasingly driven by individual reach and engagement through television and social media. This shift has coincided with a significant decline in the influence of traditional political and media outlets. This is compounded by policymakers' growing obsession with media exposure and an increasing degree of political superficiality, driven by sustained detachment from the problems on the ground. Under conditions of political polarization, social media platforms have become arenas for mobilization and incitement, where all forms of falsehood, hate speech, and provocation are permissible. Like any populist tool, the loudest and most extreme voices tend to attract the greatest attention and followership.

Third, in recent years, governments have failed to secure public trust due to factors beyond their control. These include limited financial resources and the need to build institutions almost from scratch - the Yemeni state had been highly centralized in Sana'a for decades. Operating from Aden brought institutional challenges, including the absence of basic infrastructure and the loss of accumulated institutional experience. In the interim, some institutional structures and capacities have been developed, from which the new government may benefit.

The conflict, with its attendant divisions and the proliferation of armed factions on the ground, has also prevented the transfer of revenues to the government from profit-generating institutions. Government export revenues were cut off as a result of Houthi attacks targeting oil facilities, and the intensity of internal polarization further paralyzed its ability to function. In principle, the current situation has comparatively improved, as the Saudi-Emirati rift is no longer spilling over into Yemen and incapacitating the government.

Other forms of dysfunction are deeply entrenched, such as the rife corruption within Yemen's governmental and political class, whose severity has been exacerbated by institutional weakness and the erosion of what remains of accountability and oversight mechanisms. While corruption is widely recognized for draining the state's limited financial resources, an equally serious but less scrutinized issue is the inflated bureaucracy and its lack of competence. The excessive number of public employees places a heavy burden on the budget, while patronage-driven appointments drain limited resources and undermine the government's capacity to perform.

## Silver Linings and Charting A Path Forward

The new cabinet brings some positive changes, not least the representation of women. Since the formation of a government following the Riyadh 2019 agreement, there has been a noticeable lack of women. The new cabinet has three women ministers, one of whom serves as a minister of state. The hope is that women's participation extends beyond token participation to recognizing their ability to drive meaningful change. Under the party quota system, political parties pushed to fill their allotted cabinet seats with men, deprioritizing women's participation and producing some of Yemen's weakest governments. The renewed presence of women and their appointment to major ministries, such as Legal Affairs and Planning and International Cooperation, has fueled hope that the government will move beyond questions of representation to tangible progress on issues affecting Yemeni women.

The current government has also been reinforced by a number of respected figures in Yemen, whose integrity and experience are expected to contribute to its performance and help address dysfunctions within a system deeply mired in corruption and compounded structural failures.

Despite ongoing discourse about parity between the North and the South, it is clear that the South has received a larger share of portfolios, particularly those of key and sovereign ministries. Some of these portfolios were allocated to recent members of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which has now officially been dissolved. It is hoped that they have drawn lessons from the STC's past mistakes and its opportunistic approach to power, marked by a disregard for the legitimacy of the state.

A decade of dysfunction and popular struggle can be the catalyst for meaningful reform. For this to happen, however, it is essential to revive the work of institutions tasked with combating corruption, which once monitored financial irregularities with a degree of transparency, as well as those responsible for public-sector appointments. Most critical of all is the reform of judicial institutions, which have become heavily politicized in recent years and have, since the outbreak of the war, suffered from division and disorder.

Reviving the work of the House of Representatives will be key. The legislative body should play an essential role in representing political and social forces and in overseeing the executive's performance. The paralysis of the parliament stems from two main factors. First, its division and obsolescence—split between Sana'a and Aden, with no elections since 2003—have left many members unable to fulfill their duties. Second, the security and political environment has prevented the convening of parliamentary sessions and the exercise of even basic functions, such as endorsing the government. This particular obstacle can now be overcome in the absence of the STC, which had previously blocked several attempts to hold sessions in southern Yemen.

Although staging parliamentary elections remains difficult due to security concerns and the inherent risks posed by widespread political polarization, this could be addressed through temporary measures, such as allowing local authorities to select and endorse representatives to political leaders.

The Yemeni state now needs to focus on overcoming its legacy of corruption and patronage, a legacy that the war has layered with polarization and practices embedded in political culture and conduct. Disentangling from this legacy will require considerable time and political will. The new government will test the state's ability to assert its presence in areas under its control and to establish domestic legitimacy, not merely international recognition.

Finally, a lasting, peaceful settlement or effective military intervention will ultimately depend on the government's successful restoration of state authority in Aden. Any development in Aden will remain limited in scope and duration unless it is part of a broader effort to address Yemen's overall situation.

It is no exaggeration to say that this government may represent a last chance. The challenges are substantial, and the security situation is fragile; together, they create an environment conducive to rebellion and uncontrolled popular mobilization—dynamics that could deepen chaos and fragmentation in government-held areas. The expectations placed on this government are therefore at an all-time high.

Sovereign Ministries			
Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs	Minister of Interior	Minister of Finance	Minister of Defense
 <p><b>Shayea al-Zindani</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Al-Dhalea <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> General People's Congress (GPC)</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Foreign Minister in the previous government. Previously served in diplomatic posts, including as Yemen's ambassador to Saudi Arabia.</p>	 <p><b>Ibrahim Ali Ahmed Haidan</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Abyan <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Unaffiliated/Unknown</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Graduated from the Naval Academy in Hudaydah, which he later commanded. Has served as Minister of Interior since 2020.</p>	 <p><b>Marwan Faraj Saeed Bin Ghanem</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Hadramawt <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Unaffiliated/Unknown</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Served as Director General of the General Investment Authority. Previously worked in Arab investment institutions and on economic policy.</p>	 <p><b>Taher Ali Aida al-Aqili</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Amran <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Unaffiliated/Unknown</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Major General who previously served as Chief of the General Staff of the army. He held several leadership and operational positions within the Yemeni Armed Forces.</p>
Southern Share		Eastern Share	Northern Share

## Ministers with Portfolio

### Minister of Electricity and Energy



**Adnan Mohammed Omar al-Kaf**

**Home Governorate:** Aden  
**Party/Affiliation:** Former STC

**Bio:** Served as Deputy Governor of Aden for Development Affairs, working on public services and infrastructure.

### Minister of Transport



**Mohsen Ali Haidara Qasim al-Omari**

**Home Governorate:** Al-Dhalea  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** A pilot and executive at Yemenia Airways, where he worked in the operational and commercial management of the sector.

### Minister of Civil Service and Insurance



**Salem Abu Bakr Mohammed Thabet al-Awlaqi**

**Home Governorate:** Shabwa  
**Party/Affiliation:** Former STC

**Bio:** Held political and media positions within the STC. Later chaired the Land and Survey Authority and caused a major crisis in the council by confronting corruption networks.

### Minister of Public Works and Roads



**Hussein Awadh Saeed al-Aqrabi**

**Home Governorate:** Aden  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Civil engineer who held leadership positions in the Ministry of Public Works. Supervised infrastructure and road projects in Aden and other areas.

### Minister of Education



**Adel Abdelmajid Alawi al-Abbadi**

**Home Governorate:** Lahj (Radfan region)  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Academic specializing in educational administration. Served as Vice President of the University of Aden for Academic Affairs and as acting president on several occasions.

### Minister of Social Affairs and Labor



**Mukhtar Omar Saleh al-Yafeai**

**Home Governorate:** Lahj (Yafea region)  
**Party/Affiliation:** Former STC

**Bio:** Southern political and media activist. Worked at media outlets affiliated with the STC.

### Minister of Youth and Sports



**Nayef Saleh Abdelqader al-Bakri**

**Home Governorate:** Lahj (Yafea region)  
**Party/Affiliation:** Islah

**Bio:** Minister of Youth and Sports since 2015. Previously served as Governor of Aden but was removed from the position amid tensions with the UAE related to his affiliation with Islah. Popular resistance leader during the battle to liberate Aden from the Houthis.

### Minister of Oil and Minerals



**Mohammed Abdullah Ali Bamga**

**Home Governorate:** Hadramawt  
**Party/Affiliation:** Southern National Coalition

**Bio:** Academic specializing in petroleum engineering. Held academic and administrative positions in the energy sector and at the Yemen Oil Company.

### Minister of Local Administration



**Badr Mohammed Mubarak Basalmah**

**Home Governorate:** Hadramawt  
**Party/Affiliation:** Hadramawt National Council

**Bio:** Engineer and development expert. Participated in the National Dialogue Conference and served as an advisor to the chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council for Local Administration Affairs.

### Minister of Communications and Information Technology



**Shadi Saleh Basarah**

**Home Governorate:** Hadramawt  
**Party/Affiliation:** Hadramawt National Council

**Bio:** Professor of computer science who held senior academic and leadership roles at universities in the UK.

### Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Fisheries



**Salem Abdullah Issa al-Socotri**

**Home Governorate:** Socotra  
**Party/Affiliation:** Former STC

**Bio:** Military officer who held security and political positions in Socotra, including Governor and Director of Security.

### Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training



**Anwar Mohammed Ali Kalshat al-Mahri**

**Home Governorate:** Al-Mahra  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Academic who previously served as Minister of Electricity. Currently serves as President of Al-Mahra University.

## Ministers with Portfolio

### Minister of Planning and International Cooperation



**Afrah Abdelaziz al-Zuba**

**Home Governorate:** Ibb  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Development and institutional reform expert. Previously served as Executive Director of the Executive Bureau for Accelerating Aid Absorption, as an advisor to the prime minister, and as Deputy Secretary-General of the National Dialogue Conference.

### Minister of Industry and Trade



**Mohammed Mohammed Hizam al-Ashwal**

**Home Governorate:** Ibb  
**Party/Affiliation:** Islah

**Bio:** Held administrative and oversight positions in various government institutions, including Deputy Minister of Endowments, where he was responsible for administrative planning and financial oversight.

### Minister of Information



**Moammar Mutahar Mohammed al-Eryani**

**Home Governorate:** Ibb  
**Party/Affiliation:** GPC

**Bio:** Graduate of the University of Baghdad. Has held several ministerial positions since 2012, including Minister of Information, Youth and Sports, and Tourism.

### Minister of Public Health and Population



**Qasim Mohammed Qasim Bahibeh**

**Home Governorate:** Marib  
**Party/Affiliation:** Islah

**Bio:** A specialist physician and academic. Was appointed Minister of Health in 2020 after a long career in medicine.

### Minister of Justice



**Badr Abdo Ahmed al-Aradah**

**Home Governorate:** Dhamar  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Judge who worked in the Public Prosecution and the Higher Institute of the Judiciary. Participated in training programs and initiatives to develop the criminal justice system.

### Minister of Legal Affairs



**Ishraq Fadl al-Muqtari**

**Home Governorate:** Taiz  
**Party/Affiliation:** Yemeni Socialist Party

**Bio:** Lawyer and human rights activist who documented human rights violations. Served as an investigative judge and spokesperson for the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Human Rights Violations.

### Minister of Water and Environment



**Tawfiq Abdelwahid Ali al-Sharjabi**

**Home Governorate:** Taiz  
**Party/Affiliation:** Yemeni Socialist Party

**Bio:** Worked in the water and environment sector for many years. Served as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Water and Environment and later as acting minister.

### Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research



**Amin Noman Mohammed al-Qudsi**

**Home Governorate:** Taiz  
**Party/Affiliation:** Nasserist Unionist People's organization

**Bio:** Geophysicist and expert in geological and environmental studies. Managed a scientific research and consultancy center for many years.

### Minister of Culture and Tourism



**Mutea Ahmed Qasim Dammaj**

**Home Governorate:** Ibb  
**Party/Affiliation:** Yemeni Socialist Party

**Bio:** Worked as a telecommunications engineer before entering government service as a political advisor to former Prime Minister Maeen Abdelmalek Saeed. Later served as Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, coordinating government work.

### Minister of Endowments and Guidance



**Turki Abdullah Ali al-Wadiei**

**Home Governorate:** Sa'ada  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Salafi preacher and cleric who participated in the resistance against the Houthis in Dammaj.

### Minister of Human Rights



**Mashdal Mohammed Omar Ahmed**

**Home Governorate:** Al-Bayda  
**Party/Affiliation:** Unaffiliated/Unknown

**Bio:** Lawyer who worked with the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Human Rights Violations.

## Ministers of State

Minister of State and Governor of Aden	Minister of State for Women's Affairs	Minister of State	Minister of State
 <p><b>Abdelrahman Sheikh al-Yafeai</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Lahj (Yafea region)  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Former STC</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Participated in the southern resistance during the war. Former Deputy Governor of Aden and member of the STC Presidium who has grown closer to Riyadh in recent years. Played a major role in the founding of the pro-STC Security Belt forces.</p>	 <p><b>Ahd Mohammed Salem Ja'asous</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Abyan  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Unaffiliated/Unknown</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Activist for women's issues and community development. Has worked in social protection programs and women's empowerment projects in cooperation with international organizations.</p>	 <p><b>Ahmed Saleh Ahmed al-Awlaqi</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Shabwa  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Southern Movement</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Political analyst and media commentator. Has worked as a political advisor and spokesperson for southern youth organizations.</p>	 <p><b>Akram Naseeb Ahmed al-Ameri</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Hadramawt  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Inclusive Hadramawt Inclusive Conference</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Judge who held various judicial positions in Hadramawt. Member of the Consultation and Reconciliation Commission and has participated in political dialogue processes.</p>
Minister of State for Parliamentary and Shura Council Affairs	Minister of State and Secretary of the Capital, Sana'a	Minister of State	Minister of State
 <p><b>Abdullah Ali Hussein Abu Huriyah</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Sana'a  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Political Bureau of the National Resistance</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Held administrative positions in the Office of the Presidency and other government institutions. Participated in prisoner exchange negotiations on behalf of the government.</p>	 <p><b>Abdelghani Hifzallah Jameel</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Sana'a  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> GPC</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Previously served as Secretary of the Capital and Governor of Sana'a. Has held multiple security, administrative, and local government positions.</p>	 <p><b>Waleed Mohammed Mohammed al-Qadeemi</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Hudaydah  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> GPC</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Served as First Deputy Governor of Hudaydah. Has also worked in local administration and political affairs.</p>	 <p><b>Waleed Ali Ismail al-Abara</b></p> <p><b>Home Governorate:</b> Raymah  <b>Party/Affiliation:</b> Unaffiliated/Unknown</p> <p><b>Bio:</b> Prominent human rights expert who has held various positions in government. Head of a research center specializing in public policy and regional affairs.</p>

Southern Share

Eastern Share

Northern Share

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**Maysaa Shuja al-Deen** is a senior researcher at Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. Her writing and analyses have been featured in many media outlets such as Jadaliyya, Assafir al Araby, al Araby al Jadeed, and Al-Monitor.

Shuja Al-deen holds a master's degree in Islamic Studies from the American University in Cairo. The focus of her thesis was the Radicalization of Zaydism.

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