



## **Sana'a Center Briefs the Security Council for the Second Time**

New York – Yasmeen al-Eryani, the Co-Executive Director for Knowledge Production at the Sana'a Center, briefed the UN Security Council today, focusing on the ongoing negotiations, transitional justice, women's rights, economic insecurity, and ecological justice in Yemen.

In her address, Al-Eryani said that the ongoing talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthi movement are important, but the interests of the country and its people as a whole must be considered, emphasizing that all talks must be coordinated under the UN umbrella and engage local peace efforts.

"Yemenis are fully capable of rebuilding their country and shaping its future," said Al-Eryani, but "there is a shared international responsibility to steer Yemen out of its crisis, and create an environment conducive for its reintegration as a stable and productive country in the region and the world."

On the situation of women, Al-Eryani reminded the international community and the Security Council of the unprecedented rollback of women's freedoms and the overall erosion of civic space in Yemen. "If we do not push back harder today," warned Al-Eryani, "we may find ourselves in a dystopian reality where women are erased from public life altogether: from schools, universities, markets, and politics."

This is the second time the Sana'a Center has briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Yemen. In 2021, it called for immediate international pressure to end the fighting in Marib and to prioritize economic de-escalation to mitigate civilian suffering.

The full text of Al-Eryani's briefing to the UNSC is as follows:

Salam Alaykum. Thank you for honoring me with this invitation and for the Council's interest in listening to the voice of Yemeni civil society. This is crucial at this moment when recent developments in Yemen demonstrate that it's time for the guns to fall silent and for the voices of Yemenis who yearn to shape their country's future to be heard.

My name is Yasmeen al-Eryani. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, but above all as a Yemeni.

As your honorable council is well aware, the Yemeni people have been suffering the effects of nearly a decade of war that spared no Yemeni - adults and children alike. The conflict has destroyed their lives on every front: humanitarian, economic, educational, health, and environmental, and hijacked Yemenis from the chance to dream of a better tomorrow.

But I assure you that Yemeni women, youth, and all segments of society are fully capable of rebuilding the country and shaping its future. While at the same time, I would like to emphasize the shared international responsibility to steer Yemen out of its crisis and create an environment conducive for its reintegration as a stable and productive participant in the region and the world, and the moral responsibility is doubled for everyone who got involved one way or another in the Yemen war over the past years.

Thus, I address your esteemed Council today to discuss the pressing priorities for a comprehensive and sustainable peace. While noting the importance of the ongoing talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthi group, allow me to emphasize what UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg said in his briefing last month – that any agreement should be under UN auspices. While we welcome any negotiations that mitigate violence on the ground and open pathways for peace, the interests of the country and its people as a whole must be considered, and all talks should be coordinated under the UN umbrella and engage local peace efforts.

At this critical juncture, it is incumbent upon us as civil society to pause and remind everyone that Yemenis, who have suffered the scourges of war, deserve to be heard and express their grievances, and for their concerns to be treated fairly. Any hasty peace deal that does not bring justice to Yemenis will not end the conflict or improve regional stability. And while we commend the recent prisoner exchange and the significant humanitarian impact thereof, we remind everyone that, as we speak, thousands of detainees are still waiting to be released.

Justice must never be traded for security. By doing so, we risk losing both.

Any settlement that would disregard the principles of transitional justice and absolve the belligerent parties of their responsibilities not only fails the victims but threatens renewed cycles of conflict and revenge. Addressing grievances always remains the wisest and less costly course in the long run.

Madam Chair... Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is important to recall here that Yemen has experienced decades of recurrent violence due to incomplete and unjust settlements. Thus, the concept of inclusive justice to which I have referred calls for engineering a peace process that satisfies the basic tenets of justice and grants Yemenis the right to a dignified life, a fair share of national wealth and power, the protection of their environment, as well as equal opportunities under the principle of equality that eliminates all forms of discrimination. These rights must extend to all marginalized groups, religious minorities, and the most vulnerable members of society.

This brings me to another critical issue, with the hope that the Council and the international community will spare no effort to address: protecting women's rights and combating all forms of violence against them. With the overall erosion of civic space, Yemen has witnessed an unprecedented rollback of hard-won women's freedoms. This includes women's right to participate in the labor market and play a vital role in revitalizing the economy while ensuring their protection from exploitation and maltreatment. It also includes the freedom to act as political decision-makers and not just limit their roles to representative participation, the right to organize and shape civic spaces without incitement against them, the right to quality education and to thrive, and enjoy the freedom of movement, and be visibly present in all aspects of public life. These basic rights must not be used as a tool for influence and they must never be bargained away.

Allow me here to express my disappointment about the passive stance of international actors toward discriminatory policies targeting women. It appears that the international community has chosen to deal with this issue as a mere procedural hurdle facing women humanitarian aid workers that is open for negotiation. In fact, these are systematic policies intended to reshape the whole of society, and if we do not push back harder today, we may find ourselves in a nightmarish reality where women are erased from public life altogether – from schools, universities, and politics. That the international community has chosen to stand idly by fails women and may amount to complicity.

Let me also point out the importance of putting economic priorities at the center of any peace process. Despite the decrease in fighting, the majority of Yemenis still feel unsafe due to economic insecurity.

One of the major drivers of Yemen's conflict is unjust resource distribution. The competition over scarce resources is intensifying. Warring parties have found new ways to extract money from an already impoverished population through extortionate taxes, while normal economic activity has been completely consumed by the war economy, as has humanitarian aid.

Madam Chair,

It is imperative that the international community and neighboring Gulf states in particular play a leading role in supporting the revitalization of Yemen's overall economic activity through investments and sustainable programs. This should include preparing Yemen for economic integration in the region and the global financial system, and facilitating Yemenis' access to labor markets in neighboring countries.

Ecological justice is another issue that has been neglected for decades, despite its direct correlation with Yemen's economic well-being and future. The dilapidated FSO Safer is a blatant example of how an environmental threat, which could impact millions in the region and jeopardize the Red Sea's fragile ecosystem, can be exploited as a military and political bargaining tool. While an operation to transport the fuel from Safer to a replacement vessel is set to get underway, many Yemenis wonder what will ensure that the belligerent parties do not threaten to target the new tanker in future.

Meanwhile, oil companies continue to operate with impunity and little regard to the environment, the well-being of communities, and surrounding farms and pastures. In addition to these practices that threaten the environment, Yemen, which faces a severe water crisis, has also become extremely vulnerable to climate change. The recurrence of extreme weather events in the form of floods, cyclones, and droughts has affected the livelihoods of citizens, leading to repeated displacement. Despite this Yemen has so remained outside global discussions on environmental justice and has limited access to funds earmarked for climate adaptation.

Thus, it is imperative that environmental protection and climate change adaptation programs are urgently introduced to revitalize economic sectors on which millions of Yemenis rely such as fisheries, agriculture, and apiculture.

Madam Chair,

This council has been involved in the unfolding of events in Yemen since 2015 and before. It must continue to be involved in ensuring that Yemen is ushered safely through a comprehensive peacebuilding process into a solid ground where Yemenis can begin to heal and rebuild their own country.