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# Truce Renewal Extends Period of Relative Calm



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*Cover Photo:*

*Members of a Yemeni army sniper battalion march during a military parade in Marib on June 14, 2022 // Sana'a Center photo by Abdulmajeed Al Khadhmi*

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Yemen agreed to extend it two more months, despite frustration over unfulfilled elements of the original agreement. While intermittent fighting has flared during the truce, the agreement brought a dramatic reduction in violence and casualties — and a taste of normalcy for much of the country.

Government officials and supporters said they had adhered to their side of the bargain by allowing flights to and from Sana'a airport. However, they expressed frustration that one of their main demands, the re-opening of all roads leading to the Houthi-blockaded city of Taiz, was still being negotiated well after the new truce took effect (see, *Politics & Diplomacy: 'Taiz Road Negotiations Drag On As Houthis Reject UN Proposal'*). Whether the truce can ultimately be transformed into a lasting settlement remains to be seen.

If anything, there have been fears that the truce has been used by both the armed Houthi movement and the Yemeni government to prepare for another round of fighting. Troop movements have been reported across various frontlines, including in Marib and Taiz. This prompted US special envoy for Yemen, Tim Lenderking, to warn against new fighting in remarks on the sidelines of the June 17-19 Yemen International Forum in Stockholm, where he said that anyone who believed Yemen's war could end militarily was "fundamentally mistaken." Despite the truce, fighting was reported in various governorates, including Taiz and Marib, primarily between Houthi forces and the Yemeni government.

## AP Reports Ongoing Child Soldier Recruitment

Houthi officials have acknowledged to The Associated Press that they are continuing the recruitment of child soldiers, and defended the practice, despite a promise to the UN in April that they would stop. The AP quoted two unidentified senior Houthi officials as saying several hundred children, some as young as 10, had been recruited in the past two months; one official said children had been deployed to frontline areas during the truce as part of a troop buildup. In recent years, Houthi authorities have used "summer camps" to identify and recruit child fighters. Aid workers told AP the Houthis were pressuring families to send their children to the camps in exchange for much-needed assistance, such as food rations from international aid organizations.

## Journalist, Salafi Commander Killed in Separate Assassinations

Assassinations targeted military and civilian figures in June. Saber al-Haidari, a Yemeni correspondent for the Japanese NHK network and a government Information Ministry employee, was killed by a car bomb that exploded as he was driving in Aden's Mansoura district. Two people traveling with Al-Haidari were also killed in the June 15 explosion. The President of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashed al-Alimi, has ordered an investigation into Al-Haidari's death. A similar incident in the city in November 2021 saw journalist Rasha Abdullah and her unborn child assassinated by a car bomb, while her husband, Mahmoud Al-Atmi, also a journalist, was severely injured in the blast. Shortly before his death, colleagues had informed Al-Atmi that Houthi security forces had been gathering intelligence on him and his wife.



On June 24, Abdelrazaq al-Baqmaa, a Salafi preacher and commander of the Saudi-supported Al-Yemen Al-Saeed Brigades, was found dead in his car in Marib Al-Wadi district, east of Marib city. The brigades, formed by the Saudi-led coalition at the start of the year to fight the Houthis in Marib, launched a recruitment drive in southern Yemen in early June. Days later, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) began recruiting fighters to its Support and Backup Brigades. The enlistment of forces with differing domestic loyalties came in response to ongoing Houthi recruitment and deployment to the frontlines, but could complicate the work of the PLC's newly formed military and security committee, which is tasked with restructuring military and security forces in the anti-Houthi camp under a unified command structure.

On June 29, less than a week after Al-Baqmaa's killing, an explosion in Aden targeted the convoy of Lahj governorate security chief Saleh al-Sayed. While there were conflicting reports regarding the death toll from the attack in the crowded Khor Maksar district, it was confirmed that Al-Sayed survived.



The aftermath of the car bomb that targeted the convey of Major General Saleh Al-Sayed, commander of the Backup and Support Brigades and Lahj security director, after he left the headquarters of the STC in Khor Maksar district in Aden on June 29, 2022 // Sana'a Center photo by Rajeh Al Aomry

## AQAP Escalates Attacks, Prompting Military Response

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP's) increased level of activity in recent months continued in June. AQAP militants reportedly executed an officer from the STC-backed Security Belt forces in Abyan's Madiyah district on June 9. The officer had been kidnapped the previous day. On June 22, AQAP militants were blamed for two attacks, one in Abyan and one in Shabwa, that together killed at least 10 people. In Abyan, militants ambushed soldiers belonging to the Yemeni government's Abyan Military Axis in Ahwar district. Three soldiers were said to have been killed in the initial ambush, and two more were executed after capture. Militants then attacked a Shabwa Defense Forces checkpoint near Ataq city in Shabwa governorate, killing five troops and losing three of their own fighters.

In response, government forces in Abyan announced the launch of a military operation targeting AQAP in the governorate, and requested the support of local tribes, as well as Security Belt forces, with whom they have historically had an adversarial relationship. This prompted AQAP to take credit for the Abyan attack, although it stated it had been committed by individual members and not ordered by the organization's leadership. In the message, AQAP urged local tribes to not participate in the anti-AQAP operation. No claim of responsibility has been made for the Shabwa attack.

## Other Military & Security Developments in Brief:

- **June 8:** Pro-Yemeni government media reported that a Houthi armed drone attacked Al-Qihar village in Maqbanah district, western Taiz, killing two children.
- **June 14:** International media outlets reported that Saudi Arabia and the Houthis had held virtual talks facilitated by Oman to discuss border security and "future relations under any peace deal in Yemen." No details were reported.
- **June 28:** US Central Command announced its forces had killed Abu Hamzah al-Yemeni in the northwest Syrian governorate of Idlib. Al-Yemeni was a senior figure in Horas al-Din, a hardcore offshoot of the Al-Qaeda-linked Syrian rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.



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