



YEMEN
INTERNATIONAL FORUM
منتدى اليمن الدولي



**Yemen International
Forum III**
Background Dossier

About YIF

The Yemen International Forum (YIF) is the largest and most inclusive platform for policy dialogues related to Yemen's conflict and ongoing peace process. Unique in its approach, it serves as a continuous civil society-led peace initiative, providing a space for Yemeni, regional, and international engagement aimed at overcoming current crises and paving the way to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Yemen. Since its launch in 2022, the YIF has convened over 500 political representatives, policymakers, peace mediators, experts, and civil society representatives and contributed to multi-thematic peace initiatives, ranging from political and civic engagement to transitional justice, economic deescalation, and the environment-conflict nexus.

As part of the YIF, consultations with Yemeni experts and stakeholders and extensive regional and international shuttle diplomacy are conducted throughout the year. In parallel, Yemeni-led knowledge production related to the Forum's themes and outcomes seeks to inform domestic, regional, and international policy. These Yemeni-Yemeni dialogues, regional and international discussions, and policy publications complement the formal UN-led peace process and Track II initiatives, with the overall goal of fostering an inclusive and sustained dialogue process.



Preface: A Critical Turning Point for Yemen and the Region

Yemenis today are facing a critical moment as they enter their eleventh year of war. The peace process, which seemed to gain momentum since April 2022 with a truce followed by peace talks and a general deescalation in the region, is now facing an uncertain future. Political fragmentation, a collapsed economy, and an increasingly challenging security situation cast long shadows over Yemen and raise concerns of a renewal of conflict and further fragility.

Nowhere is this fragility and the entanglement of Yemen and the region more evident than in the Red Sea crisis, where geopolitical tensions have transformed Yemen's strategic geographic location from a potential source of connectivity and prosperity to an arena of increased instability and uncertainty, risking the lives and well-being of millions of Yemenis.

While the deescalation observed in 2022-2023 had an immediate positive ripple effect on the peace process, regional conflict since October 2023 has thrown prospects for peace off track. This underscores the reality that peace and stability in Yemen go in tandem with regional stability—it would be short-sighted to think that the conflict in Yemen can be contained or relegated to a domestic matter.

The YIF III convenes as the stakes have never been higher for Yemen and the broader region. While this undoubtedly brings new and complex challenges, it also offers opportunities for enhanced multilateral and bilateral cooperation. Against this backdrop, the YIF is more than just a conference; it's a civil society-led initiative designed by Yemenis to break through political deadlocks, foster Yemeni-Yemeni dialogues, and build bridges between domestic, regional, and international actors.

Over 300 participants will participate in YIF III, including Yemeni political leaders, tribal figures, women, minorities, youth, and civil society activists, as well as regional and international policymakers, UN representatives, and experts, to explore concrete pathways for restoring stability and preventing further fragmentation and fragility.

This year's discussions will focus on political reforms that can pave the way for responsible and effective governance. The YIF will convene candid talks on protecting civil space and safeguarding the rights of activists, local mediators, women, youth, and minorities, who have undoubtedly played a critical role in maintaining a level of communal support, humanitarian access, and civil and political action amidst severe polarization. Other discussions will tackle mechanisms for regaining access to revenue sources and providing much-needed relief to the population in terms of basic services and needs. Talks will also focus on Yemen's ongoing energy transition as the country grapples with increased extreme weather due to the effects of climate change and struggles over resources in parallel to the conflict.

The YIF will be an opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from local, regional, and international experts. It will build on the momentum established in YIF I and II, laying the groundwork for a locally driven transitional justice process as we acknowledge the need to address grievances and violations in a manner that restores dignity to Yemenis and helps break the cycle of violence. Critical cross-border and regional security issues will also be addressed in an effort to come to a common understanding of shared risks and interests for Yemen, its neighbors, and the broader international community. Overall, efforts must be directed toward revitalizing Yemen's engagement within the region, as stability and prosperity in Yemen will contribute to wider regional security and economic integration.

This background document contains select publications published by the Sana'a Center and its partners related to the overall themes of YIF III: political cohesion, geopolitical engagement, inclusion and civic space, transitional justice, the economy, and the environment. We hope this reading list will further enrich the critical conversations we look forward to having this year.

Yasmeen al-Eryani,

Executive Director for Knowledge Production, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies

1. Political Cohesion

Yemen's prolonged conflict has deeply fragmented its political landscape, intensified polarization among key political components, and weakened critical national institutions. Over the last decade, the internationally recognized government has struggled with a lack of unified political will, competing agendas among its key components, and the absence of a cohesive national project, preventing it from effectively addressing the country's challenges. Regional polarization has exacerbated the government's internal fragmentation, as external interests have often influenced local actors and reinforced divisions rather than fostering national reconciliation. The result has been a Yemeni political environment dominated by power struggles at the expense of efforts to establish a governance model capable of leading Yemen toward stability.

YIF III will explore opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the internationally recognized government by discussing steps to strengthen its role in political leadership and governance. Dedicated plenaries and sessions will examine the role of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) almost three years after it was established, and the presence of key political stakeholders and the international community will be leveraged to discuss practical considerations for PLC reform. Additional sessions will address other pressing political topics such as the Southern Question and collaboration among governorates and local authorities experiencing similar challenges and priorities.

Related Reading

- [A Last Chance to Tackle Corruption](#) - February 2025.
- [Reforming the Presidential Council](#) - October 2024.
- [Child Soldiers in Marib and Shabwa](#) - September 2024.
- [Blackouts and Blackholes: Yemen's Vanishing Electricity Supply](#) - November 2023.
- [The Presidential Council's Year of Failure](#) - July 2023.
- [Entrenched Power: The Houthi System of Governance](#) - July 2022.
- [Politics Despite the War: Yemeni Political Elites in Cairo](#) - July 2022.
- [A History of Yemeni Political Parties: From Armed Struggle to Armed Repression](#) - February 2022.
- [Presidential Councils in Yemen: Exploring Past Attempts at Power Sharing and Possibilities for the Future](#) - May 2021.

2. Geopolitical Interdependencies and Regional Engagement

Stability in Yemen is integral to the region's security. For decades, crisis-level upheavals have developed and worsened in Yemen and gone largely unchecked by key regional and international actors. During the current war, divisions have deepened among Yemenis, making the conflict more intractable and negatively impacting regional security. At the same time, international actors have failed to present a clear strategy to end the conflict and restore stability to Yemen.

Houthi actions in the Red Sea since October 2023 have served to underline the risks faced by all countries that overlook Yemen's security challenges. YIF III will focus on the interdependencies between Yemen and the world, emphasizing that stabilizing Yemen and rolling back the militarization of the southern Red Sea area is in the interest of many states. The Forum will explore options for restoring stability and economic viability in Yemen as part of a collective strategy for enhancing regional security. It will analyze the Red Sea crisis from a geopolitical lens, discuss the influence of non-state armed actors, and tackle cross-border security threats.

Related Reading

- [The Houthi-Israel Confrontation](#) - February 2025.
- [A Snapshot of Yemeni Public Sentiment on Red Sea Developments](#) - October 2024.
- [Turkey and the Red Sea Crisis](#) - July 2024.
- [A New Axis: Strategic Coordination between the Houthis and Iraqi Factions](#) - July 2024.
- [Batarfi's Death and Al-Qaeda in Yemen's New Emir: What Comes Next?](#) - May 2024.
- [Iran's View of Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea: Protecting Gains and Limiting Costs](#) - April 2024.
- [Red Sea Conflict Gambles with Yemen's Future](#) - December 2023.
- [From Mountain Fighters to Red Sea Disruptors: What the Houthi Attacks Mean for Yemen, the Region, and Global Stability](#) - December 2023.
- [A Looming Battle Over Wadi Hadramawt](#) - February 2023.
- [Leadership from Iran: How Al-Qaeda in Yemen Fell Under the Sway of Saif al-Adel](#) - February 2023.
- [Resolving the Yemen-Saudi Border Problem: Time to Revive the Joint Committees](#) - June 2022.

3. Inclusion and Civic Space

One of the biggest casualties of the war in Yemen has been the shrinking of civil space and the marginalization of key segments of society. Women, youth, and civil society organizations have faced increasing aggression and restrictions on their work and movements. While restrictions are harsher in Houthi-controlled areas, efforts to limit civic space also occur regularly in government-controlled areas. Despite crackdowns on civil society and a more hostile operating environment, grassroots movements and local initiatives have demonstrated remarkable resilience, working to foster dialogue, advocate for rights, support their communities, and contribute to broader national peace efforts.

YIF III will focus on restoring Yemen's civic space by facilitating dialogue between local authorities and civil society organizations. Discussions will explore best practices for effective and inclusive governance, strategies to improve the operating environment for civil society, and mechanisms to enhance cooperation between government institutions and civic actors. A key priority will be addressing the alarming disappearance of women from the public sphere due to increasing restrictions imposed on them and the rise of gender-based violence. During the Forum, a joint advocacy strategy will be presented to identify potential collaborations between local and international stakeholders invested in safeguarding women's rights and promoting their participation in the public sphere and the future of Yemen.

Related Reading

- [A Year in Patriarchy: Key Setbacks in Yemeni Women's Rights in 2024](#) - February 2025.
- [Forgotten Victims of Yemen's War: The Plight of the Muhammashat](#) - January 2025.
- [The Impact of War on Youth Activism in Yemen](#) - August 2024.
- [Women's Public Participation in Yemen by 2030: A Scenario-Building Approach](#) - January 2024.
- [Grassroots Voices: Women and Everyday Peacebuilding in Yemen](#) - May 2023.
- [Absent from the Negotiation Table and Shunned from Public Life: Yemeni Women at a Crossroads](#) - September 2023.
- [War Passing Over Women's Bodies](#) - December 2023.
- [The Impact of the Yemen War on the Needs and Priorities of Youth](#) - January 2022.
- [Not Our War: A Vision for Peace from Yemeni Youth and Civil Society](#) - December 2021.
- [A New Path Forward: Empowering a Leadership Role for Yemeni Civil Society](#) - January 2021.
- [A Gendered Crisis: Understanding the Experiences of Yemen's War](#) - December 2019.

4. Towards a Locally-Defined Transitional Justice Process

Yemenis have endured endless cycles of violence, from past wars to the ongoing crisis. Such relentless turmoil has forced communities to grapple with a legacy of injustice, displacement, and various grievances and violations. A locally defined transitional justice process, grounded in Yemen's unique social, cultural, and historical context, provides a potential pathway to break this cycle. Such a process aims to ensure justice is served and felt by those who need it most.

YIF III will focus on advancing this vision by connecting research, policy, and grassroots perspectives. It strives to center the voices of victims, marginalized groups, and local leaders to bridge the gap between theory and practice, demonstrating that the foundations for transitional justice – and the urgency to pursue it – are deeply rooted within Yemeni society itself. Through a plenary and a series of roundtable discussions and workshops, the YIF will aim to chart a local path toward transitional justice, exploring topics such as the role of the judiciary in transitional justice, institutional reforms needed to rebuild trust in justice and reconciliation processes, the engagement of political actors in transitional justice processes, and the critical need for inclusivity.

Related Reading

- [Landmines Exact a Heavy Toll on Yemeni Civilians](#) - February 2025.
- [The Role of the Judiciary in Achieving Transitional Justice and Reconciliation in Yemen](#) - May 2024.
- [Land for the Powerful: Property Violations in Aden](#) - May 2024.
- [Houthi Authorities Undermine Judicial Independence with Major Reforms](#) - October 2024
- [Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic and Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies Advocate at United Nations for Climate Justice and Transitional Justice](#) - March 2024.
- [Engaging Victims in Peace-Making and Transitional Justice in Yemen](#) - March 2024.
- [The Yemen Declaration for Justice and Reconciliation](#) - June 2023.
- [Yemen's Children Born and Raised in Displacement](#) - July 2022.

Look out for an upcoming publication - **Conflict and Climate: The Need for Green Transitional Justice in Yemen*

5. Averting Economic Collapse

Economic mediation and recovery are essential for a durable political settlement in Yemen. The conflict has increasingly taken the form of economic warfare, eroding livelihoods and destroying the foundations for recovery. Yemen's economy is facing unprecedented strain as risks to critical sectors and the country's financial system threaten further economic collapse and humanitarian suffering. Economic and political dynamics are inextricably linked, demanding concurrent progress in both domains.

YIF III will focus on the critical role of Yemen's energy sector and explore potential mechanisms to restart hydrocarbon exports. It will also discuss reforms that the government could take to address longstanding issues related to service provision and the management of the economy, and policies to support citizens' well-being during the ongoing economic crisis. Additionally, the forum will tackle the need for a just energy transition in Yemen and explore perspectives and models from other contexts to ensure that policies are part of a larger strategic plan that is equitable and environmentally conscious. Finally, YIF III will also explore the economic relationship between Yemen and other Gulf countries and examine the evolving dynamics of aid and development in Yemen.

Related Reading

- [Houthi Detentions Leave Stark Choices for Aid Sector](#) - February 2025.
- [Rescuing Yemen's Economy](#) - December 2024.
- [Localizing Aid and Development in Yemen](#) - October 2024.
- [Every Day Brings a New Livelihood: Women's Economic Empowerment in Yemen](#) - July 2024.
- [Development in Coming: Be Careful What You Wish For](#) - March 2024.
- [Empowering Local Authorities to Lead Economic Development in Yemen](#) - February 2024.
- [Challenges to Yemen's Public Revenues](#) - December 2023.
- [Recovering Lost Ground in Shabwa's Oil Sector](#) - August 2023.
- [Two Birds With One Stone: Using Aid Transfers to Support Stable Commodity Prices in Yemen](#) - August 2023.
- [Scaling Up Solar Energy Investments in Yemen](#) - March 2023.

6. Sustainable Approaches to Critical Environmental Challenges

Yemen is experiencing increased extreme weather due to the effects of climate change, including floods, cyclones, rising temperatures, and droughts. These environmental shifts have exacerbated the country's water and energy crises, significantly impacting people's livelihoods. Millions of Yemenis have lost access to essential water and energy resources, leading to widespread internal and external migration, increased inequalities, and adverse effects on health and food security. Despite these challenges, Yemen has opportunities to develop local mechanisms and strategies for sustainable solutions to climate challenges. If carefully planned and implemented, these opportunities could help mitigate marginalization, displacement, and social tensions caused by environmental factors.

YIF III will examine opportunities for sustainable water solutions by drawing on successful community initiatives and stakeholder engagement. Much-needed discussions on renewable energy and the need for a just energy transition in Yemen will encompass both local and regional perspectives. Other talks will focus on an environmentally conscious transitional justice framework. By drawing on expertise from local, regional, and international actors, YIF III aims to provide valuable insights, draw on experiences and lessons learned from other countries, and propose solutions for Yemen's climate challenges.

Related Reading

- [Yemen's Neglected Climate Crisis](#) - October 2024.
- [The Impact of Flooding on Agricultural Communities in Yemen](#) - March 2024.
- [Yemen's Vulnerability to Climate Change: How to Strengthen Adaptation](#) - February 2024.
- [Extreme Weather and the Role of Early Warning Systems in Yemen: Al-Mahra as a Case Study](#) - August 2023.
- [Scaling Up Solar Energy Investments in Yemen](#) - March 2023.
- [Cultivating an Equitable Recovery: A Political Ecology Approach to Agricultural Interventions in Yemen](#) - December 2023.
- [Solar-Powered Irrigation in Yemen: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policies](#) - April 2021.