

# THE ROAD TO PEACE RUNS THROUGH TAIZ

Lessons learned from 5 years of de-escalation  
efforts in the heart of Yemen

June 2020

By: Brett Scott



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Photography by Ahmed Basha

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## About the Author

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## About DeepRoot

DeepRoot is a Yemeni consulting firm focused on development issues in Yemen. DeepRoot aims to provide assistance to international development actors, the private sector, local civil society organisations and the Yemeni Government in order to anchor their interventions in a deep understanding of Yemen's national and local contexts, and international best practices. DeepRoot has implemented multiple track II initiatives in direct and indirect support of the Office of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen's efforts to negotiate a political settlement to the conflict.

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## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| List of Figures .....   | 4         |
| Acronyms & Abbreviations .....  | 5         |
| Executive Overview .....  | 6         |
| <i>Key findings &amp; insights</i> .....  | 7         |
| <i>Recommendations for stakeholders</i> .....                                   | 10        |
| <b>PART 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....   | <b>11</b> |
| 1.1 Methodology .....   | 13        |
| 1.2 Report Structure .....  | 14        |
| <b>PART 2: THE CONFLICT CONTEXT</b> .....                                       | <b>15</b> |
| 2.1 A city under siege .....  | 16        |
| 2.2 Hawban industrial area: the Ansar Allah-controlled corridor .....           | 20        |
| 2.3 The Islah Party and the primacy of internal rivalries .....                 | 22        |
| 2.3.1 <i>The regional dimension</i> .....                                       | 24        |
| <b>PART 3: DE-ESCALATION ATTEMPTS</b> .....                                     | <b>26</b> |
| 3.1 Mediation by the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation ..... | 28        |
| 3.2 Sweden Consultations & the Statement of Understanding on Taiz .....         | 31        |
| 3.3 Proposal by the Ansar Allah-appointed governor .....                        | 33        |
| 3.4 Local committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah .....                         | 34        |
| 3.5 Letter to UN OCHA .....   | 36        |
| 3.6 LDC in Dhahran Al-Janoub and Hawban .....                                   | 38        |
| 3.7 The Social Committee for Peace .....  | 39        |
| 3.8 Mehdi Al-Mashat and the Islah Party .....                                   | 40        |
| 3.9 Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi .....  | 41        |
| 3.10 Prisoner exchange agreements .....   | 41        |
| <b>PART 4: LESSONS LEARNED</b> .....  | <b>43</b> |
| 4.1 Strategic interests and concerns surrounding de-escalation .....            | 44        |
| 4.2 Scope of de-escalation efforts .....  | 46        |
| 4.3 Approaches to mediation in Taiz .....                                       | 47        |
| 4.4 Fostering an environment more conducive to peace .....                      | 49        |
| <b>PART 5: CONCLUSION &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....                           | <b>50</b> |
| 5.1 Recommendations .....   | 51        |
| <b>APPENDICES</b> .....   | <b>54</b> |
| Appendix 1: Proposal by the Civil Alliance for Peace (undated, late 2019) ..... | 55        |
| Appendix 2: Sweden Consultations Proposal No. 2 (December 2018) .....           | 55        |
| Appendix 3: Sweden Consultations Proposal No. 3 (December 2018) .....           | 56        |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Appendix 4: Proposal from the Ansar Allah governor (early December 2018) .....              | 56 |
| Appendix 5: Governor's local committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah (Aug 1, 2018).....     | 57 |
| Appendix 6: Proposal by the governor's local committee (October 2018) .....                 | 57 |
| Appendix 7: Letter from Taiz governor and Axis head to UN OCHA (March 11, 2018).....        | 58 |
| Appendix 8: Statement of intent to pursue a ceasefire, overseen by OCHA (June 2, 2016)..... | 58 |
| Appendix 9: LDC-Taiz agreement signed in Dhahran Al-Janoub (April 10, 2016).....            | 59 |
| Appendix 10: LDC-Taiz agreement signed in Hawban (April 16, 2016) .....                     | 60 |
| Appendix 11: Resistance Council statement on the Hawban agreement (July 23, 2016).....      | 61 |
| Appendix 12: Complete list of members in the Social Committee for Peace.....                | 61 |
| Appendix 13: Social Committee for Peace proposal (undated) .....                            | 62 |
| Appendix 14: Social Committee for Peace proposal for August 2, 2016 ceasefire .....         | 63 |
| Appendix 15: Letter from the Resistance to the Social Committee for Peace (May 5, 2017) ... | 64 |
| Appendix 16: Letter to the Resistance Council from Sultan Al-Barakani (July 21, 2017) ..... | 64 |
| Appendix 17: Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi's initial ideas on mediation (2015) .....                 | 65 |
| Appendix 18: Saleh Al-Sammad's letter to Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi (2015).....                   | 66 |
| Appendix 19: Resistance and Military council heads write to Sheikh Al-Salahi (2016) .....   | 66 |

## List of Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Figure 1:</b> Timeline of main de-escalation efforts.....                                 | 7  |
| <b>Figure 2:</b> All routes identified in the main de-escalation proposals .....             | 8  |
| <b>Figure 3:</b> Map of Taiz city .....  | 16 |
| <b>Figure 4:</b> Map of control for Taiz city.....   | 17 |
| <b>Figure 5:</b> Restricted road access to and from Taiz city.....                           | 19 |
| <b>Figure 6:</b> Governorate map of control.....   | 20 |
| <b>Figure 7:</b> Map of Hawban area .....  | 21 |
| <b>Figure 8:</b> Shaiban and Al-Oudi point as they discuss road access in Taiz city .....    | 28 |
| <b>Figure 9:</b> Locations identified in proposal by Civil Alliance, late 2019 .....         | 29 |
| <b>Figure 10:</b> Strategic sights relevant to the Civil Alliance proposal .....             | 30 |
| <b>Figure 11:</b> Roads mentioned in UN Proposal No. 2 .....                                 | 31 |
| <b>Figure 12:</b> Proposal by the Ansar Allah-appointed governor, December 2018.....         | 33 |
| <b>Figure 13:</b> October 2018 proposal by the committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah ..... | 35 |
| <b>Figure 14:</b> Locations named in March 2018 letter to UN OCHA .....                      | 37 |
| <b>Figure 15:</b> Locations named in Social Committee for Peace proposal.....                | 39 |



### Acronyms & Abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>AQAP</b>   | Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula                              |
| <b>DCC</b>    | De-escalation and Coordination Committee                       |
| <b>EU</b>     | European Union   |
| <b>GPC</b>    | General People's Congress                                      |
| <b>HSA</b>    | Hayel Saeed Anam   |
| <b>IDP</b>    | Internally displaced person                                    |
| <b>IPC</b>    | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification                  |
| <b>JCC</b>    | Joint Coordination Committee                                   |
| <b>JMP</b>    | Joint Meeting Parties  |
| <b>KSA</b>    | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  |
| <b>LDC</b>    | Local Disengagement Council                                    |
| <b>NDC</b>    | National Dialogue Conference                                   |
| <b>OCHA</b>   | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)       |
| <b>OSESGY</b> | Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen |
| <b>PSO</b>    | Political Security Organization                                |
| <b>SPC</b>    | Supreme Political Council                                      |
| <b>SSF</b>    | Special Security Forces  |
| <b>UAE</b>    | United Arab Emirates   |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations   |
| <b>UNSC</b>   | United Nations Security Council                                |
| <b>WHO</b>    | World Health Organization                                      |
| <b>YSP</b>    | Yemeni Socialist Party   |



## EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

This paper presents Taiz as a case study on locally-driven peacebuilding efforts in Yemen, mapping and analysing the main de-escalation initiatives launched in the governorate since the beginning of the ongoing conflict. In an attempt to contribute to the literature on local peacebuilding, the paper highlights the key lessons learned and arrives at a set of corresponding recommendations for local, national, and international stakeholders on how to most effectively advance ongoing and future peacebuilding efforts. It also discusses the central strategic importance of Taiz within the wider conflict, particularly with regards to the underlying competition between the Islah Party and other national parties and regional states.

Throughout efforts to resolve Yemen's multifaceted conflict, local actors have largely been seen through the lens of complicating the national peace process, and at best providing islands of stability in some post-conflict areas of the country. Little attention has been given to the direct role community leaders and local officials are playing in driving forward de-escalation initiatives in governorates around the country. Beyond bringing much needed respite to communities trapped near the frontlines, these locally-driven peace processes have the potential to build trust between the warring parties, cultivate local acceptance and buy-in for a broader agreement, and lay the groundwork for more rapid stabilization in the immediate post-conflict period.

This local activity – and potential – can be seen clearly in Taiz, where one of the most complex and protracted localized conflicts is playing out. A near-total siege continues to suffocate Taiz city, one of Yemen's largest and most diverse population centers, and in addition to fighting against Ansar Allah,<sup>1</sup> local groups nominally aligned against Ansar Allah have also frequently clashed for control of territory or a stake in state institutions. Yet at the same time, a locally-driven peace process in Taiz has been underway: Between 2015 and early 2020, multiple councils, committees, delegations, and multi-party alliances focused on reducing hostilities in the governorate have been established, resulting in at least a dozen written de-escalation proposals being raised between the warring parties.

The paper is based in part on research DeepRoot conducted for the EU-funded project Supporting Inclusive Peacemaking and Political Transition in Yemen, implemented throughout 2018 and 2019 in partnership with the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). The lessons learned and recommendations are furthermore informed by DeepRoot's direct engagement with local mediators and community leaders in Taiz. This practical analysis of de-escalation efforts in the heart of Yemen is aimed at enabling peacemaking practitioners to better incorporate the warring parties' interests and concerns into a sustainable and realistic approach that benefits from the cumulative experience of Yemeni mediators on the ground.

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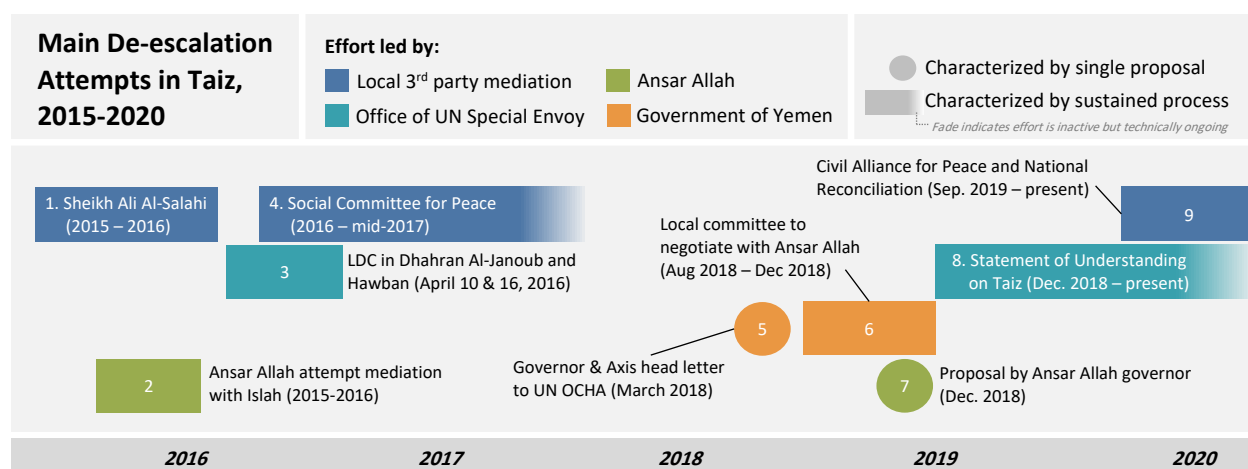
<sup>1</sup> Commonly referred to as the Houthis. The formal name of the group, Ansar Allah, is used in this report in line with the official language adopted by the UN and the broader international community supporting the peace process in Yemen.



## Key findings & insights

There has been substantial variety in the de-escalation efforts launched to date in Taiz. Both warring parties, the Office of the Special Envoy, and third-party Yemeni mediators (including cross-party networks and independent mediators) have all introduced multiple proposals. These have ranged from humanitarian-focused initiatives to open up a single road for civilian movement, to calls for a governorate-wide cessation of hostilities. The issue of road access has been central to most of these efforts due to the severe restrictions to movement in Taiz city, and in some cases proposals have positioned road access as a building block toward a larger ceasefire. Figure 1 presents a timeline of the nine distinct efforts examined in this report.

**Figure 1: Timeline of main de-escalation efforts**



Of the many proposals introduced, few proceeded to be signed by the warring parties, and none have been fully implemented. However, these efforts provide a wealth of knowledge that can be harnessed in any ongoing and future de-escalation attempts. The key insights are as follows:

### *On the parties' strategic interests and concerns:*

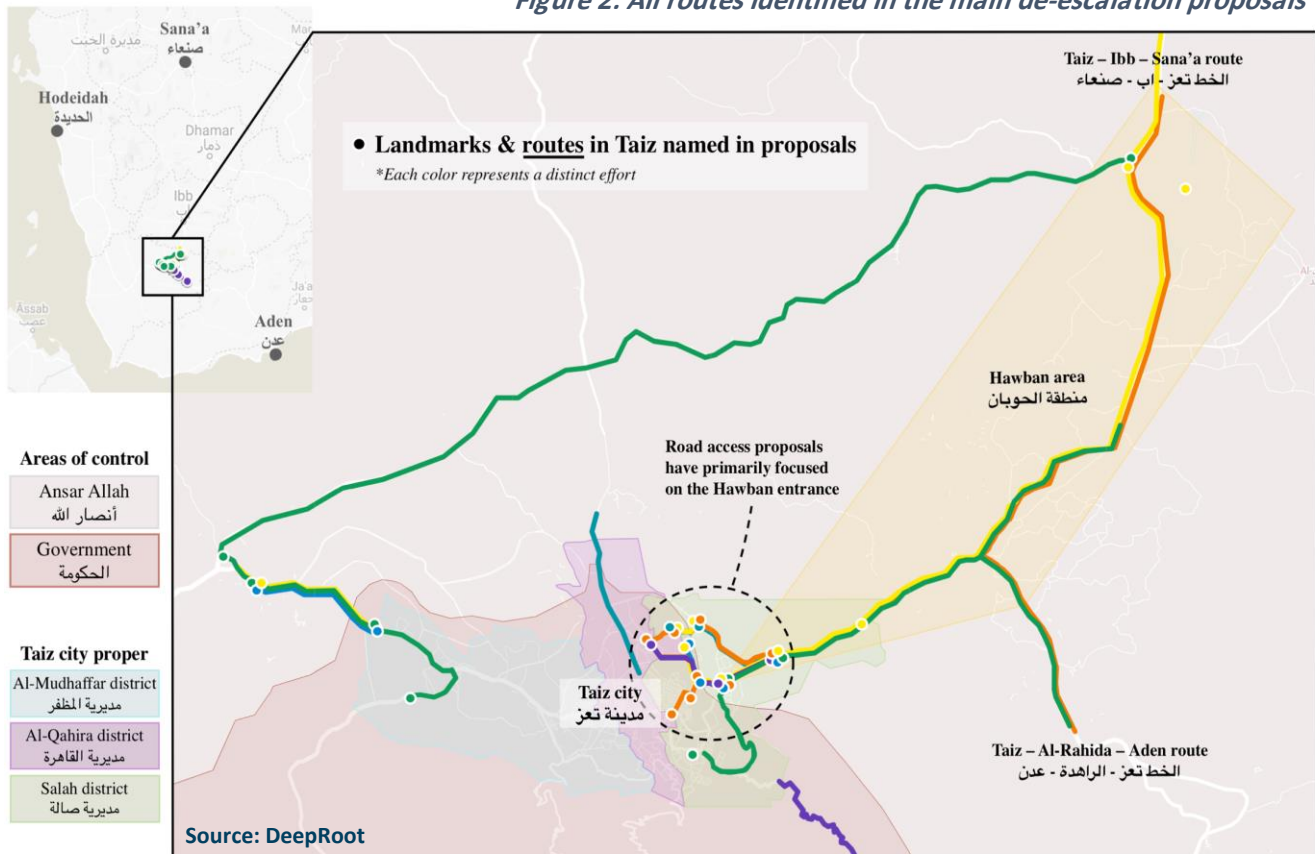
- Ansar Allah have a strong economic interest in maintaining control over Hawban area and taxing its industrial base, and may be concerned that ceasing military operations (and de-militarizing a major route) would leave them more vulnerable to an advance by government forces.
- Ansar Allah also face less public and military pressure to reach an agreement on Taiz, as the government and Coalition have not launched a concerted effort to fully liberate the city – in large part due to internal differences over the Islah Party's empowerment.
- Despite the above, the government continues to rally around the intention of retaking Taiz, by force if necessary, and may be concerned that a formal agreement would “legitimize” the zones of control and preclude future military advancement against Ansar Allah.
- The warring parties continue to place broader strategic significance on Taiz for its enduring role as a cultural capital, seat of political ideology, main link between north and south, and due to its outsized influence on trade and business nationwide.



### On the scope of agreement:

- Seven distinct routes across the frontline around Taiz city have been negotiated over – or at least raised between the warring parties – since the conflict began. The eastern entrance of the city, running through Hawban area, has been most heavily targeted in these efforts. This can be seen in Figure 2, which layers together many of the maps introduced throughout this paper and shows the precise locations and roads that have been explicitly identified in the written agreements and proposals.

**Figure 2: All routes identified in the main de-escalation proposals**



- There is a low probability that a governorate-wide ceasefire will be met with success, short of a major shift in the larger conflict. Targeting the opening of 1-2 specific routes into Taiz city, limited in scope as much as possible to addressing humanitarian concerns, is more realistic and can be part of a snowball strategy to advance an effective ceasefire in key areas around the city without the warring parties having to name it as such.
- Efforts to improve road access have been narrow in focus, with a relative absence of intermediary steps to build on. Creative initiatives like removing garbage mounds or activating water pumping stations in the relevant frontline areas – and even incorporating the roads to eventually be targeted – can build momentum through strictly humanitarian trust-building exercises.



*On the approach to mediation:*

- Local activists have consistently been the primary drivers of peacemaking efforts in Taiz, but have not been sufficiently incorporated into national and international processes.
- National-level Yemeni figures respected by both sides can play an important role in mediating between the warring parties, and several networks, such as the Social Committee for Peace and the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation, have demonstrated the effectiveness of this.
- Formal OSESGY-led efforts, especially the Local Disengagement Council (LDC) agreements of 2016, have repeatedly served as a legitimate foundation for negotiations in subsequent efforts led by local actors.

*On considerations for broader support for peace:*

- locally-mediated prisoner exchanges have achieved moderate success in Taiz and can serve to build greater confidence between the warring parties.
- Political polarization, including the politicization of humanitarian issues, is hampering peacebuilding efforts and this environment of distrust enables spoilers to impede any efforts.
- The conflict has exacerbated Yemen's already dismal unemployment rate, incentivizing young locals to join armed groups in order to receive income. Economic drivers of the conflict, in addition to the broader issues of political polarization, cannot be ignored in peacebuilding efforts in Taiz.



## Recommendations for stakeholders

Based on the lessons learned, the below steps are recommended for local, national, regional, and international stakeholders to take in order to support peace efforts in Taiz. Each recommendation is expanded on in Part 5.

### *All stakeholders*

1. Incorporate the sustained inclusion of civil society and private sector leaders, including women and youth, in de-escalation efforts.
2. Avoid linking de-escalation in Taiz to other national processes, whether explicitly or not

### *International stakeholders*

3. Promote local ownership of conflict de-escalation efforts, placing governorate-level actors at the forefront and allowing for Yemeni mediators with access to both warring parties to play an intermediary role.
4. Build capacities of other locally-driven peacebuilding efforts that are crucial to building trust between the warring parties, like locally-mediated prisoner exchanges.
5. Be open to less formal means of mediation, including oral agreement.

### *Regional stakeholders*

6. Cease all financial and material support to Yemeni combatants in Taiz governorate who do not fully adhere to the formal chain of command under the Yemeni ministries of defense and interior.
7. Support reconciliation efforts to better align pro-government of Yemen groups behind local authorities, with the aim of stabilizing government-controlled areas, reaching greater consensus on their administration, and improving coordination on peacebuilding efforts.

### *National stakeholders*

8. The Yemeni government: support the governorate-level alliance of political parties in Taiz as a means to reduce political polarization and encourage greater representativeness and accountability in the local administration.
9. Ansar Allah: engage more constructively with locally-led initiatives, refrain from reverting them to the national political process, and instead allow for greater de-centralization in peacebuilding efforts related to easing the humanitarian suffering of civilians.

### *Local stakeholders*

10. Use creative small steps to build confidence between the warring parties, engage the relevant local authorities on both sides, and sustain momentum toward more substantive de-escalatory measures.
11. Develop moderate, realistic proposals for how international stakeholders can support the local peace process in Taiz.
12. Lead the way for greater social and political cohesion in de-escalation efforts.
13. Expand the loose network of security and tribal leaders engaged in peace discussions over Taiz.





# **PART 1** INTRODUCTION



Years of sustained conflict in Yemen have resulted in the de-concentration of power structures in many areas of the country. Amid the power vacuum, and with new relationships being forged between local groups and regional countries increasingly invested in the conflict for broader geopolitical objectives, local actors have shouldered a greater burden in ensuring security and service provision in their communities. In many areas this has led to a reshaping of the relationship between governorate authorities and the central state, for example in Marib and Hadhramawt where local authorities began retaining a larger share of oil and gas revenues, and to the rise of separatists in parts of the south.

With most frontlines between the Yemeni government and Ansar Allah deeply entrenched – and in some cases static for years – infighting intensified in many areas of the country between diverse local groups, each with their own relationship to national and regional actors. As a result of the fragmentation of the conflict, many of these localized hostilities are likely to persist following a broad settlement to the conflict. Efforts to reach such a settlement have largely been viewed through the lens of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSES-GY), entrusted by the UN Security Council to resolve the national-level conflict, and to a lesser extent direct negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Ansar Allah. Comparatively little attention has been given to the diverse locally-led peace processes that have been ongoing in several areas of the country.

This report is focused on mapping and analyzing the conflict de-escalation efforts that have taken place in Taiz governorate since fighting spread there in March 2015.<sup>2</sup> Since early in the conflict, Ansar Allah (and until December 2017 forces loyal to former President Saleh) have maintained a near-total siege on the city of Taiz, suffocating one of Yemen's largest population centers. Restrictions on the movement of civilians and goods, including humanitarian aid, have crippled the local economy and the ensuing security vacuum gave room for internal tensions to boil over. As a result, the people of Taiz have consistently suffered from some of the worst conditions within what is widely described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Taiz remains home to an unparalleled diversity of political parties and social groups and movements, and has a longstanding reputation as an important commercial, educational, and cultural hub in Yemen and the wider region. Though geographically situated in southwest Yemen, Taiz is located between the country's two seats of power – Sana'a and Aden – and is often referred to as Yemen's third city. This combination of humanitarian, social, and strategic factors have prompted an unparalleled number of initiatives aimed at de-escalating the conflict within Taiz.

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<sup>2</sup> This report assumes a basic knowledge of the main parties to the conflict. For background on the conflict in Taiz and additional details on the humanitarian, economic, and political situation in the governorate, see: DeepRoot Consulting, "Caught in the Middle: A Conflict Mapping of Taiz Governorate," August 16, 2018. <https://www.deeproot.consulting/single-post/2018/08/16/Caught-in-the-Middle-A-Conflict-Mapping-of-Taiz-Governorate>.

<sup>3</sup> UN News, "Humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world, warns UN," February 14, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032811>.



Beyond the formal peace process led by OSESGY, various efforts have been launched by civil society and private sector leaders, independent local mediators, governors on both sides, and delegations appointed by either warring party. The issue of road access has featured prominently in most of these efforts, which have ranged from humanitarian-focused attempts to open select roads, to all-encompassing proposals stipulating a governorate-wide ceasefire and withdrawal of Ansar Allah forces. Altogether, Taiz serves as the clearest illustration of the kind of sophisticated and sustained efforts being exerted at the local level to reduce hostilities, and provides a wealth of knowledge for peacemaking practitioners throughout the country.

## 1.1 Methodology

This report examines nine distinct localized de-escalation efforts that have occurred between 2015 and early 2020, several of which each included multiple proposals. Based on the cumulative lessons learned from these efforts, the report offers a detailed set of recommendations aimed at providing local, national, and international stakeholders with a solid foundation upon which ongoing and future efforts in Taiz and beyond can be supported. The report highlights the opportunities present for greater cooperation between local and international stakeholders in peacemaking in Yemen, and discusses a number of steps that can be taken to rebuild social cohesion and political freedoms – issues that will remain into the post-conflict period.

The findings presented in this report are drawn in part from research the author conducted as part of Supporting Inclusive Peacemaking and Political Transition in Yemen, an EU-funded project DeepRoot implemented throughout 2018 and 2019 in partnership with Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). This involved desk research, including an analysis of around two dozen public and confidential proposals and letters pertaining to de-escalation in Taiz produced by the warring parties, Yemeni mediators, and OSESGY. Most of these documents can be found in the appendices at the end of this report. It also included interviews with political and military leaders from Taiz, independent mediators, and civil society groups working on peacebuilding in the governorate.

In order to make the findings actionable and practical for stakeholders engaged in ongoing and future de-escalation efforts, the research findings have been refined based on DeepRoot’s work in direct support of local mediators and OSESGY in Taiz. Moreover, the report incorporates input from a workshop DeepRoot co-convened in late 2019 aimed at enhancing cooperation in peacebuilding efforts in the governorate and strengthening international support for locally-led initiatives. The workshop brought 19 leading civil society and private sector actors from Taiz together with OSESGY and the EU Delegation to Yemen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> European External Action Service. “Multifaceted peacebuilding in Taiz to empower civil society and alleviate the humanitarian situation.” August 25, 2019. [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/yemen/67899/multifaceted-peacebuilding-taiz-empower-civil-society-and-alleviate-humanitarian-situation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/yemen/67899/multifaceted-peacebuilding-taiz-empower-civil-society-and-alleviate-humanitarian-situation_en); and DeepRoot Consulting. “On long march toward peace in Taiz, local peacebuilders join hands.” September 19, 2019. <http://bit.ly/2llg3Ht>.



## 1.2 Report Structure

The report is structured in five parts, beginning with an introduction. Part 2 details the geographic and administrative divisions in Taiz, highlighting in particular the frontline and strategic areas relevant to conflict de-escalation. This provides the foundation upon which the mappings presented in Part 3 are based. This part also provides contextual information on the strategic economic, political, and military interests of the warring parties as they relate to Taiz, before widening the picture to consider the governorate's broader significance in national and regional politics.

Part 3 describes in detail the most notable attempts between 2015 and early 2020 to de-escalate the conflict in Taiz. Drawing from over a dozen written proposals and other documents, nine distinct efforts are individually assessed. Several maps in Part 3 show the precise locations inside and surrounding Taiz city that have been identified in past and ongoing mediation efforts.

Part 4 compares and analyses the major efforts described in Part 3, and draws on insights from workshop discussions and interviews DeepRoot has conducted with leading mediators, civil society leaders, and decision makers in Taiz to arrive at a set of key lessons learned from the peace process in Taiz. These findings relate to the warring parties' strategic interests and concerns; the scopes of de-escalation proposals; the approaches to mediation; and broader considerations for supporting peacebuilding in Taiz.

Part 5 offers a set of recommendations for international, regional, national, and local stakeholders on how the lessons learned from previous de-escalation efforts can be applied to ongoing and future efforts in Taiz and other governorates across the country.





## **PART 2**

### **THE CONFLICT CONTEXT**

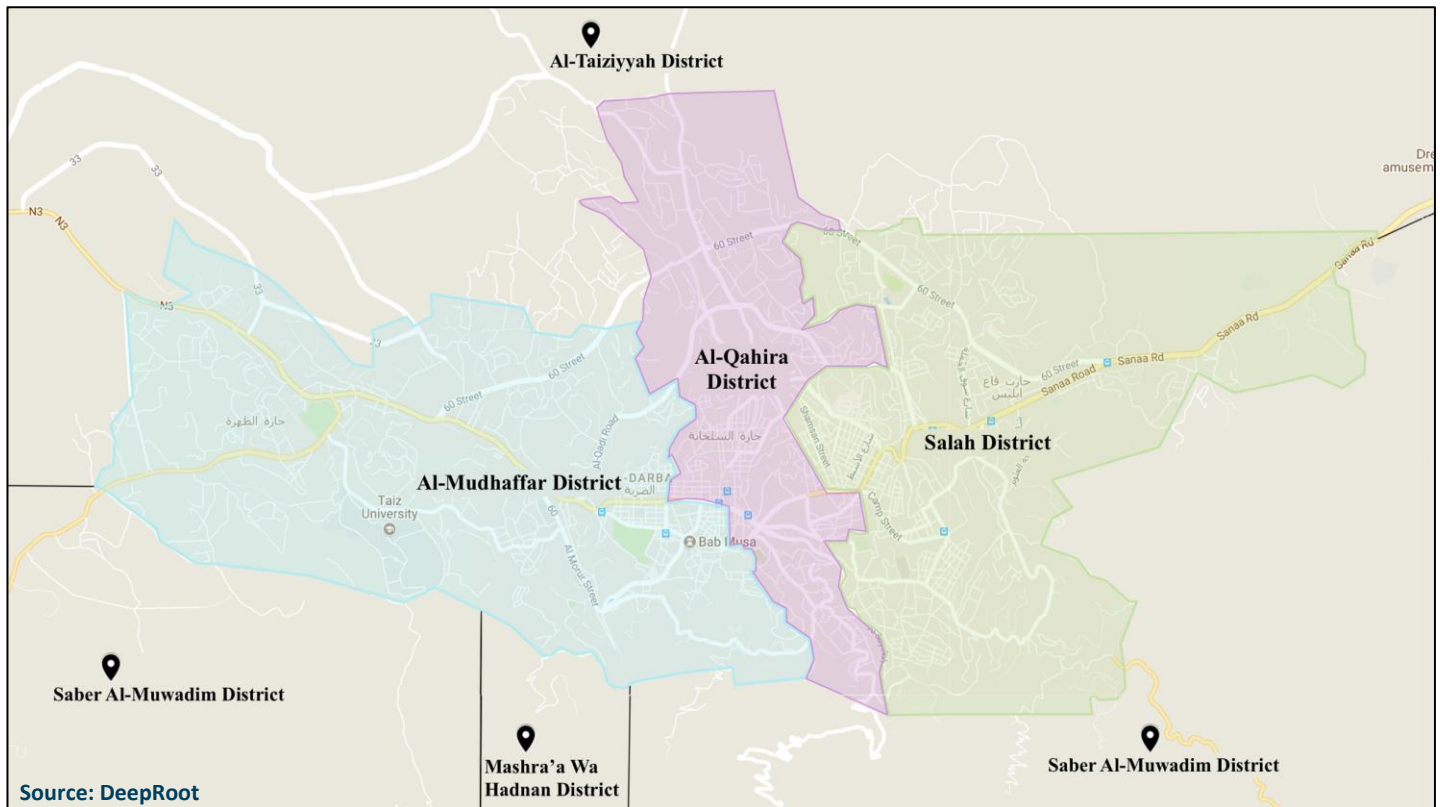


The de-escalation agreements and proposals made to date demonstrate considerable variety and complexity in the locations and routes identified. Roads are identified by a variety of landmarks, intersections, and areas, and in different proposals a given route can be identified using a completely different set of landmarks. In order to accurately identify routes and build a platform to compare proposals, this section provides the main geographic, military, humanitarian, and economic background necessary to evaluate the proposals mapped in Part 3.

## 2.1 A city under siege

Of the 23 districts that form Taiz governorate, three comprise the administrative boundary of Taiz city. As shown in Figure 3, these are Al-Mudhaffar (*blue*), Al-Qahira (*purple*), and Salah (*green*).<sup>5</sup> In practice, the city limits extend into the neighboring districts of Al-Taiziyah, Mashra'a wa Hadnan, and Saber Al-Muwadim.

**Figure 3: Map of Taiz city**



Road access efforts have been primarily concentrated on Salah district, owing to its highway linking Taiz to both Sana'a and Aden. Salah is also home to several strategic sites, including the Republican Palace and Special Security Forces (SSF) headquarters, where the beginning of the conflict in Taiz traces back to (see Box 1).

<sup>5</sup> This mapping bases the geographic boundaries of Taiz city on a UN OCHA map created in 2016: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/yemen/infographic/taizz-city-map>.



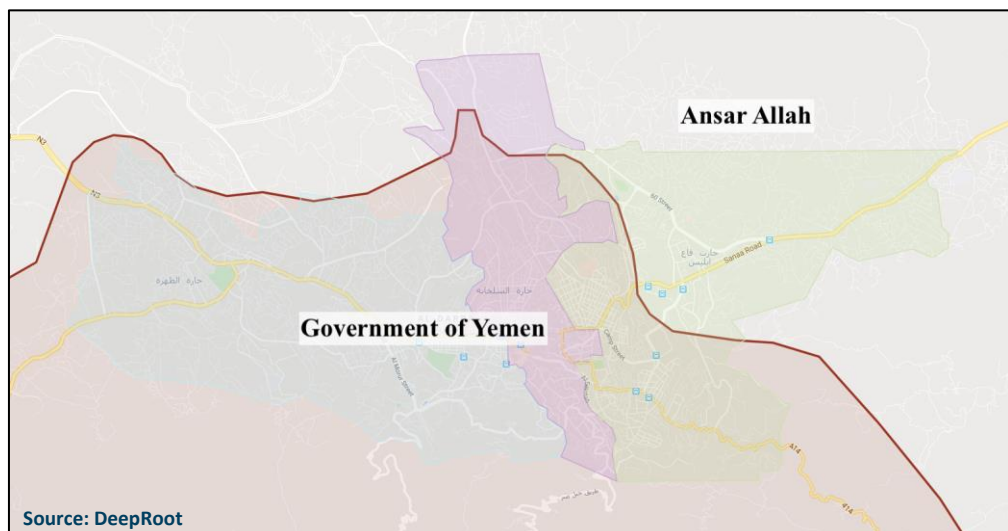
**Box 1: The resistance forms, a siege is enforced***Background*

As with many of the governorates that the Ansar Allah/Saleh alliance took control of early in the conflict, Ansar Allah's expansion into Taiz was facilitated by locally-based brigades loyal to former president Saleh. This process started soon after Ansar Allah captured Sana'a in September 2014 and began exerting influence on the Defense Ministry, including the re-allocation of military equipment in favor of more loyal brigades. Peaceful anti-Ansar Allah/Saleh demonstrations were violently repressed in mid-March 2015, followed shortly by Shawki Hayel Saeed's resignation as governor over the refusal of the Special Security Forces (SSF) to follow his orders. Ansar Allah/Saleh forces spread south through Lahj to Aden, and in the days following the Coalition intervention on March 26 Taiz descended into full-blown conflict. Many brigades, including the 35th Armored and 22nd Mechanized, collapsed as commanders remained loyal to Saleh.

To counter the Ansar Allah/Saleh forces, a government-aligned Popular Resistance Council was formed in April 2015 under the leadership of Hamoud Al-Mekhlafi. This joint military-civilian body worked in parallel with a Military Council made up of senior military officials and led by Sadeq Sarhan. Opposition to the Ansar Allah/Saleh alliance was relatively well organized in Taiz, owing in part to the large number of powerful local actors who sided with the government and their experience opposing the Saleh regime in 2011. Resistance and military forces were able to retake swathes of territory from the Ansar Allah/Saleh alliance early on, and by July 2015 had taken back much of the city. However, momentum slowed and Ansar Allah/Saleh forces re-established their positions on the outskirts of the city. By August 2015, they had imposed a blockade on the city that remains largely in place today.

As shown in Figure 4, government forces control the majority of Taiz city, including all of Al-Mudhaffar district and the vast majority of Al-Qahira district. Salah district is more heavily contested, with Ansar Allah maintaining control over strategic hill-tops and fortified areas overlooking the city. They continued to lay siege to bordering government-controlled areas as of mid-2020.

**Figure 4: Map of control for Taiz city**





All armed actors inside the government-held majority of Taiz city now fall under the authority of the ministries of interior and defense, following years of internal clashes in the city. As a result of the military restructuring process (see Box 2), in 2017 resistance groups were incorporated into formal brigades, all of which fall under the Taiz Axis. The commander of the Axis, Khaled Fadhel, is responsible for overseeing all Taiz-based military units in the governorate. While there are several exceptions to this chain of command elsewhere in the governorate, the brigades inside Taiz city adhere to this hierarchy. They are the 45th and 17th brigades, positioned in western Taiz city, and the 22nd and 170th brigades, which are in the east.

### Box 2: Resistance forces integrate into the Axis

### *Background*

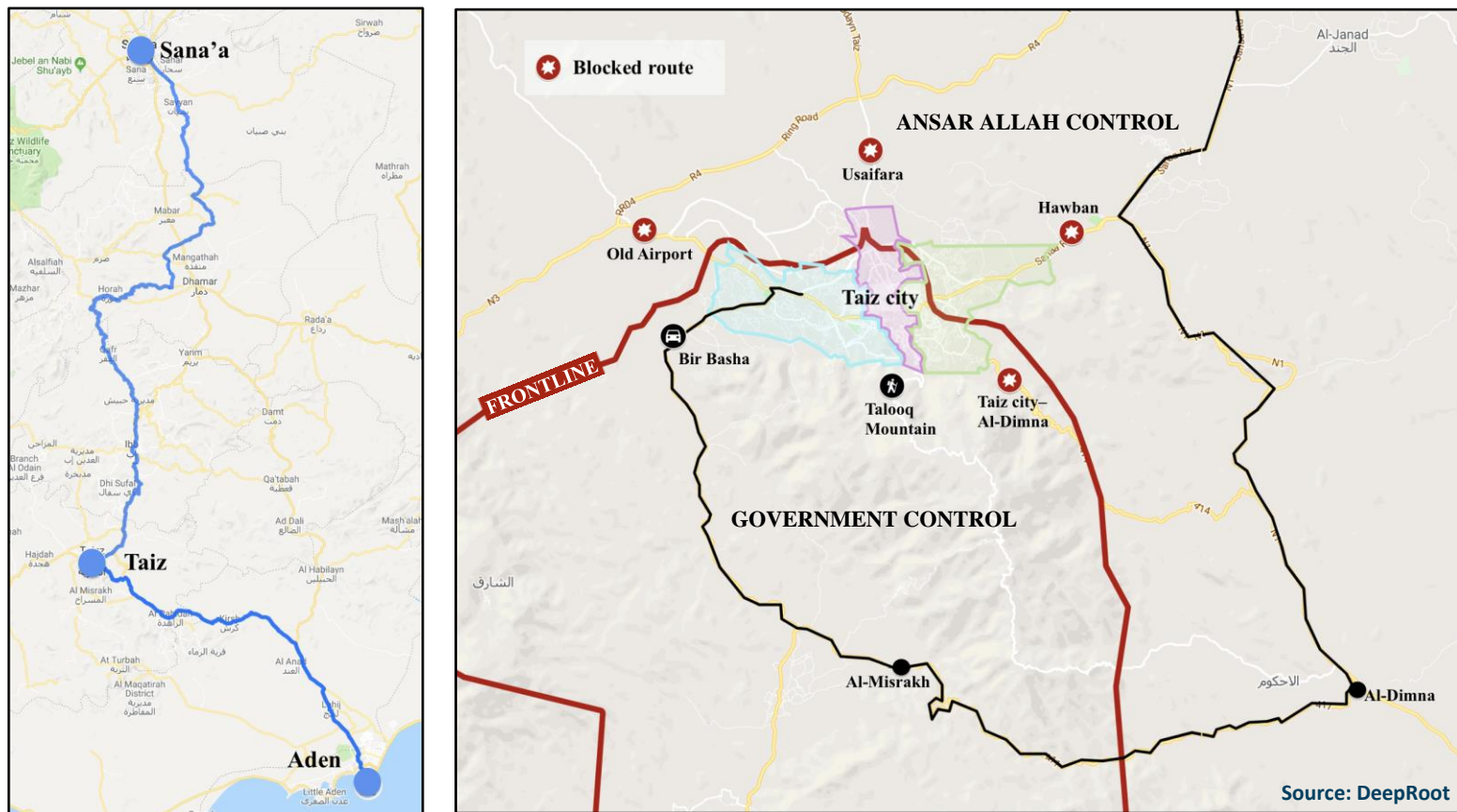
Resistance head Hamoud Al-Mekhlafi left Yemen in March 2016 due in part to pressure from the UAE over his affiliation with Islah. His departure, coupled with the entrenchment of the frontlines against Ansar Allah and the UAE's allocation of funds and equipment to Salafi militants, reduced the cohesion between anti-Ansar Allah/Saleh groups. Infighting in Taiz city was frequent between UAE-supported Salafi Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas and brothers Sadeq and Abdulwahid Sarhan, head of the 22nd Mechanized Brigade and the Political Security Organization (PSO) respectively. Clashes between various other armed groups over control of local markets, for the purpose of illegal tax collection and extortion, were also common.

President Hadi appointed Ali Al-Mammari as governor in January 2016, almost a year after Shawki Hayel's resignation left an administrative vacuum in the governorate. Al-Mammari and Hadi made the decision to integrate all resistance forces into the military, which was put into effect the following year, in January 2017. All resistance groups were placed under the Taiz Axis, the pre-existing body that falls under the Fourth Military Region, which is formally responsible for overseeing the military in Taiz, Aden, Lahj, Al-Dhale'a, and Abyan governorates. Although technically incorporated into the 35th Armored Brigade, the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions remained operationally independent and maintained a strong presence inside Taiz city until ultimately being forced out by local security and Axis forces in 2019.

As of mid-2020, Ansar Allah continues to maintain a partial siege on the city, leaving almost all routes in and out of the city completely blocked. Figure 5 shows the preferred peacetime route linking Taiz with Sana'a and Aden (left), and the main arteries into and out of the city (right).<sup>6</sup> Four of these corridors remain fully blocked and no traffic is able to enter or exit through them. Of these, the Hawban route is the main focus of recent and past proposals, although the other three main blocked routes have all been mentioned in past proposals as well.

<sup>6</sup> The icons in the figure are not intended to show the precise locations of the landmarks but rather the names often used by locals when describing the routes as a whole (i.e. the Old Airport is inside the city limits).



*Figure 5: Restricted road access to and from Taiz city*

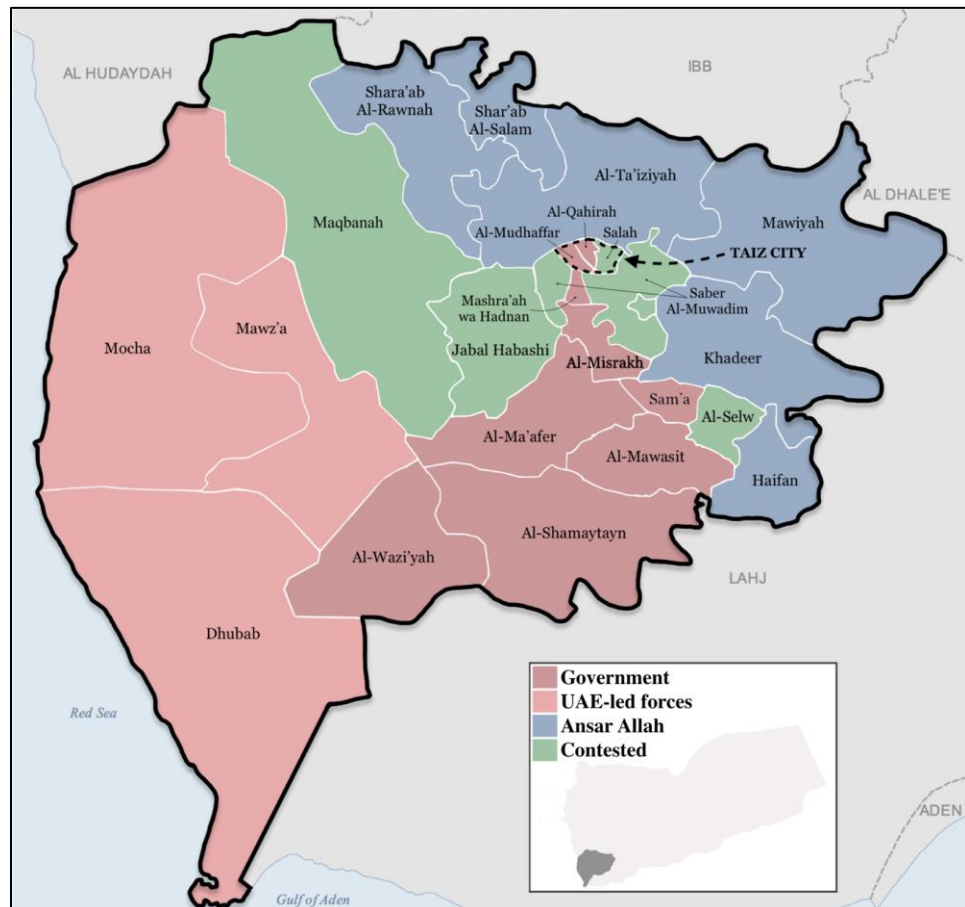
Two entrances are mostly open for travel into and out of the city, but at great inconvenience and oftentimes danger. The black line on the map (right) in Figure 5 shows the current preferred route for civilians travelling between Taiz city and Sana'a. Someone travelling from Sana'a to Taiz city, for example, would travel through Ansar Allah-controlled territory south, past both the Hawban and Taiz city–Al-Dimna entrances, until they reach Al-Dimna. West of that town they reach the last Ansar Allah checkpoint, crossing into territory controlled by the 35th Armored Brigade. From Al-Misrakh, they head north to the Bir Basha entrance, named after the market located near the city outskirts. This route is usually open, but sometimes it closes for hours or up to a couple days, at which point travelers are often forced to wait in Al-Misrakh until it reopens or take the alternative route.

The alternative route, which became accessible early in the conflict when the siege was partially breached, is the hike through Talooq Mountain. Traversing through difficult terrain, this route is not suitable for vehicles or people in poor health. The partial siege maintained on the city has contributed to making Taiz one of the epicenters of the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Yemen. Humanitarian organizations have also faced repeated access restrictions due to disputes between government authorities and tribal and other local groups outside the context of the government-Ansar Allah conflict. This includes road blockages around Turbah, the main town in Al-Shamaytayn district south of Taiz city.



The governorate as a whole remains heavily contested, with Ansar Allah controlling much of the north and east, as shown in Figure 6. The following two sections discuss the broader conflict dynamics.

**Figure 6: Governorate map of control**



Source: Adapted from DeepRoot (2018)

## 2.2 Hawban industrial area: the Ansar Allah-controlled corridor

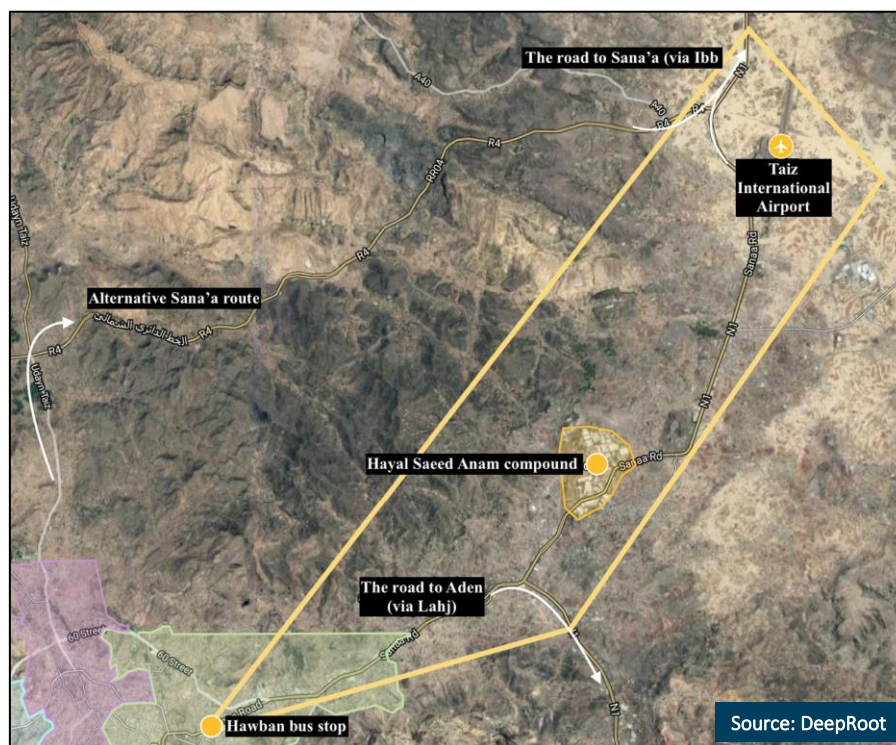
Until Ali Abdullah Saleh was killed by Ansar Allah in December 2017, military and security forces loyal to Saleh played a crucial – and initially dominant – role in the conflict in Taiz. Following his death, Ansar Allah quickly consolidated full control over the security and military apparatuses in areas under their control. Ansar Allah's command structure is heavily centralized, and decisions tend to be dictated out of Abdulmalik Al-Houthi's office to commanders and "supervisors."

As in other areas of the country, Ansar Allah operates along two parallel tracks: Through their formal political alliance with the Sana'a-based faction of the GPC party (GPC-Sana'a), using official state institutions such as the governor's office; and through bodies established and operated solely by Ansar Allah. The latter are dominated by longtime Ansar Allah members, often Hashemites (descendants of the Prophet Mohammed) from Sa'ada governorate.



The most crucial strategic site in Taiz that is under Ansar Allah control is Hawban area, located on the eastern outskirts of Taiz city. Hawban is one of the most important areas in all of Yemen for trade and manufacturing.<sup>7</sup> It serves as the main distribution center of various goods for Taiz and neighboring Ibb, two of the country's most populated governorates. The national headquarters of Hayel Saeed Anam (HSA), the largest private sector conglomerate in Yemen, is in Hawban, where it has a large compound containing several factories.

Figure 7 shows several of the locations that are encompassed by Hawban area (orange overlay). The exact boundaries of Hawban are unclear, but it stretches from inside Taiz city's Salah district (*green*), moving outside the city proper to the Hayel Saeed Anam Group compound and Taiz International Airport, closed since the beginning of the conflict.



**Figure 7: Map of Hawban area**

Beyond providing a lucrative source of revenue for Ansar Allah, Hawban area is also strategically valuable given it encompasses the main highway network linking Taiz to Sana'a and Aden. For this reason, Hawban has been the primary focus of de-escalation efforts. Opening the route through Hawban to civilian travel would provide greater relief than any other route, as it is not only the shortest route but also a wide road in relatively good condition. This is especially relevant not only for civilian vehicles transporting wounded and ill patients in and out of the city, but also for commercial trucks carrying goods into the city, as the existing secondary roads have proven difficult – and even deadly – for larger vehicles to maneuver.

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the war, Taiz governorate accounted for 12 percent of all employment across the agriculture, industry, and services sectors, second only to Ibb. Taiz's share of the industry sector, however, was far ahead at 19 percent, followed by Ibb at 13 percent. International Labour Organization (ILO) and Government of Yemen, "Yemen Labour Force Survey 2013-14," 2015. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_419016.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_419016.pdf).



### 2.3 The Islah Party and the primacy of internal rivalries

The strong presence in Taiz of Yemen's main Islamist party, Islah, has been a major factor in shaping the approach various national and regional actors have taken toward the conflict in the governorate. Generally speaking, containing the party and preventing its empowerment has been a priority for several key actors.

Islah currently has two main centers of activity: Marib and Taiz. Its national headquarters is in Marib city, where it has strong influence throughout the governorate, extending into neighboring areas like Al-Jawf governorate. However, in more tribally-oriented regions of the country Islah takes a hybrid approach that acknowledges tribal identity as coming before party line, meaning many tribal sheikhs are pragmatically affiliated to the party but not necessarily loyal to it. This is in contrast to Taiz, where tribal structures are significantly weaker and the party is seen as exercising its "pure" political ideology. National leadership figures from the GPC, Socialist, and Nasserist parties interviewed for this research all expressed the view that Taiz is the core of Islah's ideological support base.

For national and regional actors, the significance of Islah's empowerment in Taiz lies in the outsized influence the governorate has on national politics. Dating back centuries, Taiz has served as an important economic and cultural center, and as a melting pot for different political and ideological movements.<sup>8</sup> It has repeatedly served as a launching point for generations of revolutionaries, who throughout history have grown in Taiz their movements, including against the Imamate in the north and British imperialism in the south. More recently, Taiz was a major driving force in the pro-democracy protests of 2011 that succeeded in removing Ali Abdullah Saleh from the presidency, and was described as "the heart of Yemen's revolution."<sup>9</sup>

Today, Taiz remains a microcosm of Yemen's diversity of ideologies, and is the most politically active city in Yemen in terms of the number of parties continuing to operate. After most of Taiz city was retaken by government-aligned forces and stabilized, a loose political alliance was formed between representatives of the political party branches in Taiz city. This included the main parties – GPC, Islah, Nasserist, and Socialist – and many other smaller parties, like the Ba'athist party and Salafi Al-Rashad Union. Following the April 2019 establishment of the National Alliance of Yemeni Political Parties, a national-level body that meets periodically in Riyadh,<sup>10</sup> later in 2019 the party branches in Taiz reformed their alliance to function as a governorate branch of this national political alliance. This is the only governorate where such a political alliance is operating with relative freedom.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. <https://www.deeproot.consulting/single-post/2018/08/16/Caught-in-the-Middle-A-Conflict-Mapping-of-Taiz-Governorate>.

<sup>9</sup> Gordan, Sasha. "Taiz: The Heart of Yemen's Revolution." Critical Threats, 2012. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/taiz-the-heart-of-yemens-revolution>.

<sup>10</sup> According to state media, the alliance includes the following parties: GPC, Islah, Socialist, Nasserist, Peaceful Southern Movement, Justice and Construction Party, Al-Rashad Union, Renaissance Movement for Change, National Solidarity Party, Popular Forces Union, the Yemeni Grouping Party, Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, Peace and Development Party, Republican Party, Peoples' Democratic Party, Liberation Front, Republican Union. <https://www.sabanew.net/viewstory/48282>.



Within the government camp, the overarching cleavage in Taiz is between individuals and forces loyal to or perceived to be controlled by the Islah Party, and those seeking to prevent the party's empowerment, the latter of which have been loosely aligned in part through shared UAE support.

Islah is viewed as playing a dominant role in Taiz city and seeking to consolidate control over state institutions through its strength in the local authority and influence on the military. As mentioned, all brigades in Taiz city follow the Taiz Axis led by Khaled Fadhel, who is not a party member but, as with the individual brigade commanders, is seen as subordinate to the party and Vice President Ali Mohsen. The most controversial party member in Taiz is Abdu Farhan, better known by the name Salem. As organizational head of the party's local branch, he organizes party members and coordinates with military and security bodies in Taiz. However, opponents of Islah allege he exercises control over fighters loyal to the party, acting as a de-facto field commander in the city.

At the same time, Taiz remains politically diverse. Its three war-time governors have not been Islah affiliated, and multiple deputy governors from different political parties remain actively engaged. Moreover, the 35th Armored Brigade, which oversees large swaths of territory south of the city, has served as a bulwark – both physically and ideologically – against Islah's expansion in government-held territory. The death in December 2019 of its influential commander, Adnan Al-Hammadi, has left a great deal of uncertainty over the brigade's future (see Box 3).

### **Box 3: Adnan Al-Hammadi, between Abu Al-Abbas and the Axis**

### *Background*

Adnan Al-Hammadi served as commander of the 35th Armored Brigade from April 2015 until his death on December 2, 2019. He was widely seen as a national icon for his role in liberating large swathes of Taiz, and for remaining a non-partisan military leader throughout the internal feuds that plagued the governorate. He rebuilt the 35th Brigade to include troops from all backgrounds, including career soldiers, Nasserist party loyalists, Socialists, Salafis, and even for a period Yemen's first all-female military battalion.

During the integration process his brigade was formally put under the Taiz Axis, and several resistance forces were formally placed under Al-Hammadi, including the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions. However, Al-Hammadi retained a degree of independence and he reported directly to the national leadership. At the same time, the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions remained loyal to Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas, even after he was designated a supporter of AQAP and the Islamic State.

Al-Hammadi was critical of what he saw as Islah and Ali Mohsen's increasing domination over decision-making in Taiz, although he refrained from engaging in infighting and maintained amicable relations with all groups. In addition to the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions, other opponents of Islah, like forces led by Tareq Saleh, move with relative freedom in territory controlled by the 35th Brigade.<sup>11</sup> Given that Al-Hammadi was a powerful moderating figure in Taiz, his death has left much of southern Taiz susceptible to further hostilities between Islah-aligned and anti-Islah groups, particularly as many locals accuse Islah and Ali Mohsen of orchestrating Al-Hammadi's assassination.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the dynamics between Islah and other armed actors, particularly in southern Taiz, see: Sultan, Maged & Al-Sharjabi, Ahmed. "Ripple Effects from Yemen's South Threaten Stability in Taiz." Yemen Polling Center. September 9, 2019. <https://www.yemenpolling.org/ripple-effects-from-yemens-south-threaten-stability-in-taiz/>.



### 2.3.1 The regional dimension

When Coalition-backed resistance and Yemeni military forces pushed the Ansar Allah/Saleh alliance out of Aden and surrounding areas in July 2015, support for fighters in Taiz did not follow. Since then, as the lead Coalition member state active in Taiz, the UAE has been seen by many Yemeni analysts as having pursued two apparent objectives: containing the Islah Party, and advancing militarily against Ansar Allah along the coast into Hodeidah. Saudi Arabia has not exerted a clear strategy or significant funding to actors in Taiz apart from the formal military structure.

The UAE then channeled considerable funds and weapons for distribution in Taiz through Salafi Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas.<sup>12</sup> It was reported that the UAE also provided a lesser amount of funds to Nasserist party head Abdullah Noaman, in part because there are a sizable number of Nasserists in Al-Hammadi's 35th Armored Brigade. More broadly, this served to promote a degree of partnership between diverse actors opposed to Islah's expansion. At the end of 2016 the UAE began leading a military operation against Ansar Allah to push up the west coast to Hodeidah port city (see Box 4).

#### Box 4: Operation Golden Spear

#### *Background*

Operation Golden Spear was launched at the end of 2016 with the goal of retaking coastal Taiz and ultimately pushing into Hodeidah governorate to retake its port city. The operation succeeded in capturing the two coastal districts of Taiz, Dhubab and Al-Mocha, from Ansar Allah in early 2017, and later large parts of the inland districts of Al-Mawza and Maqbanah as well. When the Ansar Allah/Saleh alliance collapsed in December 2017, anti-Ansar Allah forces entered Hodeidah for the first time. In April 2018, Saleh's nephew Tareq emerged in western Taiz with strong UAE backing, leading a group called the Yemeni National Resistance Forces.

Since the beginning of the operation, the fighting along the west coast has been led on the ground by the Al-Amalika (Giants) Brigades, a collection of three military brigades each led by Salafis from Lahj governorate. Officially, the operation is under the authority of the government and led by the commander of the Fourth Military Region (under which the Taiz Axis falls), but in reality Haitham Qasem Taher, a former defense minister in the 1990s, is understood to have acted as de-facto leader of the Yemeni forces, with the UAE overseeing the offensive. Whereas Tareq Saleh operates entirely through the UAE and does not recognize the legitimacy of the Yemeni government, the Giants Brigades recognize Hadi's legitimacy.

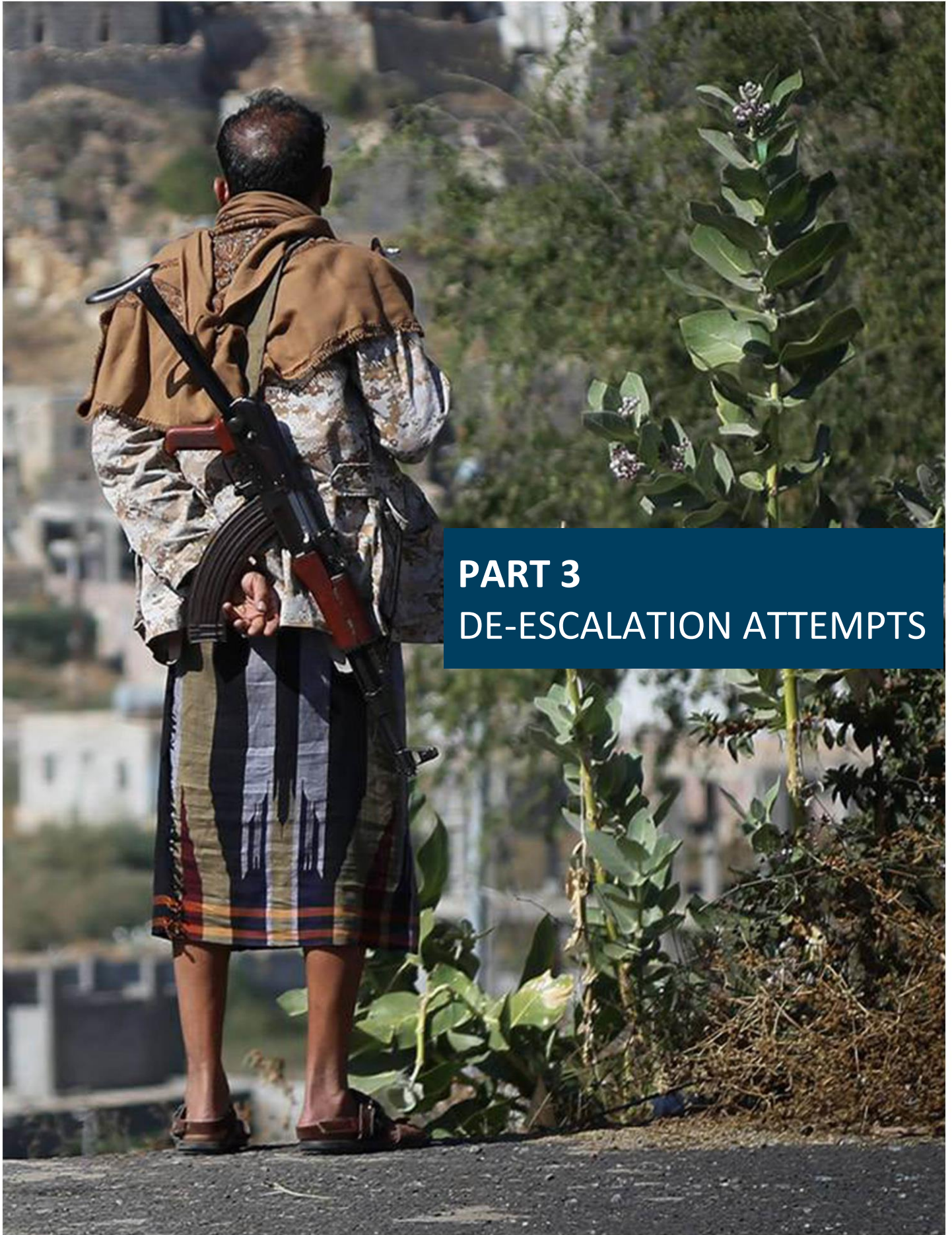
<sup>12</sup> According to 35th Brigade commander Al-Hammadi, who distributed the official military salaries of the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions' members, even after Abu Al-Abbas was designated a terrorist by the US and GCC member states he continued receiving far more funds and weapons from the UAE than even the entire 35th Brigade, which is the largest brigade in Taiz (Author interview with Al-Hammadi in 2018).



Through supporting a loose coalition of southern Salafis, Sudanese troops (until late 2019), and Saleh loyalists under Tareq, the former president's nephew, the UAE has maintained operational control over the coastal districts of Taiz. The local authority and military in Taiz offered support for the offensive, but no brigades based in the governorate were included in this front. The UAE likely excluded military leaders from Taiz in order to keep the front firmly under their control and avoid potential interference from the Islah Party, given the party's large base in the governorate and its strategy of spreading its members widely throughout the military and resistance.

The pattern of UAE support in Taiz has been in line with its apparent strategy across southern Yemen, which is to bolster militant Salafis who are opposed to political Islam, southern separatists who are not aligned with the Yemeni government, and loyalists of the Saleh family/GPC. This has the effect of containing the Islah Party and exerting operational control over experienced fighters outside of the Yemeni government chain of command.





## **PART 3**

### **DE-ESCALATION ATTEMPTS**



This part examines in detail nine distinct de-escalation efforts launched since 2015. Each of these resulted in the issue of de-escalation being raised to the level of decision-makers in both parties, and in all but one written proposals were produced. Countless other initiatives aimed at reducing the severity of the conflict in Taiz, including advocacy campaigns and other complementary forms of peacebuilding, have formed an integral part of the local peace process in Taiz but are outside the scope of this paper.<sup>13</sup>

The findings of this research indicate there are three local actors in the government camp with decision-making power when it comes to negotiations over Taiz city: 1– The governor (Nabil Shamsan since January 2019, preceded by Ameen Mahmoud and Ali Al-Ma’amari); 2– The Taiz Axis head (Khaled Fadhl since 2016, except for most of 2019 when Sameer Al-Sabry briefly replaced him); and 3– The Islah Party (represented formally in Taiz by Abdulhafedh Al-Faqeeh). The late Adnan Al-Hammadi, commander of the 35th Armored Brigade, was until December 2019 considered another decision maker, as was Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas prior to the departure of his Battalions from the city. The most prominent official representing the government camp in various efforts has been Abdulkareem Shaiban (pictured).



**Abdulkareem Shaiban** is a long-time member of Islah, and a party representative in parliament. Shaiban has chaired several negotiation committees, including the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), the governor’s committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah, and the Local Disengagement Council (LDC) of Taiz, making him the leading local government official engaged in mediation efforts with Ansar Allah since 2016. He has frequently partnered with local Socialist party member Ali Al-Ajar throughout these mediation efforts.

In the Ansar Allah camp, there are no comparable locally-based decision makers, but rather a number of key officials active in Hawban who work closely with the national leadership. These include Saleem Al-Mughallis, who was appointed governor in February 2020, and who has represented the group in several rounds of UN-sponsored talks; and Ahmed Al-Musawa, an Ansar Allah-appointed deputy governor. Both are members of Ansar Allah’s political office. In mediation efforts Ansar Allah continues to be represented by a combination of Ansar Allah and GPC-Sana’a officials, with their lead delegate since 2018 being GPC member Ameen Al-Bahr (pictured).



**Ameen Al-Bahr** served as the Supreme Political Council (SPC) appointed governor of Taiz between October 2018 and February 2020. He is a member of the Sana’a-based faction of the GPC, and he is from Mawiya district of Taiz, where he is a local sheikh. Formerly, he served as security chief of Aden. Al-Bahr has minimal influence in Taiz given that most state institutions are in the government-controlled city and decision-making power rests with Ansar Allah. Nevertheless, he has been directly engaged in several de-escalation efforts he served as the public face of Ansar Allah’s involvement in them.

<sup>13</sup> For example, one initiative that has been ongoing for several years is “Taiz Women for Life,” comprised of eight women in Taiz who have organized advocacy campaigns, held meetings with senior officials involved in de-escalation efforts, and brought wider attention to repercussions of the siege on civilians. <https://www.facebook.com/TaizWomen/>.



### 3.1 Mediation by the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation

September 2019 – present

In late 2019, the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation launched an effort to de-escalate the conflict in Taiz, with particular focus on opening routes in and out of the city. The Civil Alliance is a broad coalition formed in 2015 and comprised of various unions, including labour, women's, and chamber of commerce unions, in addition to civil society leaders and other prominent public figures. Its members are primarily based in Sana'a, and it is regarded as an independent body that provides a platform for Yemenis to discuss and find their own solutions to conflict-related issues. Through its small secretariat, the Civil Alliance has worked on mediating several issues, including reconstructing electricity towers in frontline areas like the Marib-Sana'a line, opening road access, and distributing pension payments to retirees.

The Civil Alliance began speaking regularly to officials on both sides about opening road access in Taiz in September 2019. At the end of October, Dr. Hamoud Al-Oudi, chairman of the Civil Alliance, and Abdulrahman Al-Olfi, secretary-general, travelled from Sana'a to Ansar Allah-controlled Hawban and then government-controlled Taiz city.

*Figure 8: Shaiban (center left) and Al-Oudi (center right) point as they discuss road access in Taiz city, Oct. 2019.*



Inside Taiz city, on October 31 the Civil Alliance representatives met with Abdulkareem Shaiban, head of the government delegation for the UN-led effort on Taiz emanating from the Statement of Understanding on Taiz reached in Sweden (see Section 3.2). They visited multiple locations where the main routes are blocked, and discussed the procedures for lifting the concrete barriers and de-militarizing the routes.<sup>14</sup>

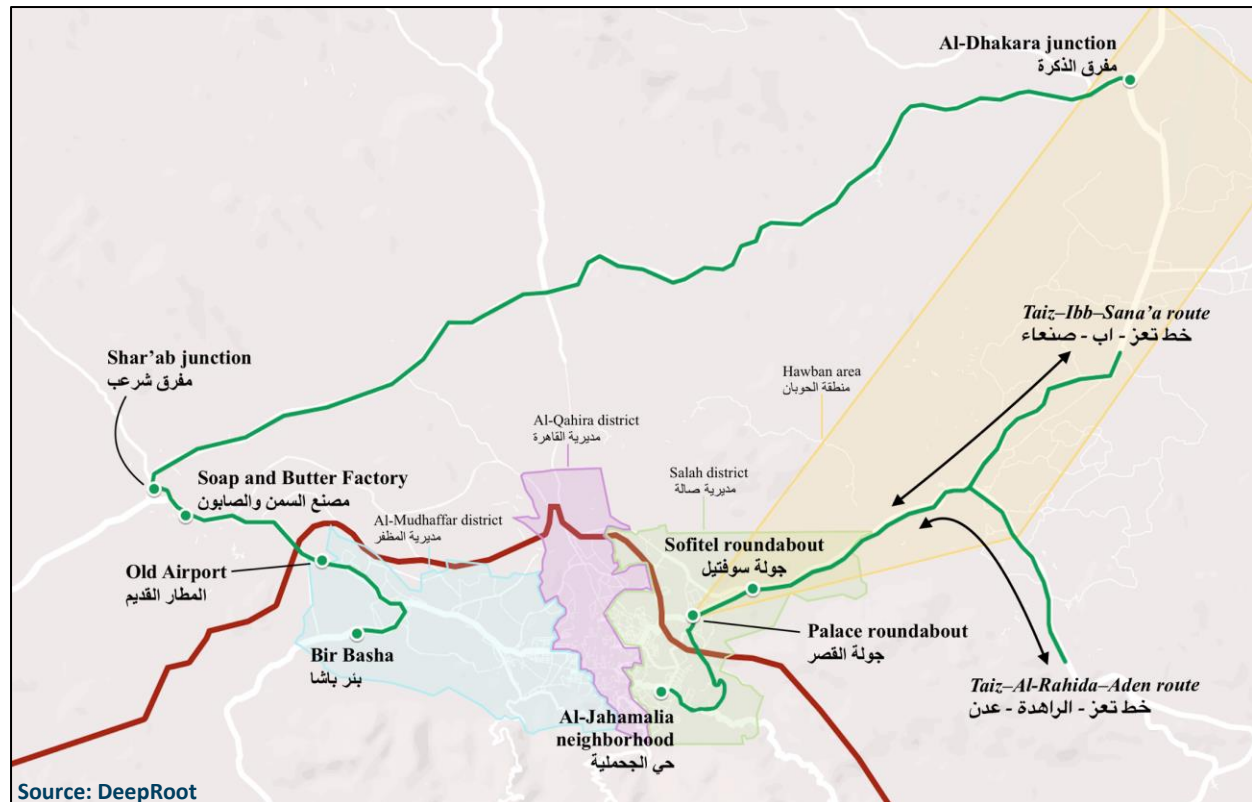
Following the meeting, the Civil Alliance leaders voiced optimism that the eastern (Hawban) and western (Old Airport) routes would be opened on the Prophet Mohammed's birthday a week later, in early November. This date passed without progress, but individual meetings with representatives of each warring party continued and an undated proposal was put forth (Appendix 1). Into the beginning of 2020, the Civil Alliance continued to seek both warring parties' signature on the draft agreement.

<sup>14</sup> According to a post that Civil Alliance chairman Dr. Hamoud Al-Oudi published on his personal Facebook page, December 8, 2019. [shorturl.at/iwzHU](https://shorturl.at/iwzHU).



The proposal stipulates the opening of the following routes (see Figure 9): The northern route, from Al-Dhakara junction through to Bir Basha, is for transporting goods via trucks and medium-sized vehicles, while the route that goes through Hawban to Al-Jahamalia neighborhood is for regular passenger vehicles.

*Figure 9: Locations identified in proposal by Civil Alliance, late 2019*

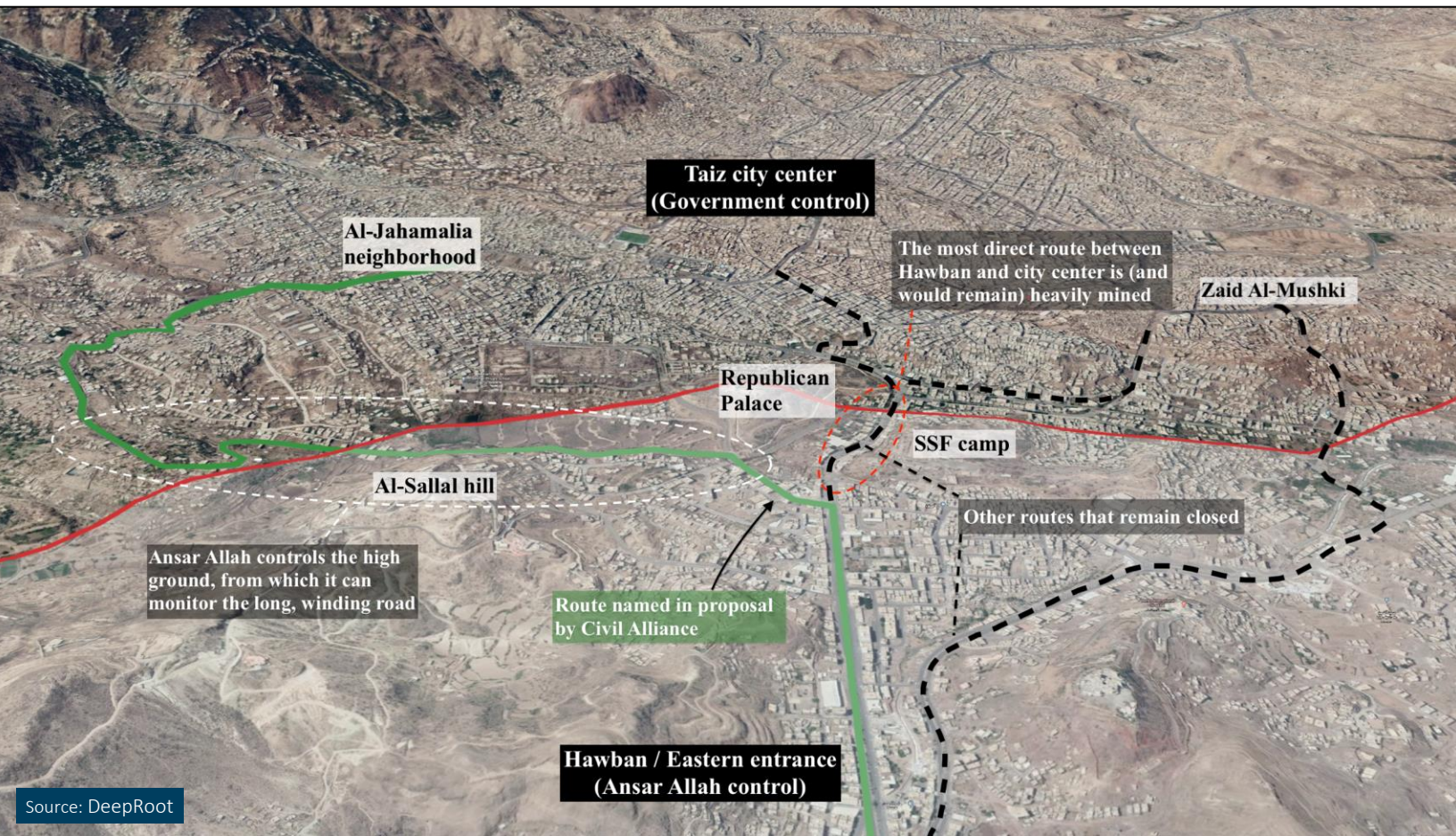


According to one of the members of the Civil Alliance who worked directly on the proposal and met officials in both Sana'a and Taiz city, the specific route through Hawban named in the proposal was put forth by Ansar Allah, and the government side agreed for it to be written into the draft agreement. This route has not been specifically identified in any past proposals. From the perspective of one of the mediators, this road would satisfy Ansar Allah's concerns of the government potentially launching a military advance along the opened route in the future.

Figure 10 shows the main reasons for this. Namely, Ansar Allah's control of Al-Sallal hill, which is more accurately described as the edge of a mountain range. It provides a vantage point over most of the proposed route, and moreover the portion of road it overlooks is relatively narrow, long, and winding. At the same time, the most direct route into the city center, which has been targeted in many past de-escalation efforts, would remain closed at the crucial choke-point between the Republican Palace and the headquarters of the Special Security Forces (SSF). This vital stretch of road is heavily mined, and could remain heavily militarized even if the route proposed in the Civil Alliance proposal is opened.



*Figure 10: Strategic sights relevant to the Civil Alliance proposal*



This proposal, and the Civil Alliance’s mediation effort as a whole, builds on the progress made in several of the other major efforts examined throughout the remainder of Part 3. The warring parties’ three-person delegations who are named in the proposal are the same as those officially nominated for the Taiz portion of the Stockholm Agreement (Section 3.2). This has effectively localized that process while keeping it legitimate in the eyes of the government and Ansar Allah, and avoided fully replacing or challenging the Stockholm Agreement, which technically remains ongoing.

Moreover, the proposal explicitly references the April 2016 Hawban Agreement (3.6), and of the individuals named in the proposal, one or more have been directly involved in each of: The Social Committee for Peace (3.7); the April 2016 Dhehran Al-Janoub and Hawban agreements (3.6); the local committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah (3.4); and the Ansar Allah-appointed governor’s proposal (3.3).

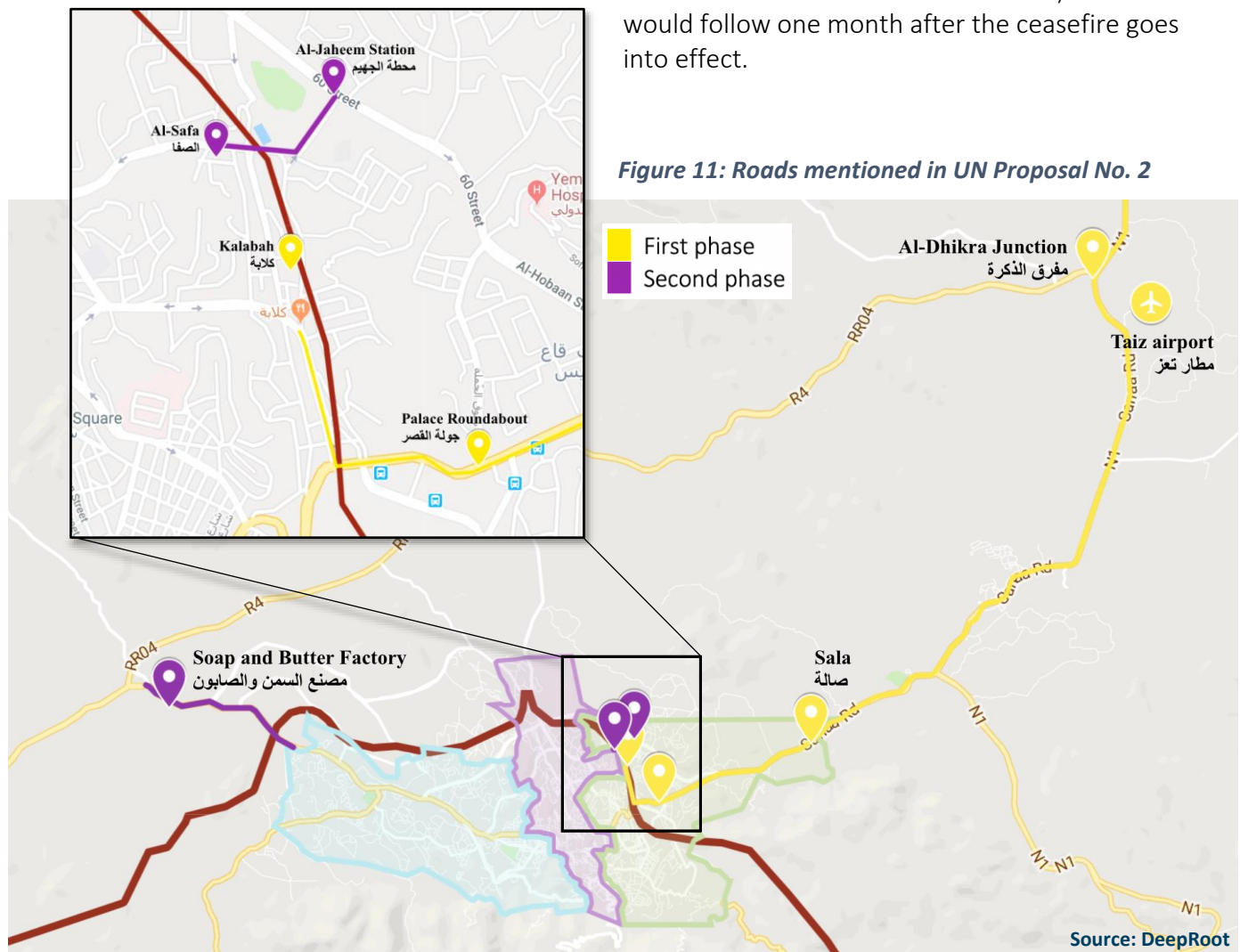


### 3.2 Sweden Consultations & the Statement of Understanding on Taiz

December 2018 – Present (inactive)

The office of the Special Envoy introduced a total of four proposals on Taiz during the Sweden Consultations held in December 2018. Based on discussions with individuals familiar with the proceedings, the first proposal called firstly for a reduction of hostilities based on the April 10 Dhehran Al-Janoub agreement, and secondly for the opening of the main corridors of Taiz city. This proposal was broad and designed to be modified based on input from the delegations. A second proposal was then introduced, incorporating among other things Ansar Allah's demand for a comprehensive governorate-wide ceasefire. This was rejected by the government delegation.

A second proposal (Appendix 2) introduced by the UN, which was shared by representatives of both warring parties, stipulates as the first step a complete ceasefire and the halt to any escalations at all fronts in the governorate. It subsequently proposes the opening of the roads identified in Figure 11, according to a phased approach. Phase 1 would be launched two weeks after the ceasefire goes into effect, and it includes the opening of Taiz airport (currently under Ansar Allah control in Hawban area). Phase 2 would follow one month after the ceasefire goes into effect.





A third, more basic proposal was then introduced (Appendix 3), which is similar to the final document that was ultimately signed. Whereas the rejected third proposal called for the formation of a joint de-escalation committee that would determine the geographic scope of de-escalation and how to open corridors, the final agreement only stipulates the formation of a joint committee. The Statement of Understanding on Taiz<sup>15</sup> was announced at the close of the Sweden Consultations as one of three components of the Stockholm Agreement.<sup>16</sup> It reads as follows:

The two parties agreed on the following:

- 1- Form a joint committee including representative from the Civil Society and with the participation of the United Nations.
- 2- The two parties shall designate their representatives in the joint committee, and the names shall be delivered to the United Nations no later than one week after the conclusion date of Sweden consultations.
- 3- The United Nations shall set the date and location of the first meeting of the joint committee.
- 4- The joint committee shall determine its working mechanism and the ToRs of its members.
- 5- The joint committee submit a report on its work to the upcoming consultations

The Statement of Understanding on Taiz did not include any provisions on reducing the fighting, and the warring parties only agreed to nominate representatives to form a joint committee, which became known as the Joint Coordination Committee (Taiz JCC). Ansar Allah put forth three names to the UN, which were then matched by the government (see table below). Notably, no civil society actors were included in the JCC, despite this being explicitly stipulated in the Statement of Understanding.

| Taiz Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) members |   |
|---|---|
| Name  | Description   |
| <b>Ansar Allah Delegation</b>                   |   |
| Ameen Al-Bahr                                   | Ansar Allah-appointed governor of Taiz (until Feb. 2020)                    |
| Ahmed Ameen Al-Musawa                           | General manager of Ansar Allah's coordinating body for humanitarian affairs |
| Brigadier General Ahmed Yahia Shrweed           | Ansar Allah commander   |
| <b>Government Delegation</b>                    |   |
| Abdulkareem Shaiban                             | Islahi parliamentarian and former head of the LDC                           |
| Ali Mohammed Al-Ajar                            | Socialist Party figure  |
| Mohammed Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Mahmoudi           | Politically independent, former security chief of Taiz                      |

Initial plans to convene meetings in Taiz city and Hawban between the two delegations and UN officials, which were envisioned to result in the formation of military and civilian sub-committees, fell through in January 2019. The UN has held ongoing consultations with the individual delegations, but as of the beginning of 2020 they had yet to meet jointly. While this effort technically remains ongoing, in practice the initiative by the Civil Alliance effectively succeeded it.

<sup>15</sup> Statement of Understanding on Taiz: [https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/taiz\\_agreement.pdf](https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/taiz_agreement.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Stockholm Agreement: [https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/stockholm\\_agreement\\_.pdf](https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/stockholm_agreement_.pdf).



### 3.3 Proposal by the Ansar Allah-appointed governor

December 2018

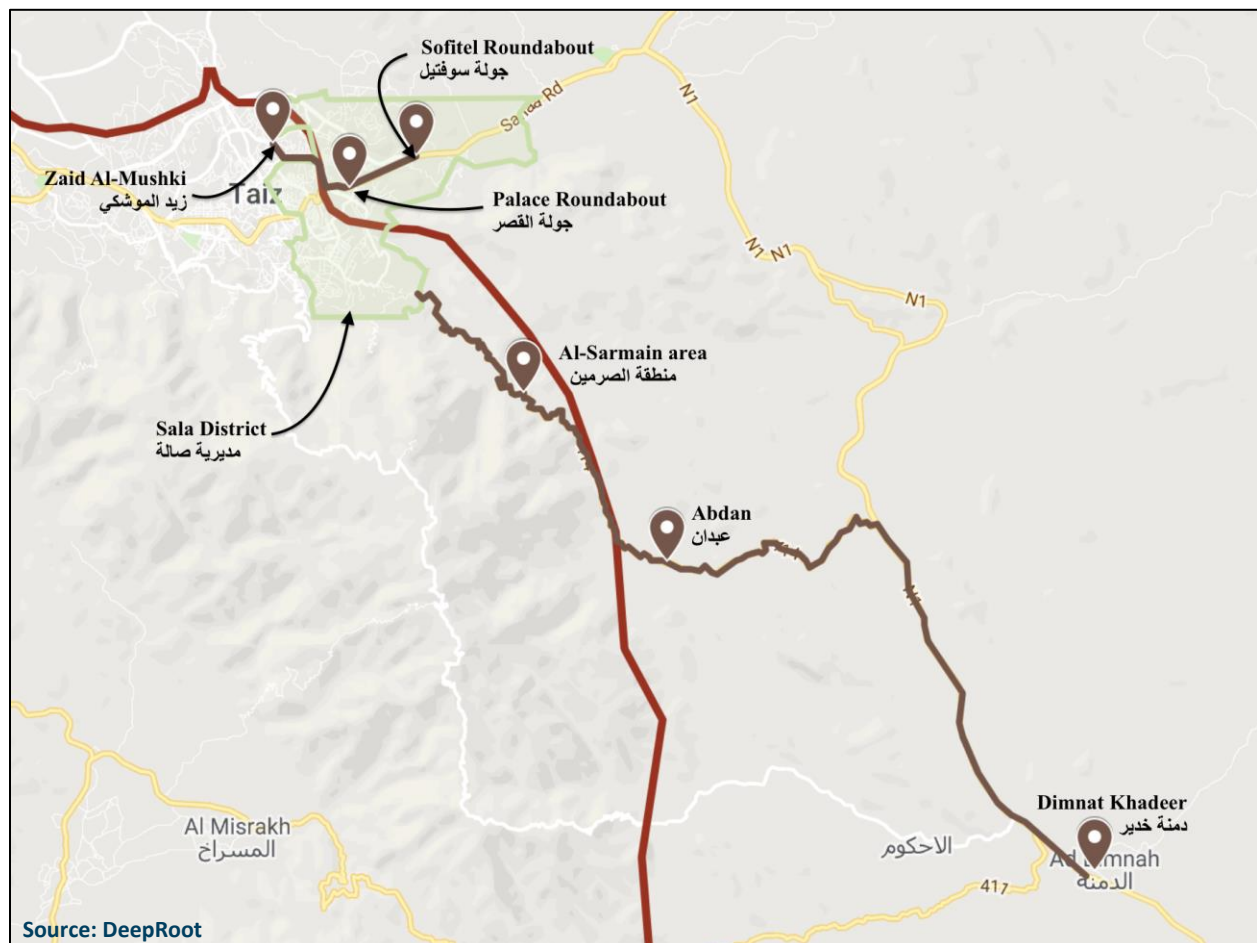
The Ansar Allah-appointed governor of Taiz, GPC member Ameen Al-Bahr, sent a proposal (Appendix 4) to his counterpart's local negotiating committee (see section 2.4), according to a member of that committee who provided DeepRoot with a copy. The proposal was sent in December, only days before the start of the Sweden Consultations, and was never directly negotiated over.

In the proposal, Ansar Allah proposes the opening of the following two routes (*paraphrased*):

- The route from Sofitel Roundabout to the Palace Roundabout through to Zaid Al-Mushki, which is to be open for all civilians and non-military goods to enter and exit the city.
- A second opening for entering and exiting Taiz city via Sala district through Al-Sarmain area to Abdan, arriving at Dimnat Khadeer area.

In subsequent steps, the agreement lays out a local prisoner exchange and notes the two parties should work toward opening up all the roads leading into and out of Taiz city.

**Figure 12: Proposal by the Ansar Allah-appointed governor, December 2018**





### 3.4 Local committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah

August 2018 – December 2018

At the beginning of August 2018 Governor Ameen Mahmoud formed a committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah for opening road access. According to the governor's decree (Appendix 5), the committee was tasked with opening passageways and easing the movement of civilians and the flow of humanitarian supplies to Taiz governorate, not necessarily to seek a cessation of hostilities or a wider peace deal. Everything concerning road access, including ceasefire attempts that would open up the road network, were supposed to go through this committee, which coordinated with the governor.

The committee, originally comprised of eight individuals, is chaired by Abdulkareem Shaiban, who represented the government delegation in the LDC during the April 2016 discussions in Dhahran Al-Janoub and Hawban. In addition to including the top local officials involved in road access, prisoner exchange, and military affairs, the committee also included numerous civil society actors and over 30 percent representation of women.

After convening several internal meetings in Taiz, and following up on previous efforts that had been stalled, in October 2018 the governor's committee sent Ansar Allah a new proposal (Appendix 6) for de-escalation. The committee proposed the opening of several routes, to be followed by an exchange of prisoners. The portion of the proposal that discusses road access reads as follows, color-coded for the map in Figure 13:

1. Opening the route reaching Taiz city through the **Al-Rahida–Aden** route and **Taiz–Ibb–Sana'a** from the **Hawban route**.<sup>17</sup>
2. Exit from Taiz city or the entrance to it from the **Hawban route** which passes through the **Hotel Roundabout (Sofitel)** going through to the [Republican] **Palace Roundabout** to implement through **Aqabat Muneef** to **Hawdh Al-Ashraf**.

Or from the **Hotel Roundabout (Sofitel)** to the **Palace Roundabout** to **Al-Hayat Hospital** to **Zaid Al-Mushki**.

Or from the **Roundabout (Sofitel)** across **Al-Jaheem Station** to **Al-Safa Mosque**<sup>18</sup> to **Zaid Al-Mushki**.

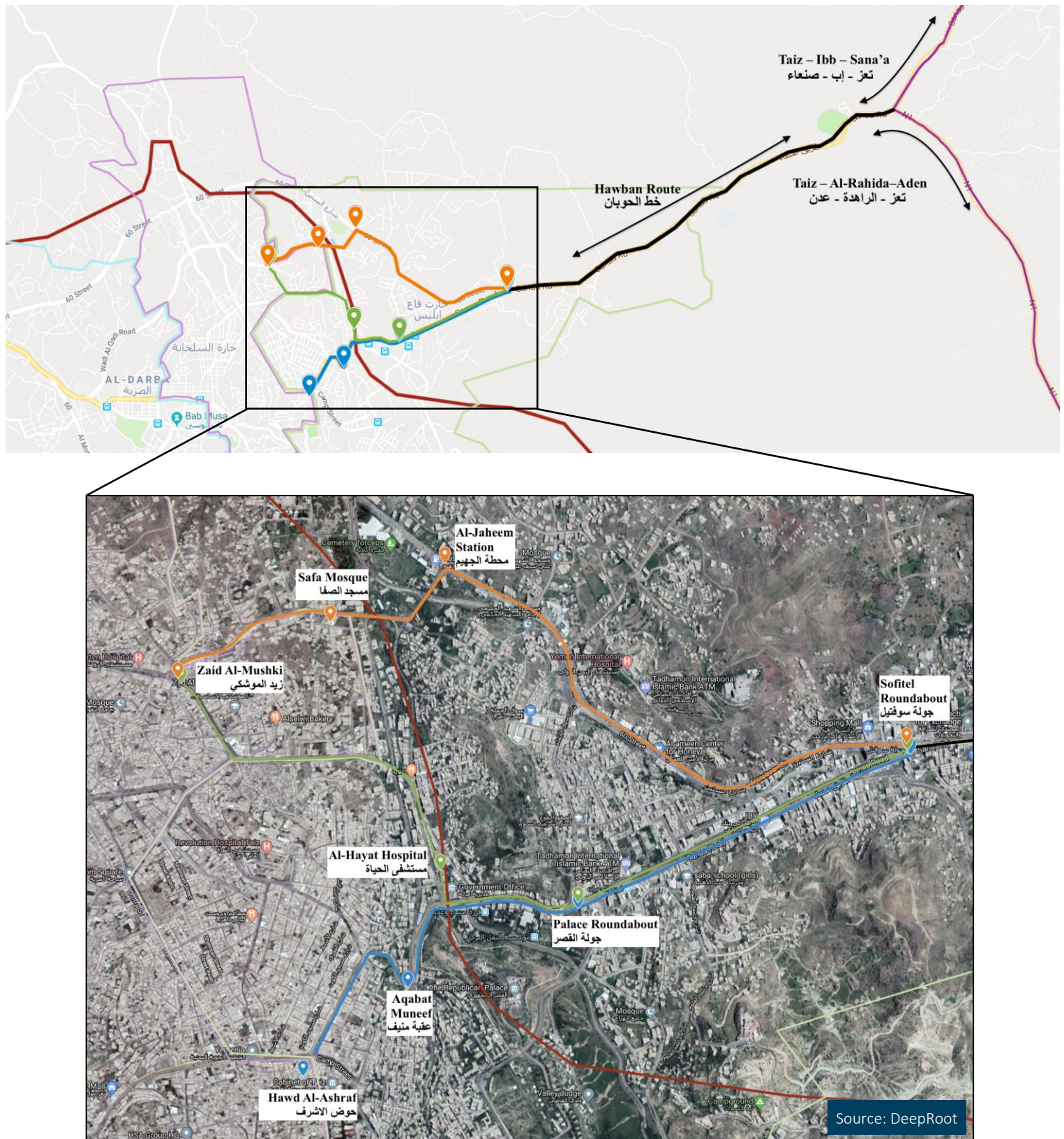
Ansar Allah never explicitly responded to the proposal, according to a member of the committee who helped draft it, although Ameen Al-Bahr's own proposal sent to the committee less than two months later was a response of sorts. As a result of the negotiations over Taiz between the national delegations in the December 2018 Sweden Consultations, namely the formation of the Taiz JCC, this local committee was sidelined and did not convene again.

<sup>17</sup> For the purpose of this mapping the "Hawban route" is displayed as only the chokepoint entrance/exit through Hawban area into Sala district, because each road branching from it has more specific identifiers.

<sup>18</sup> The agreement refers only to "Safa" (صفا). A member of the governor's committee confirmed to DeepRoot that the plotted location of Safa Mosque is correct. There is another mosque with the same name located near Sofitel Roundabout.



Figure 13: October 2018 proposal by the committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah

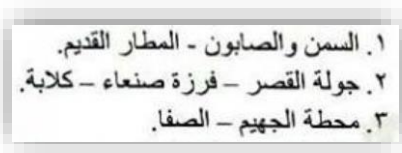




### 3.5 Letter to UN OCHA

March 2018

In a letter (Appendix 7) dated March 11, 2018, Governor Ameen Mahmoud and Taiz Axis head Khaled Fadhl wrote to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stating they have no objection to opening three corridors for humanitarian access and the movement of civilians. They identified the following locations, which are numbered and mapped in Figure 14 on the next page:



1. Butter and Soap – The Old Airport
2. Palace roundabout – Sana’a (bus) stop – Kalabah area
3. Al-Jaheem Station – Al-Safa

According to a source in Taiz in direct communication with the governor over the issue of humanitarian road access, it was UN OCHA that first approached the local authorities with this idea, and the above letter is in response to their suggestion. Ansar Allah never responded to the proposal.

This was not the first time UN OCHA has pursued efforts to open road access to and from the city. In 2016, OCHA representative George Khoury oversaw the signing of a document (Appendix 8) dated June 2, 2016, which states the warring parties’ intention to work on a ceasefire and ease the flow of humanitarian aid. The following month, in July 2016 then UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick called for a ceasefire specifically in Taiz.<sup>19</sup> He told UN News at the time, “We’ve been working for some time with the groups (warring parties) down here to try and come up with a broad humanitarian access agreement for the whole of Taiz and the whole of Ibb governorate.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Reuters. “U.N. calls for humanitarian truce in Yemen’s Taiz province,” July 27, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-taiz-idUSKCN107195>.

<sup>20</sup> UN News. “‘Tentative agreement’ towards ‘humanitarian pause’ in fight for Taiz,” July 27, 2016. <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2016/07/615512>.







### 3.6 LDC in Dhahran Al-Janoub and Hawban

April 2016, continual relevance

On December 15, 2015, during the OSESGY-led peace talks in Switzerland, the De-escalation and Coordination Committee (DCC) was established in order to oversee a ceasefire and deter further clashes.<sup>21</sup> The DCC was created as a joint national-level body, based in Dhahran Al-Janoub, Saudi Arabia under UN sponsorship. On April 10, 2016, governorate-level Local Disengagement Councils (LDCs) were established to work under and report to the DCC. The LDCs, comprised of local-level officials, were formed in six governorates: Al-Jawf, Shabwah, Al-Dhalea, Al-Baydha, Marib, and Taiz.<sup>22</sup>

Each of the six LDCs signed their own agreement (Appendix 9) that same day on April 10, which all contained the same wording and were authenticated by the same Saudi representative. This was a general agreement that was used to define the overall framework between the two warring parties, and it addressed three main areas: releasing detainees, enacting a ceasefire, and opening roads. Three committees were formed: a military committee to address the ceasefire; a special committee to address the prisoner exchange file; and a civil committee to focus on the issue of road access.

The representatives in the Taiz LDC then signed a follow-up agreement in Hawban area of Taiz the following week, on April 16. The Hawban agreement (Appendix 10) builds on the April 10 agreement and details the implementation process. The parties agreed to a ceasefire that same day at 3pm; for all roads to be opened, including the main Hawban entrance used for transit to and from Aden and Sana'a, as well as the western road to Hodeidah; freedom of movement for all civilian goods and people; and the exchange of prisoners as well as stopping any further arrests or detentions.

The agreement was never implemented, likely because it was intertwined with a nationwide ceasefire attempt that was immediately violated. However, the April 10 and 16 agreements were seen as legitimate by a wide array of stakeholders and repeatedly positioned as a foundation for subsequent de-escalation attempts. For example, in July 2016 the government-aligned Resistance Council of Taiz released a press statement (Appendix 11) stating that any ceasefire and/or road access effort in the future should use the Dhahran Al-Janoub/Hawban agreement as its foundation (stating as well that the Resistance did everything in its power to implement the ceasefire but that Ansar Allah broke their word).

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Security Council, Meeting No. 7672, April 15, 2016.  
[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_pv\\_7672.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_7672.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> The government representatives in the Taiz LDC included, among others, Islah parliamentarian Abdulkareem Shaiban and Socialist party member Ali Al-Ajar. Their counterparts included prominent local GPC figure Abdulwali Al-Jabari and Ansar Allah members Mohammed Abdullah Nayef and Zakariya Mutta.



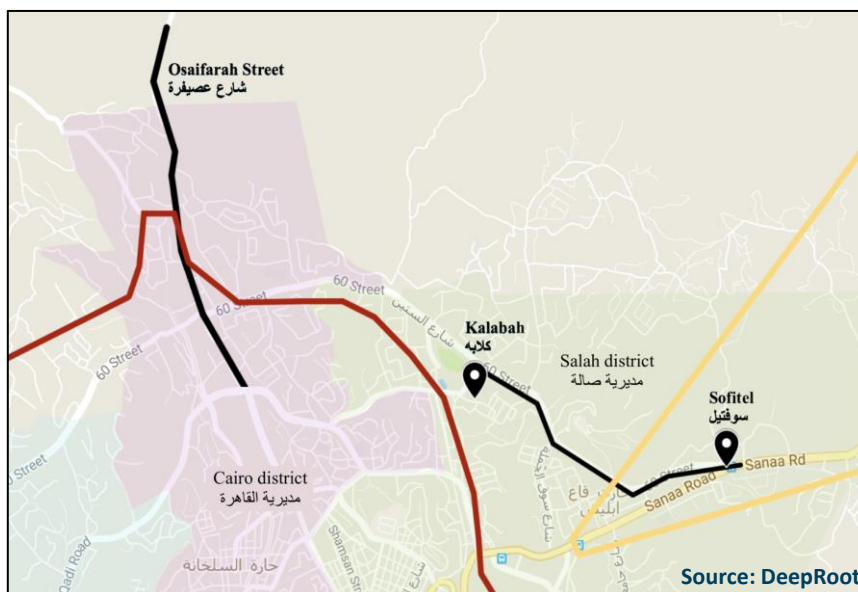
### 3.7 The Social Committee for Peace 2016 to mid-2017

Often referred to as simply the Social Committee (اللجنة المجتمعية), this was a group of primarily national-level figures from Taiz intent on advancing de-escalation efforts locally. They focused their efforts on negotiating between the Ansar Allah/Saleh and government camps. Although the Committee's efforts did not achieve concrete results, it was perceived as relatively neutral and inclusive, and managed to create and rally support for several realistic proposals based on consultations with informed locals.

The Social Committee included prominent figures from various political parties as well as many independent locals, but was largely driven by senior GPC members from Taiz with varying national-level allegiances. The Committee was chaired by Sultan Al-Barakani, one of the assistant secretary-generals of the GPC and head of its parliamentary bloc, and also included other senior GPC officials like presidential advisor Rashad Al-Aleemi and former Taiz governor Hamoud Al-Sufi. Senior Islah, Nasserist, and Socialist leaders were also included (for a complete list of members see Appendix 12).

In one of the Social Committee's proposals (Appendix 13), the Committee proposed that two specific routes on the perimeter of Taiz city be opened. It stated:

- 1.1. Agreement that the western corridor "Osaifarah" is to be a humanitarian corridor and entry port for civilians, foodstuff and goods, and humanitarian assistance; and
- 1.2. Agreement that the "Sofitel Kalabah" entrance is to be a humanitarian corridor and exit port for civilians, foodstuff, goods, and humanitarian aid.



**Figure 15: Locations  
named in Social Committee  
for Peace proposal**



The Social Committee has also attempted to open up road access and enact a ceasefire on a larger scale. For example, another proposal (Appendix 14) called for a ceasefire to go into effect on August 2, 2016 on all fronts in Taiz, and outlined steps for all roads to be opened to and from the governorate, and between and within all districts.

The Social Committee started its efforts in 2016 and stopped around mid-2017. It did not officially disband, but rather it has been inactive since then. This could perhaps be linked to the breakdown of Ansar Allah-Saleh relations over the summer of 2017, but the reasons are not clear. Sheikh Sultan Al-Barakani led this effort from abroad, where he remained aligned to Saleh's GPC but opposed to Ansar Allah.

Although the Committee's proposals were not implemented, its members were in communication with all sides and continued to be actively contributing to other efforts. For example, a May 9, 2017 letter (Appendix 15) from Resistance Council head Hamoud Al-Mekhlafi addressed to Al-Barakani and the Social Committee for Peace says that the resistance will implement a ceasefire according to what was decided in the Dhehran Al-Janoub/Hawban agreement (see Section 3.6), and states "the Social Committee should establish an explicit and clear position in such case that the other party does not agree [to implement]."

In another letter (Appendix 16) dated July 2017, from Sultan Al-Barakani to the Resistance Council, the Social Committee head said Ansar Allah agreed to open the Al-Zayla'i route, which is located outside the city, to the west. However, this was never implemented. According to a source working in the office of then Governor Ameen Mahmoud, the proposal was in discussion during the administration of his predecessor, Governor Ali Al-Mammari, but nothing came of it and it is not being discussed by the current administration.

### **3.8 Mehdi Al-Mashat and the Islah Party**

#### **2015 – 2016**

Prior to becoming president of the Supreme Political Council (SPC), while serving as director of Abdulmalik Al-Houthi's office Mehdi Al-Mashat sent Ansar Allah mediators on multiple occasions in 2015 and 2016 to meet the resistance in Taiz. According to a senior Islah Party official within the resistance in Taiz, on these occasions Ansar Allah said they wanted to talk to the Islah Party directly. However, Islah representatives refused to meet with Ansar Allah, telling them to meet with the local authority instead. This research did not uncover evidence of any documentation from this effort.

Ansar Allah views the Islah Party as the dominant force in Taiz and may have been seeking a genuine cessation or reduction in hostilities. At the same time, they may have been seeking to feed public perceptions of Islah as dominating the resistance and local authority in Taiz. Beyond encouraging internal opposition against the party, Ansar Allah may have sought to present their military campaign in Taiz as one against Islah or the Muslim Brotherhood, rather than against the people of Taiz.



Islah likely declined to negotiate directly with Ansar Allah because the party has sought to blend itself in with the resistance and local authority rather than position itself as a parallel body carrying out government functions. As such, any direct talks between the party and Ansar Allah would undermine the local authority and reduce its negotiating power. Moreover, the party likely recognized that it would be easy for local opponents to accuse it of cutting a deal with Ansar Allah over control of the governorate, and that meeting Ansar Allah would further sour the party's relationship with the Coalition. Despite this, many critics of Islah allege the party has reached an unwritten agreement – or arrived at a mutual understanding – with Ansar Allah to reduce the tempo of the fighting at frontlines where the Taiz Axis is present.

### **3.9 Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi** 2015 – 2016

Ali Al-Salahi is a sheikh from Taiz who attempted to mediate between Ansar Allah and the resistance in the early stage of the local conflict. He started his mediation efforts in 2015 and continued into 2016, before joining the Social Committee for Peace led by Sultan Al-Barakani (see section 2.3). He was in communication with both the Saleh and Hadi-aligned factions of the GPC in Taiz, the Islah Party, Ansar Allah, and others. He published a statement (Appendix 17) online entitled “An initiative to end the fighting in Taiz, July 30, 2015,” in which he outlines his ideas for successful mediation between the warring parties.

Saleh Al-Sammad, who at the time was the Ansar Allah Presidential Office head, wrote a letter (Appendix 18) welcoming Al-Salahi's efforts to prevent further bloodshed in Taiz. Al-Sammad said Ansar Allah agreed to his initial points, with the condition that the “Aggression” must immediately halt its attacks. Despite reaching a wide audience, his efforts failed to gain much momentum and his attempt at mediation did not lead to any agreement. The simplest explanation for this is that this early in the conflict the frontlines had not yet become entrenched and neither side was ready to compromise.

Nevertheless, Al-Salahi remained a notable mediation figure, well into 2016. Following the April 16, 2016 agreement in Hawban area (see Section 2.4), the heads of the Hadi-aligned Resistance and Military Councils of Taiz, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Mekhlafi and Sadeq Sarhan respectively, wrote a letter (Appendix 19) addressed to Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi, welcoming his efforts and saying they should be in line with what was outlined in the Hawban agreement.

### **3.10 Prisoner exchange agreements**

Several of the above efforts have included proposals with stipulations for the exchange of prisoners and detainees, but they did not progress to the stage of being implemented. Instead, efforts to secure the release of prisoners and detainees in Taiz have largely taken place separate from those aimed at opening road access and reducing hostilities, and been conducted by a different set of officials and mediators. Independent local mediators, facilitating mostly small-scale exchanges between the warring parties, have achieved moderate success in these efforts.



According to one of the main independent mediators involved in facilitating exchanges between the warring parties in the governorate, during the four years between 2016 and the end of 2019, an estimated 850 prisoners and detainees<sup>23</sup> have been exchanged or released<sup>24</sup> in Taiz. This breaks down as follows:

- Ansar Allah has exchanged around 350 government-affiliated prisoners and detainees, most of whom were detainees (non-combatants). Ansar Allah released an additional 200 individuals outside of explicit exchanges, for a total of 550 individuals.
- Government and government-aligned forces exchanged around 250 Ansar Allah-affiliated prisoners and detainees, most of whom were prisoners (combatants). An additional 50 or so Ansar Allah-affiliated individuals were released outside of explicit exchanges, for a total of 300 individuals.

The negotiation process facilitated by local independent mediators in Taiz varies substantially. This can range from a relatively orderly process, whereby mediators deal directly with the official representatives of the warring parties to negotiate over lists of prisoners and detainees, resulting in a formal signed agreement; to dealing more informally with commanders or other powerful figures and arriving at a verbal agreement through negotiation over the phone.

Ansar Allah has a more centralized structure with regards to the prisoner and detainee file. Abdulqader Al-Murtadha, the head of the National Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, is the main Ansar Allah official responsible for the prisoner and detainee file whether at a national level or in specific governorates, including Taiz. On the government side, local officials, rather than the official national committee, are who mediators typically approach. Throughout the conflict, Islah Party member Dhia Al-Haq Al-Ahdal has been the key official handling the prisoner file in Taiz.

When progress has been lacking on the more formal side, independent mediators have frequently and directly approached other senior officials in Taiz to push forward negotiations. On the government side, exchanges with Ansar Allah have been mediated not only via the Taiz Axis and local authority, but also separately with the 35th Armored Brigade, the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions, and Tareq Saleh's forces.

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<sup>23</sup> Using the terminology employed by independent mediators, the phrasing "prisoners and detainees" is used collectively to refer to all individuals being held by a warring party due to their real or perceived affiliation to an opposing party. The term "prisoner" refers to a combatant captured from an active area of hostilities, or from outside of active hostilities but they are known to be a combatant. A "detainee" is a non-combatant akin to a political prisoner. Government officials accuse Ansar Allah of imprisoning civilians for the purpose of negotiating the release of its fighters.

<sup>24</sup> Whereas an "exchange" entails handing over an individual to the opposing party in return for one or more other specified individuals, there have also been instances of individuals being "released" by the warring parties without it being contingent upon a corresponding release of individuals held by the opposing party.





## PART 4 LESSONS LEARNED



This section compares and analyzes the de-escalation efforts examined in Part 2, and draws on insights from workshop discussions and interviews conducted with mediators, civil society leaders, and decision makers in Taiz. This section is not intended to define the single best approach to conflict resolution in the governorate, but rather to equip stakeholders with the knowledge to make informed decisions based on shifting developments on the ground. The lessons learned relate to the warring parties' strategic interests and concerns; the scopes of de-escalation proposals; the approaches to mediation; and fostering an environment more conducive to peace.

#### 4.1 Strategic interests and concerns surrounding de-escalation

The humanitarian needs of civilians have been placed at the centre of de-escalation attempts in Taiz, and for good reason. Yet there are wider reaching political and military implications for the warring parties – whether real or perceived – that must be considered in any de-escalation efforts.

**Ansar Allah have a strong economic interest in maintaining control over Hawban** and taxing its industrial base. Ansar Allah may be concerned that ceasing military operations along a major route – especially through Hawban – would leave them more susceptible to an advance by government forces. The ongoing effort by the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation addresses this concern by proposing the opening of a secondary route that Ansar Allah have a wide vantage point over, significantly reducing the threat of a military advance because the main routes across the frontline could remain mined and blockaded.

**Ansar Allah have faced relatively less pressure to reach an agreement on Taiz**, both militarily and in terms of popular domestic pressure. The national government and Coalition have not lent sufficient support – or priority – for local forces to launch a concerted effort to push Ansar Allah fully out of Taiz city, and local government-aligned actors have been preoccupied jockeying for control within government-controlled territory. As a result, the status quo has largely favoured Ansar Allah.

**Decision making power is heavily centralized with Ansar Allah leadership** in Sana'a (and Sa'ada), but locals working for or aligned to Ansar Allah have different fears and incentives than Ansar Allah as a whole, albeit with overlap. This would include the Ansar Allah-appointed governor, a Taiz native, and various mid-level tribal leaders in Hawban. Government control of Hawban, for example, could threaten their financial interests, reduce their importance to Ansar Allah, and leave them vulnerable to revenge or prosecution from the government.

**The Yemeni government continues to rally around the intention of retaking Taiz, by force if necessary.** Government forces have repeatedly voiced the intention of a large-scale military escalation to retake the governorate in its entirety, and during the 2018 Sweden Consultations sought to negotiate for a full withdrawal of Ansar Allah forces from Taiz. In more moderate de-escalation efforts, the government may be concerned about signing a formal agreement that would “legitimize” the zones of control and preclude future military advancement against Ansar Allah – or at least make it more diplomatically costly.



**The government has stabilized its authority inside the city, with Islah being the dominant player.** After resistance forces were integrated into the Taiz Axis and the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions were forced out of the city, the governor's office and Taiz Axis, both understood to be influenced by the Islah Party, maintain full authority over the liberated portion of the city and thus have the ability to negotiate over all entry points around and inside it. This is not the case with the governorate as a whole, as UAE-supported actors like Tareq Saleh and Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas do not follow the government chain of command.

**The Islah Party's strategy in Taiz is the subject of considerable debate:** party officials are vocally supportive of opening road access, with Islahi parliamentarian Abdulkareem Shaiban being the main local mediator throughout the war. Opponents of the party, however, accuse Islah of maintaining a façade of low-intensity conflict against Ansar Allah along the frontline, while focusing on consolidating control in government-held territory.

The reality may be somewhere in the middle: the front against Ansar Allah has slowed considerably, with Ansar Allah launching artillery into the city at a markedly reduced rate.<sup>25</sup> Without strong Coalition backing, Islah loyalists and affiliates would take heavy casualties in an operation to fully liberate the city, given Ansar Allah maintain the high ground and have heavily mined frontline areas. This would leave Islah vulnerable in other areas where they are competing for influence with political parties as well as UAE-backed armed groups. At the same time, Islah may worry that striking a legitimate deal with Ansar Allah, even if via the governor's office, would further allegations the party is secretly coordinating with Ansar Allah.

**The Coalition has pursued a policy of containment to prevent Islah's empowerment,** and has not prioritized military advancement nor de-escalation between government and Ansar Allah forces. Following the liberation of Aden in July 2015, southern resistance forces were prevented from continuing on to Taiz, and Emirati funds and military equipment have been channeled in large part to armed groups acting independent of the Axis, Islah, and Vice President Ali Mohsen. Since the latter half of 2019 a shift in the Coalition has been underway, toward Saudi Arabia gradually replacing the UAE's dominant role in many areas of the country, which may be the case in Taiz. Regardless, de-escalation efforts require the Coalition's buy-in and cannot be seen to disproportionately advantage Islah.

**Both warring parties continue to place broader strategic significance on Taiz,** beyond the more immediate interests and concerns above. The governorate continues to be considered as a main link between north and south, as a seat of political ideology, as a cultural capital, and for its outsized influence on trade and business countrywide.

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<sup>25</sup> Street fighting and indiscriminate shelling have made Taiz city the urban area with the highest civilian death toll, although Ansar Allah's shelling of non-military targets has decreased in frequency since 2017. Source: ACLED. "Yemen's urban battlegrounds: violence and politics in Sana'a, Aden, Tai'zz, and Hodeidah." December 2018. <https://acleddata.com/2018/12/07/yemens-urban-battlegrounds-violence-and-politics-in-sanaa-aden-taizz-and-hodeidah/>.



## 4.2 Scope of de-escalation efforts

De-escalation proposals have ranged in scope from targeting a single humanitarian corridor (requiring only a ceasefire at one specific point on the frontline) to negotiations over a governorate-wide ceasefire and withdrawal of Ansar Allah forces. When shaping the direction of future efforts, what are the factors to take into consideration with regards to their scope, including the specific roads to target?

**There is a low probability that a governorate-wide ceasefire will be met with success,** short of a major shift in the larger conflict. This is not only due to the warring parties' interests, but also because the Yemeni government does not have full control over all forces in the governorate that are nominally aligned against Ansar Allah, namely the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions and Tareq Saleh's forces. Moreover, as the government continues to call for Ansar Allah to withdrawal from Hodeidah as part of the Stockholm Agreement, it may view a ceasefire without withdrawal as undermining those negotiations.

### A lesson from Sweden

During the 2018 Sweden Consultations, the first proposal on Taiz introduced by OSESGY placed de-escalation as the initial step in a broader agreement that also included road access. The second proposal expanded on this, and incorporating Ansar Allah's demands it called for a comprehensive governorate-wide ceasefire as the first step. This drew criticism from a member of the governor's local committee over what was seen as OSESGY's positioning of the Taiz file as a "political" file rather than a humanitarian one. The member said the special envoy should have stuck to the humanitarian elements as in the local proposals, and if not, then the negotiations over Taiz should have been presented as comprehensive as with Hodeidah, rather than humanitarian in nature.

Overall, government delegates involved in the negotiations on Taiz were critical of what they perceived as OSESGY exerting pressure and actively shaping the outcomes of the Hodeidah Agreement, while serving only as a self-declared "facilitator" for the Taiz negotiations. On the other hand, in the months preceding the Sweden Consultations, proposals sent between the government and Ansar Allah-appointed governors of Taiz were similar in several respects: they were both more limited in scope in terms of calling for the opening of specific roads into/out of Taiz city, followed by the exchange of prisoners by either side. The reduction of hostilities is positioned as a later step to work toward, rather than one that would precede the road openings.

**Targeting the opening of 1-2 specific routes into Taiz city,** limited in scope as much as possible to addressing humanitarian concerns, is a more realistic path to progress. Local mediators and delegates involved in past and ongoing de-escalation efforts interviewed for this research were largely in favor of this approach. Opening any particular route would require an effective ceasefire along it and in many cases greatly reduce the hostilities on portions of other blocked roads. In this sense, opening a single road can be part of a snowball strategy to advance an effective ceasefire in key areas around the city without the warring parties having to name it as such. Introducing stipulations with more overt political and military implications for the warring parties would render it more exposed to the kinds of objections that have plagued other high-profile negotiations.



**At least seven distinct routes crossing the frontline into Taiz city have been named in past proposals.** When it comes to selecting the specific entrance(s) to Taiz city, there are several aspects to consider, which can be broken down into two major considerations: Firstly, the strategic importance of Hawban area as a whole relative to the three other main blocked entry points to the city. The Hawban entrance of the city is the most critical for road access, but also the most sensitive due to its military and economic importance. In consultations with key local actors, it was agreed that focusing on the issue of road access from Hawban to Taiz city is the right starting point, while at the same time alternative routes into and out of the city that are of less strategical importance to the warring parties should be kept in consideration as back-up options.

Secondly, while the Hawban route bottlenecks into a single highway on the outskirts of the city and is thus generally referred to as one entry point, in reality it branches into several roads inside the Ansar Allah-controlled eastern portion of the city. At least four distinct roads within the Hawban entrance have been specified in various proposals. One specific route through Hawban has been identified in proposals introduced by the government, Ansar Allah, and OSESGY: It goes from Sofitel Roundabout to the Palace Roundabout, continuing on to Al-Hamd Hospital through to Zaid Al-Mushki. This route is highly sensitive because it is overlooked by the Ansar Allah-controlled headquarters of the Special Security Forces.<sup>26</sup> Perched atop a hill and centrally located, from the perspective of sources in Taiz city this is a key position from which Ansar Allah fighters fire sniper rounds across enemy lines, restricting movement.

### **4.3 Approaches to mediation in Taiz**

Taking into consideration each party's interests in Taiz and the pros and cons of different scopes of proposals, what lessons have been learned in terms of the different approaches to convening and mediating de-escalation efforts?

**Local activists have consistently been the primary drivers of peacemaking efforts in Taiz,** but have not been sufficiently incorporated into national and international processes. There is a pattern of civil society leaders being sidelined as de-escalation efforts gain steam and move up the chain of importance to senior decision makers, only to resuscitate the process after it stalls. In addition to direct involvement in the proposal development and negotiation process, community leaders can play a crucial role in driving grassroots pressure on the warring parties.

This is particularly important given the difficulty in enforcing monitoring and accountability mechanisms on an agreement in Taiz, even more so after the warring parties became bogged down in the UNSC-backed Hodeidah Agreement. However, civil society leaders have not been sufficiently informed of many de-escalation efforts. For example, the UN-sponsored agreements of April 2016, signed by the LDC representatives, were the most technically sophisticated attempt to date but no pressure was placed on either party, in part because community leaders had little to no information on what the LDC was or how it was connected to the DCC in Dhehran Al-Janoub.

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<sup>26</sup> The Government continues using the pre-war term "Special" while Ansar Allah reverted to the Saleh-era term, "Central" Security Forces.



### Another lesson from Sweden

The Statement of Understanding on Taiz reached in Sweden stipulates the formation of a joint committee “including representative from the Civil Society.” However, the national delegations left without instructions concerning the composition or mechanism of the joint committee. Immediately after the talks, the governor of Taiz drafted a list of representatives that included civil society leaders, including women, and sent it to President Hadi for his approval. At the same time, Ansar Allah sent their list to OSESGY, which only contained three names. At this point, the government was asked to only submit three names.

In the end, no civil society actors were included, nor were any women. This effort was therefore shaped (albeit unintentionally) to allow for the sidelining of the community leaders who had been active in the governor’s committee since August, and effectively made the inclusion of civil society leaders and women in the process dependent on the warring parties reaching a more advanced stage where sub-committees would be formed.

**National-level Yemeni figures respected by both sides can play an important role in mediating between the warring parties.** Several individuals and networks have been able to negotiate directly with both sides and put forth realistic proposals. These include Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi and individuals in the Social Committee for Peace and the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation. In this respect there are many additional figures not mentioned in Part 3 who maintain good standing with both sides and are important advocates for de-escalation in Taiz. For example, former governor Shawki Ahmed Hayel Saeed has been a consistent voice in calling for peace in Taiz, and through personal visits to Hawban and with leadership figures on both sides he, along with other private sector actors, can help future efforts gain traction.

**The Islah Party is the main local player on the government side,** but any negotiations with Ansar Allah must be between the government and Ansar Allah. Islah has influence over the greatest number of fighters in Taiz, as well as detainees, and Ansar Allah considers the party’s buy-in to be necessary for the implementation of any agreement. However, direct talks between the Islah Party and Ansar Allah would be controversial and raise tension between the party and its local political adversaries in the government camp, and therefore Islah will only engage under the umbrella of the local authority.

**The April 2016 agreements in Dhahran Al-Janoub and Hawban continue to provide a groundwork for future negotiations.** These agreements, reached by the Taiz LDC,<sup>27</sup> were subsequently referenced by the Taiz Resistance Council as forming the basis upon which any future proposals should be based, and have been explicitly referenced in proposals introduced by the governor’s local committee, OSESGY, and the Civil Alliance.

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<sup>27</sup> The proposals refer to the April 10 agreement, when the representatives signed a document in Dhehran Al-Janoub, and/or the follow-up signing of a document in Hawban area of Taiz on April 16, though all are understood to refer to the same effort as a whole.



#### 4.4 Fostering an environment more conducive to peace

The strategic interests and concerns of the warring parties at they relate to de-escalation in Taiz, including their perspectives on the different scopes and mediation approaches, are not set in stone. Shifts in the levels of trust between the warring parties, or political competition and economic incentives, for example, influence their willingness to engage. In this regard, there are several insights regarding how an environment more conducive to peace can be developed in Taiz.

**Certain local initiatives, like prisoner exchanges, have achieved moderate success in Taiz** and can serve to build greater confidence between the warring parties. Hundreds of prisoners from either side in the governorate have been released in efforts that were led by independent local mediators. These efforts have acted on the warring parties' mutual desire to secure the release of their imprisoned members and affiliates. Strong pressure from the families of those imprisoned, and the mediators' ability to communicate with decision makers on both sides, were cited as key factors contributing to their successes. Despite the relative success of their efforts, local prisoner exchange mediators in Taiz have received little support and are under-equipped.

**Economic drivers of the conflict have a wider reaching impact that cannot be ignored.** Beyond providing lucrative income for elite local security and military officials, the conflict has exacerbated Yemen's already dismal unemployment rate, thereby pushing thousands of locals – especially youth – to pick up arms in order to receive an income.

**Political polarization, including the politicization of humanitarian issues, is hampering peacebuilding efforts.** The community in Taiz has become significantly more polarized as a result of both the government-Ansar Allah conflict and infighting between various political parties, Islamic ideologies, and their affiliated armed factions, which has resulted in considerable loss of life and destruction of property. From the outset, peacebuilding initiatives in Taiz face strong allegations of supporting one group or another, and this environment of distrust enables spoilers – those benefiting from the conflict's continuance – to impede any efforts. Successful aspects of past efforts can be drawn on to tackle political polarization.

For example, the Social Committee for Peace included senior members from all of the political parties active in Taiz. While this was more of a loose network than a formal committee, it nevertheless opened a channel of communication whereby all the political components were included in discussions rooted in the need to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Taiz. There are also a number of important efforts that sought to reduce political infighting during the transitional period. For example, local dialogues were convened by then governor Shawqi Hayel in 2012 and 2013, which brought together a wide variety of social and political groups in Taiz. Aimed at providing a platform to reconcile their differences in the wake of the 2011 uprising, one of the outcomes of this effort was a code of honor which could be revisited today.



An aerial photograph showing a winding asphalt road on a steep, rocky hillside. The road is filled with a dense line of vehicles, primarily white vans and cars, moving in both directions. Some vehicles are stopped, creating a traffic jam. The hillside is sparsely vegetated with dry grass and small shrubs. In the background, a sprawling city with numerous buildings is visible, nestled in a valley. Beyond the city, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear sky. A dark blue rectangular box with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

## **PART 5**

## **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**



Several developments in the latter half of 2019 have shifted dynamics in Taiz. The departure of the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions from Taiz city and Islah's greater consolidation of power have simplified the day-to-day situation in the city to some extent. Yet the purported drawdown of the UAE in Yemen and the death of 35th Armored Brigade commander Adnan Al-Hammadi have left a great deal of uncertainty in the governorate, particularly as it remains unclear whether Saudi Arabia will take on a more significant role in Taiz.

Regardless, the extensive locally-driven efforts to open road access and de-escalate the fighting in Taiz that have already been exerted provide a wealth of knowledge that can be applied no matter the direction these developments progress. This section condenses the lessons learned in Part 4 into a selection of recommended steps for local, national, regional, and international stakeholders to take in order to support peace efforts in Taiz. Many of the recommendations are also applicable to conflicts in other governorates around Yemen.

## 5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

### *All stakeholders*

1. **Incorporate the sustained inclusion of civil society and private sector leaders, including women and youth, into de-escalation efforts.** Civil society and other local civilian leaders have been the most consistent force driving peace efforts forward, with many of them being active since long before the current conflict began. Their involvement in peace processes should not be limited to helping jumpstart local negotiations, but rather should be ongoing and designed into the process from beginning to end. This also entails strengthening the technical capacity of community leaders, especially lawyers, professors, and civil society heads to play a role in monitoring a potential ceasefire.

The governor's committee formed in 2018 provides a model for inclusivity in local efforts; while the UN-led process resulting from the Sweden Consultations demonstrates how civil society leaders, and especially women, can quickly be sidelined by the warring parties if their inclusion is not explicitly and strategically incorporated into the effort.

2. **Avoid linking de-escalation in Taiz to other strategic issues, whether explicitly or not.** On several occasions mediators have pointed to the interlinking of Taiz and other issues as potentially hindering progress in Taiz. For example, the April 16, 2016 Hawban agreement may have failed to be implemented because it was intertwined with a nationwide ceasefire attempt that was immediately violated; and parallel negotiations over Hodeidah during the Sweden Consultations in December 2018 likely shifted the scope of negotiations over Taiz in an unconstructive direction. While recognizing that local actors are often firmly rooted in both their local and broader political frameworks, and that the localized conflict in Taiz cannot be solely addressed in isolation, care should be taken to reduce the risk of other issues sidelining or further complicating de-escalation efforts in Taiz.



### *International stakeholders*

3. **Promote local ownership of conflict de-escalation efforts, placing governorate-level actors at the forefront and allowing for Yemeni mediators with access to both warring parties to play an intermediary role.** While it is impossible to fully de-politicize road access and related issues in Taiz, keeping such efforts as localized as possible will reduce the extent to which it is subject to political calculations and tied to issues outside Taiz, like the Hodeidah Agreement or the Riyadh Agreement. Moreover, local actors feel the impact of road closures and other challenges more directly, and this may leave them open to compromise than national elites. See: The Civil Alliance and Social Committee for Peace.
4. **Build capacities of other locally-driven peacebuilding efforts that are crucial to building trust between the warring parties.** Local prisoner exchange mediators have had significant success in brokering small but recurring exchanges in Taiz, and could expand their efforts with greater backing – so long as it does not seek to replace in local mediation practices.
5. **Be open to less formal means of mediation, including oral agreement.** Due to concerns related to potential future military advancement in the governorate and particularly following the deadlock resulting from the Hodeidah Agreement, informal agreements can be a viable option – and have historically been met with considerable success throughout Yemen's history.

### *Regional stakeholders*

6. **Cease all financial and material support to Yemeni combatants in Taiz governorate who do not fully adhere to the formal chain of command under the Yemeni ministries of defense and interior.** This notably includes Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas and Tareq Saleh. Moreover, Abu Al-Abbas should be given a fair trial or, in the absence of evidence, his name should be removed from the list of designated supporters of terrorism so that he can be fully included in peacebuilding efforts. The Salafi sheikh is designated by the UAE and Saudi Arabia (and the rest of the GCC member states and USA) for allegedly providing material support to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. However, as leader of the Abu Al-Abbas Battalions he continues to be funded and protected by the Coalition, a dynamic that complicates peacebuilding efforts.
7. **Support reconciliation efforts to better align pro-government of Yemen groups behind local government authorities, in order to stabilize government-controlled areas and reach greater consensus on their administration.** The Coalition should furthermore support de-escalation efforts between the government and Ansar Allah, including but not limited to locally-led efforts to open road access. This entails creating clear channels to communicate with local peacemakers and officials in Taiz to coordinate their work, including to cease airstrikes that would violate or risk impeding the implementation of an agreement.



*National stakeholders*

8. **The government should support the governorate-level alliance of political parties in Taiz as a means to reduce political polarization and encourage greater representativeness and accountability in the local administration.** The role of political parties has been weakened across the board in Yemen during the conflict, but they nevertheless remain a fundamental component of public life, especially in Taiz. Supporting the alliance of political parties through engagement in consultations and decision-making processes will also help foster an environment of greater transparency.
9. **Ansar Allah should engage more constructively with locally-led initiatives and allow for greater de-centralization in peacebuilding efforts** related to easing the humanitarian suffering of civilians. While Ansar Allah has and continues to engage in mediation efforts on Taiz, it has on multiple occasions effectively shut down efforts by reverting them to the national political process. With its centralized decision-making structure, it is crucial that Ansar Allah cooperate more closely with local mediators in Taiz and allow its public representatives in the governorate to engage in meaningful humanitarian-focused efforts, ensuring they are shaped in a manner that address Ansar Allah's strategic concerns.

*Local stakeholders*

10. **Develop moderate, realistic proposals for how international stakeholders can support the local peace process in Taiz.** Awareness raising and calls for international (especially UN) monitoring of a ceasefire/road access agreement must be paired with a push for more concrete and realistic near-term steps that can be taken to support locally-driven confidence-building measures. International stakeholders could, for example, provide local prisoner exchange mediators with technical and material support.
11. **Lead the way for greater social and political cohesion in de-escalation efforts.** This includes enhancing cooperation between civil society and private sector actors, and engaging political party branches in discussion while building grassroots pressure on the warring parties.
12. **Expand the loose network of security and tribal leaders engaged in peace discussions over Taiz.** This entails going beyond the local political leadership to engage leaders in the security sector, and especially on the Ansar Allah side tribal actors who have direct access to Ansar Allah leadership. While recognizing that expanding the number of stakeholders involved increases the risk that goals will become diluted by varying priorities, it is important to build a degree of confidence and foster greater understanding, not necessarily to secure their direct involvement. Local peacebuilders can explain to them the value of opening humanitarian road access to Taiz city, gain a better understanding of their interests and concerns toward any de-escalatory measures, and provide a sense of ownership over any proposals in order to encourage their buy-in.





## APPENDICES



## Appendix 1:

Proposal by the Civil Alliance for Peace and National Reconciliation (undated – late 2019)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

### محضر تنفيذي يفتح الطرق إلى مدينة تعز

- إنه في يوم ..... 1441هـ الموافق / 2019م وبمسمى من التحالف المدني للسلم والمصالحة الوطنية تم الاتفاق بين الطرفين الموقعين على اتفاق إبريل 2016م على الآتي :-
- أولاً: يتم فتح الطرق التي تصل مدينة تعز (بخط الراهدة - عدن) و (تعز - إب - صنعاء) من خلال خط الحويان على النحو التالي :-
- 1- يكون الخروج من مدينة تعز أو الدخول إليها من خلال خط الحويان الذي يمر عبر جولة فندق (سوفتيل) مروراً إلى جولة الفصير ثم المرور بوادي صالة وصولاً إلى منطقة صالة ثم ينفذ إلى حي الجميلية .
  - 2- يتم فتح خط للنقلات الكبيرة والسيارات المتوسطة "الدينان" من مفرق الذكرة مروراً بشارع الستين إلى مفرق شرعب ثم مصنع السمن والصابون ثم المرور بالخط الرئيس إلى المطار القديم وصولاً إلى بير باشا.
  - 3- يتعهد الطرفان بعدم استخدام الطرق في أية تحركات عسكرية بشرية كانت أو آلية .
  - 4- يتعهد الطرفان بالزام النقاط الأمنية التابعة لكل منهما على مداخل الطرق "المنفذ" للسماح بتحرك المواطنين والركبات الخاصة والعامة المحملة بالمواطنين والمسافرين والعابرين والبضائع والمواد التموينية والأدوية بسهولة بيسر وبدون أي اعتراض .
  - 5- تمارس النقاط الأمنية على مداخل الطرق التفتيش الأمني الروتيني كل في حدود إدارته ونقطة تمرركزه السابقة قبل الفتح دون أي تشديد أو عرقلة .
  - 6- يلتزم الطرفان بعد تكرار أخذ أية مبالغ مالية أو عينية تحت مسمى الضرائب أو الجمارك وقد أخذت من الجهة التي أتت منها ؛ ويتم العمل بحسب قانوني الجمارك والضرائب.
  - 7- يتم الترتيب لفتح الفوري للطرق أعلاه بمجرد استكمال التوقيع على هذا المحضر من كلا الطرفين ، والمجتمع المدني كشاهد .
  - 8- تقوم لجنة فتح الطرق من الطرفين بمتابعة تنفيذ هذا الاتفاق والتوقيع عليه بين الطرفين وتذليل كافة الصعوبات التي قد تطرأ أثناء التنفيذ أو بعده ، وبإشراف ورقابة محايدة من المجتمع المدني.
  - 9- العمل على أن يتم فتح الطرق الأخرى الموصلة إلى المدينة تدريجياً .
- ثانياً: يتعهد الطرفان بموجب هذا الاتفاق بحماية وسلامة العابرين والمسافرين وإزالة السواتر الترابية والكثل الخرسانية وبوقف إطلاق النار على طول الطريق المتفق على فتحها ، وعلى الطرف الثاني نزاع الألغام .
- الطرف الأول

التوقيع

الثاني

عبدالكريم شرف شيبان - رئيس اللجنة ..... الاسم:- غالب عبدالله مطلق

محمد عبدالله المحمودي - نائب رئيس اللجنة ..... الاسم :-أمين علي البحر

علي محمد المعمرى -مقرر اللجنة ..... الاسم :-أحمد أمين المساوي

المجتمع المدني ( التحالف المدني للسلم والمصالحة الوطنية):-

الاسم :- أ.د/ حمود صالح العودي ..... التوقيع

الاسم :- مجيب سلطان عبدالقادر ..... التوقيع

الاسم :- معين العبيدي ..... التوقيع

## Appendix 2:

Sweden Consultations Proposal No. 2 (December 2018)

### اتفاق لوقف إطلاق النار وفتح المعابر و المطار في محافظة تعز

تمهيد:

يهدف اتفاق وقف إطلاق النار وفتح المعابر والمطار في محافظة تعز الى معالجة الوضع الانساني الصعب ووقف دائم للأعمال العدائية التي من شأنها أن يؤدي إلى تقدم الأطراف باتجاه التوصل إلى سلام مستدام مستنداً بذلك على اتفاق طهران الجنوب لوقف إطلاق النار وفتح المعابر في تعز والذي تم توقيعه في 10 أبريل 2016.

يتفق الطرفان على الاجراءات المرحلية الآتية:

أولاً: اعلان وقف إطلاق النار وخفض تصعيد في كافة جبهات محافظة تعز:

- الاتفاق على اعلان وقف إطلاق النار غير المشروط على أن يشمل كافة أرجاء محافظة تعز، على أن يشمل كافة الاعمال التي تعيق العمل الانساني كاعمال القصف الجوي والمدفعي والقصف والافغام.
- يتم تشكيل مجموعة عمل من الأطراف بمشاركة من الأمم المتحدة تكون مسؤولة عن مراقبة تنفيذ الاتفاق وفض النزاعات مع الاستعانة من اللجان الموجودة سابقاً.

ثانياً: إعادة فتح الطرق والمعابر والمرات المؤدية من وإلى المحافظة وفتح المطار وفق للمراحل اذاتة:

المرحلة الاولى

- يتم فتح المعبر الشمالي من صنعاء -أب / الحويان إلى مدينة تعز عبر مفرق الذكرة - صالة - جولة القصر - كلابة. يتم فتح هذا المعبر بعد اسبوعين من سريان وقف إطلاق النار وإزالة الافغام المعيقة لفتح المعابر
- يتم فتح مطار تعز امام العمليات الانسانية و عمل مسوحات لاعادة التاهيل و التشغيل بالتزامن مع فتح المعبر الشمالي

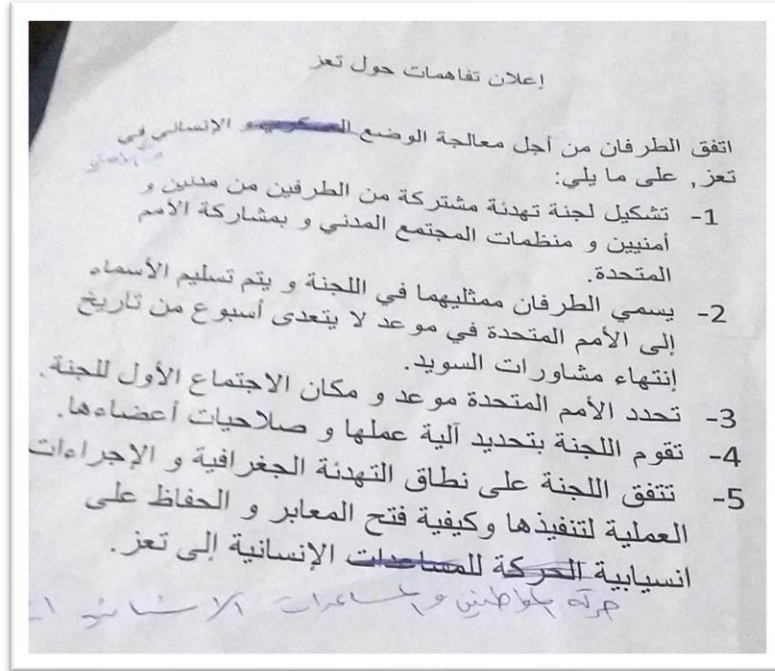
المرحلة الثانية

- يتم فتح المعبر الشرقي: محطة الجهم - الصفا بعد شهر من سريان وقف إطلاق النار.
- يتم فتح المعبر الغربي إلى محافظة الحديدة (السمن والصابون) بالتزامن مع فتح المعبر الشرقي.



**Appendix 3:**

Sweden Consultations Proposal No. 3 (December 2018)

**Appendix 4:**

Proposal from the Ansar Allah governor (early December 2018)

- بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
- انطلاقاً من قوله تعالى: ( ولا تزرؤا وازرة وزر أخرى) وقوله تعالى: (ولقد كرمنا بني آدم) وانطلاقاً من مبادئ وقيم وتعاليم ديننا الاسلامي الحنيف، وتخفيفاً لمعاناة المواطنين وحفظاً لكرامتهم وحقوقهم في المرور والتنقل، فقد تم الاتفاق على الاتي:
- 1- التعهد بتنفيذ ما ورد في اتفاقية ابريل/2016م والمعروفة باتفاقية ظهران الجنوب وعلى عدة مراحل.
  - 2- التعهد والالتزام بفتح خط وطريق أول من سوفتيل - جولة القصر - زيد الموشكي، ليكون ممراً آمناً لدخول وخروج الاشخاص والمركبات والسلع والبضائع والادوية والمستلزمات النفطية والغاز إلى ومن مدينة تعز.
  - 3- التعهد والالتزام بفتح طريق ثاني للخروج والدخول من وإلى مدينة تعز عبر خط وطريق منطقة صالة مروراً بمنطقة الصرمين - عبادان وصولاً إلى منطقة دمنة خدير.
  - 4- التعهد بتهدئة الجبهات في المناطق الكائنة على خطوط مرور الاشخاص والمركبات الموضحة في البندين (2:3) من هذا الاتفاق.
  - 5- التعهد والالتزام على القيام بالتبادل الكلي للأسرى والمعتقلين بين الطرفين.
  - 6- التعهد والالتزام على تأمين الطرق والممرات المشار اليهما في البندين (2:3) من هذا الاتفاق، وبما يكفل حرية وكرامة المواطنين والحفاظ على حقوقهم وممتلكاتهم.
  - 7- العمل على اعادة فتح كل الطرق المؤدية من وإلى مدينة تعز وعلى مراحل بدء بهذه المرحلة محل هذا الاتفاق.
  - 8- العمل على تمكين المواطنين من ممارسة حقوقهم في التنقل والسكن والعودة الى منازلهم التي نزحوا منها.
- هذا والله من ورا القصد وهو الهادي إلى سواء السبيل.
- الطرف الأول/ الطرف الثاني/



## Appendix 5:

Governor's decree forming the local committee to negotiate with Ansar Allah (Aug 1, 2018)

الجمهورية اليمنية  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
وزارة الإدارة المحلية  
محافظة تعز  
مكتب المحافظ

الرقم: .....  
التاريخ: ٢٠١٨ م  
الموقع: .....  
الشارع: .....  
الطريق: .....

// تشكيل لجنة تفاوض مع الطرف الحوثي لفتح المعابر //

تشكيل لجنة من الإخوة :

١- / عبد الكريم شيبان / عضو مجلس النواب رئيس لجنة التهذنة سابقاً  
٢- العميد / محمد عبدالله المحمودي / مستشار محافظ المحافظة للشؤون الأمنية  
٣- الشيخ / عبده قاسم الجرعي / مستشار محافظة تعز الأكاديميين  
٤- د / الفت محمد الدبعي  
٥- عبداللطيف المرادي  
٦- صابر السواني  
٧- عقاب مكي  
٨- شيناز الاكحلي

رئيساً  
عضواً  
عضواً  
عضواً  
عضواً  
عضواً  
عضواً

تقوم اللجنة بالتفاوض مع الطرف الحوثي لفتح المعابر وتسهيل عبور المواطنين ودخول الإغاثات الإنسانية إلى محافظة تعز .

والله الموفق ...

محافظ المحافظة  
رئيس المجلس المحلي  
٢٠١٨ م  
فداه الإدارة المحلية  
مكتب المحافظ  
الشيخ / أمين أحمد محمود

## Appendix 6:

Proposal by the governor's local committee (October 2018)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

محضر تنفيذي بفتح الطرق إلى مدينة تعز وتبادل الأسرى ووقف إطلاق النار وفق الإتفاق الموقع عليه في ١٦ أبريل ٢٠١٦ م:

إليه في يوم ١٤٤٠ الموافق ٢٠١٨ م. تم الإتفاق بين الطرفين الموقعين على اتفاق أبريل ٢٠١٦ م. على الآتي:

أولاً: (١) يتم فتح طريق يصل مدينة تعز بخط الراهدة عدن و تعز إب صنعاء من خلال خط الحويان. (٢) يكون الخروج من مدينة تعز أو الدخول إليها من خلال خط الحويان الذي يمر عند جولة فندق ( سوفتيل ) مروراً إلى جولة القصر لتنفذ عبر عقبة منيف إلى حوض الاشراف . أو من جولة فندق ( سوفتيل ) إلى جولة القصر فمستشفى الحياة إلى زيد الموشكي. أو من جولة ( سوفتيل ) عبر محطة الجهم فمسجد الصفا إلى زيد الموشكي.

(٣) يتعهد الطرفان بإلزام النقاط التابعة لكل منهما عند طرفي الطريق ( المعبر ) بعدم التعرض لتحركات وتنقلات المواطنين والسيارات والبضائع والمواد التموينية والأدوية وكافة الاحتياجات الحياتية المدنية .

(٤) يلتزم الطرفان بعدم تكرار أخذ أي مبالغ مالية أو عينية تحت مسمى ضرائب أو جمارك قد أخذت من الجهة التي أتت منها .

(٥) يتم البدء بفتح الطريق المذكور ابتداء من الساعة من يوم تاريخ ٢٠١٨ م.

(٦) تقوم لجنة فتح الطرق من الطرفين بمتابعة تنفيذ هذا الإتفاق وتكثيف كافة الصعوبات التي قد تطرأ أثناء التنفيذ.

(٧) العمل على أن يتم فتح الطرق الأخرى تدريجياً.

ثانياً : يتم تبادل الأسرى والمعتقلين على ما تم الإتفاق والتوقيع عليه بين الطرفين بتاريخ ٢١ ديسمبر ٢٠١٧ م.

ثالثاً: يتعهد الطرفان بموجب هذا الإتفاق بحماية وسلامة العابرين والمسافرين وبوقف إطلاق النار على طول الطريق المتفق على فتحه، وعلى الطرف الثاني إزالة الألغام.

الطرف الأول  
عبدالكريم شرف شيبان  
عضو مجلس النواب رئيس اللجنة  
علي محمد المعمرى  
مقرر اللجنة  
أكتوبر ٢٠١٨ م

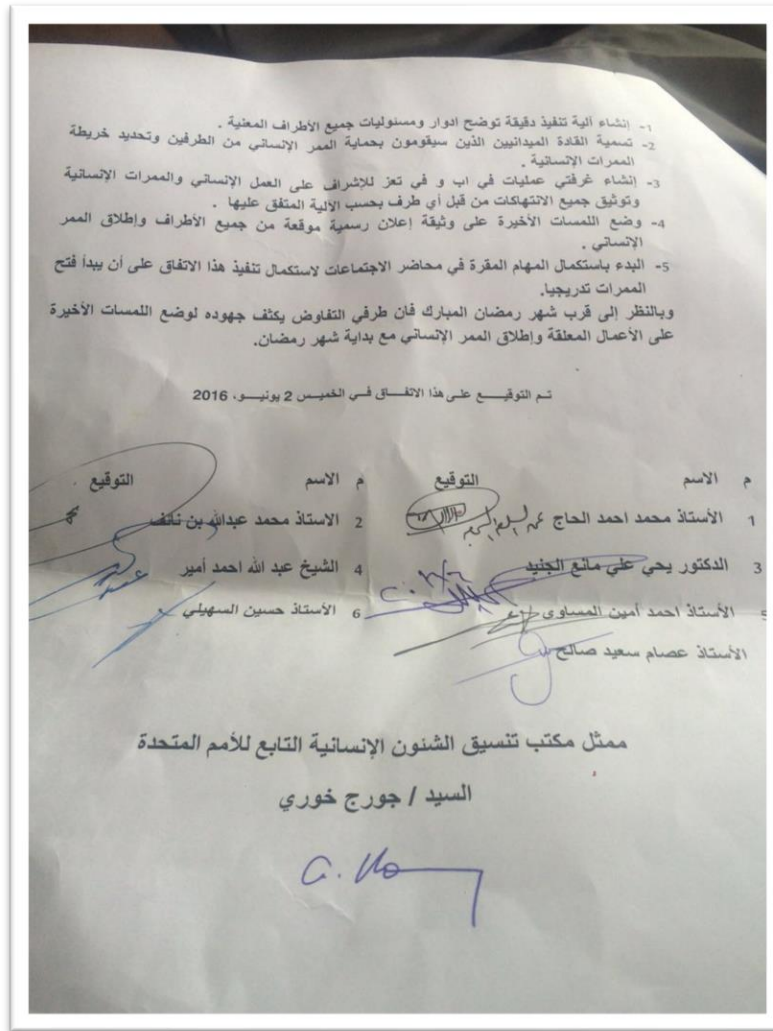
الطرف الثاني





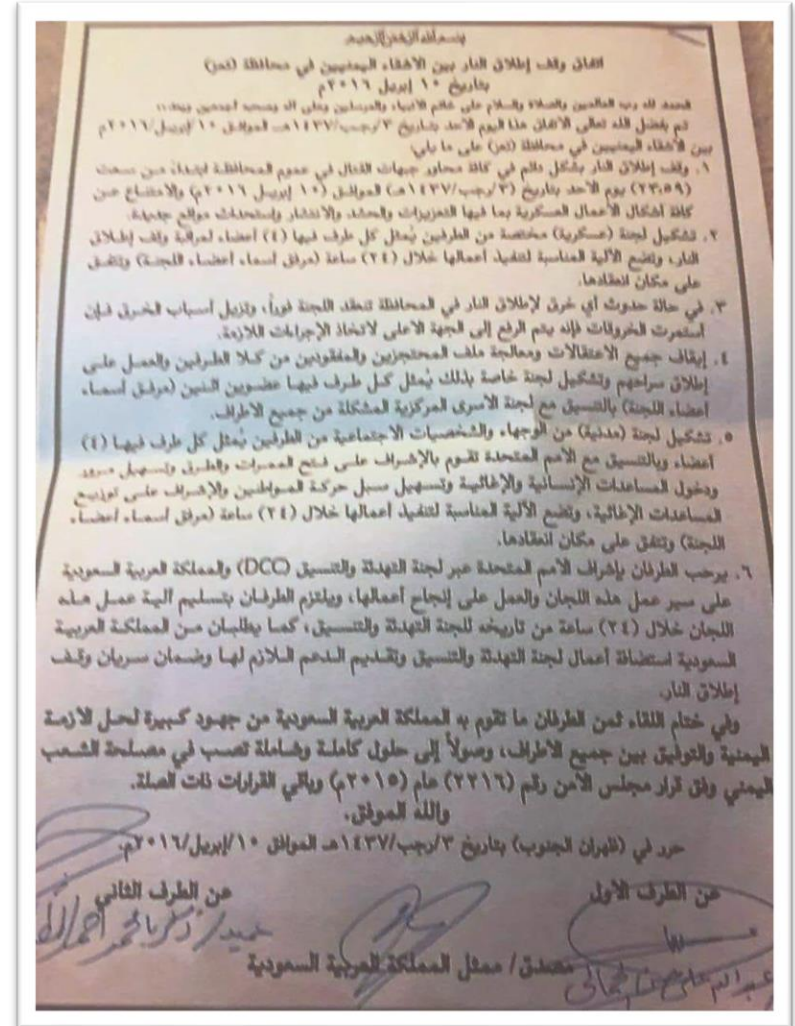


(2/2)



## Appendix 9:

LDC-Taiz Agreement signed in Dhahran Al-Janoub (April 10, 2016)













### Appendix 13:

Social Committee for Peace proposal mentioning two specific routes (undated)

(1/5)

#### المسودة

الخطوات التنفيذية لفتح ممرات آمنة في مدينة تعز

(2/5)

#### اهداف فتح الممرات الآمنة:

- 1) تخفيف معاناة السكان المدنيين والصعوبات المعيشية التي يعانون تحت طائلتها جراء الحرب المستمرة في مدينة تعز منذ أكثر من عامين.
- 2) تسهيل حركة المدنيين من وإلى مدينة تعز وانتقال البضائع والمواد الطبية والغذائية والمساعدات الانسانية بشكل آمن.
- 3) بناء تفاهات ايجابية وجسور ثقة بين الاطراف المتحاربة يمكن البناء عليها لإرساء سلام دائم في المحافظة.

#### الخطوات التنفيذية:

1. تعمل اللجنة المجتمعية للسلام برئاسة الشيخ سلطان البركاني على ابرام اتفاق بين الطرفين المتقاتلين (جماعة انصار الله والمقاومة) أو من يمثلهما على أن يتضمن الاتفاق بين الطرفين ما يلي:

1. الاتفاق على إن يكون الممر الغربي "عصيفره" ممرًا إنسانيًا ومنفذ دخول للمدنيين والمواد الغذائية والبضائع والمساعدات الإنسانية.
2. الاتفاق على أن يكون منفذ "سوق تيل كلابه" ممرًا إنسانيًا ومنفذ خروج للمدنيين والمواد الغذائية والبضائع والمساعدات الإنسانية.
3. الاتفاق على أن تكون القوات النظامية من الطرفين هي المسؤولة عن تأمين المنفذ بحيث تلتزم تلك القوات بعدم التمرد والحشد والتعزيزات واستحداث مواقع جديدة كما

(3/5)

يلتزمان بإزالة الألغام والقناصة كل من طرفه وعلى بعد اثنين كيلو من المنفذين.

4. الاتفاق على انسحاب الجماعات والمليشيات المسلحة الغير نظامية الى خارج منطقه الممرات الإنسانية على بعد ثلاثة كيلو من كل منفذ وذلك خلال 48 ساعة من توقيع هذا الاتفاق وإزالة كافة الألغام ان وجدت وذلك لضمان سلامة المواطنين على ان يكون ذلك تحت اشراف اعضاء اللجنة المجتمعية.

5. الاتفاق على وقف شامل لإطلاق النار في المنفذين والمناطق المجاورة لهما.

6. الاتفاق على تسليم كافة النقاط والنتابات المطلة على الممرين الامنين للقوات النظامية في الجهتين بمساحه خمس كيلو في الجهتين والالتزام بعدم اطلاق النار بالأسلحة الخفيفة او الثقيلة او المتوسطة او الطيران للمنشآت العامة كانت مدنيه او عسكريه او خاصه او منازل مواطنين ويحمل الطرفان مسؤولية أي خرق او تجاوز.

7. الاتفاق على قيام القوات النظامية بحمايه كافة المنشآت الحكومية والأهلية والممتلكات الخاصة بالمواطنين وحفظ الامن والاستقرار كلا في نطاق اختصاصه.

8. الاتفاق على أن تكون اللجنة المجتمعية هي المشرفة على المنفذين وتلتزم القوات النظامية المتواجدة في المناطق المجاورة للمنفذ بتعليمات اللجنة المجتمعية.

9. الاتفاق على إنشاء غرفتي عمليات بأشراف قاندي المحورين في كل طرف وعضوية اثنين من الجيش والامن



(4/5)

(القوات النظامية) ثلاثة وكلاء محافظه بكل غرفه وثلاثة من اعضاء اللجنة المجتمعية لرصد ومتابعه الخروقات وتسهيل كل المعوقات والصعوبات التي ستواجه تنفيذ الاتفاق على المستوى الميداني على ان يتواجد على الأقل شخص واحد من كل فئة في غرفة العمليات على مدار 24 ساعة وبشكل يومي.

10. الاتفاق على تمكين اعضاء اللجنة المجتمعية للسلام بتعز من مهامهم اعمالهم الخاصة بالإشراف او رصد الانتهاكات والتعاون الكامل مع اعضاء اللجنة المجتمعية او من تستعين بهم اللجنة المجتمعية وإزالة كافة المعوقات التي تمنعها أو تؤثر على قدرتها على انجاز مهامها.

11. الاتفاق على عدم إعاقة أو حجز أو إيقاف المواد الاغاثية أو البضائع أو المواطنين وتسهيل اعمال المنظمات الانسانية وحماية العاملين بالمجال الانساني.

12. الاتفاق على تبني خطاب إعلامي مساند ومواید وداعم لهذا الاتفاق ولكافة الخطوات المرتبطة به والتي تقوم بها اللجنة المجتمعية بكافة الوسائل الاعلامية المسموعة والمرئية والمقروءة وكافة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من كافة الأحزاب والتنظيمات السياسية والاجتماعية والثقافية التابعة لكل طرف.

13. الاتفاق على التنفيذ الكامل لجميع بنود الاتفاق المذكورة أعلاه والطرف الذي سيتخلف عن التنفيذ او يعمل على اعاقه تنفيذ هذه البنود كليا او جزئيا يتحمل المسؤولية الاخلاقية والانسانية والمجتمعية والوطنية المترتبة على اعاقته تنفيذ الاتفاق الهادف تخفيف معاناة المدنيين.

(5/5)

2. تعمل اللجنة المجتمعية على حشد الدعم والموارد اللازمة لتنفيذ الاتفاق والرقابة والاشراف على تنفيذه وتستعين لتحقيق ذلك بكل القوى الاجتماعية والسياسية المحبة للسلام في المحافظة.
3. تتولى اللجنة المجتمعية مهمة الادلاء بالتصريحات الاعلامية وعقد المؤتمرات الصحفية ذات العلاقة بالاتفاق وتنفيذه.
4. تعمل اللجنة المجتمعية على انماء فرص السلام بالبناء على ما يتفق عليه وتنفيذه بما يحقق السلام والدائم والشامل في المحافظة ويعيد الى نسجها الاجتماعي لحمة وتماسكه.

## Appendix 14:

Social Committee for Peace proposal for August 2, 2016 ceasefire

### اللية التنفيذية لوقف إطلاق النار بإشراف اللجنة المجتمعية

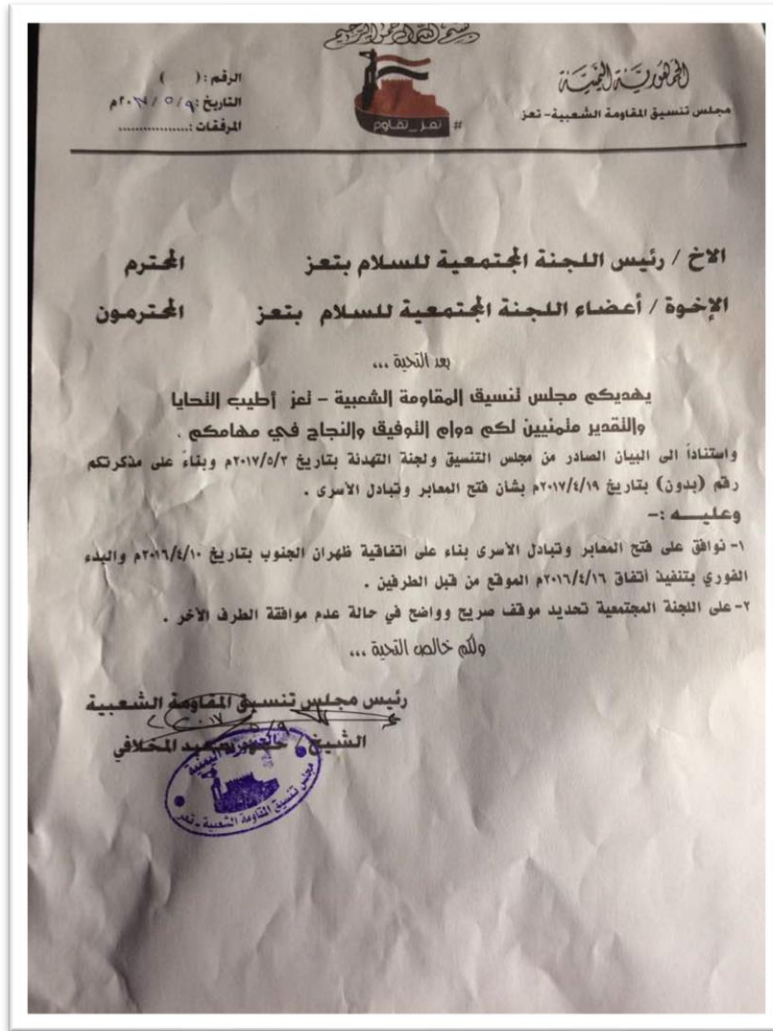
يلتزم الطرفان بتنفيذ المهام التالية :

- 1) وقف إطلاق النار ابتداء من يوم الثلاثاء 2 أغسطس 2016م ، الساعة 2 ظهرا ، ويتم تثبيت سريان وقف إطلاق النار من خلال نشر اللجنة المجتمعية لمراقبين تابعين لها في نقاط التماس .
  - يسبق ذلك تعميمات من الطرفين بوقف إطلاق النار ، وتعميم سريان الوقف لأعضائهم ومناصريهم في كل الجبهات.
  - منع كافة الاعمال العسكرية بما فيها التعزيزات ، والحشد ، والانتشار ، واستحداث مواقع جديدة.
  - فتح كافة الطرق والمنافذ المؤدية من وإلى تعز (كمرحلة أولى).
  - فتح كافة الطرق بين المديرية وداخل المديرية ومع مدينة تعز تدريجيا ، (كمرحلة ثانية) بعد استكمال فتح الممرات الرئيسة في المرحلة الاولى.
  - لجان المراقبة تتكون من 4 أعضاء (مراقب أممي، ممثل لجنة مجتمعية، ممثل من كل طرف).
- 2) تحديد الممرات الانسانية الآمنة ، وفتحها ، وتسهيل إستقبال المساعدات الاغاثية والانسانية ، وتسهيل حركة المواطنين والسيارات والبضائع والادوية وكافة الاحتياجات الحياتية المدنية.
  - تقوم اللجنة المجتمعية (مع اللجنة المدنية من الطرفين) بمتابعة تنفيذ فتح كل الممرات والطرق.
  - تسمية المراقبين على الممرات الانسانية (لجنة مجتمعية ، لجنة مدنية ، ممثل من كل طرف).
- 3) تجهيز غرفتي عمليات للرصد ، والمتابعة ، والتوثيق ، واستقبال البلاغات ، ومعالجة القضايا العاجلة والطارئة والملحة ، داخل مدينة تعز ، خارج المدينة ، بتدريهما اللجنة المجتمعية ، تتكون كل منها من الاعضاء التالية :
  - ممثل اللجنة المجتمعية .
  - ممثل للجانب العسكري للطرف الاول (داخل تعز) وممثل للطرف الثاني (خارج تعز).
  - ممثل للجانب المدني.
  - عضو السلطة المحلية.
- 4) يلتزم كل طرف برفع قوائم الاسرى التي لديه ، وخلال عشرة أيام يتم الرد وتبادل القوائم ، ثم تبادل الاسرى ، وبإشراف ممثل اللجنة المجتمعية ، ويلتزم الطرفان بعدم اعتقال أي شخص بعد إعلان وقف إطلاق النار السابق ذكره.
- 5) يلتزم الطرفان بحماية الممتلكات العامة والخاصة وتأمين حياة المواطنين والحفاظ عليها ، كل في نطاق تواجده .
- 6) تفعيل دور المؤسسات الرسمية ، الامنية ، والخدمية والقضائية ، والاهلية ، وتمكينها من مزاولة مهامها وأعمالها الطبيعية ، وتطبيع حياة المواطنين ومعاشهم .
- 7) العمل على تشكيل لجان مجتمعية في الاحياء من أبنائها ، لحماية الممتلكات العامة والخاصة.
- 8) يلتزم الطرفان بترشيد الخطاب الاعلامي ، سواء في مواقعهم الرسمية ، أو في مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي ، «تند ، خطاب احسان ، مدعا للحياة ، للمحبة والسلام ، التعايش ، البناء .

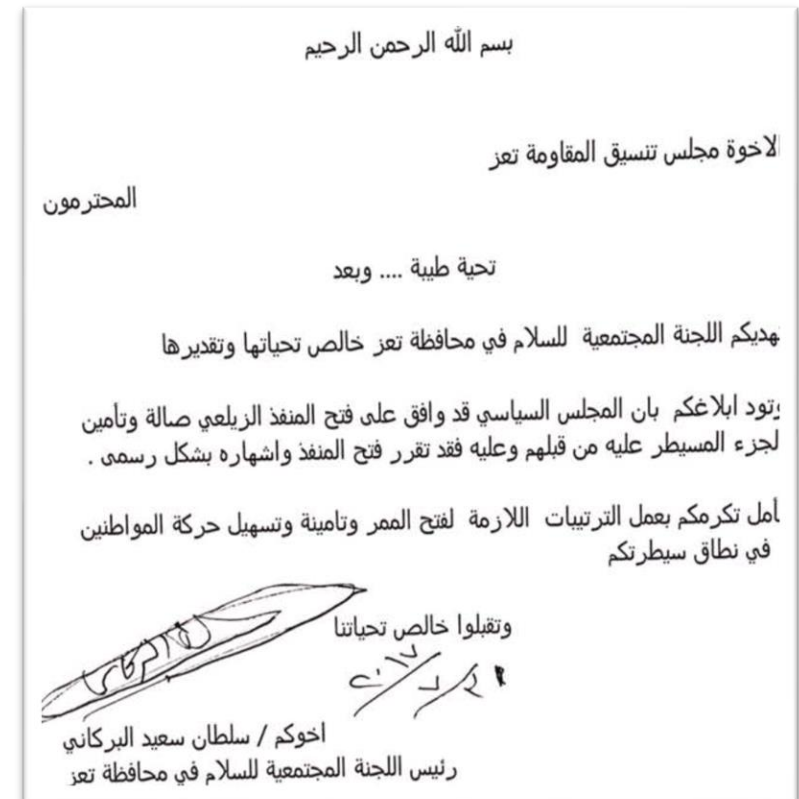


**Appendix 15:**

Letter from the Resistance to the Social Committee for Peace  
(May 5, 2017)

**Appendix 16:**

Letter to the Resistance Council from Sultan Al-Barakani  
(July 21, 2017)



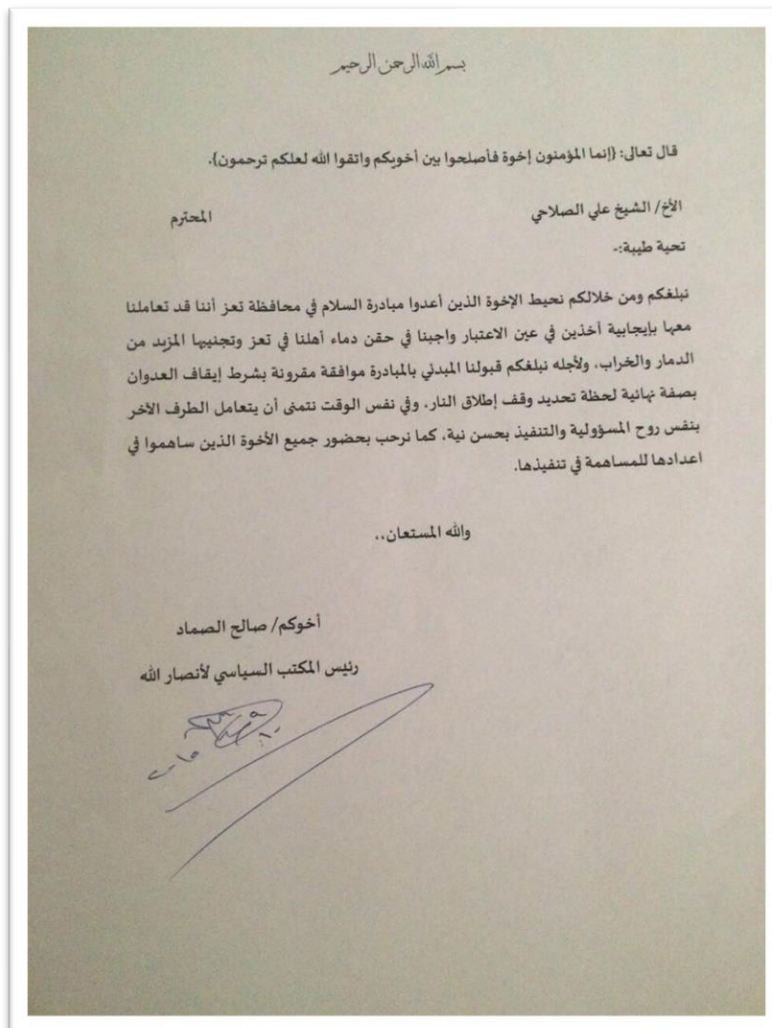






**Appendix 18:**

Saleh Al-Sammad's letter to Sheikh Ali Al-Salahi (2015)

**Appendix 19:**

Resistance and Military council heads write to Sheikh Al-Salahi (2016)







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