



Security Council

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Letter dated 11 June 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Security Council, in its resolution [2691 \(2023\)](#), requested that I present a review of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) at least one month before the expiration of its mandate on 14 July 2024. The Mission, established pursuant to paragraph 1 of Council resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), supports the implementation of the Agreement on the City of Hudaydah and the Ports of Hudaydah, Salif, and Ra's Isa, as set out in the Stockholm Agreement ([S/2018/1134](#), annex).

Since my previous review, submitted on 13 June 2023 ([S/2023/432](#)), UNMHA has continued to pursue the priorities set forth therein, namely: (a) incrementally intensifying its monitoring of the ports and the governorate-wide ceasefire; (b) restoring communication and liaison channels between the parties; (c) re-establishing avenues for de-escalation; and (d) prioritizing entry points for confidence-building and mine action, while supporting the parties to calibrate implementation of the Agreement.

Military and political dynamics

Hudaydah Governorate has remained largely stable, following the 2021 unilateral withdrawal of the Government-aligned forces, which was subsequently buttressed by the United Nations-brokered truce between April and October 2022. The central tenets of the truce continued to be observed on a de facto basis into 2024. There has been an overall reduction in hostilities between the parties, although daily exchanges of fire and violations of the Governorate-wide ceasefire persist at the front lines in the southern districts, most notably in the Hays and Tuhayta' districts. To date, these have been tactical in nature and have not led to any major changes in the overall strategic landscape of the conflict in Hudaydah, despite a noted increase in public calls by both parties for new military offensives to be undertaken in the Hudaydah Governorate.

The military situation in Hudaydah Governorate continues to be affected by the dynamics across other front lines in Yemen. In that regard, the shifting priorities of the parties and resource allocation to areas of conflict elsewhere in Yemen are likely contributing factors in the recent reduction in hostilities in Hudaydah. Nevertheless, ongoing fighting and military reinforcement in the neighbouring governorates, in particular in Ta'izz Governorate, continued to affect security conditions in Hudaydah.

Most conflict-related casualties, including fatalities, in the governorate are a result of landmines and explosive remnants of war, as opposed to being a direct result of hostilities between the parties. Hudaydah remains the governorate most affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war in Yemen. Moreover, the ongoing use of artillery, mortars and rocket fire along the front lines leads to new unexploded devices being found, which, in turn, causes a further increase in contamination that needs to be addressed. Between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024, the Mission recorded a total of



84 incidents related to landmines and explosive remnants of war, resulting in a total of 120 civilian casualties, including 8 women and 44 children.

Political space in Hudaydah remains highly contested, as the parties continue to implement and promote socioeconomic initiatives in their respective zones of control in Hudaydah Governorate as a means of projecting or consolidating their administrative authority. Those initiatives have been focused mainly on agriculture and fisheries, education, health care and water and sanitation and have included the promotion of political slogans in holiday camps for children and young people in Houthi-controlled areas. Also notable has been the focus by the parties on developing port infrastructure in the respective areas under their control.

Since October 2023, large-scale demonstrations have been organized on a weekly basis by the Houthis in Hudaydah City and its surrounding areas in support of Palestinians. There were over 250 such protests between October 2023 and May 2024. Although the demonstrations remained peaceful, they intensified significantly in both frequency and attendance during that period, drawing thousands of people at more than 20 different locations across Hudaydah Governorate. The demonstrations were often led by prominent Houthi political figures and organized to commemorate key dates or anniversaries related to either the conflict in Yemen or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Public discourse among some political actors within the Government of Yemen has been increasingly focused on criticizing the Stockholm Agreement, in particular in the light of reported Houthi attacks in the Red Sea from within the Governorate. “Anti-Stockholm Agreement” sentiments remain dominant in public discourse in government-controlled areas, where Houthi control of Hudaydah and their ability to conduct attacks in the Red Sea are blamed on the Agreement. Such discourse has included calls for a resumption of hostilities and military action to retake the port of Hudaydah, as well as calls for international support for the Government, which have been amplified by local media outlets.

The media landscape in Yemen remains highly polarized and reflects the deep rift between the parties. UNMHA and the United Nations at large are frequently the subject of misinformation and disinformation campaigns. UNMHA has noted with concern a rise in automated social media bots that amplify the spread of media-led digital misinformation and disinformation, some of it directly targeting UNMHA and the Stockholm Agreement.

Redeployment Coordination Committee and its de-escalation mechanisms

In September 2023, the Head of Mission held a meeting in Aden with the delegation of the Government of Yemen to the Redeployment Coordination Committee. That meeting marked a significant breakthrough, as it represented the first official interaction between UNMHA and the full government delegation to the Committee in three years, further to the bilateral meeting held between the Head of Mission and some members of the Committee in March of that year. The discussions served to reaffirm a shared commitment to advancing the Mission’s presence in the parts of Hudaydah Governorate under the Government’s control. In addition, on 11 November 2023, a meeting was held in the Khawkhah district between the Head of Mission and the government delegation to the Committee to discuss advancing the implementation of the Mission’s mandate in the south of the governorate. Meeting participants also explored avenues for facilitating UNMHA patrols in front-line areas, with the objective of enhancing the accuracy of ceasefire violation reporting. The Government expressed its concerns regarding the lack of progress made on opening critical roads across the front line in Hudaydah Governorate.

Notwithstanding the progress made in the second half of 2023, the level of cooperation by the Government of Yemen fluctuated in early 2024, reflecting growing anti-Stockholm Agreement sentiment and public calls for a resumption of hostilities and military action to retake the port of Hudaydah. In response, the Deputy Head of Mission travelled to Aden in January 2024 to engage with the authorities. However, associated travel to the government-controlled southern districts of Hudaydah Governorate was not approved by the Government.

In April 2024, the Head of Mission engaged with the Minister of Defence and the head of the Government delegation to the Redeployment Coordination Committee to resolve restrictions on the Mission's movements. That progress was further solidified by a visit of the Head of Mission to Aden, Khawkhah and Hays between 20 and 29 April 2024. The visit was instrumental in reaffirming a common understanding of the Mission's mandate with the Government and the members of its delegation to the Redeployment Coordination Committee and in securing assurances for the resumption of UNMHA activities and patrols in the south of the governorate.

Between June 2023 and May 2024, the Head of Mission chaired nine meetings with the Houthi delegation to the Redeployment Coordination Committee. Those sustained dialogues resulted in the increase of regular UNMHA patrols in the port of Hudaydah and allowed for the expansion of UNMHA monitoring visits to conflict-affected and front-line districts in the south of Hudaydah Governorate under Houthi control.

It is regrettable that there is no female representation from either of the parties on the Redeployment Coordination Committee. Despite that, UNMHA seeks to engage with women where it can on both sides of the front line in Hudaydah Governorate and with women in Aden and Sana'a as much as possible. Those efforts are part of the Mission's broader intent to advance the women and peace and security agenda in Yemen.

Lastly, prior challenges concerning the issuance of visas and residency permits for UNMHA personnel to work in government- and Houthi-controlled areas have been eased, demonstrating increased cooperation from both parties.

Monitoring the ceasefire and maintaining the civilian nature of the ports

UNMHA patrolling in the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa has continued, despite considerable hindrances imposed by the Houthis, including restricting patrols to a pre-approved date, time and route and preventing UNMHA military monitors from freely gathering information during the patrols. UNMHA has remained steadfast in its commitment to carrying out its mandated tasks despite those challenges and has continuously strived to expand and enhance its patrolling in the Red Sea ports. The Mission currently undertakes patrols in the port of Hudaydah twice a week and in the ports of Salif and Ra's Isa once a week. This reflects an increase in routine UNMHA patrols in port locations to an average of 11 per month since March 2024, compared with an average of 7 per month between June 2023 and February 2024. Engagements with Houthi representatives to the Redeployment Coordination Committee continue to lead to an even greater increase in the number of patrols, including in Hudaydah City.

Noting the limitations imposed upon it, UNMHA has not directly observed military objects or manifestations at the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa during its patrols. Based on an analysis of open-source information, including the announcements made by the Houthis and Member States' military spokespersons, over 50 per cent of the air strikes on Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen by international military forces (as part of what has been described as "Operation Poseidon Archer") were conducted in Hudaydah Governorate since January 2024. Nevertheless, the operations of the Red Sea ports have not been directly affected by

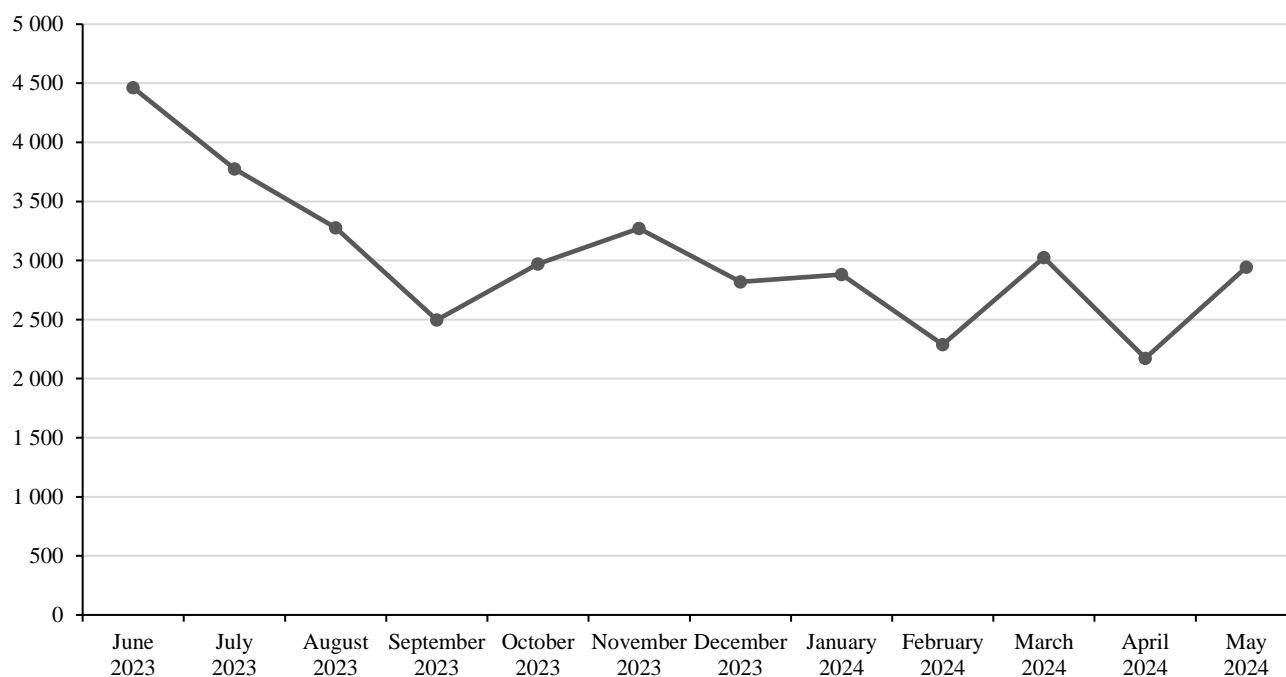
the air strikes. In the Salif and Ra's Isa areas, where a significant number of air strikes were conducted, it was assessed that targeted locations were between five and eight km south of the ports, except for one building in the Salif port area that was struck on 30 May. Consequently, UNMHA patrols in the ports continued uninterrupted. During the period under review, a total of 102 patrols were carried out to monitor the ports.

Despite increasingly confrontational statements by the Government, in which it called for the recapture of the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa, and heightened tensions in the Red Sea, there has been no discernible impact observed by UNMHA on the number of vessels arriving to the ports, and monthly import levels remained generally stable. Between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024, 480 vessels berthed at the Red Sea ports, representing a 68 per cent increase in the number of vessels compared with the same period one year earlier. Of those vessels, 33 per cent carried food items (both commercial and humanitarian) and 23 per cent carried fuel consignments. According to the World Food Programme, the highest amounts of tracked food and fuel imported to the Red Sea ports since 2022 were in April 2024.

UNMHA increased its patrols in conflict-affected and front-line districts in the governorate, in line with its mandate to monitor the governorate-wide ceasefire. The Mission conducted 29 patrols and visits during the reporting period. These included patrols in the Hays and Khawkah districts, under government control, and in the Durayhimi, Bayt al-faqih, Tuhayta' and Zabid districts, under Houthi control. Patrols at the front line have been augmented using geographic information system tools and improved data-collection methods on ceasefire violations. UNMHA continues to impress upon the Government the importance of regular patrolling for the monitoring of the ceasefire, while seeking to increase the number of patrols in Houthi-controlled districts close to the front line.

In a sign of continued support for monitoring activities, the government delegation to the Redeployment Coordination Committee maintained the provision of its ceasefire violation data to UNMHA, which it had recommenced in May 2023, after a pause of three years. From 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, a total of 36,386 ceasefire violations were reported by the parties. The overall trend aligns with the decrease in fighting in Hudaydah Governorate. However, the number of reported ceasefire violations remained constant, at around 80 to 100 per day, since September 2023 (see figure below). Ceasefire violations were predominantly the result of small arms fire, compounded occasionally by the use of heavier-calibre weapons. In addition, there has been a steady rise in artillery and mortar shelling in recent months, possibly correlating with increased drone reconnaissance activities. Houthi forces in particular have been intensifying their drone activities, suggesting their use in target acquisition preceding artillery and mortar attacks on positions held by government forces. Daily reporting by the parties indicates their commitment to the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and opportunities for continued engagement for de-escalation. At the same time, the daily breaches underline the potential for rapid military escalation and the necessity of UNMHA patrolling at the front line and in conflict-affected districts.

Number of reported ceasefire violations, by month, June 2023–May 2024



Coordination with Stockholm Agreement stakeholders

Coordination with Stockholm Agreement stakeholders remains paramount among UNMHA priorities. The relationship between UNMHA and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen is of primary importance and, where appropriate and within the Mission's mandate, all possible efforts are made to support the Special Envoy's endeavours for reaching a durable and lasting peace in Yemen. UNMHA also sought to reinforce its cooperation with the Resident Coordinator Office for Yemen and the United Nations country team. The Mission continued to work through established forums for the regular sharing of information and for collaborating on specific initiatives, where appropriate. That notably included logistical and operational support provided by UNMHA to the FSO *Safer* salvage operation, conducted between April and August 2023.

The period under review saw UNMHA initiate joint monitoring and assessment missions with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to conflict-affected districts in government-controlled areas in the southern districts of Hudaydah Governorate. These included missions to areas where humanitarian access was previously extremely limited, but which form a core part of the Mission's monitoring and patrolling efforts. The villages of Rawan and Haymah, for example, had previously been wholly inaccessible to the United Nations country team. The aim of those joint missions was to observe the humanitarian situation in those areas, in particular in relation to the conditions faced by internally displaced persons, and to identify risks and evaluate conflict dynamics. Local leaders and officials from the Government also joined some of the missions. The patrols demonstrated that villages in proximity to the front line in Hudaydah Governorate are in dire need of assistance in terms of water and sanitation, health, education, shelter and livelihood.

In late 2023, UNMHA began implementing its first quick-impact projects to enhance an enabling environment for its mandate delivery. Those projects have greatly increased opportunities for collaboration with the United Nations country

team on the ground. They also represent an important tool for UNMHA engagement with local authorities and communities. UNMHA has completed four quick-impact projects in the Khawkhah and Hays districts, which have benefited over 5,000 schoolchildren through improved learning environments and supported women through vocational training and capacity-building support for a local women's organization. Construction of a labour and delivery room at a clinic in Khawkhah and the rehabilitation of four classrooms in a school, also in Khawkhah, are expected to be completed in June 2024. UNMHA had initially encountered challenges in implementing quick-impact projects in Houthi-controlled areas, but the situation began to improve in 2024, after local authorities committed to supporting UNMHA in identifying priority projects.

UNMHA continued its mandated role of coordinating mine action efforts within Hudaydah Governorate, while supporting the Resident Coordinator Office in restructuring national mine action interventions following the conclusion of funding for the United Nations Development Programme mine action project in June 2023. That loss of resources had a significant impact on mine action activities across Yemen, in particular halting most demining operations in Houthi-controlled areas. It also had a noticeable effect in government-controlled areas, where international non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross were the only entities conducting clearance activities, through their own funding streams.

UNMHA has continuously sought to strengthen existing coordination efforts with local mine action authorities, international non-governmental demining organizations and the United Nations country team. Those efforts have seen close engagement and cooperation with both mine action coordination centres in Yemen, based in Aden and Sana'a, as UNMHA continues to further enhance its partnership with both entities to reduce the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on the civilian population of Hudaydah Governorate. Engagement with United Nations country team members on joint initiatives or coordination efforts related to mine action included activities with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNMHA deployed additional mine action capacity to Aden, to provide enhanced support to the Government of Yemen and to support progress in mine action in government-controlled areas of the governorate.

In addition, UNMHA continued to improve its comprehensive database for recording all incidents involving landmines and explosive remnants of war in Hudaydah Governorate and for publishing its monthly fact sheet on mine action, which covers mine action-related data and activities in the governorate. The fact sheet has proved to be a valuable resource for actors working on mine action in Yemen, further demonstrating the coordination role of UNMHA.

Observations

The Hudaydah Agreement and the activities of UNMHA remain essential elements to the long-term objectives of stability in the Hudaydah Governorate and lasting peace in Yemen, notwithstanding current regional tensions. The concerning rise of anti-Stockholm Agreement sentiment serves only to undermine the broader political process in Yemen and creates conditions for potential military escalations that could derail the progress made to date. I urge all parties to implement their commitments to the Hudaydah Agreement and to cooperate with the Mission in the delivery of its mandate.

Keeping the Red Sea ports fully operational is critical, given the deteriorating food and nutrition security and the re-emergence of cholera in Yemen. The flow of humanitarian assistance, medicine, food, fuel and other commercial goods into Yemen

through the Red Sea ports is not only essential to preventing a deterioration in humanitarian conditions in the country but also remains an integral building block for durable peace in Yemen. A return to direct military confrontation over the ports will only serve to plunge the population of Yemen into an even more dire situation and prolong a devastating conflict.

UNMHA continues to play a vital role in maintaining a liaison with the parties to the Hudaydah Agreement, by focusing on facilitating communication through the Redeployment Coordination Committee, the revitalization of which is critical to the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement, but which remains unfulfilled. UNMHA has remained resolute in its efforts to re-establish a joint Redeployment Coordination Committee mechanism and has provided the parties with space and opportunities to that end. UNMHA will continue its efforts in that regard and will provide all avenues possible for de-escalation and trust-building between the parties. The return of the Government to bilateral Redeployment Coordination Committee meetings and the resumption of reporting on ceasefire violation data have been important breakthroughs towards restoring the joint nature of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and its subsidiary mechanisms. Those steps also underscore the importance of the Mission's presence in monitoring breaches of the ceasefire, preventing escalation and deterring possible offensive operations by either party in Hudaydah Governorate.

UNMHA conducts its patrolling and monitoring in the face of severe restrictions on its freedom of movement imposed by the parties. I urge all parties to ensure unhindered access for the Mission throughout Hudaydah Governorate. The Houthis must enable unimpeded patrolling in the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa. Equally, patrolling by UNMHA in front-line areas under government control must not be subject to any further restrictions, with the Mission permitted to conduct regular patrols from the Khawkhah to Hays districts. UNMHA patrols in the Red Sea ports remain essential in serving as a deterrent to their militarization and in maintaining the civilian nature of the ports. Carrying out regular monitoring visits to the contested southern districts on both sides of the front line is also a crucial part of the Mission's role in maintaining oversight and preventing escalation in Hudaydah Governorate. Those visits have also been essential to building trust with communities living in these areas and to fostering confidence in the Hudaydah Agreement.

Reducing the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the civilian population of Hudaydah Governorate will remain a primary concern for UNMHA. The Mission's mine action coordination role was considerably enhanced over the past year, on both sides of the front line. Moreover, thanks to its technical expertise on mine action, UNMHA emerged as a resource on mine action issues for the entire United Nations family in Yemen. Fostering a safe environment in Hudaydah that is free from the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war is a critical part of the trajectory towards peace and stability in the governorate. The large number of victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war in Hudaydah Governorate, with a high proportion of those victims being children, is of particular concern.

Through implementing its first quick-impact projects, UNMHA has been able to strengthen its community engagement and build an inclusive base of support for the Hudaydah Agreement at the local level. The delivery of quick-impact projects has also created additional opportunities for cooperation with the United Nations country team and, through better access, helped to enhance an understanding of humanitarian needs in conflict-affected and front-line districts in Hudaydah Governorate. Moreover, the Mission's facilitation of two joint monitoring visits to the villages of Haymah and Rawan with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also represented an important contribution to that end, and further patrols are planned on the basis of developments on the ground. In order to actively consider gender-related aspects within Mission planning and mandate delivery and to advance the wider

women and peace and security agenda in Yemen, UNMHA continues its outreach with communities and local authorities and its cooperation with the United Nations country team, while prioritizing engagement with senior women officials in national-level bodies based in Aden. The Mission's efforts to engage with women leaders in areas under Houthi control have been met with significant challenges, but will continue nonetheless.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
