



Plenary sitting

B9-0123/2021

8.2.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen
(2021/2539(RSP))

Michael Gahler, David Lega, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Christian Sagartz
on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen (2021/2539(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Yemen, in particular those of 25 February 2016¹ and 15 June 2017² on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and of 9 July 2015³, 30 November 2017⁴ and 4 October 2018⁵ on the situation in Yemen,
 - having regard to the statement of 8 February 2021 by the spokesperson of the European External Action Service on the latest attacks by Ansar Allah,
 - having regard to the statement of 19 December 2020 by the spokesperson of the European External Action Service on the formation of the new Yemeni Government,
 - having regard to the annual report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of 28 September 2020 on the situation in Yemen,
 - having regard to the statement of 14 January 2021 by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen,
 - having regard to the statement of 14 January 2021 by the World Food Programme Executive Director,
 - having regard to the third report of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, entitled ‘Yemen: A Pandemic of Impunity in a Tortured Land’, which covers the period from July 2019 to June 2020,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the conflict in Yemen has been ongoing for six and a half years; whereas Yemen remains the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, with nearly 80 % of the population — more than 24 million people — in need of humanitarian support, including over 12 million children; whereas the situation on the ground continues to worsen as 50 000 Yemenis are already living in famine-like conditions, with 5 million more just one step away; whereas preventing famine remains the top priority right now;
- B. whereas the World Food Programme estimates that over 20 million people are food insecure, with malnutrition disproportionately affecting marginalised and at-risk groups;

¹ OJ C 35, 31.1.2018, p. 142.

² OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 146.

³ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 93.

⁴ OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 104.

⁵ OJ C 11, 13.1.2020, p. 44.

whereas there are currently 16 million people at risk of going hungry in the country;

- C. whereas access restrictions imposed by the parties to the conflict on humanitarian agencies and on food, medicine and fuel supplies, the further deterioration or destruction of water, sanitation and health infrastructure, flooding, the COVID-19 pandemic, the non-payment of salaries, currency depreciation and donor fatigue all further exacerbate the world's worst humanitarian crisis; whereas the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen is directly attributable to the conduct of the parties to the conflict;
- D. whereas UNICEF has warned that the number of children under the age of 5 who suffer from acute malnutrition could rise to 2.4 million in 2020; whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross has reported that 50 % of Yemeni children are experiencing irreversible stunted growth; whereas UNICEF warned in June 2020 that 7.8 million children had no access to education following COVID-19-related school closures and nearly 10 million did not have adequate access to water and sanitation;
- E. whereas the current lack of funding for international humanitarian aid complicates this situation, as the high-level pledging event held in Riyadh in June 2020 saw donors pledge only USD 1.35 billion of the USD 2.41 billion needed to cover essential humanitarian activities between June and December 2020; whereas the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director has stated that 'starting 1 February, because of the lack of funds, we will have to cut rations to 25 percent';
- F. whereas the Yemeni economy has shrunk by over 45 % since 2015 and is further worsened by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas the depreciation of the Yemeni rial has resulted in a reduced import capacity with severe consequences, as Yemen imports 90 % of its food along with most of its medicines and fuel necessities; whereas since August 2016, most of Yemen's 1.25 million public sector employees – and around 7 million of their dependents – have been left without a regular income; whereas the UN Panel of Experts has identified a 'sophisticated money-laundering scheme' by authorities that results in a 'windfall, at the expense of the Yemeni population' and is 'in violation of the right to food';
- G. whereas there are over 3.5 million internally displaced persons in Yemen, most of them women and children who face acute vulnerabilities, including 1.5 million in the Ma'rib Governorate alone who lack access to basic necessities and education;
- H. whereas approximately 112 000 people, of whom around 12 000 were civilians, have died as a direct result of hostilities since the current conflict started in 2015;
- I. whereas the UN has found that both Iranian-backed Houthi and coalition forces have violated international humanitarian law by attacking civilian targets; whereas the international community can and should take further initiatives to help bridge the acute accountability gap that persists in relation to the conflict in Yemen; whereas the UN Group of Eminent Experts calls on the Security Council to refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court and to expand the list of persons subject to Security Council sanctions;
- J. whereas, in its third report entitled 'A Pandemic of Impunity in a Tortured Land', the

UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen detailed serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including airstrikes that fail to abide by the principles of distinction, proportionality and/or precaution, indiscriminate artillery attacks, the impeding of humanitarian relief supplies and access to food and healthcare, injuries and deaths from landmines, arbitrary detentions, torture and enforced disappearances, widespread displacement, assaults on civil society and religious minorities, recruitment and use of children, gender-based violence and endemic impunity;

- K. whereas the EU remains committed to continuing to deliver life-saving aid to all people in need in Yemen; whereas, at the same time, the EU shares the concerns of the UN and other donors about the continuing shrinking of humanitarian space; whereas, since the beginning of the conflict in 2015, the EU has allocated EUR 896 million to respond to the crisis in Yemen, including EUR 553 million in humanitarian aid and EUR 318 million in development assistance;
- L. whereas the situation in Yemen carries grave risks for the stability of the region, in particular that of the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the wider Middle East;
- M. whereas during the Arab Spring in 2011 the Houthis expanded their influence and drew support from other groups across the country that also rejected President Saleh's regime; whereas during the transition of power from President Saleh to President Hadi the Houthis took part in the 'National Dialogue Conference' (NDC) that proposed a federal division of Yemen into six regions;
- N. whereas although well-received by the majority of political factions, the Houthis and elements of the Southern Movement objected to the way some of the regional lines were drawn; whereas peaceful dialogue was short-lived as the Houthis took advantage of instability in the interim government in early 2014 and launched a new attack from the north, reaching as far as the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014;
- O. whereas analysts largely agree that, by failing to pursue an inclusive political path, Yemen has been locked in rising tribal and political tensions and a bitter proxy war between Iranian-backed Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia, bringing the wider region directly into a complex conflict; whereas Saudi Arabia perceives Houthi rebels in Yemen as a proxy Iranian force, while Iran has condemned the Saudi-led offensive and called for an immediate halt to Saudi-led airstrikes;
- P. whereas the EU is concerned about reports of renewed attacks carried out by Ansar Allah in the Ma'rib and Al-Jawf Governorates, as well as repeated attempts to make cross-border attacks on the territory of Saudi Arabia; whereas the renewed military action and offensives at this particular time seriously undermine ongoing efforts by UN Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, as well as the overall efforts to bring the war in Yemen to an end;
- Q. whereas a stable, secure Yemen with a properly functioning government is critical to international efforts to combat extremism and violence in the region and beyond, as well as to peace and stability within Yemen itself;
- R. whereas on 4 February 2021 US President Joe Biden announced the end of US support

to Saudi Arabia's military operations in Yemen, a policy that began under former President Barack Obama and continued through the Trump administration, and, to underscore this commitment, declared the end of relevant arms sales and named a new envoy to oversee the nation's diplomatic mission to end the civil war;

- S. whereas the announcement of a new Yemeni Government as part of the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement in December 2020 is a positive step towards a comprehensive political solution for the country; whereas Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, the internationally recognised government (IRG) president, appointed a new 24-member cabinet to rule a joint coalition with the Southern Transitional Council (STC), in compliance with that agreement – which is a Saudi-brokered power-sharing arrangement – but did not regrettably include any women amongst its members for the first time in over 20 years; whereas a new dispute has broken out between the IRG and the STC over a judicial appointment, confirming the instability of the joint government; whereas renewed military conflict has also erupted between IRG forces (supported by a Saudi-led coalition) and the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in de facto authority in the north, near Hodeidah, a vital Red Sea port, further disrupting the flows of desperately needed imports;
 - T. whereas the UN's special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, claimed in his latest briefing that the regional mood was conducive to reviving the moribund peace process, but warned that the US's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organisation in January would severely affect his ability to engage with the parties;
 - U. whereas criminal and terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and so-called ISIS/Daesh have been able to benefit from the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen; whereas on 4 February 2021 the United Nations disclosed that the leader of Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen has been under arrest for several months, a development that may have opened up a goldmine of information for counterterrorism agencies in their campaign against the global Al-Qaeda network;
 - V. whereas the protracted crisis in Yemen combined with the impact of COVID-19, which exacerbates existing social, economic and structural vulnerabilities, has dramatically increased humanitarian needs in the country, making the application of the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus essential;
- 1. Condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing violence in Yemen since 2015, which has degenerated into the worst humanitarian crisis in the world;
 - 2. Notes that security is an essential precondition for sustainable development;
 - 3. Calls on all parties to comprehensively cease hostilities and to work urgently to achieve a sustainable and inclusive peace through a sustained and effective political and peace process that includes the full involvement of women, young people and minority groups;
 - 4. Condemns the recent attacks carried out by Ansar Allah in the Ma'rib and Al-Jawf Governorates, as well as the repeated attempts to make cross-border attacks on the territory of Saudi Arabia, which undermine the international community's overall efforts to bring this proxy war in Yemen to an end;

5. Calls on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to end any measures that exacerbate the current humanitarian crisis, these being particularly amplified by the fact that this is a proxy war; calls on them, in particular, to cease attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the population, and to take all necessary steps to remove disproportionate restrictions on the safe and expeditious entry into Yemen of humanitarian supplies and other goods indispensable to the civilian population via Sana'a International Airport, to ensure the full and smooth functioning of key ports such as Aden and Hodeidah, to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, and to take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of the right to an adequate standard of living, in particular for women and children; demands an immediate end to all acts of violence committed against civilians in violation of applicable international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and that all necessary measures be taken to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure;
6. Calls for the immediate release of all persons who have been arbitrarily detained and, where possible, of detainees who are at risk of contracting COVID-19; demands that the rights of detainees be respected, including the right not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment and the right to a fair trial;
7. Issues a strong call for an end to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, including those in detention; calls on the EU, in this respect, to ensure specific funding for local women-led and women's rights organisations to better reach women, girls and gender-based violence survivors, as well as for programmes dedicated to achieving women's resilience and economic empowerment;
8. Calls on all parties to the conflict to end the recruitment and use of children as soldiers in the armed conflict and to further ensure the demobilisation and effective disarmament of boys and girls recruited or used in hostilities, and urges them to release those captured and to cooperate with the UN with a view to implementing effective programmes for their rehabilitation, physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society;
9. Expresses grave concern at the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen and the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict on civilians, and condemns all attacks on civilians; expresses grave distress at the level of violence in Yemen;
10. Recognises that the current economic downturn is one of the main drivers of humanitarian needs in Yemen; reiterates that the parties to the conflict must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and refrain from using the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; calls, to this end, on the European Union and all Member States to provide an economic rescue package for Yemen, including foreign exchange injections to help stabilise the economy and the Yemeni rial and to prevent further food price rises, as well as the provision of foreign reserves to subsidise commercial imports of food and fuel and to pay public salaries;
11. Calls on all parties to the conflict to take the necessary measures to ensure effective, impartial and independent investigations into all alleged violations and abuses of human

rights and alleged violations of international humanitarian law, and to establish a procedure whereby individuals can report disappearances, ensuring that reports are investigated independently, efforts are undertaken to find the victims and perpetrators are held accountable;

12. Is deeply concerned about reports of the denial of freedom of religion or belief, including discrimination, unlawful detention and the use of violence, calls for the rights to freedom of expression and belief to be respected and protected, and condemns discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, notably in cases concerning the distribution of humanitarian aid;
13. Is deeply concerned about the continued presence in Yemen of criminal and terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS/Daesh; calls on all parties to the conflict to take resolute action against such groups;
14. Welcomes the decision by US President Joe Biden to ensure US support for the United Nations' initiative to impose a ceasefire, open humanitarian channels and restore long-dormant peace talks; welcomes Saudi Arabia's support for a 'comprehensive political solution' in Yemen after President Joe Biden ended US support for the kingdom's military campaign in the country, and salutes the fact that Iranian-backed Houthi rebels welcomed these plans too, saying it was a step towards ending the long conflict;
15. Supports the efforts of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, to advance the political process and achieve an immediate nationwide ceasefire; calls for the Special Envoy to be given full and unhindered access to all parts of the territory of Yemen; urges the EU and Member States to continue engaging with all parties to the conflict and to assert the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and the UN draft political declaration;
16. Welcomes the fact that the EU will continue to provide development assistance to Yemen, prioritising interventions aimed at stabilising the country, and will work in stable areas with local authorities to promote resilience, to help maintain the provision of basic services and to foster sustainable livelihoods for communities, as well as the fact that the EU has pledged over EUR 114 million; urges the international community to cover the existing humanitarian funding gap at the upcoming 2021 Yemen Pledging Conference;
17. Calls on the Commission to increase the coordination of humanitarian and development actors, and calls for prioritisation of the triple nexus approach in addressing the crisis in Yemen;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Government of Yemen.