

Yemen

By Júlia Palik

Between 1989 and 2018, Yemen saw two major conflicts: one over territory and one over government.¹ In 1990, South Yemen (former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) and North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic) united, forming the Republic of Yemen. In 1994, the secessionist Democratic Republic of Yemen tried to re-establish an independent South Yemen, but the movement was defeated by North Yemen.

The primary government conflict involves the Zaydi Shia Houthi rebels (Ansarallah) and the Government of Yemen (GoY), as of June 2019, headed by Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Between 2004 and 2009 Ansarallah fought six rounds of wars (Saada wars) against the GoY headed by the then President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The localized conflict was in this period waged mostly in the northern governorate of Saada, the original stronghold of the rebel movement. Ansarallah stated that the movement was fighting the government over socio-economic and political grievances. In 2009, Saudi Arabia became involved in the conflict in support of the government. The

sixth round of the Saada wars ended with a ceasefire in July 2010, but no peace agreement was signed.

In 2011, as part of the region-wide Arab Uprisings, popular youth protest erupted in Yemen. Various opposition groups joined the protest against the 33-year long rule of Saleh. In 2012, in response to the developing insecurity, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the UN brokered a transition plan through which the former Vice President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi became president. In 2014, Ansarallah took over the capital Sanaa. The group demanded the government to step down and dissolved the

Overview Box

- Between 1989 and 2018, there were 59 ceasefires.
 - 12 of these were related to the conflict over territory between the Government of Yemen (GoY) and the Democratic Republic of Yemen. 8 were declared unilaterally and 4 bilaterally.
 - 29 ceasefires were related to incompatibility fought over government. Among these, 2 were declared unilaterally, 25 bilaterally, and 2 multilaterally.
 - 18 ceasefires were concluded between non-state actors.
- 28 ceasefires were related to different peace processes.
- 6 out of the 28 peace process related ceasefires were concluded between non-state actors.
- 42 ceasefires involved mediators.
 - The most frequent mediators were Qatar, Saudi Arabia, US and two organizations: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the United Nations.
 - 5 ceasefires were mediated by internal actors.
 - In case of non-state ceasefires 9 of the 18 ceasefires were mediated by Yemeni tribal leaders.

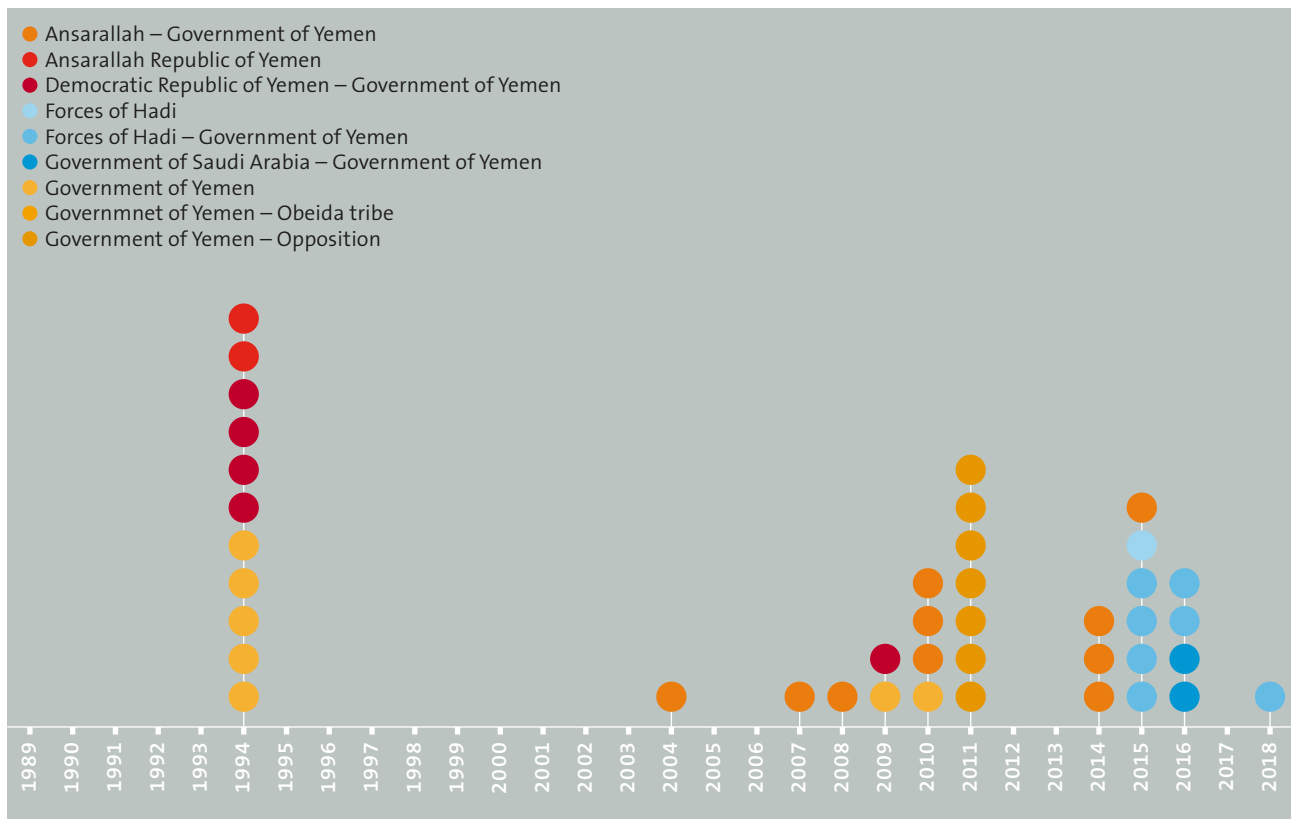


Figure 1: Ceasefires between the GoY and non-state actors in Yemen between 1989 and 2018

parliament in 2015. Subsequently, it established the Supreme Revolutionary Council, which forced Hadi to resign and flee to Aden and then to Riyadh. As a response to these events, in March 2015, the Saudi Arabian-led coalition intervened militarily with the stated goal of restoring the legitimate government of Hadi and reversing the territorial gains of the Houthis (which they accuse of being an Iranian-funded military force). The coalition receives weapons as well as logistical and intelligence support from major powers like the US, UK, and France. As of June 2019, the conflict is ongoing.

Ceasefires and Peace Processes

Ceasefires in the civil conflict in Yemen can be clustered along three distinct phases of the peace processes (cf. Figure 1). Non-state ceasefires are treated separately at the end of this report.

The *first phase* is the Qatar mediated peace process during the Sadaa wars (2007–2009). In May 2007, Saleh invited the Qatari Emir to help find a solution to the conflict with Ansarallah. In June 2007, Qatari mediation efforts resulted in a joint ceasefire agreement, which lasted for six months until fighting renewed. The February 2008 Doha Agreement envisioned a more comprehensive solution for the conflict and included provisions for the Yemeni government to release prisoners, grant amnesties, and to reconstruct war-torn areas. The agreement also set out the terms under which the Houthis would disarm. To sweeten the deal, Qatar offered political asylum to rebel

leaders and USD 500 million reconstruction assistance for Saada Province. In May 2009, Saleh declared Qatari mediation to be a failure due to disagreements over the disbursement of reconstruction funds and withdrew the promised investments. Fighting continued until the 13th of July 2010 when the Doha Agreement and the ceasefire were “re-activated” by the parties.

The *second phase* is the GCC and UN mediated transition process (2011). This period did not exclusively center on the Ansarallah-GoY dyad, but aimed at negotiating the peaceful transition of power from former President Ali Abdullah Saleh to a new unity government. Three mediators were involved in the second phase: the GCC, the UN, and the EU. The mediators sought to negotiate the transition of government power, but the overall framework was set by the GCC Initiative of 2011. In 2011, when the Arab Uprisings reached Yemen, at least three distinct conflicts culminated: The elite struggle in the capital city of Sanaa between the Saleh-led General People’s Congress (GPC) and the opposition (Joint Meeting Parties), the Ansarallah-GoY conflict, and the independence movement in southern Yemen. Large protests led by the Yemeni youth and civil society were accompanying these. The GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, offered mediation services, as a response to the violent escalation of the Yemeni conflict in its immediate neighborhood. The Gulf Initiative, a two-page document, demanded Saleh to step down and envisioned the establishment of a unity government consisting of the GPC and the opposition parties dominated by the

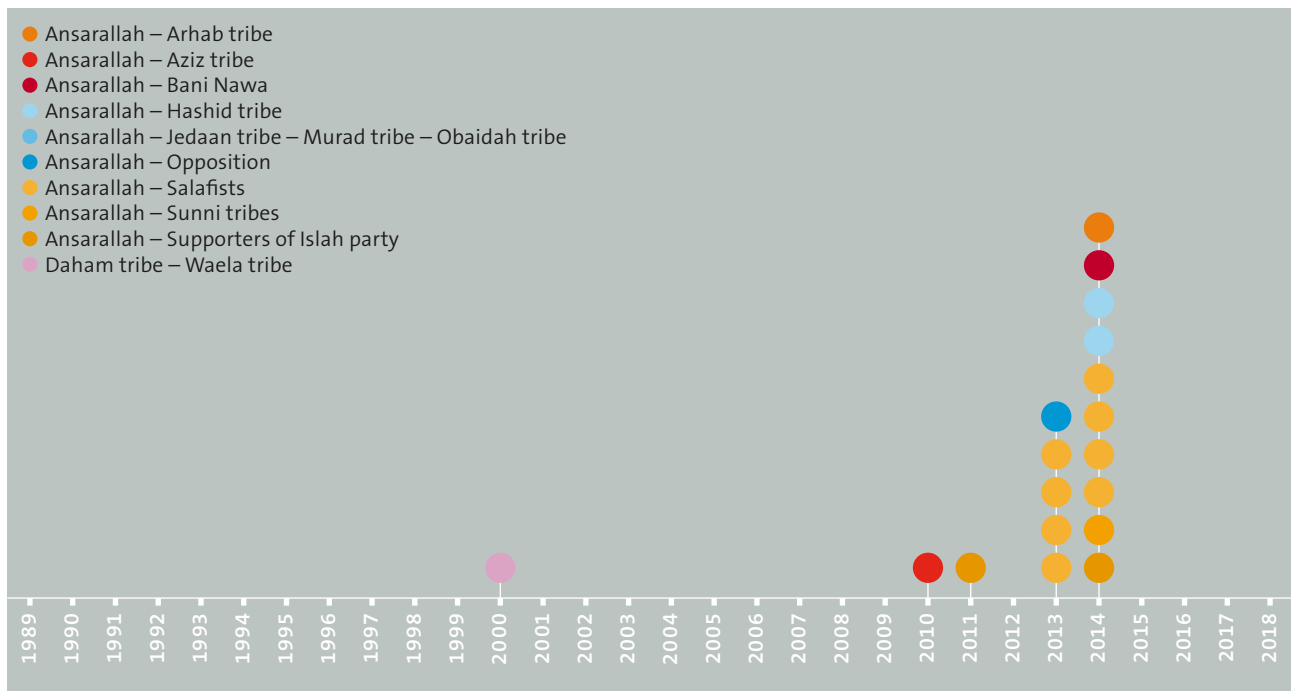


Figure 2: Ceasefires between non-state actors in Yemen between 1989-2018

Sunni reformist Islah-party. After months of protracted protests and negotiations, Saleh agreed to resign in exchange for immunity. In 2011, eight ceasefires were concluded between the GoY and the following non-state actors: JMP, Sadiq al-Ahmar tribe, and forces of General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar. These actors are referred to as “Opposition” in Figure 1.

In November 2011, the government and the opposition parties signed the *Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council* (Implementation Mechanism), led by UN Special Representative Jamal Benomar. The Implementation Mechanism placed former Vice President Hadi in power as an interim president and also included measures on security sector reform, transitional justice, and the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC (2013–2014) was tasked with reaching national consensus on a new political system for Yemen by including all previously marginalized groups, such as Ansarallah, the Southern Movement, women, youth, and civil society. After the conclusion of the NDC, the security situation rapidly deteriorated. In early September 2014, former President Saleh and his military allies joined forces with Ansarallah. This step marked a significant shift in the balance of power and Ansarallah was able to capture Sanaa. In 2014, three ceasefires were concluded between the GoY and Ansarallah mediated by the UN. As a last attempt to reverse the developments on the ground, Benomar brokered a ceasefire as part of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) between Hadi and Ansarallah. The PNPA was not implemented.

The *third phase* are the UN-led peace processes since March 2015. Since 2015, two UN Special Represent-

atives tried to find a negotiated end to the conflict. In April 2015, Benomar was replaced by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, whose term saw the conclusion of five short-lived preliminary ceasefires. Following the Saudi intervention, the conflict drastically escalated and ceasefire implementation continuously failed. The June and December 2015 talks in Geneva and the April to August 2016 talks in Kuwait were both preceded by ceasefires but did not produce any tangible results.

After the conclusion of the 90 day talks in Kuwait (August 2016), the then US State of Secretary John Kerry stepped in to find a political solution to the conflict. In November 2016, the Hadi government refused to sign the Kerry-plan because of fears that it would be politically sidelined. After this meeting, Ansarallah refused to engage in any subsequent mediation effort until the peace process in Stockholm. Between 2015 and 2018, ten ceasefires aimed to create a space for the delivery of humanitarian aid. The majority of these ceasefires were announced by Saudi Arabia and not the GoY. Ceasefires in this period have not been monitored by a third party.

In December 2018, after a two-year deadlock, the third UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, managed to bring the GoY and Ansarallah together. The parties signed the Stockholm Agreement that consists of three separate agreements, one of them being a ceasefire in the port city of Hodeidah and a handover of the three Red Sea ports (Hodeidah, Al-Salif, and Ras Isa) to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.² The Stockholm Agreement was accompanied by Security Council Resolutions 2451 and 2452 that both endorsed the agreement and established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) to oversee

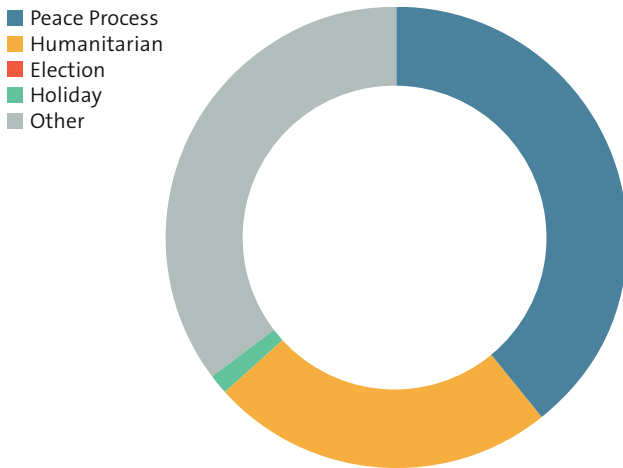


Figure 3: Ceasefires by purpose

the implementation of the agreement for an initial period of six months. As of June 2019, the ceasefire appears to hold.

Ceasefires Outside the Peace Processes

31 ceasefires were not related to peace processes, but had other stated objectives (cf. Figure 3). Eight of these 31 ceasefires were declared to allow humanitarian aid to enter the war-torn areas. These ceasefires were often explicitly limited in their duration and declared for two to five days. Interestingly, only one ceasefire was declared in observance of a Muslim religious holiday in 1994. In 2016, fighting between Ansarallah and Saudi Arabia reached the Saudi

border area. The Saudis and Ansarallah negotiated a ceasefire for prisoner-exchange purposes. The shortest ceasefire was declared for three hours in 1994 by the GoY.

Non-State Ceasefires

The 2011–2015 period saw 16 non-state ceasefires (cf. Figure 2). These ceasefires have been concluded between Ansarallah the Salafists, the Sadiq al-Ahmar tribe, and multiple smaller loosely organized tribes. Notably, these ceasefires and their location overlapped with Ansarallah's territorial expansion. The military and territorial expansion was primarily due to the Saleh–Ansarallah alliance. It ended in 2017 when Saleh was killed by Ansarallah because he showed readiness to enter into negotiations with Saudi Arabia.

Endnotes

1. Note: UCDP has not included data on the conflict between the GoY and Ansarallah before 2015 due to the lack of a stated incompatibility. According to UCDP, “the conflict between the government and Ansarallah was for several years not included in UCDP data due to the lack of a stated incompatibility. The UCDP definitions states that the incompatibility, or the conflict issue, can be either concerning government (the type of the political system, the replacement of the central government) or territory (secession or autonomy for intrastate conflicts). Ansarallah has persistently claimed that they don't want to overthrow the sitting government. Instead, the group has stated that it want the government to end what they perceive as socioeconomic injustices and the governments political discrimination of the group and the Huthi tribe. On 9 March 2014, however, the leader of the group, Abd-al-Malik al-Huthi, called on the government to step down. The leader cited what the group perceived as the governments failure to improve living standards in the country as well as corruption as reasons for its call for resignation.” UCDP: Ansarallah, downloaded from: <https://ucdp.uu.se/#/actor/1091> 03.06.2019
2. The other two agreements concern the exchange of prisoners and the establishment of humanitarian corridors in war-torn Taiz.

Ceasefire Country Reports are part of the Ceasefire Project, a collaboration between the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, and the Peace Research Institute in Oslo. They provide short summaries of the role played by ceasefires in civil conflict. All analyses are based on the ETH/PRIO Ceasefire Dataset.

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