



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
14 June 2022

Original: English

---

## Letter dated 13 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Security Council, in its resolution [2586 \(2021\)](#), 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 15 July 2022. The Mission, established pursuant to paragraph 1 of 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 4 June 2021 ([S/2021/528](#)), UNMHA stepped up its political engagement strategy in order to encourage the parties to the Agreement to return to the Redeployment Coordination Committee and its joint mechanisms following the suspension on 12 March 2020 by the Government of Yemen of its participation in the Committee, which it has yet to resume. The Mission continued its efforts to support implementation of the ceasefire, including by expanding its monitoring reach and advancing mine action on the ground. Following the unilateral withdrawal of the joint forces of the Government of Yemen from Hudaydah on 12 November 2021 and the significant shift of the front line to the southern districts of Hudaydah Governorate, achieving those objectives remains essential to maintaining the stability of Hudaydah and, most vitally, maintaining the functioning of the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa.

Since the withdrawal, UNMHA has responded with agility and realigned its approach, priorities and footprint in response to the altered operational environment, with a view to: (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 working with the parties to calibrate implementation of the Agreement in the altered context.

As a result of this major shift in the military landscape, which has been amplified by broader developments, including the two-month-long nationwide truce that commenced on 2 April 2022 and was then extended on 2 June for an additional two months, along with the change in the Government of Yemen leadership on 7 April 2022, the Mission has recorded a marked decline in the number of ceasefire violations and offensive operations across the governorate, with overall stability in Hudaydah city. Those developments have led to an increase in civilian movement and a marked shift away from a mainly military focus by local authorities on the ground.

As a result, space has opened for the Mission to work with the parties to support confidence-building measures on both sides of the front line and take a lead role in



coordinating mine action with stakeholders, including by providing technical expertise to address significant explosive remnants of war contamination in Hudaydah. Another benefit has been increased freedom of movement, which has enabled the Mission to develop an expanded patrol plan and gain increased access to areas in Hudaydah city that the local authorities had previously prevented it from entering.

### **Military and political dynamics**

From 3 June to 11 November 2021, there were active hostilities in 6 of the city's 26 districts, including the eastern and southern outskirts of Hudaydah city. The city, however, experienced some stability during that period in comparison with previous months, with a decline in the level and frequency of hostilities. The conflict was centred in the southern districts of Hudaydah Governorate, where fighting was persistent, in particular at vulnerable points on the west coast highway.

During that period, political dynamics were dominated by the leader of the National Resistance and recently appointed Deputy President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Brigadier General Tareq Saleh. Military forces on the west coast were restructured, integrating components of the Government of Yemen joint forces, as well as hundreds of Tihami fighters, under the command of Tareq Saleh. It was reported that there were internal disputes in the joint forces during the integration, sparking incidents of civil unrest and armed clashes in the southern districts of the Governorate. In parallel, the Political Bureau of the National Resistance took steps to establish itself as a new entity in the country's political arena.

This period also saw efforts by the Houthis (who also call themselves Ansar Allah) to advance their military operations on other fronts outside of Hudaydah, in particular in Ma'rib and Shabwah. Those efforts gave rise to a heightened "anti-Stockholm Agreement" sentiment among some in the Government of Yemen, who issued unilateral statements in which they asserted that the Hudaydah Agreement protected a status quo in the west that enabled the Houthis to deploy additional personnel and resources on other fronts.

In the early hours of 12 November 2021, the Government of Yemen joint forces unilaterally withdrew from their positions across large parts of Hudaydah Governorate. The withdrawal was conducted without coordination with or the prior knowledge of the United Nations. The joint forces redeployed to new positions in the south of the governorate and reportedly reinforced fronts in Tai'zz and the south of Yemen. Houthi forces immediately took control of most of the vacated areas, from Hudaydah city to Tuhayta' district in the south of the governorate. The redeployment led to a major shift of the front line, to the southern districts of the governorate, an indication that military priorities had changed.

The unilateral withdrawal sparked reactions from certain components of the joint forces, some of which expressed opposition to the move, while the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Yemen indicated that the Government had not been aware of the operation. On 15 November, the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, which is led by Saudi Arabia, issued a statement describing the withdrawal as part of a military strategy to support other fronts. Meanwhile, the Houthis reasserted control over the local administration in the vacated areas of Hudaydah Governorate that they now occupy.

In the aftermath of the withdrawal, areas in the vicinity of the new front line and southern districts saw high levels of fighting, including a significant increase in aerial activity as the parties sought to consolidate their new front lines. Hostilities declined noticeably in the period after the withdrawal; although new hotspots emerged, the conflict was focused in the southern districts of Hays and Tuhayta'. Since the

withdrawal, Hudaydah city and the ports have seen a significant reduction in conflict. However, notable incidents occurred in the first quarter of 2022. For example, on several occasions, regional actors alleged that the Houthis had utilized the ports to launch waterborne improvised explosive devices into the Red Sea. It was reported that 24 air strikes targeting areas within and around Hudaydah city and its ports were carried out on 20 January and 26 March in response.

Throughout the reporting period, ceasefire violations continued to have a significant impact on the local population and residential areas, in particular during the period following the withdrawal and spikes of escalation in Hudaydah city. An estimated 106 civilians, of whom at least 3 were women and 32 were children, were killed and another 244 were injured, among whom were 24 women and 47 children.

The dramatically shifted dynamics following the withdrawal also gave rise to an urgent need to make progress in mine action in Hudaydah. Incidents involving landmines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices, soared because of the population's increased access to areas that were formerly under military control. Since the withdrawal of the joint forces on 12 November 2021 and up to and including 30 May 2022, the Mission recorded 69 incidents across the Governorate that were caused by those hazards, resulting in an estimated 67 civilians killed, including 1 woman and 15 children, and another 74 injured, including 5 women and 22 children. Mine incidents are one of the most significant risks to the protection of civilians.

UNMHA has closely monitored the impact of the nationwide truce mediated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. Since that truce went into effect on 2 April 2022, there has been a noticeable shift in the situation, with a cessation of large-scale attacks and offensive operations. By 8 June 2022, a total of 18 vessels carrying fuel had entered Hudaydah port, both during the lead-up to the truce and after it went into effect, bringing noticeable relief to the population in Hudaydah city and the surrounding areas, with fuel being readily accessible on the public market. The Mission continues to closely coordinate with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen with respect to the national situation.

### **Redeployment Coordination Committee and its de-escalation mechanisms**

To secure a sustained resumption of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, the most significant implementation and coordination mechanism of the Hudaydah Agreement, the Mission continued to focus on: (a) bringing the parties back to dialogue through a proposed joint, face-to-face meeting as the most immediate objective; and (b) addressing issues raised by the Government of Yemen with respect to implementation of the Agreement, including to ensure that the Mission has the ability to equally access the territory controlled by both sides in Hudaydah.

Between July and October 2021, efforts to narrow the gap between the parties and advance those objectives continued through several engagements both at the military and political levels. Specifically, engagement efforts with both sides focused on making progress towards agreement on three core issues: (a) the relocation of UNMHA headquarters to the Hudaydah airport, which is equally accessible to both sides; (b) the request to address the concerns of the Government of Yemen regarding the killing of its liaison officer on the Hudaydah front line following the shooting incident of 13 March 2020; and (c) the location for a joint meeting (sites in the region and in Europe have been proposed).

With regard to the planned relocation of UNMHA headquarters, a subject that I addressed in my previous review (S/2021/528), the Mission presented the parties with an operational plan and a revised phased concept of operations for redeployment.

While both sides agreed in principle to what is set out in those documents, there were certain areas of disagreement, in particular with regard to the sequencing of events. To advance the discussion, UNMHA attempted to convene a joint meeting, but its efforts were unsuccessful.

Progress in that regard halted following the withdrawal of the Government of Yemen joint forces, and efforts shifted to immediate engagement with both parties and other interlocutors in order to gain a thorough understanding of their new positions following the withdrawal and of any implications for the Hudaydah Agreement. While differing positions were presented, in particular by components of the joint forces, the Mission, through its engagement with the Co-Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, was able to confirm that the Government remained committed to the Stockholm Agreement. Similarly, engagements with the Houthis revealed: (a) a firm commitment to the Hudaydah Agreement and its implementation and to the Redeployment Coordination Committee; (b) the expectations that UNMHA and the United Nations country team should be heavily involved in supporting humanitarian efforts, in particular mine action; and (c) a commitment to increased cooperation and enhancing the Mission's freedom of movement.

The new Head of UNMHA, who took up his post on 23 January 2022, has built on these efforts and focused on broadening consultation with the parties, influential local and regional actors and the international community, with a view to engaging on measures to further the implementation of the Agreement. Those consultations have centred on proposals to re-establish liaison channels, with the support of UNMHA teams co-located with each party on the ground that are focused on broadening local-level participation, with a view to ensuring that community-related priorities and concerns are taken into account. The channels will be used for de-escalation and collaboration on mine action and to support confidence-building measures.

In parallel, the Head of Mission has sought to make progress towards an agreement with regard to a proposal for the immediate establishment of an UNMHA presence in Government-controlled territory south of the new front line, in order to ensure that the Mission is equally accessible and can provide impartial assistance to both parties for the full implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement, and to realign the Mission's footprint. Following the change in the leadership of the Government of Yemen and the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council on 7 April 2022, the Head of Mission met and engaged with Council members, including the Deputy President, Brigadier General Tareq Saleh. As a result of those engagements, the Mission developed a concrete plan for strengthening its relationship with the Government of Yemen, including through the establishment of a permanent UNMHA presence in Mukha', which is the joint forces' centre of operations on the west coast.

### **Monitoring the ceasefire and maintaining civilian nature of the ports**

The Mission continued to monitor the ceasefire throughout the reporting period. In that regard, it has made sustained efforts to expand its reach, gain access to conflict-affected areas and, in close coordination with Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, engage the parties at all levels to de-escalate fighting where increased conflict occurred. Although the Mission's freedom of movement has remained subject to major constraints, stemming largely from the continued suspension of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and the restrictions on movement imposed by the Houthis, UNMHA has made some inroads on that score, gaining increased access to the ports and enhancing its ability to reach locations within Hudaydah city and the southern districts. That development has strengthened the Mission's monitoring and situational awareness in those areas and, thanks to its increased presence, has served as a confidence-building measure.

At the outset of the reporting period, following negotiations and the conclusion of an agreement with the Government of Yemen, and after notifying the Houthis, the Mission conducted road assessments in Government-controlled territory, running from Hays to Khawkhah in the south of the governorate and along the west coast highway to Manzar district, south of Hudaydah city. Those road assessments marked the first time that UNMHA had gained access to districts south of Hudaydah city since its inception. The purpose of the assessments was to enhance the situational awareness, mobility and operational radius of UNMHA and the United Nations country team in areas that had been hard to reach. The road assessment missions visited critical hotspots and enabled UNMHA to obtain a first-hand overview of the former front line, including military positions, and record the changes that have occurred in comparison to what the parties had reported in 2019.

Since the withdrawal of the joint forces, UNMHA has visited large parts of the former front line and carried out three assessment missions to districts south of Hudaydah city, including in the areas of Durayhimi, Jah and Tuhayta'. Those visits enabled the Mission to assess the clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war on main roads, the resumption of traffic resulting from the opening of the main route to Sana'a, road conditions and the humanitarian situation.

To address the changed situation in Hudaydah, UNMHA developed an expanded patrol plan designed to ensure its daily access to ports at all port installations and to conflict-affected areas in the southern districts of Hudaydah. Following extended negotiation, the Houthis have agreed to facilitate implementation of this plan in areas under their control, with priority given to increased access to the ports. Patrolling the ports and supporting the parties to maintain the civilian character of the ports has been a core priority for the Mission, in particular following escalations earlier in 2022 and allegations that the ports were being used for military purposes. In support of landmine and explosive remnants of war surveys, UNMHA has conducted regular patrols in contaminated locations in Hudaydah city that pose a high risk to the local population. In addition, it has consistently sought to gain access to sites where significant ceasefire incidents occurred, with a view to verifying and assessing the impact on the ground.

The establishment of a permanent UNMHA presence in Mukha' will further enable it to gain access to conflict areas from the south.

### **Coordination with Stockholm Agreement stakeholders**

UNMHA has continued to coordinate with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other partners to provide all possible assistance and ensure a unified understanding in support of the Hudaydah Agreement. As part of that effort, the Mission has advocated in favour of humanitarian passage to areas of need and supported the resolution of issues affecting the local population. UNMHA, working through an established forum for regular exchange of information with the United Nations country team, was able to regularly provide the country team with situational awareness briefings on the evolving dynamics on the ground, in particular in the immediate aftermath of the withdrawal of the joint forces. In furtherance of the Hudaydah Agreement, the Mission, in close coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported the development of infrastructure-related projects aimed at delivering peace dividends to rural communities on both sides of the front line. However, implementation of those projects has stalled because of the shifts in territorial control following the withdrawal of the joint forces.

UNMHA, through its mine action adviser, has assumed a lead mine action coordination role in Hudaydah Governorate and established a mine action coordination mechanism comprising the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre,

UNDP, the United Nations Children’s Fund and other partners on the ground. This mechanism is designed to provide targeted technical expertise to the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre and stakeholders and to develop and implement a coherent strategic plan to support Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre activities, including to promote rapid information-sharing on mine incidents, identify and survey mined areas, strengthen mine education and awareness, with a focus on women and children, and support safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. Since April 2022, UNMHA, in coordination with UNDP and the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre, has conducted landmine and explosive remnants of war surveys in five suspected high-risk areas and a plan is being developed to advance immediate measures to mark identified mine fields and intensify explosive risk ordinance education. In parallel, the Mission continues to conduct mine action advocacy through its high-level engagements and social media platforms.

To promote local engagement with women, UNMHA completed a comprehensive mapping of female activists and community-led organizations on both sides of the front line, with a view to increasing women’s participation in the implementation of the Agreement and locally led peace initiatives.

UNMHA has supported the United Nations project to address the deteriorating condition of the floating storage and offloading vessel *Safer*, which is moored off the coast of Hudaydah. To that end, the Mission has provided, inter alia, facilitation support for the activities of the United Nations project team through the Mission’s liaison system with local actors, as well as logistical and information support for the project team during its initial visit to Hudaydah in February 2022. Since that time, UNMHA and the *Safer* project team have continued to hold discussion, with a view to the potential provision by the Mission of additional support for future operations.

### **Operations during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic**

While the Mission continued to operate under strict COVID-19 protocols, in line with United Nations country team and World Health Organization guidance, the impact of COVID-19 on UNMHA operations eased considerably in the reporting period. Following a significant decrease in operating capacity at the height of the pandemic in 2020 and in the first half of 2021, the Mission has increased its footprint, with a particular emphasis on increasing the number of monitors to enable it to expand the reach of its patrols. In addition, UNMHA continued to mainstream lessons learned to ensure that best practices to mitigate risks are integrated into its operations.

More than 95 per cent of Mission staff (both international and national) have been vaccinated against COVID-19 following the roll-out of the vaccine. In addition, measures have been taken to ensure that the families of national staff and contractors have access to the vaccine. As a result of those efforts, UNMHA can conduct its operations with a significantly reduced risk to both staff and the local population.

### **Observations**

Three radical shifts have altered the military and political landscape in the Mission’s area of operations. The first was the withdrawal of the joint forces from Hudaydah city and large parts of Hudaydah Governorate on 12 November 2021. The second was the transfer of power from the former President, Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, and Vice-President of Yemen and the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council, which includes among its membership the two most influential commanders on the west coast. The third was the implementation of the two-month-long United Nations-brokered truce, which commenced on 2 April 2022 and was then extended for an additional two months on 2 June, and related efforts to work towards a sustained ceasefire. Those shifts are providing new opportunities for reducing

violence and advancing stability and confidence-building on the west coast in support of the Special Envoy's efforts to achieve a comprehensive and inclusive political solution across Yemen. The most critical priorities are set out below.

Supporting the parties' efforts to maintain the civilian nature of the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa remains a critical priority for the Mission. Since June 2021, more than 70 per cent of humanitarian assistance for Yemen has entered through the ports of Hudaydah, providing food and nutritional support to over 13 million men, women and children in Yemen. In the same period, the ports of Hudaydah and Salif have served as entry points for 745,983 tons of life-saving commodities and more than 4.8 million tons of commercial cargo, including 3.8 million tons of food, 0.8 million tons of fuel and 211 tons of medical equipment and medical supplies. While it is imperative that the ports remain protected from military action, events in the first quarter of 2022 have shown that they remain vulnerable. The Mission's continued presence in Hudaydah city and its intensified monitoring of the ports remain essential to preserving the lifeline that those ports provide. Following agreement with the Houthis, UNMHA has progressively increased its monitoring of the ports and will continue to engage at all levels to advance that objective and ultimately deliver on its overarching mandate, by monitoring the ports daily, unannounced and across all installations.

Adjusting the Mission's footprint so that it can effectively respond to the changed situation in Hudaydah and ensure the equal access of both parties remains an even more critical priority in the current climate, in particular given that Government forces are now situated more than 100 km south of Hudaydah city.

An UNMHA presence south of the front line is key to the Mission's ability to provide effective and impartial support to assist both parties in fully implementing the Hudaydah Agreement. The agreed upon UNMHA presence in Mukha' will provide the Mission with a gateway to the southern districts of Hudaydah. UNMHA has deployed the required capacity and put in place the logistics needed in that regard.

The Mission's established and mature liaison system with the Houthi hierarchy has been leveraged to advance critical objectives, including mine action, and serve as a conduit, when needed, in support of partners and humanitarian interventions on the ground. The new permanent UNMHA presence in the south is vital to solidifying those efforts across both sides and strengthening the Mission's relations with the Government and broader stakeholders on the west coast. Building on those efforts, a realigned liaison process between the parties, to be facilitated by UNMHA teams in the north and south of Hudaydah Governorate, will be essential to advancing objectives in the current climate, including de-escalation, mine action, confidence-building and providing support to unhindered and safe humanitarian access. A realigned liaison process would also be of vital importance should the current truce continue to evolve and become a more sustained ceasefire.

Following the withdrawal of the joint forces, mine incidents in which civilians, including children and women, are injured and killed have become an almost weekly occurrence because of the population's increased access to areas that were formerly under military control, where mined areas remain unmarked. On 5 April 2022, UNMHA established a mine action coordination mechanism, and the Mission has strived to coordinate the provision of expertise, mine surveys and mine awareness. Those initiatives have helped reduce the risk of death or injury among the most vulnerable in Houthi-controlled territory. Collective efforts to build on those initiatives, including support for efforts in Government-controlled territory, will be paramount to protecting the local population, in particular those who are most vulnerable, and could serve as a model to advance mine action on other fronts. Mine

action coordination provides an opportunity for UNMHA to increase protection of the civilian population and will remain a critical part of mandate delivery in the future.

The ability of the Mission to deliver on its mandated tasks and its ultimate support for effective ceasefire implementation will continue to hinge on the freedom of movement afforded to it by both parties. Since the establishment of UNMHA, limited freedom of movement has been one of the greatest challenges to the Mission's ability to operate effectively. Some progress has been made in that regard recently, enabling the Mission to have a more systematic presence in the ports and locations south of the city. However, it remains essential for UNMHA to make continued progress on that front. Accordingly, the Mission will continue its advocacy efforts at all levels to move this issue forward and will continue to count on the collective support of the Security Council to advance this aim.

The conflict in Yemen continues to highlight the significant vulnerability of women; they carry the heaviest burden in this conflict, especially in households in communities that have suffered a total breakdown of their social cohesion and safety networks. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women in Hodaydah and across Yemen and the significant role that women play as agents of change and campaigners for local level reconciliation, UNMHA will continue to explore channels for strengthening local women's engagement on both sides of the shifted front line.

In the light of the devastating conflict in Yemen, now in its eighth year, the United Nations-brokered truce, which was extended for an additional two months from 2 June 2022, and the steps taken to build a more sustained ceasefire have brought some hope that the suffering and the plight of the Yemeni people will be brought to end. While the situation remains highly fragile, it is essential that UNMHA, in lockstep with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, remains poised and ready to take advantage of entry points and opportunities for confidence-building at the local level that might serve to reinforce broader peace efforts.

Lastly, the Mission's objectives of realigning its footprint and re-establishing a liaison process between the parties, with both sides participating, will help them to leverage these opportunities and will encourage participation by local actors, including women and young people. The ultimate goal is to build confidence and stability, thereby creating an enabling environment for the return of displaced persons and advancing collaborative mine action, the opening of roads and the safe delivery of aid.

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

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

---