

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Southern Transitional Council

The Secretariat -General

Human Rights Department



المجلس الانتقالي الجنوبي

الأمانة العامة

دائرة حقوق الإنسان

Mr Mohammad Ali Alnsour  
Chief of Middle East and North Africa Section  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

CC: Mr Elobaid Elobaid, Head of the UN Human Rights Office in Yemen  
Ms Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict  
Ms Dina Zorba, UN Women Country Representative for Yemen

10 December 2019

Dear Mr Alnsour,

First, I wish to convey our appreciation for OHCHR's diligent efforts to address the human rights situation in Yemen, and to highlight the work the STC has been undertaking to protect and serve the Southern people, particularly on the back of recent developments in South Yemen. As we work to intensify our efforts, we hope we can continue the close engagement between our teams.

The wave of violence against Aden and other Southern governorates, which began on 1 August 2019, exacerbated an already dire situation. The attacks threatened our people's security, and challenged the fragile status quo and rule of law in the South. As part of our responsibility to the Southern people, the STC acted quickly to restore stability to the South and engage constructively in the dialogue initiative convened by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to agree a workable solution with the Yemeni government.

In parallel, over the last several months, the STC's human rights department, in collaboration with the relief teams, intensified our activities to respond to the evolving situation. Under demanding circumstances, we worked to respond to allegations of human rights violations against members of the population in the South, including with resources for the public to report incidents. And we provided facilitation for humanitarian operations and personnel on the ground so that services continued to reach all those in need.

More broadly our department, since the STC's establishment in 2017, has reported about human rights abuses and responsible parties. And we have, as part of our commitment to human rights and accountability, shared such information with the Group of Eminent Experts and will continue to do so. Additionally, we regularly provide training for security forces on international humanitarian and human rights law, and are stepping up initiatives in the areas of health, education, and empowerment of women and youth.

We are cautiously optimistic about the next phase for South Yemen, as we move to build on the Riyadh Agreement toward a sustainable solution for the Southern issue. We firmly believe in a



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political solution for the South and the Yemeni crisis under UN auspices. We know that there is far more to be done on the human rights front as well as to safeguard against any challenges that may arise in the coming period. We are committed to doing our utmost to secure a sustainable solution for the South and an end to human rights violations across the board. We hope we can count on your support, and we urge you to:

- (i) **Prioritize the South in public statements by Commissioner Bachelet and OHCHR.** Strong public rhetoric is critical to maintaining momentum on the South issue and the urgency of a solution as part of the UN-led political process. The August events are a reminder of the very real threat of continued violence in the absence of a genuine solution for the Southern issue. Highlighting the South in your public and private engagements during the current window of opportunity will greatly help progress a political and sustainable solution to the issue.
- (ii) **Ensure balanced reporting on the human rights situation in Yemen.** We appreciate the difficulties in collecting and verifying information from the ground to support future accountability. The STC stands ready to support your efforts with information on various issues. We hope you look to us as a resource for your investigations and reporting on the situation in the South.
- (iii) **Stress the importance of Southern women and their specific needs.** Southern women and girls currently rank among the most vulnerable groups as a result of the broader marginalization of the South. In addition to the devastating circumstances of famine and disease, women are subject to gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation. Understanding these gendered vulnerabilities are critical to ensuring they are tackled.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with your team in person in Aden to discuss these issues, and to work jointly moving forward to ensure the rule of law and human rights across Southern governorates.

Sincerely,

Niran Souqi, Esq.  
Member of Leadership Council, Human Rights Portfolio  
Southern Transitional Council