

Renewed US assistance won't end UNRWA's financial troubles

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1623006430978193300

Sun, 2021-06-06 22:12

AMMAN: The UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has hailed the US administration's resumption of aid as politically significant but said its longstanding financial crisis will continue during 2021, should no more donations come.

US President Joe Biden's administration has announced the resumption of assistance to Palestinians, including to UNRWA, signaling a U-turn from the policies of President Donald Trump, who cut off assistance to the agency in 2018.

The State Department said it would provide a total of \$235 million in assistance to projects in the West Bank and Gaza and to UNRWA, which provides aid and other vital services, including education and critical health care services to 5.7 million Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

As detailed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in April, \$150 million will be go to UNRWA, \$75 million to economic and development assistance and \$10 million to peace-building programs.

UNRWA Spokesperson Sami Mshasha has said that the US's renewed assistance to UNRWA is extremely important but the money pledged is still below Washington's regular donation to the relief agency.

"Despite the announcement of the Biden administration that they will resume the support to the agency, till the end of 2017 the US was our largest donor with a donation of \$260 million, which represented at that time one fourth of our budget. This year they have announced that they will only be giving us \$150 million to our regular services and regular budget, as well as our emergency operations," Mshasha said in an interview with Arab News.

Mshasha explained that UNRWA has entered 2021 with a budget deficit exceeding \$200 million, part of which was a carry-over of liabilities the agency had failed to pay in 2020. "As we speak, we are looking at a budget deficit exceeding \$150 million and this is a serious one with (the agency's) budget of 1.2 billion that covers our regular operations and emergency operations.

"The American resumption of aid is extremely important politically as well as financially and it will prompt other donors either to resume the levels of funding that (UNRWA) enjoyed from them in years before or to step up and increase their funding."

The spokesperson said that some of UNRWA's cash crisis has deepened with its longtime donors either cutting off or reducing their donations as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and its accompanying economic hardships. "So the additional money from the US is basically balanced out by the fact that two other major donors have indicated that they will not be able to meet their annual obligations as in past years even though their contributions remain

important for us.”

Mshasha also said that Washington has announced additional assistance to UNRWA following the recent conflict in Gaza to help an early recovery and meet the needs of the coastal enclave’s population. “(It is) not clear how much but it will be an additional money.”

“All in all, the financial situation of the agency is very dire,” he said, explaining that UNRWA is still applying strict austerity measures on its 28,000 staff members to address the budget deficit, continue delivering its health, education, relief and social services to Palestinian refugees and meet its obligations to external services providers.

The spokesperson explained that UNRWA has launched an emergency appeal of \$232 million to finance its operations in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in 2020 and another appeal of \$380 million for 2021. “In both these emergency portals, we (are) also envisioning a budget deficit – a huge one in that.”

COVID-19

Mshasha explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has been hindering UNRWA’s ability to service the population in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon and meet their increasing health and economic needs.

In addition to health services and vaccination, he explained that the relief agency is struggling to repair the “economic devastation” of the population – most of them are daily-paid workers who ended up unemployed as a result of the pandemic. “Those people are to be added to the number of people who are under the poverty line and thus qualify for our food and in-kind assistance in Gaza, Syria and elsewhere.”

He also said that UNRWA is working with health agencies to vaccinate as many people as possible “but the inoculation rate is still very low” in besieged Gaza, war-hit Syria and crisis-hit Lebanon. “We are now concerned about a third wave (of COVID-19) after the recent conflict in Gaza and this is now on the top of all worries and challenges gripping the Strip.”

UNRWA has launched a \$ 94.6 million COVID-19 appeal to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on Palestine refugees in the Middle East, with a special focus on health, cash assistance and education.

Mshasha explained that the agency is working with its strategic dialogue partners Sweden and Jordan which, he said, have been leading the efforts to solve UNRWA’s financial problems. They plan to organize an international conference to bring together the agency’s donors and supporters to discuss their long-term arrangements for UNRWA. The spokesperson expected to the international conference to take place in October.

“We need a predictable framework for our financial situation, one we can build on and plan upon and one that is multiyear.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US](#)

[UNRWA](#)

[Palestine](#)

[Gaza](#)

Gaza receives engineering equipment from Egypt to rebuild strip
UN agency withdraws director from Gaza after threats

[Yemenis shocked after girl, 5, killed in Houthi strike on gas station](#)

Sun, 2021-06-06 20:51

ALEXANDRIA: Shocking images showing the charred bodies of a father and daughter killed in a Houthi missile strike in Yemen's central city of Marib have sparked outrage inside and outside the country amid calls to "name and shame" the militia for its brutal attacks on civilians.

The five-year-old girl was among at least 14 people killed when a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis struck a fuel station in densely populated

district in Marib on Saturday.

The attack occurred while dozens of cars were waiting at the station to be refueled, onlookers said.

The girl, identified as Lian Taher, was inside her father's car outside the station when the missile hit.

Emergency workers who rushed to the scene were targeted by an explosive-laden drone fired by the Houthis, leaving many civilians bleeding to death.

After footage of the charred remains of the child and her father were widely shared on social media, Yemeni human rights activists, government officials and Western diplomats strongly condemned the Houthi attack and demanded the militia be punished for targeting civilians in Marib.

Marib Gov. Sultan Al-Arada warned that Houthi missile and drone attacks are threatening tens of thousands of internally displaced people who live in the city, and urged local and international organizations to condemn the attacks.

"The local authority calls on all Yemeni people from across the political and social spectrum to stand together in the face of the Houthi militia's terrorism, which was and still is the cause of most of its tragedies," he said.

Ali Al-Lahabi, a Yemeni MP, accused the Houthis of violating religious and tribal norms that forbid the targeting of civilians.

"Today's crime against civilians and children in Marib breaches tribal norms in Yemen and all humanitarian Arab and international norms," he said in a Twitter post.

Angered by images of the dead civilians, Abdul Malik Al-Mekhlafi, an adviser to Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, urged those who believe the Houthis can cooperate with peace efforts to change their mind.

"The attack again confirms the ugly face of the Houthi, who has rejected all international efforts to stop the war," Al-Mekhlafi said on Twitter.

On the ground, Yemeni army commanders battling the Houthis in Marib and Hodeidah said that deadly attacks by the militia will continue until military and financial support from Iran is ended.

"War crimes will not stop unless the Iranian regime is deterred, and the Houthis who kill children and women are brought before the International Criminal Court," Sadeq Dewaid, a National Resistance Forces spokesperson in the western province of Hodeidah, said.

Western envoys to Yemen also voiced their grief and anger at the civilian deaths, demanding the Houthis stop attacking civilians and engage with the UN-brokered peace proposals.

The US Embassy in Yemen described the Houthi missile and drone attacks in

Marib as “inhumane violence.”

Cathy Westley, the embassy’s charge d’affaires, said in a statement: “We are horrified by reports that the Houthis used a ballistic missile to destroy a gas station in Marib, killing and wounding civilians. The Houthis reportedly then used a drone to attack an ambulance crew coming to aid the injured. This inhumane violence must end.”

The UK’s Yemen envoy, Michael Aron, said on Twitter that he was shocked by the reports of the attacks, adding that only a nationwide truce would put an end to human losses.

“The Houthis must stop their Marib offensive and engage seriously with the UN. Agreement on a nationwide cease-fire would prevent such tragic losses and allow humanitarian action,” he said.

Yemeni officials and experts warned that the militia attacks could destroy intensive international diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Hooria Mashhour, a former human rights minister, told Arab News that the UN Security Council should impose the peace plan that calls for an immediate end to the fighting in Yemen.

“While the war continues and there are no sincere intentions to achieve a comprehensive cease-fire, we will see tens and even thousands of charred bodies of children and adults,” Mashhour said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)
[Houthis](#)

5 things we learned from Saudi's 3-0 win over Yemen in their AFC World Cup qualifier
Omani FM, Yemeni counterpart meet to discuss Yemen's state solution

[Abu Dhabi crown prince and chairman of Libyan presidential council discuss developments in Libya's political process](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-06-05 22:16

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed affirmed the UAE's firm position toward supporting Libya and achieving the aspirations of its people toward stability, development and unity, state news agency WAM reported on Saturday.

His comments came during a meeting with the chairman of Libya's Presidential Council Dr. Mohammed Younes Al-Manfi, who is on an official visit to the country.

At the beginning of the meeting, Sheikh Mohammed welcomed Al-Manfi and wished him success and the Government of National Unity in leading their country to safety. He conveyed greetings of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, UAE president. Both sides discussed developments in the political process in Libya and efforts to push it forward, as well as a number of issues of common concern, WAM reported.

The crown prince said his country was ready "to provide all aspects of support and cooperation to overcome existing challenges, and to continue working with regional and international parties to strengthen the pillars of peace and stability, in accordance with the aspirations of the Libyan people."

Al-Manfi thanked the Sheikh Mohammed for the UAE's positive stances in supporting Libya and its people in international forums.

He stressed the depth of relations between the UAE and Libya and looked forward to further strengthening and developing these relations during the coming period for the benefit of the two countries.

Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush and a number of Libyan officials also attended the meeting.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed also held talks with Mangoush during her visit, where they reviewed developments in Libya, the importance of supporting the Government of National Unity during its leadership of the

transitional phase, and preparations for the upcoming elections scheduled for December.

Sheikh Abdullah said that the “UAE supports all efforts and endeavors that lead to a secure, stable and prosperous Libya and always stands by the Libyan people to achieve their aspirations for stability, development and prosperity.”

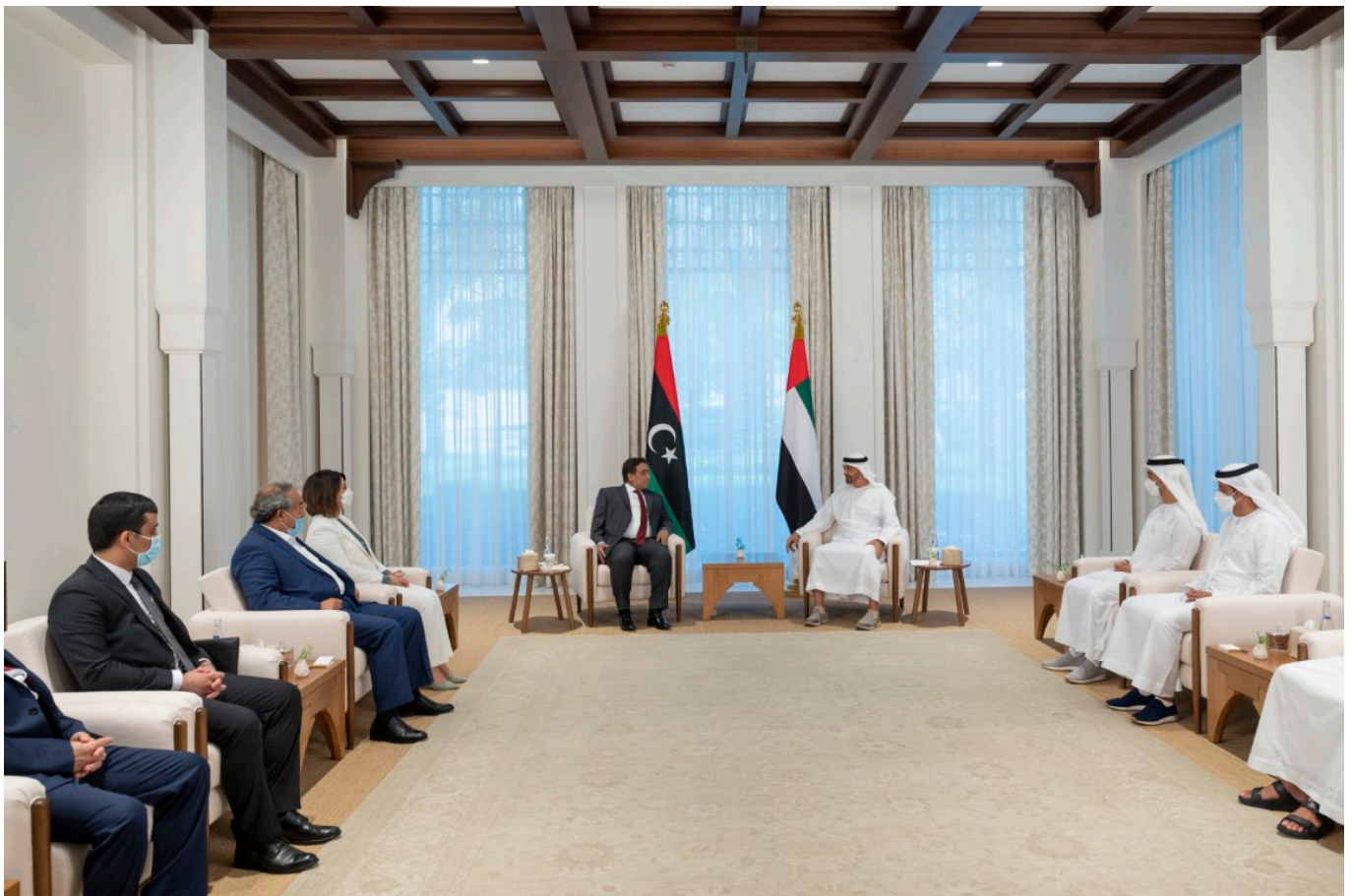
He praised the efforts made by the Government of National Unity during its leadership of the current stage and what it is doing to consolidate the pillars of security and stability in Libya and to create all the appropriate conditions for holding the elections.

Libya is seeking to extricate itself from a decade of chaos and conflict that followed the toppling of dictator Muammar Qaddafi in the 2011 NATO-backed uprising.

A formal truce signed last October set in motion a UN-led process that led to the creation of an interim government tasked with unifying the country’s divided institutions, launching reconstruction efforts and preparing for December polls.

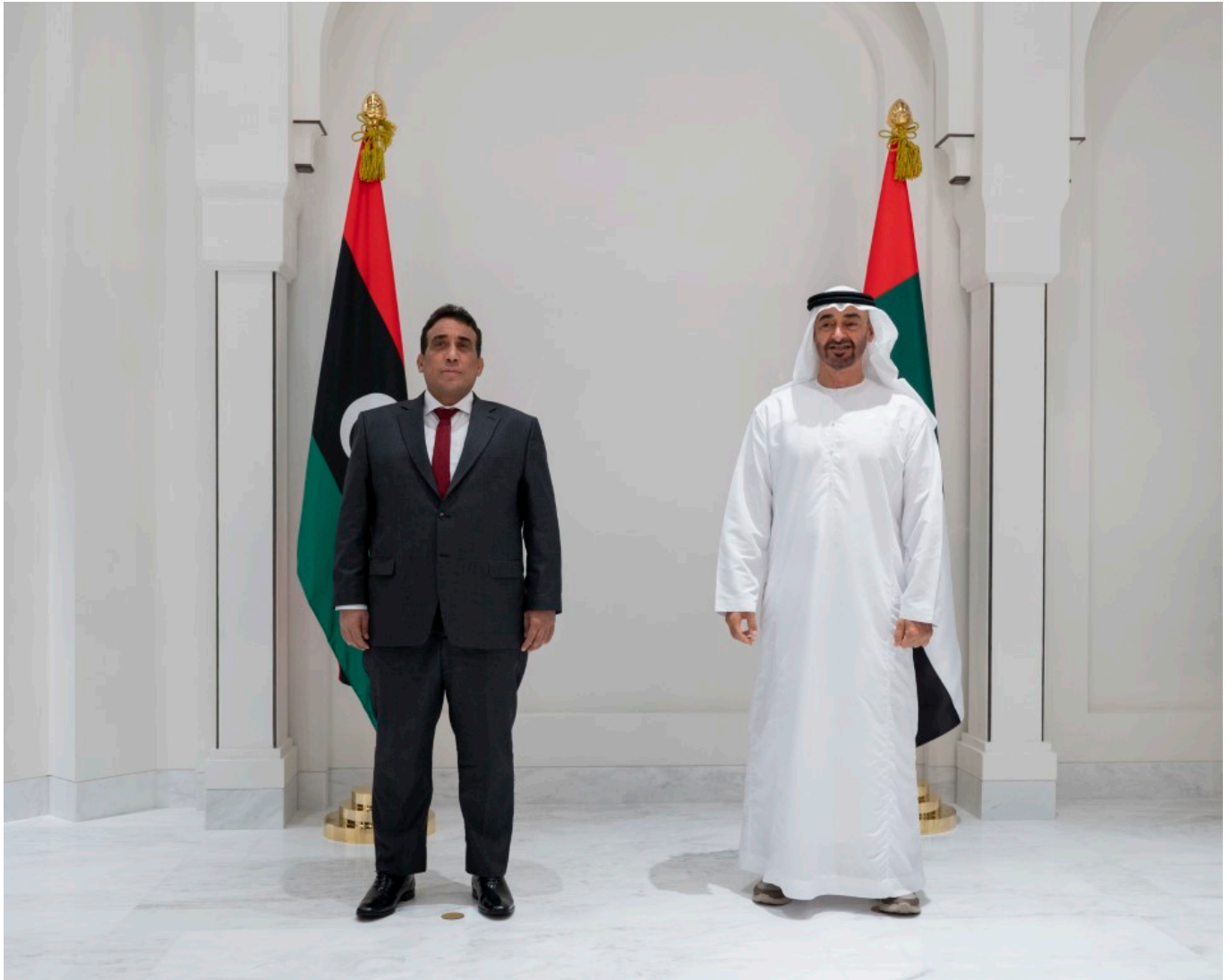
Germany will host a new set of peace talks later this month in Berlin, with Libya’s transitional government due to attend.

(With AFP)









Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UAE](#)

[Libya](#)

[Mohammed Younes Al-Manfi](#)

[Najla Mangoush](#)

Morocco's foreign minister meets senior Libyan officials
Libya's PM welcomes opening of Spanish embassy in Tripoli

[Turkish opposition party seeks probe into paramilitary contractor](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-06-05 21:52

JEDDAH: Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) is seeking a

parliamentary inquiry into a paramilitary contractor, following allegations it was training militants in Syria.

Fugitive mob boss Sedat Peker claimed that SADAT, which has close ties with the government and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was training Al-Nusra Front fighters and arming the group by diverting Peker's aid convoy heading to Syrian Turkmen.

SADAT International Defense Consultancy was formed in 2012 by Adnan Tanriverdi, a retired general and former military adviser to Erdogan.

Its stated mission is to establish "defense collaboration and defense industry cooperation among Islamic countries to help the Islamic world by providing strategic consultancy, defense and security training, and supply services to armed forces and internal security forces of Islamic countries."

It offers courses on conventional and unconventional warfare tactics, armored vehicle hunting, sharpshooting, mortar forward surveillance and other areas.

Unal Cevikoz, Istanbul deputy of the CHP and a former ambassador, filed a request for a parliamentary inquiry about SADAT.

He reiterated allegations that SADAT had violated UN Security Council rulings with its activities in war-torn countries, especially in Syria and Libya, by providing military training to civilians, establishing alternative armies, dispatching mercenaries and sending illegal weapons.

"These claims will deeply undermine our country's international prestige and will result in challenging consequences for Turkey," he said. "These allegations about SADAT concern countries where the Turkish Armed Forces remain active. Therefore, they carry risks for the reputation of not only Turkey but also its army. They will also push people to challenge the legitimacy of the Turkish Armed Forces' presence in those territories."

SADAT employs between 50 and 200 retired officers from different specialties, with many of them dismissed from the army due to their Islamic allegiance.

The CHP said the claims about SADAT should not only be viewed through a military and security dimension, but also their potential consequences for Turkey's relations with countries that it has military agreements with.

The SADAT allegations have sparked debate about whether there is control over different armed units and if each segment has begun establishing its own paramilitary group in semi-official or informal ways.

Tanriverdi was a chief adviser to Erdogan between 2016 and 2018, attending a critical summit before the 2018 operation Afrin in Syria, along with Turkey's National Intelligence Service head Hakan Fidan. He is also known as someone who carries weight in presidential policy choices.

"All previous parliamentary questions about SADAT remained unanswered," Cevikoz said. "Therefore, it is now an obligation for all of us to set up an investigation commission about this company's activities abroad."

Neither the government nor the defense minister has so far responded to parliamentary questions from the opposition about the contractor, and no investigation has been launched into allegations about SADAT for years.

The CHP wants the public to be informed about SADAT and for all its international military activities be investigated, whether it provided military training in countries like Syria, Libya and Somalia, and whether it dispatched illegal weapons in violation of UN Security Council rulings.

In 2018, Turkish opposition politician Meral Aksener alleged that SADAT set up armed training camps in the Konya and Tokat provinces. But her request to open an investigation about these activities was met with silence.

SADAT was put on the domestic agenda following claims that its members contributed to the popular mobilization during the 2016 failed coup attempt, leading many people to label it a "shadow army."

Peker has been a prominent mafia figure since the 1990s and fled the country last year to avoid a criminal investigation.

He has leveled accusations of corruption, mismanagement and connections to organized crime against Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

He claimed to have arranged to send military equipment to Syrian Turkmen and shared the plan with an AKP lawmaker in order to receive permission to dispatch the trucks in 2015.

He also claimed to have opposed sending aid to Al-Nusra Front because the group was fighting Turkmen minorities in Syria. He said the trucks were diverted and sent to Al-Nusra fighters instead by a group within SADAT.

"They diverted aid trucks for Turkmen to Al-Nusra under my name, but I didn't send them – SADAT did. I was informed about it by one of our Turkmen friends," Peker said in a video.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Syrian rebels](#)

[Turkish paramilitary](#)

[Republican People's Party \(CHP\)](#)

[SADAT](#)

Council of Europe meets to review Turkey's non-implementation of key rulings
Erdogan says Turkey discovered 135 bcm additional natural gas in Black Sea

[Yemen official says Houthi militia fire missile, killing 14 in Marib](#)

Sat, 2021-06-05 21:43

CAIRO: Yemen's Houthi militia fired a ballistic missile Saturday on a government-held city, killing at least 14 people, including a 5-year-old girl, an official said.

The missile hit a gas station in the Rawdha neighborhood in Marib, according to Ali Al-Ghulisi, the Marib governor's press secretary.

He said dozens of people were wounded in the attack.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis.

The Iran-backed Houthi militia launched an offensive to capture oil and gas-rich Marib from the internationally recognized government in Yemen in February.

The offensive sparked regional and international condemnation, especially since Marib has served as a safe haven for thousands of internally displaced persons who have been fleeing the fighting since the start of the conflict in 2014.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Marib](#)

[Houthis](#)

[Ali Al-Ghulisi](#)

US envoy says Yemeni Houthi militia not trying to reach cease-fire Failure of UN talks with Yemen's Houthi militia on Safer tanker 'not surprising' – information minister