

Press release: Foreign Secretary: Building blocks for Yemen solution are in view

- Serious consideration is being given to a set of political ideas and confidence-building measures that would allow for the start of political talks in Sweden by the end of November.
- Coalition agrees to Houthi medical evacuation, with agreed conditions. This is a major development given that this was a prior block to talks.
- UK to continue to discussions with partners on how Security Council can support political process and lead to improvements on the humanitarian situation.

Following the visit of Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the Saudi-led Coalition have agreed to the evacuation of wounded Houthis from Yemen, one of the key stumbling blocks to the UN Geneva talks in September.

Subject to final reassurances, Coalition forces will now permit the UN to oversee a Houthi medical evacuation, including up to fifty wounded fighters, to Oman, ahead of another proposed round of peace talks in Sweden later this month.

The Foreign Secretary's trip to the Middle East, during which he met with the senior leadership of the Saudi, UAE and Yemeni governments, and spoke with the Foreign Minister of Oman, helped improve understanding on steps that would lead to a cessation of hostilities.

The Foreign Secretary had constructive discussions on pathways to achieve de-escalation and reduce tensions, and was clear that both sides would need to play their part in confidence-building measures.

Meanwhile the UK will continue discussions with partners on how the UN Security Council can support the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' on the political process and improving the humanitarian situation. This will include discussions on

the draft UN Security Council Resolution on Yemen ahead of a Security Council briefing on the issue on 16 November.

The Foreign Secretary also used meetings with Saudi Arabia's rulers to push for real accountability against those responsible for the brutal murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, pointing out both the strong international condemnation and the need for evidence that such an act could never happen again.

In the days preceding the visit, the Foreign Secretary spoke with his US, German and French counterparts in order to deliver a coordinated response to the challenges facing the region.

Speaking following his visit Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt said:

The world's worst humanitarian crisis is not a natural disaster. It is the man-made situation in Yemen. I have just been in Saudi Arabia and the UAE because there is a window of opportunity to tackle it.

75% of the population in Yemen require humanitarian assistance and 8.4 million are at risk of starvation. We have to act.

Diplomacy and negotiation remain the only path to ending the conflict and I am encouraged that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have shown their support for the UN peace process, led by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

In my meetings we have made progress in removing the largest stumbling block to previous proposed rounds of peace talks, and set out a credible path to a de-escalation of military activity.

I will continue talking to partners about the best way for the Security Council to support the UN Special Envoy's efforts on the political process and improve the humanitarian situation. We await Martin Griffiths' important briefing to the Security Council on 16 November.

Overall, I leave the region encouraged by these signs of progress, and I am determined to do what it takes to convert this into a lasting peace for the people of Yemen.

Further information