



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL



12 June 2023

*Input for report on thematic priorities of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs. Thematic issue #3 on IDPs in peace negotiations, mediation and peacebuilding to achieve sustainable peace.*

**Note:** This document presents a sample of findings, analysis and recommendations from a private briefing paper issued in October 2022 entitled “Homeless in our homeland: Reflections from Yemen’s IDPs on the UN Brokered Truce and their hopes for the future”. For the full briefing please email Renata Rendon, NRC Yemen Advocacy Manager at [renata.rendon@nrc.no](mailto:renata.rendon@nrc.no) and Matthew Hemsley, DRC Middle East Regional Office Advocacy and Communications Manager at [matthew.hemsley@drc.ngo](mailto:matthew.hemsley@drc.ngo).

### **Homeless in our homeland: Reflections from Yemen’s IDPs on the UN Brokered Truce and their hopes for the future**

In September 2022, six months into the unprecedented UN-brokered truce in Yemen, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) spoke with 153 internally displaced persons (IDPs) across areas controlled by the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) in Taiz, Aden, Lahj and Hodeida governorates to better understand the impact of the truce on their lives.

The peace process in Yemen has so far followed a track one format, and as such lacks community voices. While the truce has received international attention and mobilized the global community to recommit to efforts towards lasting peace in Yemen, few resources have been put into collecting voices, opinions, perspectives and expectations of displaced communities. While the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen (OSESGY) is taking important steps to better include humanitarian INGO and CSO actors in consultations, more must be done to embed truce or peace discussions in the lived realities of Yemen’s conflict-affected population. Findings from this research highlighted potential unintended negative consequences that could result from peace initiatives where conflict affected communities don’t have access to information about peace processes, are not kept abreast of developments, or invited to share their perspectives on what they need to move from displacement and aid dependence to durable solutions.

#### **1. Initial overview of findings:**

##### IDP Awareness and Perceptions of the Truce:

IDPs in IRG-controlled areas were largely aware of the truce and its various elements but tended to measure its value through the lens of access to livelihoods, affordable food, delivery of humanitarian assistance and feelings of safety and security; things that it largely did not deliver. One group said, "it

has no real value in reality, and it has not been implemented in its most important provisions, for example, opening roads." A group in Taiz viewed the truce negatively, saying, "It was positive for the Houthis and negative for us."

Of those who had heard of the truce, all identified that it included an agreement to stop the conflict; others mentioned opening the roads and ports, release of prisoners, and the payment of civil servant salaries. One participant said that "aid delivery" was part of the truce agreement. Three groups in Taiz said that "reducing prices" was part of the truce. Some respondents in Aden had not heard of the truce.

#### Recommendations for Yemen Context that Could be Useful at a global Level:

The data highlights the need for more concerted and focused attention from the humanitarian community on both keeping conflict affected communities abreast of truce or peace negotiations or agreements and what they consist of but also how the truce is perceived by the communities that we work with. For example, the data indicates that knowledge of the details of the truce may be limited, unclear or simply inaccurate, raising certain expectations that may not be delivered on.

The research also shows that while people want to believe in the truce, it must be implemented "fully" and positively experienced across Yemen's areas of control to be perceived as having positive impact or being worthwhile. The OSESGY should consider whether future extensions without real, tangible progress towards all elements of the truce and consequent benefit to populations across Yemen, may undermine long-term goals.

The significance of this should not be underestimated. Resources towards ensuring that the truce is implemented in full and its benefits felt by vulnerable populations across both Ansar Allah and IRG controlled areas could go a long way in building popular support for the truce, contributing towards a sustainable peace process and improving the chances for longer-term recovery in Yemen.

#### The Truce was "on paper" only:

For many IDPs, the truce existed "on paper" only and did not have a positive impact on their lives. Rather, most of them reported a worsened situation during the truce period, with reports of either the price of goods or cost of rent having risen, aid delivery having diminished, or safety and security incidents having continued or increased. In some cases, they report all of the above simultaneously.

Although asked whether these changes were perceived to be a result of the truce, most respondents did not specify. Respondents in two different FGDs did state that they believed the changes were a direct result of the truce, with one respondent saying, "Because of the truce, the activity of [humanitarian] organisations decreased, and prices increased for everything, and safety is almost non-existent due to the emergence of armed groups in a large way."

#### Recommendations for Yemen Context that Could be Useful at a global Level:

While exploring and understanding any potential correlation between the truce and a worsened economy, increased inflation, diminished aid and increased insecurity would take further time and resources, we do know that aid has been reduced across areas where we received this feedback. The perceived reduction in aid may not be directly related to the truce, instead caused by restricted humanitarian access, reduced funding or the natural end of a project cycle. Despite this, if the basic humanitarian needs of IDPs are not met during the truce, such perceptions will likely persist and could have tangible, real-world negative impacts on the popular support for the truce, potentially undermining the sustainability of a future peace process.

The findings highlight that while there continues to be progress in delivering on some elements of the truce, the humanitarian and development response, as well as efforts to stabilize the economy and protect people from violence in IRG-controlled areas, are not perceived to be keeping up. The truce cannot and should not operate in a bubble.

International stakeholders supporting the truce must not forget the real day-to-day struggle for survival of the majority of Yemenis, with IDPs among the most vulnerable, or they will risk losing popular support for this initiative and potentially undermine the long-term sustainability of any peace agreement. Likewise, a truce alone, at least with the elements currently agreed to and under which short-term extensions continue to be made, will not address the issues most important to the day-to-day survival of IDPs, including the economic elements and the rampant insecurity, especially in IRG controlled areas.

#### Raising Hopes for Durable Solutions:

While the truce raised hopes of the possibility of return to Areas of Origin (AoO), those hopes were soon dashed. While IDPs knew others who had attempted to return home since the truce came into effect on 2 April 2022, there were no successful returns reported. Instead, several incidents were reported in which IDPs were shot and killed while attempting to return to their AoO. One respondent reported knowing someone who had been killed by a landmine while attempting return, while others were reportedly arbitrarily detained or facing delays or harassment at checkpoints.

#### Recommendations for Yemen Context that Could be Useful at a global Level:

The data shows that the truce raised hopes for some IDPs around returning home and that some communities have attempted return without understanding protection implications. Aid agencies should consider this as part of their protection and community engagement strategies. It is vital for the wider humanitarian community to understand both the opportunities and any potential unintended negative consequences that could result from short term truce or longer-term peace processes, and how our community should be preparing to respond.

#### Increased Tensions with Host Communities and Push Factors:

Some IDPs noted tensions with host communities due to competition for resources. This finding was echoed by Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) staff who highlighted the possibility for increased tensions in case of a longer term truce agreement or fuller peace process, where the AoO of displaced people could be perceived as safe to return to, leading to host communities increasing their calls for IDPs to “go home”. CCCM staff also highlighted that unresolved issues with land agreements for IDPs sites, where some agreements are contingent on the conflict remaining active, could also result in coerced or unsafe returns or secondary/tertiary displacement in the case of a longer-term peace process.

With regards to what people said they needed to live a safe and a dignified life, the priorities were:

1. Livelihoods or income generating opportunities,
2. Safety and security,
3. Access to services like food, housing, education and health services, and
4. Opening roads

#### Recommendations for Yemen Context that Could be Useful at a global Level:

A prolonged truce, truce-like situation or progress towards a fuller peace process could result in greater pressure for IDPs to return home in advance of the conditions being suitable for such movement.

A focus on the economic file should be twofold through first, tangible steps to stabilize the currency and economy and second, continued investment by donors in Yemen through an adequate recovery and development response to complement the humanitarian response. This is necessary in parallel to ongoing discussions around the other specific elements of the truce to capitalize on opportunities offered by the agreement. International stakeholders must commit to fully funding the humanitarian and development response and redouble their efforts to address with authorities the increasing bureaucratic impediments and insecurity that are restricting humanitarian access.

**Closing Thoughts:**

DRC and NRC conducted this research as an opportunity to hear from IDPs in Yemen about the truce and the effect it has on their lives, if any. Based on the above, the humanitarian community must better understand its role in enabling access to information for conflict affected communities about truce or peace processes, how they may or may not impact them. Humanitarian should come together and better understand both positive and potentially negative effects of the truce on the communities that we aim to support and elevate the experiences of Yemen's most vulnerable to ensure that they have a seat at the table as part of ongoing truce discussions and any longer-term peace process.