

**Yemen**

## Yemen's warring sides agree two-month truce, says UN envoy

Terms will allow fuel into Houthi-controlled port and flights from capital in first mutual ceasefire since 2016



A Yemeni policeman inspects a site damaged by an air strike in Sana'a © Hani Al-Ansi/dpa

**Samer Al-Atrush** in Riyadh YESTERDAY

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The UN envoy to Yemen said warring parties in the country, where Iranian-backed rebels are fighting the Saudi-supported government, have accepted a two-month truce starting on Saturday.

The announcement by Hans Grundberg came days after both the Houthi rebels and the Saudi-backed government [announced their own unilateral ceasefires](#), following an escalation in missile and drone attacks on oil installations in Saudi Arabia and retaliatory air strikes by the kingdom in Yemen.

The truce, coinciding with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, would be the first mutually agreed ceasefire since 2016, a year after a Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen to stop the Houthis from seizing the country from the internationally recognised government.

The war, which has contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis from disease and malnutrition, has ground to a stalemate on most fronts.

“The aim of this truce is to give Yemenis a necessary break from violence, relief from the humanitarian suffering and most importantly hope that an end to this conflict is possible,” Grundberg stated.





UN envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg © AFP via Getty Images

Under the terms, the Saudi-led coalition will let fuel ships enter the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeidah on the Red Sea, and commercial flights will be allowed from Sana'a airport “to pre-determined destinations in the region”, Grundberg said. He added he would oversee the reopening of a main road that has been a key government demand.

The most recent escalation in the conflict had come after forces supported by Saudi Arabia and its coalition ally the United Arab Emirates ousted the Houthis from the strategic Shabwa province. The Houthis responded by launching missile and drone attacks on oil facilities and an airport in the UAE, while increasing their attacks on Saudi Arabia.

Last month a Houthi missile attack struck an Saudi Aramco distribution facility in Jeddah as the city prepared to host a Formula One grand prix race.

The war, initially backed by the US, has become a thorn in its relationship with Saudi Arabia, with President Joe Biden ending the sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia. But western diplomats say Saudi Arabia has been trying lately to find a way out of the war. The UAE scaled back its presence in 2019.

Analysts warned that implementing the truce would remain a challenge. “Like a lot of people, I was sceptical that a ceasefire was possible, and the question I have is what the X factor was here — what convinced everyone to make the compromises needed to get here?” said Peter Salisbury, senior Yemen analyst with the International Crisis Group.

“As ever with these agreements, it’s a total battle to get to ‘yes’. But the even bigger challenge now will be taking what’s on paper and turn it into a reality,” he said.

Yemen expert Raiman al-Hamdani said the war had taken a toll on both sides, with the Houthis suffering from a lack of fuel and other resources, and the Saudis looking for an exit.

“The agreement has come, I think, because it is economically induced. No longer can the Houthis survive without fuel and the blockade, Iran wants to sell oil internationally, the Saudis want to get out of the conflict, and at this point there are already certain factors that make it ripe,” he said.

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