

The UAE has made progress toward being a model for positive change in the Middle East



People watch fireworks illuminate the sky in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on Dec. 2. (All Haider/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

By Letters to the Editor
December 7

The Dec. 3 editorial "A quartet of despots in the Middle East" mischaracterized the United Arab Emirates as neglecting its role as a positive force for change in the world's most troubled region. In just 47 years, the UAE created a society built upon the values of inclusion, mutual respect and shared prosperity. Arab youths identify the UAE as the "top country to live in" by a 2-to-1 margin over the next-ranked countries. People of more than 200 nationalities live peacefully in the UAE. There are more than 40 Christian churches, and there are Hindu and Sikh temples. International religious leaders gathered in Abu Dhabi to

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The UAE has made progress toward being a model for positive change in the Middle East - The Washington Post
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discuss ways to create a more open and tolerant region for all
faiths.

More than 80 universities in the UAE are challenging and inspiring young people. More than 20 million tourists visited the UAE last year. UAE passport holders can travel to 167 countries without the need for pre-visa requirements, underscoring what can be achieved through positive diplomacy.

Women in the UAE are religious ministers, fighter pilots, judges, chief executives and even hockey players. And next March, more than 7,000 athletes will compete at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, reinforcing and expanding the values of inclusion and mutual respect into a region that can use much more of both. The UAE is a young country, with much work to do. However, we have made significant progress as a model for positive change in the region and a steadfast U.S. ally. These are hardly the traits of an "oppressive" society.

Yousef Al Otaiba, Washington

The writer is the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to the United States.

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UAE Welcomes Yemen Peace Talk Developments

1 message

Hagir Elawad <hagir@uaestrategies.com>
Reply-To: Hagir Elawad <hagir@uaestrategies.com>

Fri, Dec 14, 2018 at 4:39 PM

Good afternoon Colleagues,

The UAE welcomes yesterday's positive developments emerging from the UN-backed negotiations between the internationally recognized Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels. H.E. Dr. Anwar Gargash, the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs described the talks as "encouraging" and thanked the UN and UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his commitment and efforts. Dr. Gargash also recognized the commitment and bravery of the 5,000 Emirati soldiers and Yemeni forces. Furthermore, he emphasized the UAE's continued commitment to humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Yemen.

And while this is an important step that gives hope, there is still more work to be done. The UAE has played a vital role in bringing the parties to the table. Its commitment to the political process and support of Mr. Griffiths, the humanitarian assistance, efforts in post-conflict stabilization and recognizing that peace is possible, have been critical. We hope that the parties will remain engaged and adhere to the agreements so that Yemen and its people can begin a new chapter, one with a confident outlook for the future.

The article below further elaborates on Dr. Gargash's comments. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Best,

Hagir

Anwar Gargash: Hodeidah ceasefire is 'important first step' to end the Yemen conflict

The National

December 14, 2018

Dr Anwar Gargash said on Friday that the outcome of United Nations-backed negotiations in Sweden between Yemen's government and the Houthi rebels is an important first step towards reaching a political solution to the conflict but "the road ahead remains bumpy".

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs reiterated the UAE's support for "the political and humanitarian process as well as plans for reconstruction" after Yemen's warring parties agreed to withdraw all forces from Hodeidah governorate and its vital harbours as part of a wider ceasefire agreement sealed on Thursday in Rimbo.

The key points from the agreement include:

- Immediate ceasefire by warring parties in the city and Hodeidah's three key ports - Hodeidah, Ras Issa and Al Saqef
- Armed forces from both sides will withdraw from three ports within days
- Hodeidah port city comes under control of local forces recognised by the Yemeni government. UN to play a leading role in port operations
- Establishment of humanitarian corridors monitored by the UN

"The day after after Sweden brings hope to Yemen," said Dr Gargash. "The road ahead remains bumpy but the significant breakthrough will make peace possible. The UN-led Yemeni-owned process is necessary to sort out contending aspirations.

"The Coalition's fundamental argument that military pressure will bring political results and that Hodeidah is critical to the process has proven right. Now we must concentrate on building on Sweden.

"Longer term we seek a Yemen at peace with itself and its neighbours," Dr Gargash added, stressing the need for an effective state, which would ultimately prevail over violence. This would lead to "a Yemen looking towards the future with confidence".

Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, said that the negotiations showed that achieving peace in the country is possible.

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He commended the government and rebel delegations for reaching agreement on a ceasefire and withdrawal of forces in the key port city of Hodeidah, exchange of prisoners and the opening humanitarian corridors to the embattled city of Ta'ez, which were announced at the conclusion of the initial round of talks on Thursday.

"Although many details remain subject to further discussion, these consultations between the Republic of Yemen Government and the Houthis marked a pivotal first step," Mr Pompeo said in a statement released by the State Department.

"Moving forward, all must continue to engage, de-escalate tensions, and cease ongoing hostilities. This is the best way to give these and future consultations a chance to succeed," he said.

"The work ahead will not be easy, but we have seen what many considered improbable begin to take shape. Peace is possible. The end of these consultations can be the beginning of a new chapter for Yemen."

The progress in peace efforts comes as the US administration faces increasing pressure from legislators over its assistance to the Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's government against the Iran-backed rebels.

On Thursday, the Senate approved a largely symbolic resolution to end US backing for the coalition. The resolution cannot be debated in the House of Representatives before January, when members elected in last month's midterm elections will take their seats. It would probably be vetoed by President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly voiced support for Saudi Arabia.

International pressure for peace in Yemen has been driven by concerns of a deepening humanitarian crisis if fighting escalated in Hodeidah, which is the main entry point for shipments of food and humanitarian aid to the impoverished country.

The agreement in Sweden will allow UN supervision of Hodeidah's ports, as well as establish humanitarian corridors, and raised hopes of getting aid to about 22 million Yemenis in need, or four-fifths of the population. About 14 million are on the verge of starvation, according to the Red Cross.

A Redeployment Coordination Committee including both sides will oversee the ceasefire and withdrawal, according to the agreement. It will be chaired by the UN and report weekly to the UN Security Council.

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Jeremy Hunt, the British Foreign Secretary, who recently visited the region to advocate peace efforts, welcomed the agreement but said the focus should be on a "lasting settlement".

The UN special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, said the government and rebels have agreed to meet again in late January to discuss a political framework for peace, although a venue has yet to be decided.

The breakthrough in the peace negotiations was also welcomed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who described the talks in Sweden as "a crucial first step towards ending the conflict in Yemen, tackling the humanitarian emergency and addressing the sharp deterioration in the national economy".

Their statement also thanked Sweden for hosting the talks and the Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and UAE governments for "invaluable support and facilitation".

"In an admirable demonstration of international co-operation, representatives from over 20 countries worked in proximity with the special envoy during these consultations," the ambassadors said.

In a reminder of the tense situation on the ground, Houthi rebels attacked a village in southern Hodeidah just hours after the announcement in Sweden, forcing dozens of families to leave their homes.

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