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Moving towards peace? Riyadh agreement unites separatists and Yemeni government

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On Tuesday 5 November 2019, the southern separatists in Yemen signed an agreement with Yemen's Saudi-backed government in an attempt to end the power struggle in the southern part of the country.¹ Mohammad Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, described the agreement as a step towards finding a political solution capable of ending the multifaceted conflict.² The Riyadh agreement signed in Saudi Arabia includes calls for “forming a new cabinet of no more than 24 ministers within 30 days,[...and the...] placing all military forces under the defence ministry

1 Rashad, Marwa, [Yemen government and separatists sign deal to end power struggle in south](#), Reuters, 05 November 2019.

2 [Massive plaudits greet Yemen deal: UAE, US, Kuwait, UN, Arab League hail Riyadh agreement](#), Gulf News, 05 November 2019.

and security forces under the interior ministry”.³ The deal also includes the equal representation of northerners and southerners in the newly formed cabinet. The agreement was a result of one month-long indirect talks between the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the government under Saudi's leadership. The STC, the separatist movement in the south of the country, are supported by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi's main coalition partner, and belong to the Sunni Muslim alliance fighting the Houthis, an Iran-aligned movement, in Yemen.⁴

In order to ensure the implementation of the deal, Emirati forces retreated from Aden, the southern port of the country, leaving the southern areas to the control of Saudi Arabia. Aden had become the seat of the Yemeni government following the Al Houthi overthrow of the Sana'a based government and the subsequent seizing of the city. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is also Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, attended the signing ceremony and expressed his satisfaction with Saudi Arabia's efforts and the agreement as a whole.⁵ Dr. Anwar Gargash, UAE minister of state for foreign affairs and international cooperation, announced that the agreement is a move towards taking all legitimate aspirations of Yemeni society into consideration, including the Houthi rebel group.⁶ He stated that “Houthi militias have wreaked havoc on the country, but they are part of the Yemeni society and they will have a role in its future”.⁷

Presidents such as Donald Trump and Abdulfatah Al-Sissi both welcomed the agreement as an important steppingstone. Also, Yemen's UN envoy Martin Griffiths stated in a tweet that the Riyadh agreement was an important step towards peacefully settling the conflict. Analysts such as International Crisis Group stated that it was too early to tell whether the outcome of the agreement would be positive but highlighted that it was an important step.⁸

3 El Gergawi, Sherry, [Yemen power sharing agreement hailed by world leaders as step in the right direction](#), Ahrum Online, 07 November 2019.

4 Rashad, Marwa, [Yemen government and separatists sign deal to end power struggle in south](#), Reuters, 05 November 2019.

5 [Massive plaudits greet Yemen deal: UAE, US, Kuwait, UN, Arab League hail Riyadh agreement](#), Gulf News, 05 November 2019.

6 [UAE expects 'decisive' twelve months ahead](#), Dr. Gargash, Saudi Gazette, 10 November 2019.

7 [Houthi rebels will have role in Yemen's future, says UAE](#), Al Jazeera, 13 November 2019.

8 Rashad, Marwa, [Yemen government and separatists sign deal to end power struggle in south](#), Reuters, 05 November 2019.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Pia Podieh
Middle East Intern



Avenue Louise, 89 - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 02 725 84 66

www.bic-rhr.com

info@bic-rhr.com