

Recommendations: The London Ministerial on Yemen

January 25, 2010

The London Ministerial on Yemen is a welcome opportunity for the international community together with the Yemeni government to think through and develop a number of initiatives that will address a combination of social and security challenges that are of relevance to Yemeni citizens and the international community.

On January 19, 2010, in Washington, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for American Progress convened approximately 20 experts from government and nongovernmental organizations drawn from a range of disciplines to puzzle through a set of recommendations that might be considered at the London Ministerial.

These recommendations do not represent a consensus document.¹

- **Focus international leadership and attention:** Appoint a Friends of Yemen Contact Group at the London Ministerial or agree on a meeting date to convene such a group. The contact group should be composed of senior representatives of the Yemeni government and the Obama administration as well as European governments, the European Union, and the United Nations. Other Arab governments, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, and regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council have a particularly important role to play in such a group. The contact group should reconvene on a regular schedule with no gaps greater than 60 days between meetings over the next two to three years. There should be a biannual reconvening at the foreign minister level to review and adjust the work of the contact group.
- **Broaden the lens with which the international community engages Yemen:** International interests in Yemen should not be viewed exclusively through the lens of fighting al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP. Yemen has myriad problems that demand urgent international assistance. If the international community is to build credibility within Yemen, it must be seen as working to help resolve these problems, not just the ones that could potentially affect the West. Assistance should be needs based, informed by opinion data that exist or that should be collected. Funds should be overseen by the contact group.

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- **Explore international mediation for the conflicts in the North and South:** The Houthi uprising in the North and the separatist movement in the South are severely damaging the Yemeni government’s capacity to address the needs of its people or counter the growing influence of AQAP. While the Yemeni government may insist on resolving these conflicts internally, mediation efforts and assistance from international institutions and organizations may be necessary to ensure they are brought to an end as quickly as possible.
- **Establish a global fund to assist Yemen in addressing its water crisis:** Yemen is experiencing a water crisis, with most of its aquifers expected to run dry in the coming years. This fund should support Yemen’s acquisition of the best available technologies to avert water shortages, assess areas in most urgent need of water, and develop infrastructure necessary for widespread water delivery.
- **Develop a plan to ease transition from a petroleum-based economy:** Yemen’s oil reserves are rapidly depleting and will soon be unable to support its economy. The contact group should help Yemen develop a plan to transition away from a petroleum-based economy, including financial assistance to make up some of the shortfall in oil revenue in the near term.
- **Create an internationally funded and monitored Reintegration and Risk Reduction Initiative:** The contact group should oversee a task force of experts to create a state-of-the-art Reintegration and Risk Reduction Initiative to be internationally funded but based in Yemen.
 - The goal should be to stand up a well-run, well-resourced, internationally monitored initiative that works with individuals to reject violence.
 - The funds for this initiative should be split between some combination of the United States, European states, Arab countries, private donors, and the Yemeni government. The Yemeni government has a location that could potentially be used for such an initiative.
 - Programs should be tailor-made for each individual that enters into it and able to address a wide variety of needs—from those who are reintegrating into society after prolonged detention to those who embrace *takfiri* beliefs and violence. Screening protocols and individually designed programs will need to be developed involving psychological counseling, medical attention, job training, and financial assistance for participants and their relatives. The program also would include religious discussion with clerics and with Yemeni militants who have renounced violence, and engagement with participants’ families, local imams, and tribes—where possible—to facilitate the return to the community. Local civil society should be enlisted. Sustainable jobs that allow participants to reintegrate into society ought to be a cornerstone of this program.

- International experts should be consulted to develop an agreed-upon protocol on what constitutes success.
- **Move the Yemeni Detainees at Guantánamo:** Participants at the London Ministerial can help resolve a critical aspect of closing Guantánamo by addressing the fate of the remaining Yemeni detainees. The Risk Reduction Initiative described above and overseen by the contact group should be used to reintegrate those cleared for release from Guantánamo.

Endnotes

- 1 Some participants wished to be identified while others did not. In keeping with the off-the-record nature of the discussion, we have chosen to list no one but the conveners, Dr. Sarah E. Mendelson, Director, Human Rights and Security Initiative, CSJS and Ken Gude, Associate Director, International Rights and Responsibilities, Center for American Progress. The views expressed here are the authors' alone, and we thank all the participants for their time and for their comments. For additional commentary concerning the London Yemen Ministerial, see Sarah E. Mendelson, "Past the Deadline on Guantánamo," *Foreign Policy*, January 25, 2010.