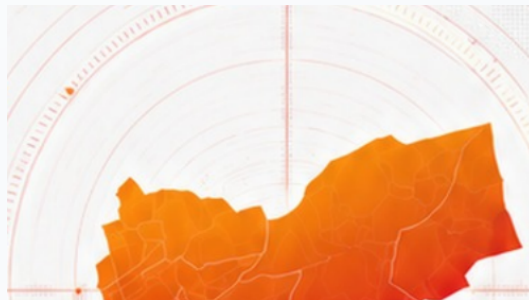




January 2026

Dissolution of the UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council: A Test of State Recovery and the Monopoly of Force

A focused analytical reading for decision-makers within Abaad Observatory for Early Warning and Strategic Indicators



Risk Level:
Red

State Recovery

Monopoly of Force

Aden, Hadramawt and Al-Mahra

Issued by



Abaad Studies & Research Center

www.abaadstudies.org

info@abaadstudies.org

abaadstudies@gmail.com

[@abaadstudies](https://twitter.com/abaadstudies)

+967 737 887 778

Abaad Observatory

Methodology and Analytical Approach

Abaad Observatory for Early Warning and Strategic Indicators adopts a multi-stage monitoring and analysis methodology designed to transform raw materials, news items, reports, and dispersed data into indicators that can be understood, measured, and assessed. The aim is to help decision-makers, researchers, and relevant stakeholders read ongoing developments in Yemen and anticipate their possible trajectories.

The methodology begins with collecting monitored materials from media sources, official statements, local and international reports, organizational outputs, and available field indicators. These materials are then classified into key tracks: political, economic, social, military, security, rights, and humanitarian indicators.

After classification, the materials are analyzed across four main levels: event intensity, indicator direction, level of impact, and early-warning significance. The Observatory does not treat news items as isolated incidents, but rather as signals that may reveal broader trends, rising risks, or exploitable opportunities.

Abaad Observatory for Early Warning and Strategic Indicators also uses artificial intelligence tools to support the processing of raw information, sorting of materials, detection of recurring patterns, classification of indicators, and generation of initial readings that help the analytical team produce faster and more structured situation assessments.

Artificial intelligence is not used as a substitute for human judgment or editorial responsibility. It is used as an assisting tool within a research and analytical process supervised by the Observatory's team. All outputs are subject to human review, consistency checks, editorial refinement, and political and strategic interpretation before being approved in the final version.

This integration of human monitoring and AI-assisted analysis aims to improve analytical efficiency, reduce data fragmentation, accelerate the detection of early indicators, and maintain professional standards of accuracy, context, and caution in drawing conclusions.

Abaad Observatory

Analytical Workflow

First

Collection of raw materials. News items, statements, reports, official remarks, and information relevant to the monitoring period are collected.

Second

Classification of materials. Materials are categorized into political, economic, social, military, security, rights, and humanitarian indicators.

Third

Trend analysis. The materials are examined to identify rising, declining, stable, or latent trends.

Fourth

Risk-level assessment. Each indicator is assessed according to its potential impact on the state, security, society, economy, the political settlement, and the humanitarian file.

Fifth

Human and editorial review. The analytical outputs are reviewed to ensure clarity of meaning, accuracy of interpretation, and avoidance of bias or unsupported conclusions.

Sixth

Production of a decision-maker-oriented assessment. Indicators are converted into an executive summary, scenarios, risks, opportunities, and practical recommendations.

Abaad Observatory

Fixed Editorial Note

This report is not intended to provide a monthly news archive or to simply restate all developments in chronological order. Rather, it seeks to produce an analytical reading directed at decision-makers. Accordingly, the issues addressed in this report are arranged according to their level of impact and strategic significance, not merely according to the date on which they occurred.

Therefore, some events that may appear limited in media volume may receive greater analytical weight if they are connected to the future of the state, the monopoly of force, unified security command, the settlement track, or the rights and humanitarian situation.

Abaad Observatory

First: Executive Summary

January 2026 marked a pivotal month in the trajectory of the Yemeni conflict. The center of gravity shifted from following dispersed events to a critical test of the state's ability to restore its institutions and monopolize military and security decision-making after the dissolution of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council and the beginning of efforts to reorganize the situation in Aden, Hadramawt, Al-Mahra, and Socotra.

The most important indicator in January was that the Yemeni state, with clear Saudi backing, moved from merely rejecting parallel armed formations to taking practical steps. These steps included receiving military camps, redeploying forces, making military appointments and dismissals, calling for the removal of military camps from Aden, and repeatedly emphasizing that any weapon outside the framework of the state represents a direct threat to stability.

However, this shift does not mean that the path toward state recovery has become guaranteed. Rather, it reveals a highly sensitive phase, as the dismantling of parallel formations may trigger political and security reactions from networks that have lost privileges or centers of influence. January, therefore, does not represent the end of the Southern Transitional Council's risks, but the beginning of the test of managing the post-dissolution phase politically, security-wise, rights-wise, and in terms of service delivery.

The monitoring also shows that Yemen has entered a phase of redefining the legitimacy equation: will authority be exercised through state institutions, or through armed power centers financed from outside the state? And can the new government translate its political and military decisions into stable institutional reality in Aden and the eastern governorates?

Abaad Observatory

Second: General Risk Indicator

Overall risk level: Red / High.

The risk indicator in January is elevated for three main reasons. First, the process of dissolving the Southern Transitional Council and reintegrating its forces is still in its early stages. This is a sensitive process that may provoke resistance from political, military, or financial networks harmed by the loss of influence.

Second, Aden and the eastern governorates have become a direct testing ground for the government's ability to impose security. The monitored developments included assassination attempts, the handover of military camps, closure of offices, abductions, and requests to pursue suspects in assassination cases through Interpol. These are all indicators that institutional transition may face security resistance no less significant than political opposition.

Third, the rights and humanitarian file remained highly pressing, particularly in relation to secret prisons, enforced disappearance, obstruction of the Muscat prisoner-exchange agreement, and the Houthis' continued detention of UN and humanitarian staff. These issues make any political settlement vulnerable to blackmail and disruption.

The risk in January does not lie only in the possibility that the Southern Transitional Council may return as an organization. It also lies in the possibility that the logic of parallel formations may return under new names, or that affected networks may shift toward obstructing security, public services, and political decision-making.

Abaad Observatory

Third: Key Transformations in January

1. Political Transformation: From Managing Division to Redefining the State. January witnessed a clear political shift from managing balances with the Southern Transitional Council toward an attempt to redefine the center of legitimacy and representation. The discourse on Yemen's unity, rejection of separatist entities, and support for state sovereignty was repeated by Yemeni, regional, and international actors.

The appointment of Shaye Al-Zindani as prime minister and his mandate to form a new government also emerged as part of an attempt to rebuild government performance after a period of political and administrative disruption. The implication is that the state is seeking to replace the equation of partnership with power centers with the equation of partnership under the umbrella of institutions.

Yet the success of this path depends on the new government's ability to produce tangible results in security, services, and salaries, not on political decisions alone. Citizens will not measure the state's success by the number of presidential decrees, but by improvements in security, regular services, control of corruption, and the return of functioning state institutions.

2. Military and Security Transformation: The Monopoly of Force Becomes the Core Issue. The military and security indicator was the most sensitive in January. The monitored developments focused on receiving military camps, redeploying forces, integrating armed formations, removing military camps from Aden, and completing the handover of military positions in Hadramawt to the Nation Shield Forces.

This means that the conflict is no longer only with the Houthis on the frontlines. It has also become an internal struggle within the anti-Houthi camp over who possesses weapons and who controls security decision-making. The strategic implication is that the state has a rare opportunity to restore part of its authority if it succeeds in integrating formations and stabilizing Aden, Hadramawt, and Al-Mahra.

The monopoly of force is not a political slogan; it is the very criterion of state existence. Any delay in integrating armed formations or bringing them under the Ministries of Defense and Interior gives parallel networks an opportunity to reposition themselves.

3. Regional Transformation: Decline of the Emirati Role and Rise of Saudi Arabia as Guarantor. The monitoring shows that Saudi Arabia moved as the main guarantor of the process of dismantling parallel formations and normalizing conditions in Aden and the eastern governorates. The issues of Mayyun, Socotra, and Somaliland also appeared as regional extensions of Yemen's concern over the reengineering of maritime and geopolitical influence outside the authority of the state.

The implication is that Yemen is entering a phase of regional power rearrangement, not merely internal restructuring. This makes the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab, Socotra, Mayyun, and Somaliland interconnected files within the broader path of state recovery.

4. Economic Transformation: Limited Monitoring Volume, Deep Strategic Impact. Although economic materials were limited, they carried serious indicators. Most notably, U.S. estimates indicated that the Houthis receive more than two billion dollars annually from smuggled Iranian oil, alongside broad sanctions targeting Houthi smuggling and financing networks.

This means that the economic war is not marginal. It is part of the Houthis' ability to continue militarily and politically. On the other hand, the internationally recognized government faces another test: can it transform Saudi political and military support into economic and service recovery that citizens can feel?

5. Rights and Humanitarian Transformation: Prisons and Detainees as a Test of Legitimacy. January saw the emergence of secret prisons, enforced disappearance, obstruction of the Muscat prisoner-exchange agreement, the Houthis' continued detention of UN employees, the termination of World Food Programme staff contracts in Houthi-controlled areas, and repeated warnings of a widening humanitarian need.

The importance of this file lies in the fact that the rights issue is no longer merely humanitarian. It has become a political file that tests the legitimacy of all parties. No new legitimacy can be built while the files of detention, disappearance, and secret prisons remain unresolved.

Abaad Observatory

Fourth: What January's Indicators Mean for Decision-Makers

January's indicators mean that Yemen has entered a phase of rebuilding the state from within the anti-Houthi camp, not only confronting the Houthis. The Houthis remain a military, economic, and rights-related threat, but the immediate risk in January was linked to the extent to which the state can end the multiplicity of power centers within its own areas.

The success of the post-STC dissolution process will not be measured by the announcement of the dissolution itself, but by four practical tests: can the government actually unify military and security decision-making? Can it prevent armed reactions, assassinations, or political sabotage? Can the southern dialogue be transformed into an inclusive national process rather than a platform for reproducing separatism? And will state recovery be reflected in services, salaries, and the economy?

Decision-makers are facing a narrow window. If the post-dissolution moment is invested in building effective security and service institutions, it may become a turning point in the state-recovery process. If, however, the phase is managed through domination, exclusion, or bureaucratic delay, it may generate a new wave of instability.

Abaad Observatory

Fifth: Rising Risks

1. Resistance from Networks of the Dissolved Southern Transitional Council

Some political or military networks that lost their positions may shift toward security disruption, media incitement, organized protests, assassinations, or disruption of services.

2. Aden's Fragility

Aden is the most important test. Any failure to stabilize it will weaken the image of the new government and provide its opponents with evidence that the state is unable to manage the temporary capital.

3. Continued Indirect Emirati Influence

Despite talk of withdrawal, indicators in Socotra, Mayyun, and Somaliland suggest that influence may shift from direct presence to local networks or maritime and regional arrangements.

4. Houthi Exploitation of the Transition

The Houthis may exploit the government's preoccupation with reorganizing the south to increase military, rights-related, or humanitarian pressure; obstruct the prisoner-exchange agreement; or reposition on some fronts.

5. Escalation of the Rights File

Secret prisons, enforced disappearance, Houthi death sentences, the prisoners' agreement, and the detention of UN and humanitarian workers may become domestic and international pressure files if they are not handled seriously and transparently.

Abaad Observatory

Sixth: Available Opportunities

1. Opportunity to Rebuild the State's Monopoly of Arms

If the process of integration and handover is completed under the Ministries of Defense and Interior, it will represent a strategic step toward rebuilding the state.

2. Opportunity to Turn Southern Dialogue into a Settlement Within the State

Rather than allowing southern dialogue to become a gateway to separatism, it can be transformed into a framework for addressing the southern question within a federal state or fair arrangements that preserve Yemen's unity.

3. Opportunity to Build a Regional Coalition Supporting Yemen's Unity

Repeated positions by Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and Arab states in support of Yemen's unity can be invested diplomatically to close the door to fragmentation projects.

4. Opportunity to Target the Houthi Economy

Sanctions on financing and smuggling networks open a window to dry up Houthi resources, provided they are accompanied by Yemeni tools for financial and maritime tracking and coordination with international partners.

5. Rights-Based Opportunity to Build Trust

Closing irregular prisons, releasing arbitrarily detained individuals, holding perpetrators accountable, and protecting witnesses can give the government moral and political leverage.

Abaad Observatory

Seventh: Possible Scenarios

Scenario One

Controlled State Recovery. Probability: Medium. The Presidential Leadership Council and the new government, with Saudi backing, succeed in completing the handover of military camps, integrating formations, stabilizing Aden, and opening a southern dialogue track under the umbrella of the state.

Scenario Two

Security and Political Resistance from Affected Networks. Probability: Medium to High. Acts of disruption, assassinations, or organized protests emerge in Aden, Hadramawt, and Socotra with the aim of showing that the dissolution of the Southern Transitional Council created a security vacuum.

Scenario Three

Houthi Exploitation of Internal Preoccupation. Probability: Medium. The Houthis exploit the state's preoccupation with the southern file to reposition, escalate rights-related pressure, obstruct the prisoners' agreement, or increase pressure on the frontlines.

Scenario Four

Greater Internationalization of the Red Sea and Islands File. Probability: Medium. The importance of Mayyun, Socotra, Somaliland, and Bab al-Mandab grows in regional and international calculations. This may create opportunities for the Yemeni state if it acts diplomatically, or risks if the file is left to external actors.

Abaad Observatory

Eighth: Recommendations for Decision-Makers

1. Manage the Post-STC Dissolution Phase as a Security and Political Transition, not merely as an administrative decision. It requires a clear timeline for receiving military camps, integrating forces, addressing ranks and salaries, and dismantling irregular networks.

2. Unify Military and Security Decision-Making Under the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Any exceptions or parallel arrangements will reproduce the same problem under new names.

3. Turn Aden into a Rapid Success Model by prioritizing security, services, salaries, the port, the airport, and the judiciary. Aden is the mirror of the new state.

4. Open an Inclusive Southern Track Under the Umbrella of the State, so the political vacuum after the dissolution of the Southern Transitional Council is not filled by networks of anger, separatism, or external influence.

5. Build a Diplomatic File on Islands and Maritime Corridors. Socotra, Mayyun, Bab al-Mandab, and Somaliland should become a sovereign file in Yemeni foreign policy linked to national security and international trade.

6. Establish a Financial and Maritime Monitoring Unit to Track Houthi Financing, linking maritime security with financial analysis, oil networks, smuggling routes, financial transfers, and commercial fronts.

7. Close the File of Irregular Prisons Transparently through a national investigation mechanism, witness protection, the release of arbitrarily detained individuals, and accountability for those involved.

8. Link Saudi and International Support to Government Performance Indicators in security, services, salaries, and transparency.

Abaad Observatory

Ninth: Concluding Situation Assessment

January 2026 was not only the month of the Southern Transitional Council's dissolution. It was also a test of whether the Yemeni state can restore its center after years of multiple armed and political power centers. The opportunity is real, but it is surrounded by high risks. Its success requires a delicate balance between security firmness, political containment, rights-based accountability, and service reform.

The bottom line for decision-makers is clear: State recovery does not begin with announcing the dissolution of formations. It begins with preventing their return under new names, transforming weapons into institutions, turning political disagreement into dialogue, and converting external support into tangible government performance.
