



منصة شباب لبناء السلام
Youth platform for peacebuilding

Policy brief

Yemeni Youth Engagement in the First
Track of Peacebuilding Process
(The Missing Track)

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Introduction

This policy brief highlights the reality of engaging Yemeni youth in the first track of the peacebuilding process, as well as outlining the obstacles to youth's participation in ending conflicts and building peace.

It discusses the reasons why the Yemeni youth had turned away from the participation in the first track of peacebuilding as well as the challenges that limit their participation, and thereby increase their exclusion from participating and influencing in decision making positions and policies that affect them.

The main causes of this issue are: (i) the poor capacity of youth to be organised, negotiate this kind of issues, make their voices heard, and access the negotiation table in the first track and beyond; (ii) lack of comprehensive youth-representing community empowerment tools that are necessary to give youth a real opportunity to represent themselves and their communities in the first-track negotiations, (iii) OSESGY is offering no help or support in this regard; (iv) the negotiating and political parties having no faith in engaging the youth in the first track negotiations and beyond. All these reasons have played a key role in excluding the youth from participating actively in decision making at the local and international level in order to contribute in developing the policies and legislations that would promote security stabilization in their country and communities.

Background

The Yemeni youth have a crucial role to play in the peacebuilding process which is evidenced by their contributions in supporting the efforts of the second and third tracks carried out by local organizations and community youth-led initiatives that implement projects supporting a peacebuilding process related to the environment, education, security, economy and politics. In addition, the Security Council resolution (2250) on youth, peace and security was an important pillar in supporting youth, strengthening their role and urging Member and Donor States to consider ways to increase the overall representation of youth in decision making and peacebuilding processes at all levels and to prevent conflicts. Although the UN resolution is in place and all contributions of the Yemeni youth in the mentioned tracks, youth almost have no role in the OSESGY-led first track of peacebuilding process.

Analysis

The lack of youth participation in the peacebuilding process in Yemen is the result of the following causes:

1. Exclusion from Political Participation

This is because peacebuilding talks are under the control of the senior leadership of parties and the parties to the conflict, not to mention that the youth are divided politically where they side with either of the parties to the conflict. The lack of UN and global support they had before is another reason that contributes to their current situation.

2. Security Concerns

Many of the interviewed youth reported that they would prefer working in humanitarian responses and entrepreneurship, because these options are safer than taking part in the political scene or working in the field of rights, which could put their lives in danger.

3. Deterioration of the Economic Conditions

The challenging economic conditions in the country forced the youth to avoid any form of participation in politics and decision-making, which are viewed as a luxury they cannot afford since their only priority in life is to provide the basic needs of life for their families.

4. Deterioration of the Educational System

Educational facilities have been heavily damaged because of the war. Not only did it keep the youth away from any form of political participation, but also made them in a state of loss, fail to participate in public life, and forced many of them to partake in the armed conflict or fall in frustration and despair.

Obstacles Limiting Youth Participation in the First Track of Peacebuilding

- Poor communication between the young leaders who are involved with political parties and the senior party leaders.
- Lack of expertise in this kind and level of negotiation.
- Lack of knowledge of the developments on the political scene.
- International and local organisations paying little attention to the young people involved with political parties.
- Lack of a coalition or an organised structure for independent youth so they can take part in the negotiations.
- Most of active youth in the peacebuilding process are not organised within a youth bloc or network.
- The ineffective role of the civil society in empowering the youth.

Recommendations

- Recommendations for the UN Special Envoy's Office

- Reactivating the Youth and Women Forum of the UN Envoy's Office since it is the primarily agency responsible for engaging youth in the first track of the peacebuilding process; and the importance of developing inclusive and transparent administrative and financial policies and tools for the forum.
- Forming a youth group that brings together all youth coalitions and blocs working on peacebuilding to become a community framework representing the youth.
- Establishment of a monitoring body and organising a Shadow Youth Conference in parallel to the negotiations between the parties to the conflict; and to have permanent channels of communication with the Envoy's Office regarding the negotiations, starting from the preparatory phase, to the convening phase, to the follow-up of the results and commitments of each party.

- Recommendations for the UN agencies and international organizations

- Supporting and funding the women and youth forum of the UN Envoy's Office.
- Building youth capacities in terms of peacebuilding, facilitating conducting meetings and consultations between the actors in the first track and the international organizations and state ambassadors.
- Supporting the youth group to submit papers that address national issues relevant to them to build the trust between the parties leading to mitigating the war and ending it, especially that the issues currently discussed by the parties to the conflict are primarily military and nonrelevant to citizens and youth.

- Recommendations for local civic organizations

- Supporting youth to obtain the institutional tools of societal and political influence that make them eligible for participating in the negotiations at the first track, through forming frameworks to represent them that are acceptable at both the UN level and main parties to the conflict.
- Designing and implementing projects to build youth capacities in terms of negotiation and advocacy; this will help them go through the negotiations of the first track of peacebuilding process and build their capacities of negotiation, leadership, influence, mobilization, advocacy, networking, and bringing youth voices into the dialogue table.