

## August Monthly Update

September 3, 2020

Dear friends,

Last week, a flurry of explosions erupted across Yemen's southern province of Abyan as government forces and pro-independence Southern Transitional Council troops traded heavy fire. As yet another round of formal peace negotiations appears to have faltered, dashing hopes for a cessation of the violence, it is local communities that are tragically suffering beneath the swelling conflict. All the while, ICRD has been working with religious leaders to help maintain stability and encourage peace in the region. Religion remains a primary source of values for these beleaguered communities and religious leaders are a critical provider of social services in many places where the government is absent, working tirelessly to strengthen local efforts toward peace. Thankfully, their hard work has not gone unnoticed!

The Director General of Social Affairs in the Abyan region recently attended an ICRD-supported workshop focused on building social cohesion and mitigating the drivers of conflict at the local and community level. The workshop, the first in a series, brought together twenty-five participants including religious leaders, educators, media professionals, and civil society actors from across Abyan. This programming is being conducted as part of an ongoing collaboration with **PartnersYemen** and **PartnersGlobal**.

Participants and facilitators committed to social distancing, wearing facemasks, and other recommended guidelines for safe interaction during the pandemic, the toll of which is hard to calculate in Yemen. These measures allow community actors to continue to strategize on how to weather the impacts of the war, an already stressed healthcare system, lingering outbreaks of disease and the effects of food shortages, all of which have been made more difficult by the eruption of COVID-19.



The Director observed the entirety of the workshop, as program participants explored and practiced techniques in identifying drivers of conflict, facilitating community dialogues, providing conflict mediation, and promoting critical thinking. Building on the foundational knowledge of previous ICRD-supported workshops, these follow-on trainings are helping to build out local capacities that are vital to long-term peace in the region.

Following the workshop, the Director conveyed the thanks and appreciation of the Governor. Furthermore, he praised the role, work programs, and activities of the workshop facilitators. He notably emphasized the importance of these workshops and his hopes that they would emerge with meaningful community initiatives focused on peace and social cohesion.

COVID-19 has created dramatic challenges for everyone, but the pervasiveness of violent conflict has remained a constant. Working to bring some cessation of violence to Yemen will allow the country and local communities to focus scarce resources and much-needed cooperation on addressing the disease. As we adapt our peacebuilding strategies and programs to ensure the safest environments for our partners, we need your help to carry on this important work.

Join ICRD for our first ever **Virtual Faith-in-Action Awards**. The Faith-in-Action Awards recognize the unique contributions of an individual or individuals to issues of global concern and the important role that faith convictions play in their work. This year's event will honor Karena Gore, Director of the Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between environment, climate, and peacebuilding.



Join ICRD virtually on Thursday, October 22, 2020, at 7:00pm EDT, and help make faith part of the solution! Tickets are available for purchase [HERE](#) and we look forward to seeing you there!

Warm regards,

James Patton

As the United Nations celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council – of which ICRD is a part – is hosting an event to recognize the role of UN partnerships with faith-inspired organizations over the decades to advance human well-being around the globe. The event will take place on Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00am to 10:00am EDT, and is open to public participation through the following [LINK](#).

ICRD President, James Patton, will be moderating a panel discussion between UN Ambassadors and leaders of faith-inspired organizations, exploring how to restore faith and unity in the UN multi-lateral system during increased fracturing of the global community. The panel will take place from 8:20 to 8:45. We hope that you can join and support this important milestone!

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