



23 January 2014 – Say Yemen, and the first thought of many would be “kidnappings”. However, there is more to the country than what we mostly hear in the news.

The country has been undergoing a democratic transition, with a Government of National Unity, which came to power in an election in February 2012 following the resignation of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. He agreed to step down following widespread protests similar to those seen across the Middle East and North Africa as part of the so-called “Arab Spring” pro-democracy movement.

Yemen has now successfully concluded nearly year-long talks on which the country's new constitution will be founded, although obstacles remain.

“Yemen has demonstrated to the region that positive change is possible when pursued through dialogue and compromise,” Mr. Ban said in a [statement](#) from his spokesperson.

He commended the commitment of all political actors to achieve a peaceful transition – particularly the leadership and determination of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi and the delegates of the Conference – which have set Yemen “on the path to democratic governance.”

Launched on 18 March, the National Dialogue Conference brought new actors to the political process such as youth, women, civil society representatives and the Hiraak Southern

Movement. The Conference aimed to feed into a constitution-making process and pave the way for general elections in 2014.

The Houthis, a group of Zaidi Shia Muslims who draw their name from their late leader, launched a six-year rebellion against the central government in 2004 that left thousands of people dead in the north.

Since October they have been involved in clashes with ultraconservative Salafists and Sunni tribesmen allied to them in several northern areas despite a government-brokered ceasefire.

The UN's special envoy for Yemen, Jamal Benomar, described the conclusion of the National Dialogue Conference as a "historic moment".

"After being on the brink of civil war, Yemenis negotiated an agreement for peaceful change, the only such in the region," he said.

"The National Dialogue established a new social contract and opened a new page in the history of Yemen, breaking from the past and paving the way for democratic governance founded on the rule of law, human rights and equal citizenship," he added.

*UNRIC:s related links and library backgrounder on Yemen*

<http://www.unric.org/en/unric-library/27107>

<http://www.unric.org/html/english/library/backgrounders/yemen.pdf>