



## [Rights Groups Urge Yemen's Houthi Rebels to End the Taiz Blockade Due to the Hindrance It Has Had on the Flow of Humanitarian Aid](#)

In one of the latest developments regarding Yemen, sixteen rights groups including prominent organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have urged for the Taiz blockade to be removed to allow aid to better flow into the city and surrounding region. The blockade has been imposed by the Houthi rebels since early 2016, after they seized Sanaa and much of northern Yemen. The negative impacts of the conflict in Yemen over the past eight years has thrown the country into one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent times, resulting in widespread hunger, disease, and brutal attacks on civilians that have claimed thousands of lives. Experts point out that the Taiz blockade has only exacerbated the already critical situation in Yemen, restricting freedom of movement and impeding the flow of essential goods, medicine, and humanitarian aid to the city's residents. Most water reserves are depleting or have been completely depleted, and as such, civilians have had to rely on water trucks from outside the city as a critical lifeline.

Due to the unique geographical location of the city, the blockade has trapped citizens inside. The restrictions imposed by the Houthis has forced civilians to use unkept and dangerous mountain roads that are the only connection between the city of Taiz and the surrounding areas. Houthi-manned checkpoints impede residents from gaining access to essential items such as fruit, vegetables, cooking gas, dialysis treatment packets, and oxygen cylinders. These restrictions have also driven up prices of essential goods that are already lacking in the city, as they have become scarce. Well over 11.7 million individuals in Yemen are living in poverty due to the longstanding conflict. The Taiz province is the junction between two crucially-important highways: an east-west road leading to the coastal city of Mocha on the Red Sea, and another north-south one to Sanaa via the Dhamar and Ibb provinces. The closure of these roads has incapacitated the city as the trip between Taiz city and Al Hawban now takes five or six hours on rugged mountainous roads.

For the Houthis, the primary concern for them is that unblocking the roads will open the door for Yemen's army to mobilize in Taiz and attempt to regain a foothold in Sanaa. Rights activists point out though that the Houthis have an opportunity to show good faith by allowing humanitarian efforts to more easily enter the region and provide much-needed aid for civilians. In the negotiations for the ongoing 2022 truce, the United Nations floated a proposal to open the roads, with both civil society groups and government entities asking for this during a first round of discussions in an attempt to help ease aid deliveries and the movement of residents. This could have significantly alleviated the suffering of many civilians in the war-torn country.

Instead, the Houthis raised their ceiling of demands and set hard-to-meet conditions, such as insisting that government security forces must leave Taiz before they lift the siege. Even in the face of these obstacles and difficulties, the landmark truce in Yemen was recently extended until the 2nd of October. The extension included a commitment by both the government and Houthis to intensify negotiations to reach an expanded agreement as soon as possible. The truce has been rightfully outlined as a positive development, and the hopes of reopening roads in Taiz would also drastically improve the lives of millions of civilians by bolstering access to food, healthcare, and other humanitarian services.