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Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

The Repercussions of the Safer Crisis: Environmental Risks & a Humanitarian Catastrophe

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First: Preamble

The Floating Storage and Offloading (FSO) "Safer" vessel is an oil tanker built in 1976. In 1987, it was converted into a floating storage and offloading vessel for the export of crude oil. It is currently moored in the port of Ras Isa, which is under the control of the Houthi militia, about 60 km north of the Yemeni city of Al Hudaydah. This vessel was built by Japan and used for 10 years as a very large crude carrier (VLCC). In 1986, the three million barrel capacity supertanker was converted to a floating storage and offloading facility named "FSO SAFER".

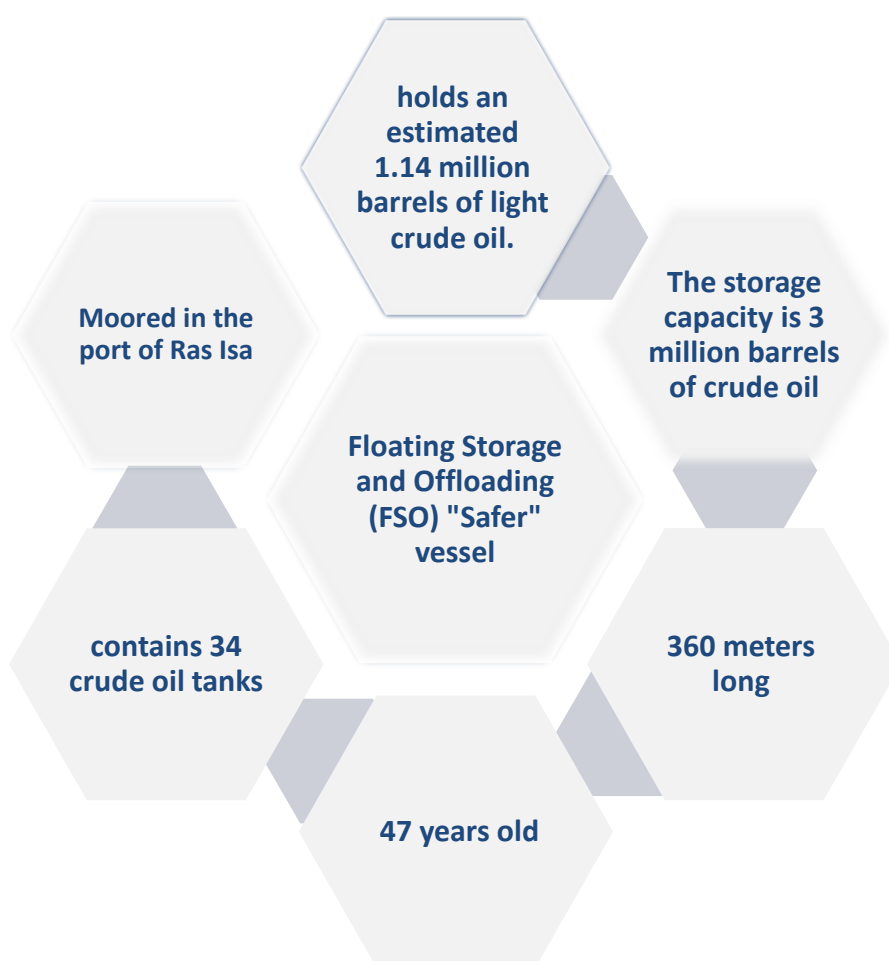


Figure 1: Basic information about the Safer vessel

Owned by the National Oil Corporation (NOC) and controlled by the Houthi militia, the Vessel currently contains 150,000 metric tons, representing 1.1 million barrels of crude oil, while its storage capacity is about 3 million barrels.¹ The Vessel was used to store and export crude oil coming from the oil fields in Marib Governorate. However, production, offloading and maintenance operations for Safer

¹ FSO Safer: Plans to salvage rusting oil tanker delayed by rising shipping costs, <https://bit.ly/42pNAG6>

were suspended in 2015 due to the outbreak of conflict in Yemen. During the period from 2015 to March 2023, the Houthi militia continued to delay the implementation of the reform plan proposed by the United Nations to address the situation of the Safer reservoir, which includes three steps; first; tank condition assessment; second:

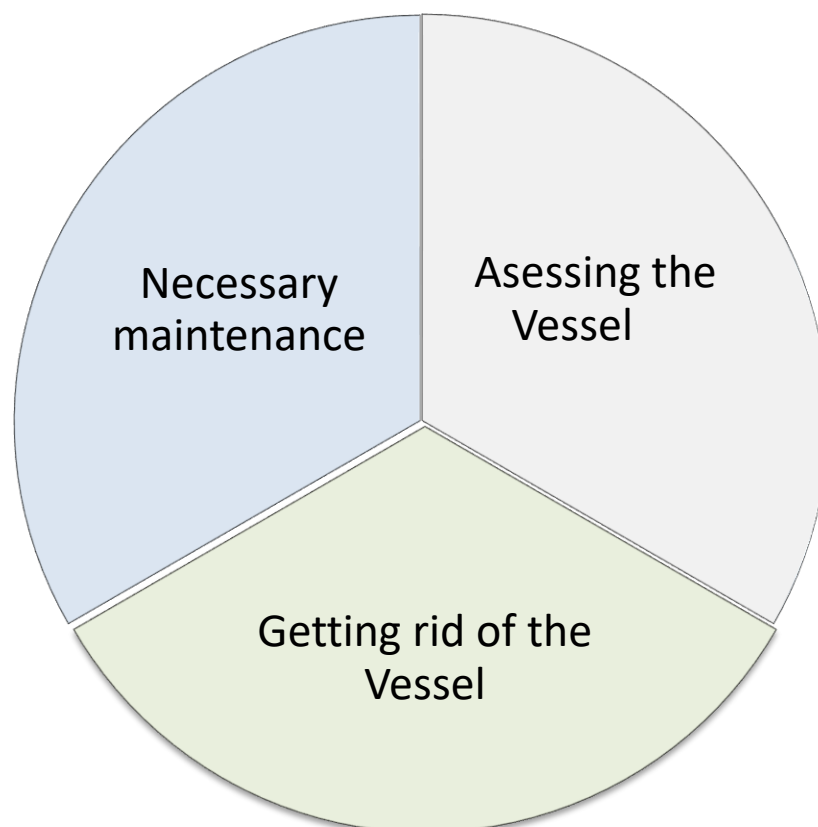


Figure 2: Steps for addressing the Safer reservoir crisis according to the UN vision

perform necessary maintenance; and finally: getting rid of the Vessel. However, the Houthi militia continued to use the reservoir as a tool to achieve political gains and put pressure on the Arab coalition and the international community.

Although the Houthi militia agreed more than once on the United Nations plan, it was at the same time putting various obstacles to accessing the reservoir, and did not allow the technical experts appointed by the United Nations to access it. On March 9, 2023, the UNDP signed an agreement to purchase an oil tanker will transport oil from the floating tank "Safer", in what appears to be a step towards implementing the United Nations plan and the memorandum of understanding signed between

them and the Houthi militia. This Vessel is scheduled to arrive at the Ras Isa station near the Safer reservoir in May 2023.²

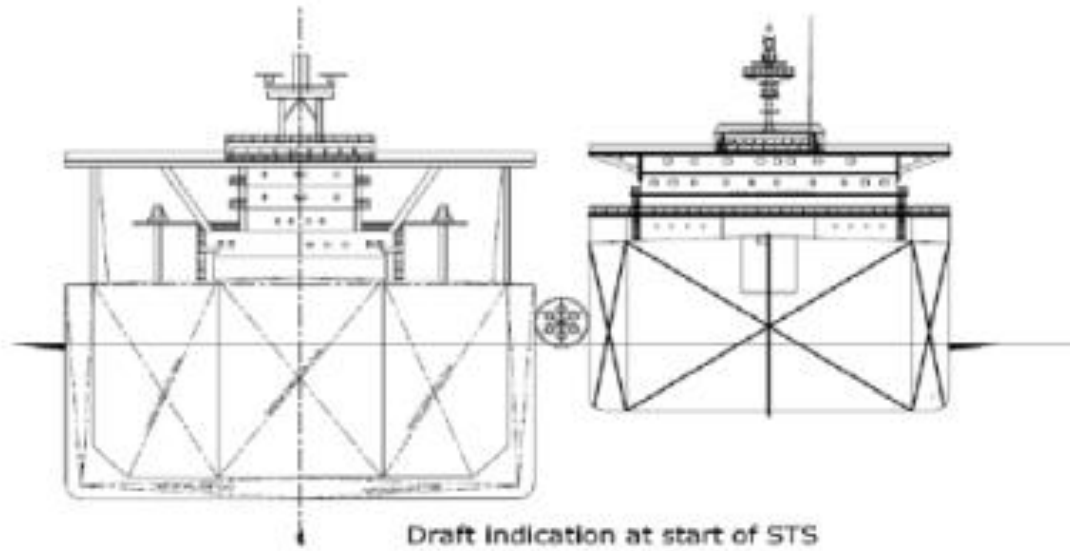


Figure 3: An illustration of how oil is transported from one vessel to another

Photo by the UNDP

Despite the previous step, the Vessel's arrival in May 2023 is subject to a political settlement that may take place between the Houthi militia and the Arab coalition. In the event that the ongoing negotiations falter, the Houthi militia may again prevent UN experts from reaching the reservoir, which constitutes a violation of the Houthi militia's obligations with the United Nations. It would also be considered a violation of the agreement signed between the Houthi militia and the United Nations in November 2020, which included a clause allowing United Nations experts to access the reservoir. It also constitutes an explicit violation of Security Council Resolution No. 2511 of 2020, which demanded the arrival of United Nations inspectors without delay to inspect and maintain the reservoir.

This may lead to unprecedented environmental damage, which consequences will affect not only the population in Yemen, but also the population in neighboring countries as a result of the threat to the marine environment in the Red Sea region. This is a continuation of the Houthi militia's violation of Security Council Resolution No. 2624 of 2022, which held it responsible for the situation of the reservoir and demanded continuous coordination with the United Nations to reach a solution to

² مسودة توضيحية بشأن مقترح الأمم المتحدة بخصوص الخزان العائم صافر، 16 مارس 2023، الأمم المتحدة – اليمن، <https://bit.ly/40kY3Ri>

this grave danger in the Red Sea.³ The continued disavowal of the Houthi militia from its previous commitments may harm the Yemeni economy, coastal communities, international trade, and the right to health. The oil spill will also have enormous impacts on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, because most of the food aid comes to the population through the port of Hodeidah, which is close to the Safer reservoir.

This report focuses on the obstacles placed by the Houthi militia to repair and maintain the Safer reservoir in Yemen, and the catastrophic repercussions and human rights violations that may result from the continuation of these obstacles, especially the violation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to health, the right to food, and the exacerbation of the problem of internal displacement in Yemen, which may exacerbate the dire situation of human rights in Yemen.

This report does not only review the obligations of the Houthi militia under international humanitarian law. However, the militia's commitment to international human rights law and international treaties and agreements approved by the militia's unrecognized Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its letter to the United Nations Group of Experts on Yemen is reviewed, as the Houthi militia acknowledged that these agreements apply to it and is committed to applying them in the areas under its control. In its written correspondence addressed to the Group of Experts on Yemen, the Houthi militia acknowledged human rights obligations and stated that its forces respect their international obligations to protect civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The Houthi militia noted that the human rights treaties ratified by the Yemeni government is applicable,⁴ which made us review these promises made by the militia at different times and pledged to the United Nations bodies and its agencies, by analogy with the issue of the Safer reservoir, which is moored in areas controlled by the Houthi militia.

Second: Houthi militia's Use of the "Safer Reservoir" as a Tool of Pressure, Ignoring Human Rights

The Houthi militia used the Safer reservoir as a bargaining chip in order to put pressure on the member states of the United Nations and the Arab Coalition. According to the vision of the Houthi militia, the reservoir's status and addressing must be part of a political settlement or a broader agreement that is subject to their

³ S/RES/2624(2022), [https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=S/RES/2624\(2022\)&Lang=E](https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=S/RES/2624(2022)&Lang=E)

⁴ Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, Para 82, <https://bit.ly/3Fqg2xV>

conditions.⁵ The Houthi militia promoted at the beginning of the conflict the theory it called a siege by the Arab coalition that prevents maintenance workers from playing their role on board the Safer reservoir.⁶

The United Nations presented its plan to repair the Safer reservoir more than once, but the Houthis have been delaying the implementation of this plan. The Houthis believe that the slowdown in addressing the Safer crisis will positively affect the Houthi militia. In July 2020, the Houthi militia entered into an agreement with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to send a team of UN inspectors to conduct preliminary assessments and repairs to the Safer reservoir. This agreement was supervised by the Houthi militia and the UNOPS and was scheduled to be implemented in the third week of August 2020. However, the Houthis put obstacles in front of United Nations experts, and did not initiate any measures to implement the agreement.⁷ What is more, it is in August 2020 as well. The Houthi militia prevented technical engineers from a Singaporean company assigned by the United Nations to access the vessel⁸ and refused to grant them any permits to enter the tank.⁹ The arbitrary conditions set by the Houthi militia included requesting the United Nations to change the company in charge of repairing the tank.¹⁰ In November 2020, the Houthi militia and the United Nations signed an agreement to appoint another team of specialists to assess the tanker and carry out the necessary repairs in compliance with the Houthi militia's request. However, the Houthi militia postponed the team's work for several months, sparking new disagreements with the United Nations over the details of the technical experts' task.¹¹ The United Nations then submitted a proposal that included placing an exclusion zone around the Safer reservoir during the assessment of the reservoir, but the Houthis rejected this proposal on March 20, 2021, as Muhammad Ali declared al-Houthi's rejection of the United Nations to place an exclusion zone of six nautical miles around Safer during the evaluation, claiming that the clause was not included in the initial agreement.¹²

The Houthis presented a new list of demands to the United Nations related to logistical and security arrangements, which angered the United Nations, and Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the Secretary-General, said that it was a kind of cat-

⁵ Inaction on 'FSO Safer' worse than potential benefit to Houthis from salvage plan, UN says, <https://bit.ly/3Z6tC0d>

⁶ U.S.-Iran Nuclear Talks and the FSO Safer Oil Tanker, <https://bit.ly/3It1nv5>

⁷ Houthis Use Potential FSO Safer Disaster as Political Leverage, <https://bit.ly/3JXMutT>

⁸ Houthis Reject UN Plan to Assess, Repair Safer Tanker, <https://bit.ly/3yU7gEs>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Houthis Reject UN Plan to Assess, Repair Safer Tanker, <https://bit.ly/3yU7gEs>

¹¹ Can the Houthi-UN Agreement Resolve the FSO Safer Oil Tanker Crisis? <https://bit.ly/3lq7UXo>

¹² <https://bit.ly/3LicQkX>

and-mouse game. On March 5, 2022, the United Nations signed another memorandum of understanding with the Houthi militia, which includes the militia's commitment to facilitate the mission of the United Nations technical team assigned to repair the Safer reservoir, and to facilitate the access of the technical experts to the reservoir.¹³

However, as usual, the Houthi militia kept putting obstacles in the way of all experts' access to the reservoir, and the Houthi militia claimed that the United Nations is the party obstructing the process of repairing the reservoir, accusing it, among other things, of trying to tamper with donor funds.¹⁴ Explaining the position of the Houthi militia, reports suggested that they had political reasons in dealing with the reservoir, including the withdrawal of the joint forces of the Yemeni government from the positions they occupy in Hodeidah Governorate.¹⁵ Other reports claimed that the Houthis threatened to target the vessel for allowing the international community to reach the reservoir without their consent. David Gray Lacey, Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator of the United Nations in Yemen before the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, criticized the behavior of the Houthis regarding dealing with the reservoir, saying that "the delay in repairing the reservoir is worse than any marginal gains that the Houthis may achieve from this delay in repairing the reservoir."

On March 9, 2023, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) signed an agreement to purchase a giant oil tanker through the SMIT Maritime Salvage Company that will transport oil from the Safer floating tank, in what appears to be a step towards implementing the UN plan. It is currently under maintenance in dry dock and is scheduled to arrive at the Ras Isa near Safer in mid-May 2023.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Houthi militia did not agree with the United Nations on a timetable for transferring oil from the Safer oil ship to the other tanker, which may delay efforts to address the situation of the reservoir.¹⁷ Even after the agreement, the Houthi militia continued to accuse the United Nations stepping up their accusation to the degree of saying that it is the UN desire to maintain the situation so that it can request greater funding from donor.¹⁸ It is worth noting that the United Nations has collected up to

¹³ اليمن: توصل إلى اتفاق مع السلطات في صنعاء لحل مشكلة خزان صافر، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/03/1095752>

¹⁴ رغم حصولها على 85 مليون دولار من الدول المانحة، <https://bit.ly/3LDD6wW>

¹⁵ Ibid, <https://bit.ly/3naGrcq>

¹⁶ مسودة توضيحية بشأن مقترح الأمم المتحدة بخصوص الخزائن العائم صافر، 16 مارس 2023، الأمم المتحدة – اليمن، <https://bit.ly/40kY3Ri>

¹⁷ Yemen's Houthis agree UN proposal to offload decaying oil tanker, <https://bit.ly/3lwplvC>

¹⁸ بعد الاحتفاء لأشهر بالاتفاق.. الحوثيون يتهمون الأمم المتحدة مجدداً بالمماطلة في تحييد خطر "صافر"،

<https://almasdaronline.com/articles/268375>

85 million dollars to implement its plan to address the situation of the reservoir, which is sufficient to implement the first phase of this plan, which may take four months, while the United Nations says that it needs another 59 million dollars to implement the second phase.¹⁹

On this previous basis, the Houthi militia may continue to violate the promises it made regarding the Safer reservoir in order to exploit this issue for as long as possible. The Houthi militia hopes that this will lead to greater pressure on the Arab coalition to stop military support for the internationally recognized Yemeni government or to make other concessions that are in the interest of the militia, of course. It also seems that the agreement provided for the purchase of another ship to transport the oil contained in the reservoir is in compliance with the Houthi militia's vision, which supports the view of Ibrahim al-Saraji, who led the Houthi technical negotiations with the United Nations, and clarified more than once that the Houthi militia will not allow the inspectors to board the Safer tank unless it is allowed to enter another oil storage station. The Houthis are trying to preserve the economic value of the Safer reservoir, in a clearer sense, the oil contained in the reservoir, which is estimated at about \$70 million. These obstacles, which the Houthi militia puts in place, are fundamentally inconsistent with Security Council Resolution 2511 of 2020, which demanded the arrival of United Nations inspectors without delay to inspect and maintain the oil tanker.²⁰ The Houthis are believed to be deliberately prolonging the crisis to pressure the internationally recognized government into giving up claim to the value of the crude oil stored on the ship. The Houthis also used the environmental danger posed by the tanker to blackmail the international community and the Arab coalition regarding any military operation targeting the city and port of Hodeidah, which are under their control.²¹

In sum, it can be said that the Houthi militia used the Safer reservoir in order to achieve three main goals:

- In the first stage, the aim was to put pressure on the coalition and the international community to urge the joint forces affiliated with the Yemeni government to withdraw from the positions they occupy in Al-Hodeidah Governorate;

¹⁹ "أنصار الله": الأمم المتحدة تتجاهل مخاطر تسرب النفط من الناقله "صافر"، <https://bit.ly/40us9IE>

²⁰ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/050/99/PDF/N2005099.pdf?OpenElement>

²¹ Ibid

- Second: The Houthi militia wanted protection from any military action in the area where the Safer reservoir is located. The Houthi militia has planted marine mines near the Safer reservoir in the port of Ras Isa and in the neighboring coastal areas, in anticipation of any military action that might aim to control the reservoir.²² It is worth noting that planting sea mines, whether at sea or on the coast, is contrary to international humanitarian law and customary international humanitarian law, including the eighth Hague Convention that regulates the use of sea mines in war, as well as the protection of neutral ships and civilians who do not participate in military actions.²³
- Third: Urging the United Nations to purchase another oil tanker to keep the crude oil on the Safer reservoir, which is estimated at about \$70 million.

Third: United Nations Role in Addressing and Repairing the Safer Reservoir

- In 2018, the United Nations communicated for the first time with the Houthis and the recognized Yemeni government, in order to provide adequate support to solve the problem of the Safer oil reservoir. In 2019, the Houthis authorized the deployment of a United Nations technical team to assess the damage to the reservoir and carry out any possible immediate repairs. They granted the experts of the United Nations Mission entry visas to Al-Hodeidah Governorate, but it failed to grant the experts the final permits necessary to reach the reservoir by sea, and also set other conditions not related to the reservoir that eventually led to the cancellation of the mission.²⁴
- In 2020, the United Nations Development Program proposed an initial assessment and repair mission for the Safer oil tanker, and in September 2021, the United Nations attributed to its Resident Coordinator in Yemen and the Humanitarian Coordinator to develop a plan with all relevant stakeholders to reduce any damage as a result of the delay in addressing tank. On July 5, 2021, the Ministry of Oil and Minerals of the recognized government of Yemen approved the first phase of the United Nations emergency plan to transfer oil from the Safer to another vessel, and on September 4, 2021, approved the second phase of the plan, i.e. the safe replacement of the ship.²⁵
- On March 5, 2022, the Houthis signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations that established a framework for cooperation between

²² If You Think the Ever Given Was Bad, Wait Until You See the Safer, <https://bit.ly/42wiRXQ>

²³ Convention (VIII) relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. The Hague, 18 October 1907., <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/hague-conv-viii-1907>

²⁴ REMARKS BY THE SPOKESPERSON OF THE UNITED NATIONS' SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SAFER, <https://ossgy.unmissions.org/remarks-spokesperson-united-nations-secretary-general-safer>

²⁵ مسودة توضيحية بشأن مقترح الأمم المتحدة بخصوص الخزان العائم صافر، 11 أبريل 2023، <https://bit.ly/43AcFPa>

them and the United Nations. On November 18, 2022, the United Nations persuaded the Houthis to reach an agreement with the United Nations to find an alternative ship to which crude oil would be transported from the Safer ship, and the United Nations Development Program contracted with a maritime broker to search for a suitable ship for the purpose of purchasing. After that, the United Nations Development Program, which is being carried out as part of a United Nations initiative, by contracting with the marine salvage company SMIT to equip the Safer oil tanker and carry out the safe transfer of oil from one ship to another.²⁶ On April 7, 2023, the alternative ship Nautica set off on its way to the Red Sea from the Chinese port of Gushan, but the United Nations still says it needs about \$32 million.²⁷

- However, some environmental experts criticized the United Nations plan to address the situation of the Safer reservoir, and according to Ahmed Kulaib, the former director of the Safer Exploration and Production Company, as long as the goal does not include removing oil from the region, it was more appropriate for the United Nations, instead of replacing the Safer with a ship, in an attempt to postpone the disaster instead of resolving it. It was possible, according to experts, to purchase an inert gas generator and place it and operate it on the Safer tank to secure the oil tanks. According to the information, the size of the new tanker into which the oil will be offloaded will not allow it to enter any of the other Yemeni ports.²⁸ Kulaib agreed with many opinions stating that the solution lies in selling the oil on the Safer tank only and selling the quantity directly in the global market as an easy process that will not cost much. Some believe that instead of the United Nations buying another ship, rented or contracted with it for a specific period to perform the task assigned to it only, the United Nations' path to resolving the issue of the Safer by buying another ship means that it does not see prospects for a final solution to this issue, so it proceeded to buy a safer ship that can keep the oil that will be transferred to it from the reservoir for a longer period. Nevertheless, it can be said with a high degree of confidence that the main reason for the delay in addressing the status of the reservoir is due to the Houthis' violation of its agreement signed with the United Nations and the memorandums of understanding that dealt with the status of the reservoir and demanded access for technical experts to it, in addition to the violation of Security Council resolutions, especially

²⁶ الأمم المتحدة تخطو خطوة كبيرة إلى الأمام لمنع التسرب النفطي الكارثي المحتمل في البحر الأحمر إذ يوقع برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي اتفاقية لشراء ناقلة نفط بديلة، <https://bit.ly/41eVIs0>

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/DavidGressly/status/1645098283742765057>

²⁸ <https://twitter.com/AmkConsul>

Resolution 2511 of 2020, which demanded UN inspectors arrive promptly to inspect and maintain the reservoir.

Fourth: Repercussions of the Delay in Repairing the Safer Reservoir

The Houthi militia's repeated refusal to repair the Safer reservoir has raised concerns about oil leakage from the anchored reservoir near the Houthi-controlled port of Ras Isa. The total cost of such a spill could range between \$20 and \$25 billion. The total cost of cleansing and rehabilitating coastal habitats that will be damaged in the event of an oil spill from the reservoir is more than \$51 billion, according to estimates by the Kharaz Center for Environmental Consulting. In addition, if the maintenance plan proposed by the United Nations is not implemented, the oil spill or explosion of the reservoir will have dire effects on the thousands of people, the Yemeni economy, the global trade, the marine environment and will violate the right to health.²⁹

1. Undermining the Yemeni Economy

Reports of civil society organizations suggested that 670,000 people in Yemen may be directly affected in the event of an oil spill from the Safer reservoir, and the cleaning operations that will follow the occurrence of this disaster, because this will result in damage to fisheries. The fishing industry has lost \$150 million - that's \$30 million a year over five years. Ports such as Al-Hodeidah and Al-Salif will also be closed for a period that may range from two to three months, which affects the coastal industries.³⁰ This is inconsistent with Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, which stipulates the need to provide enough food for the population, and this slowdown in treating the reservoir may hinder the achievement of the first and second goals of sustainable development, which are related to the eradication of poverty and hunger, respectively. In a related context, reports suggested that the oil leakage of the reservoir may affect three million farmers in the Tihama region in Al-Hodeidah governorate, because the oil leaked from the reservoir will lead to pollution of their agricultural lands³¹. This naturally affects the enjoyment of economic and social rights guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil

²⁹ Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-response-plan-2022-april-2022>

³⁰ خزان صافر العائم: قنبلة موقوتة، <https://bit.ly/3FGhkVw>

³¹ سام تدعو الأمم المتحدة إلى اتخاذ إجراءات عاجلة لإنقاذ بيئة البحر الأحمر من كارثة وشيكة، <https://almahriah.net/local/2836>

and Political Rights. It will also delay the achievement of the development goals, especially SDG 13, which threatens to leave thousands of people in Yemen far behind.

2. Impeding Global Trade

In addition to the damage to the Yemeni economy, the collapse of the reservoir will impede the movement of global trade, because the potential oil leakage will inevitably lead to the closure of the ports of Hodeidah and Saleef, and this in turn will impede the movement of global trade. The oil leakage will also lead to instability of shipping routes at the narrow Bab al-Mandab,³² which will have unprecedented costs on international trade, including the disruption of international trade through the Suez Canal, which amounts to the volume of international trade through which more than 10% of world trade passes. To assess the costs in similar incidents, the sudden breakdown of the ship Ever Given for about six days led to losses estimated at about \$9.6 billion per day.³³ If maritime transit through the Red Sea, which accounts for 8–10 percent of world trade and roughly 5.5 million barrels of oil per day, were blocked due to the resulting hazards, exclusion zones, and cleanup efforts, the costs in both dollars and time would be gigantic. Vessels of all kinds carrying a wide variety of goods would have to delay their voyages or travel all the way around the Cape of Good Hope to transit between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic or Mediterranean. Commodity prices, most obviously the price of oil, would spike.³⁴

3. Damaging the Marine Environment

Various researches to assess the potential effects of the oil spill from the Safer reservoir concluded that it will have huge repercussions on the marine environment, as this leakage will harm the world's only known temperature-resistant coral reef system, and the fishing and coastal tourism sectors in the Red Sea basin. In the context, some reports also compared the state of the Safer reservoir in the event of an oil leak from it and the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez tanker when it spilled about 250,000 barrels of oil in a seashore in the state of Alaska, and its repercussions on the marine environment are still present.³⁵ These reports suggested that the leakage

³² UN Press Release - Major Step Forward on FSO Safer, <https://yemen.un.org/en/222395-un-press-release-major-step-forward-fso-safer>

³³ قناة السويس: توقف الملاحة "يعطل بضائع بقيمة 9.6 مليار دولار يومياً"، <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-56533751>

³⁴ Gaming out the disaster: What could go wrong with the FSO Safer, <https://bit.ly/3FJHG8X>

³⁵ There's a decrepit supertanker off the coast of Yemen — it's another Exxon Valdez disaster just waiting to happen, <https://bit.ly/3JwdUph>

would be four times greater than the oil spill that occurred in 1989 for Exxon, which is considered the worst oil spill in the world in terms of environmental damage.³⁶

Several organisms will be affected when they absorb the toxic metals associated with oil in the water or become totally covered with it. Approximately 3,441 species (millions of marine specimens) of the Yemeni coastal organisms could be endangered by the expected oil pollution;³⁷ not to mention the enormous number of specimens in the coastal areas of neighboring countries. About 283 species of phytoplankton, 139 species of zooplankton, 300 species of coral reefs, 485 species of algae, 283 species of macroalgae, 9 species of seagrass, 21 species of halophytes, 168 species of echinoderms (including 20 species of sea cucumber), 625 species of molluscs, 53 species of crustaceans, 4 species of endangered sea turtles, 969 species of fish, and 102 species of sea birds are threatened by the oil spill that could spread on the Yemeni coastal sea surface of the Red Sea.³⁸

This damage that may be caused by the continuous slowdown in the treatment of the Safer Reservoir is inconsistent with the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment,³⁹ and United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 300/76 in which the General Assembly recognized the human right to a healthy and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right.

4. Violation of the Right to Provide Adequate Food and Energy Services

An oil spill from the Safer reservoir will have disproportionate effects on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, especially in northern Yemen, where the Houthi militia rules by force of arms. Food aid entering northern Yemen, which may hinder the arrival of foodstuffs to about 8.4 million people.⁴⁰ Food prices would spike, and only a limited number of the population will be able to obtain food,⁴¹ at a time when Yemen is facing the worst humanitarian disaster in the world and is a few steps away from famine. All of the above contradicts Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, which guarantees the availability of sufficient food for the population to achieve a decent standard of living. Reports also suggested that in the

³⁶ A ticking time bomb': how FSO Safer became a 'bargaining tool' for Houthis, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1832991/middle-east>

³⁷ FSO Safer potential marine disaster: Yemen's environment worst nightmare, <https://bit.ly/3neL9Gj>

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ [NL730005.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000520.unsgsmr.htm)

⁴⁰ خزان صافر سفينة تتحطم ببطء، وثيقة احاطة، <https://bit.ly/40mbAYl>

⁴¹ <https://www.yemenmonitor.com/Details/ArtMID/908/ArticleID/73558>

event of an oil spill from the reservoir, fuel prices would increase by about 200%.⁴² This means that most of the population in northern Yemen will not be able to obtain it, which contradicts the achievement of the seventh goal of the sustainable development goals, which is to ensure that everyone has affordable access to modern, reliable and sustainable energy services.

5. Violation of the Right to Health

Among the effects that will follow the oil spill from the Safer reservoir, the public health of thousands of Yemenis will be affected, especially the communities adjacent to the reservoir area. The oil leakage from the reservoir may lead to air pollution due to the crude oil containing toxic chemicals that lead to cancer, which threatens the public health of millions of residents in Yemen. Among the health consequences resulting from direct exposure to crude oil inflammation and skin diseases, which adds new burdens to the population and to the already collapsed medical sector in Yemen.⁴³ There would be a significant health risk to vulnerable populations, such as adults and children with lung problems and adults with heart problems, and the elderly, with aggravation of pre-existing heart and lung problems likely. Air pollution from the spill could lead to an estimated increased risk of cardiovascular hospitalization ranging from 5.8 to 42.0% over the duration of the spill.⁴⁴ This contradicts Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, which guarantees the right of every person to enjoy the highest level of physical and mental health, and also delays the achievement of the third goal of the sustainable development goals related to the right to the health.

6. Exacerbation of Internal Displacement

Oil leakage from the Safer oil reservoir will exacerbate the problem of internal displacement in Yemen. There are currently 4.3 million internally displaced persons in Yemen who lack basic services, and one of the inevitably consequences that may result from the oil leakage from the Safer reservoir is the high proportion of internally displaced persons, as people resort to leaving neighboring areas because the coastal desalination plants that millions of people depend on for drinking water will be affected by this leakage. In addition to the damage to livelihoods and the severe

⁴² اليمن.. خزان صافر العاثم، <https://bit.ly/3KwwY7u>

⁴³ FSO Safer: Overview impact assessment, PAGE 4, <https://bit.ly/3Za5CcG>

⁴⁴ <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaign/fso-safer/>

shortage of the basic necessities of life, which will result from an oil spill in the reservoir.

7. High Costs of Purchasing a New Oil Tanker

The intransigence of the Houthi militia in allowing the United Nations technical team to repair the tank led to a delay in the United Nations purchase of the oil tanker through which it secures the transportation of oil inside the ship, and this resulted in an increase in the funding that the United Nations needs to purchase a new oil tanker, as the Russian-Ukrainian war undermined the oil tanker the prices for leasing oil tankers, according to UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq.⁴⁵

Fifth: Conclusions & Recommendations

There is no doubt that the Houthi militia has exploited the issue of the Safer reservoir, since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen and the control of the area in which the reservoir is moored. For eight years, it has deliberately impeded the access of United Nations experts to the reservoir, which led to damage to the engine room as a result of sea water leaking into it, which warns of danger to the marine environment in Yemen and the Red Sea, and to millions of residents. Therefore, Maat recommends the following:

- The need for member states to put pressure on everyone who has a direct impact on the Houthis, such as Iran, to push them towards ending the Safer reservoir crisis;
- The need to consider setting a specific timetable for the completion of oil transfers from the Safer tank to the new United Nations ship;
- Put pressure on the Houthis to push them to allow the team of experts access to the Safer without restrictions or preconditions;
- The need to develop alternative plans to deal with the issue of the Safer Reservoir, in anticipation of any obstacles placed by the Houthi militia in the future;
- The need for a United Nations committee to supervise the crude oil that will be transferred to the new ship purchased by the United Nations, and the process of selling this oil and distributing its revenues;
- The need for donors to complete the sums of money requested by the United Nations to implement the second phase of the United Nations plan to address the situation of the reservoir

⁴⁵ FSO Safer: Plans to salvage rusting oil tanker delayed by rising shipping costs, <https://bit.ly/3ZZ6W3c>