



# Calls for autonomy in Hahramout Read in Operational contexts and mechanisms (Position Paper)



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## Introduction:

On December 11, 2024, the Hadhramout Plateau witnessed a broad meeting attended by representatives of political and societal forces, unions, associations, scholars, media professionals, and youth under the slogan "United Towards autonomy." The meeting was convened at the invitation of Sheikh Amr bin Habrish Al-Aliyy, President of the Alliance of Hadhramout Tribes and the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference. This meeting marks a new development in the series of movements that have gained momentum since the urgent meeting held by the Alliance of Hadhramout Tribes and the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference on July 31, 2024, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Amr bin Habrish Al-Aliyy<sup>1</sup>. That meeting coincided with the visit of Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi, Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, and council members Dr. Abdullah Al-Alimi and Sheikh Othman Mujalli, to Hadhramout. Their visit carried significant political and economic dimensions, most notably discussions on the resumption of oil exports following agreements reached under the Riyadh Agreement.

The meeting concluded with a statement calling for the recognition of Hadhramout's rights and the activation of an effective and genuine partnership, represented by the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference, in line with other parties involved in the comprehensive national settlement. The statement warned against any actions involving Had Hadhramout ramout's oil—be it extraction, export, or marketing—until Hadhramout's position is solidified and its rights secured in a manner that satisfies its people, in accordance with the decisions made by the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference dated July 13. The statement further asserted that the current oil reserves in the storage tanks at the Dhabba and Masila ports are the rightful property of Hadhramout and would not be relinquished. It demanded that the full proceeds from these reserves be allocated to

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The official page of the Hadhramout Tribes Alliance on Facebook, December 15, 2024. For more information, visit: <sup>1</sup> <https://2u.pw/aNVZW6IY>





purchasing electricity for Hadhramout. The Presidential Leadership Council and the local authorities were given a 48-hour ultimatum to fulfill these demands; otherwise, the statement threatened actions described as "taking control of the land and resources". After the deadline expired, armed tribal groups were deployed across the Hadhramout Plateau and Al-Khasha, establishing new checkpoints on various roads throughout the governorate<sup>2</sup>

Amid the escalating political and economic challenges facing Hadhramout, calls for achieving autonomy have intensified as a strategic option to reclaim the governorate's rights and manage its resources independently. This political paper will explore this topic by addressing key questions: What are the contexts behind the calls for autonomy?

What is the implementation mechanism to achieve it? And what are the main challenges that may arise in realizing self-governance?

### Contexts:

In July 2024, the organizational leadership of the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference held an extraordinary meeting in the Mukalla city, during which a statement was issued revealing the depth of challenges facing Hadramout. The statement highlighted the deterioration of living, economic, and service conditions, as residents suffered from a near-total collapse of basic services, such as electricity, which would cut off for up to 15 hours daily. Additionally, it criticized the local authority's unilateral decision-making and lack of transparency in resource allocation. The statement pointed out that authoritarian policies devoid of a reformative vision had exacerbated the suffering of the residents. This led the conference to demand urgent measures, including the disclosure of Hadhramout's revenues, reform of the electricity system, and an end to

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The official page of the Hadhramout Tribes Alliance on Facebook, December 15, 2024. For more information, visit: <sup>2</sup> <https://2cm.es/L1LH>



unilateral decision-making by forming joint committees with the community to manage local resources. A deadline was given to the authorities to fulfill these demands, with warnings of escalatory measures to safeguard Hadhramout's rights and its people<sup>3</sup>.

This dire situation comes within a historical context of marginalization and neglect. Despite the decision made by former President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in 2020 to allocate 20% of oil export revenues to the governorate, this arrangement was only maintained for one payment cycle, as confirmed by Hadhramout Governor Mr. Mabkhout bin Madi in a television interview. He stated, "This percentage continued for just one installment before it reverted to its previous state"<sup>4</sup>.

The economic crisis further worsened when the Houthi group targeted the Dhabba oil port on November 21, 2021, causing a complete halt in oil exports. This directly impacted government and local revenues, plunging Hadhramout into a severe economic crisis. Despite the visit of Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi, Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, to Mukalla in June 2023, accompanied by a delegation from the Saudi Reconstruction Fund, where the government committed to supporting the local authority and improving public services through development projects funded by Saudi Arabia worth over \$266 million<sup>5</sup>, no tangible progress was made after a year. Meanwhile, services continued to deteriorate sharply, leading to increased public frustration and rising demands for escalation to achieve the autonomy.

With the continued disregard for the demands of Hadhramaut's people, the calls for the autonomy have intensified as a solution that would allow the governorate to manage its resources independently and

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The official page of the Hadhramout Tribes Alliance on Facebook, December 15, 2024. For more information, visit: <sup>3</sup> <https://2u.pw/UMhE5tlp>

A meeting with Mr. Mabkhout Bin Madi, Governor of Hadhramout Governorate, discussing Hadhramout's full share of <sup>4</sup> oil sales. Broadcast on Hadhramout TV Channel, December 16, 2024: <https://2u.pw/ci00yQdJ>

Al-Ayyam Newspaper: Al-Alimi inaugurates development projects in Hadhramout worth over \$266 million, <sup>5</sup> December 16, 2024: <https://2u.pw/GLFCLORg>



put an end to the marginalization it has suffered for decades. These events reflect a

series of crises that prompted the leadership of the Hadhramout Tribal Alliance to hold an extraordinary meeting on October 27, 2024. The alliance reaffirmed its commitment to Hadhramout's rights and demands, emphasizing the importance of achieving full autonomy. The alliance also welcomed the decision of the Hadhramout Governor to cover the local market with diesel produced by Petro-Masila, stressing the need to utilize local resources for the benefit of the community. The alliance reiterated its commitment to maintaining societal pressure until the demands are met, while establishing mechanisms to regulate the distribution of resources and ensure transparency.

### **Executive Mechanisms for Self-Governance in Hadhramout**

Amid the political, economic, and social challenges facing Hadhramout, the autonomy has become a strategic option through executive mechanisms derived from the outcomes document of the Inclusive Hadhramout Conference. This approach outlines a clear path to achieving this goal. The executive mechanisms focus on building an integrated administrative, economic, and security system, enabling Hadhramout to manage its internal and external affairs. The first steps toward the autonomy are to involve drafting a legal and constitutional framework, starting with the preparation of a local constitution that reflects Hadhramout's unique identity. This constitution will be ratified through a public referendum, defining the relationship between Hadhramout and the central government while ensuring the independence of legislative, executive, and judicial authorities within the region. Additionally, local laws will be enacted to regulate resource management and economic development.



On the Military and Security Front, the executive mechanism includes the establishment of a local army and Hadhrami police force, to be led and managed by the people of Hadhramout. The region will be declared a unified military zone under the supervision of a single local leadership. Additionally, a specialized counterterrorism unit will be formed in collaboration with coalition countries and international organizations to ensure security and stability. In this regard, Sheikh Amr bin Habrish Al-Ali announced the formation of the Hadhramout Protection Forces, appointing Major General Mubarak Ahmed Al-Awbathani as its commander <sup>6</sup>. This direction underscores the principle that any political decision must be backed by a capable military force to protect it and ensure its implementation on the ground.

On the Wealth Front. Hadhramout Governorate is rich in oil, gas, and minerals, which serve as a crucial factor in achieving autonomy that meets the aspirations of its people. Accordingly, the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference, through its executive policies, will seek to relocate the main offices of oil companies to Hadhramout, establish oil refineries, and set up gas production facilities to boost the local economy.

Additionally, it will work on creating a Supreme Economic Council to oversee the exploitation of these resources and ensure the fair distribution of revenues to improve public services. Given the critical importance of international and regional support in realizing autonomy, the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference will prioritize strengthening its relationships with brotherly nations and international organizations to foster development and stability. Strategic partnerships will be developed to attract foreign investments and expand economic cooperation, contributing to

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A decision issued by the President of the Hadhramout Tribes Alliance, published on the official Facebook page of the <sup>6</sup> Hadhramout Tribes Alliance, December 26, 2024: <https://2u.pw/942Mfrg3>



sustainable growth and reinforcing Hadhramout's position as a stable and prosperous region.<sup>7</sup>

### **Challenges and Difficulties Facing Al-Jami' and the Alliance**

#### **First: Securing a Decision from the Presidential Council**

Obtaining an official decision from the central authority that recognizes the autonomy is one of the most significant challenges facing the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference and the Alliance. They aim to secure a resolution from the Presidential Leadership Council that guarantees and reflects the will of the people rather than imposing it through military force. Achieving this goal necessitates intensified engagement and communication with the Presidential Leadership Council.

#### **Second: The Multiplicity of Military Formations in the Governorate**

Hadhramout Governorate witnesses the presence of multiple military formations with varying objectives and loyalties, posing a significant challenge to the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference and the Alliance of Hadhramout Tribes in their pursuit of autonomy. These formations may conflict with the goals of the conference and the alliance, further complicating the security and political landscape of the governorate. Under these circumstances, it becomes imperative for the conference and the alliance to establish channels of communication and coordination with these military formations to prevent escalation. Effective coordination can contribute to maintaining security and enhancing stability, which are essential prerequisites for successfully implementing autonomy.

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autonomy in the Document of Outcomes of the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference: A paper presented by Dr. Abdulaziz<sup>7</sup> Jabir, Head of the Political Department at the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference





### **Third: Reactions from Other Governorates**

The reactions of other governorates represent one of the challenges facing the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference and the Alliance, particularly from governorates with insufficient resources. Should the conference and the alliance succeed in achieving self-governance, significant discontent may arise in other governorates that feel negatively impacted by this decision. Consequently, these governorates might seek to exert pressure on the central authority to halt or modify any related resolution.

### **Additional Notes**

#### **First: Anticipated Changes**

The Yemeni society is anticipating some changes at the governmental level and within local authorities, following leaks suggesting that the Presidential Leadership Council is preparing to implement extensive changes. Therefore, the Hadhramout Inclusive Conference and the Alliance must remain unaffected by these developments if they aim to fulfill the aspirations of the people of Hadhramout.

#### **Second: The Risks of Security Vacuums**

The threat of terrorism and transnational Islamist groups potentially using Hadhramout as a base of operations, along with the continuous wave of displacement and the increasing influx of African refugees, all pose significant risks to the autonomy process. If these issues are not addressed and measures are not put in place to manage them, they could undermine the stability required for effective autonomy.<sup>8</sup>

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A personal interview conducted by the researcher with Professor Omar Bajardana, Head of the Knowledge Center for Research, on Saturday, December 28, 2024, at 8 pm <sup>8</sup>





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