

Yemeni negotiators to meet U.N. ahead of possible talks with Houthis

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Yemeni government negotiators will meet with deputy U.N. envoy to Yemen Maeen Sharim by mid-July, an official told Reuters on Tuesday, in a sign that peace talks with the Iran-aligned Houthis could resume soon.

The gathering in Riyadh aims "to crystallize the discussion topics before going to direct talks with the Houthis", the official said.

U.N. Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths said last month he hoped to get the warring parties to the negotiating table in the next few weeks to end fighting in the port city of Hodeidah, a lifeline for Yemen.

The United Nations hopes a breakthrough at Hodeidah could lead to a wider solution to the three-year-old conflict, which is widely seen as a proxy battle between regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The war has killed more than 10,000 and caused the world's most urgent

humanitarian crisis, with millions facing starvation and disease.

Griffiths met recently with ousted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and Mohammed Abdul-Salam, chief negotiator of the Houthi group, which controls the capital Sanaa and most populated areas.

After another meeting on Tuesday, he said Hadi had established a committee to consider proposals for resuming political negotiations to end the conflict.

"My job now is to undertake consultations with the government of Yemen and Ansar Allah (the Houthis) to lead to the point where we can resume formal negotiations," he told reporters.

"We'll do that as quickly as we can because of the humanitarian situation in Yemen."