

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Yemen

United States Board on Geographic Names  
Foreign Names Committee



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## 1. Introduction

This geographic names standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic names experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in the standardization of the geographic names of Yemen for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in US Government databases, publications, maps, and charts. The country policies are intended to satisfy, in part, the statutory requirements levied upon the BGN in Public Law USC 80-242 to develop principles, policies and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions with respect to the principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography.

## 2. Languages and Language Policy

### *a. Demographics*

As of July 2017, Yemen's population is 28.04 million with an average life expectancy of 65.5 years. With a fertility rate of 4.04 births per woman, Yemen's population growth rate is +2.3% annually. Ethnically, Yemenis are predominantly Arab, but are also Afro-Arab, South Asian, and European.<sup>1</sup>

### *b. Languages*

Arabic is the official language of Yemen and has 17.7 million users in the country. While Modern Standard Arabic (arb) is the official written language of Yemen, regional spoken dialects of Arabic are used colloquially, among them being Sanaani Arabic (ayn) with 11.1 million speakers, Ta'izzi-Adeni Arabic (acq) with 9.66 million speakers, Hadrami Arabic (ayh) with 4.56 million speakers, and Gulf Arabic (afb) with 10,000 speakers. On a smaller scale, Modern South Arabian Languages (MSALs) are spoken in various regions throughout the country, including Rāziḥī (rzh) with 62,900 speakers, Mehri (gdq) with 50,000 speakers, and Soqotri (sqt), which is spoken in the archipelago of Socotra and scattered areas of mainland Yemen, with 70,000 speakers.<sup>2</sup>

### *c. Geographic Names Standardization*

Yemen does not have an official geographic names authority. The *de facto* authority is the Yemen Geological Survey & Mineral Resources Board. Yemen participates in the Arabic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

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<sup>1</sup> CIA World Factbook: Yemen, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> [www.ethnologue.com/country/YE/languages](http://www.ethnologue.com/country/YE/languages)

### 3. Toponymic Policies

#### *a. Script and Orthography*

Official toponyms are written in the script and orthography of Arabic.

#### *b. Romanization*

Arabic geographic names are to be romanized using the BGN/PCGN 1956 System for Arabic. Source materials containing romanized names may be consulted for short vowel romanization.

#### *c. Diacritics*

The table below lists the special characters and letter combinations used as part of the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic, along with their respective Unicode values.

Character	Unicode Value	Character	Unicode Value
‘	2018	’	2019
Ā	0100	ā	0101
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ḍ	1E10	ḍ	1E11
Ḩ	1E28	ḥ	1E29
Ī	012A	ī	012B
Ş	015E	ş	015F
Ṭ	0162	ṭ	0163
Ū	016A	ū	016B
Ẓ	005A+0327	ẓ	007A+0327

#### *d. Generics*

A generic is a term that describes the feature associated with a place name. Examples include words such as ‘river,’ ‘hill,’ and ‘lake.’ A generic term associated with a specific feature designation is considered a true generic unless map symbology indicates otherwise. Generics are not recorded separately for populated places.

For a glossary of Yemeni generic terms, see Appendix A.

#### *e. Hyphenation and Capitalization*

Hyphenation is rare in Yemeni geographic names. If a hyphen does occur, it is included in the approved romanized form of the name.

Romanized geographic names are written in upper- and lower-case letters, following the standards detailed in the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic (see Appendix A).

### ***f. Long and Short Forms***

Long and short forms of geographic names are collected for the country name and administrative divisions, in both Roman and Arabic script.

For railroad stations (RSTN), if short form names are present on authoritative source material, these names should be collected as Approved, in addition to their respective Approved long form names.

### ***g. Numbers***

Numerals are collected in their expanded forms. However, unexpanded forms may be collected in variants, whether in Arabic script (e.g., ١, ٢, ٣, etc.) or in Roman script (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.).

### ***h. Abbreviations***

Abbreviations are not generally found in the geographic names of Yemen. However, if present they will be expanded to their full form and romanized accordingly.

### ***i. Unique Linguistic Situations***

Yemen is one of the few countries that hosts a population which actively speaks a Modern South Arabian Language on the archipelago of Socotra. This spoken language, Soqotri, is a South Semitic language which has no native alphabet and is therefore recorded using Arabic or romanized script. Many of the geographic features in the archipelago are of Soqotri origin, but are recorded on official Yemeni sources in Arabic script.

Names on the archipelago of Socotra, as with other Yemeni toponyms, shall be romanized in accordance with the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic. Whenever possible, effort should be made to preserve the original Soqotri within the parameters of the BGN/PCGN Romanization System. Names for features rendered in a non-standard romanized form which cannot be verified with authoritative, official Arabic script sources should be classified as 'Unverified.' When authoritatively-sourced names are available, such alternate romanized forms should be retained as variant names.

## **4. Political Geography Policy**

### ***a. Country Name***

Conventional Short Form	Yemen
Conventional Long Form	Republic of Yemen
Arabic Short Form – Romanized	Al Yaman
Arabic Long Form – Romanized	Al Jumhūrīyah al Yamanīyah
Arabic Short Form – Non-Roman Script	اليمن
Arabic Long Form – Non-Roman Script	الجمهورية اليمنية

### **b. Capital Name**

Conventional Short Form	Sanaa
Arabic – Romanized	Şan‘ā’
Arabic – Non-Roman Script	صنعاء

### **c. First-Order Administrative Divisions**

Yemen is comprised of 21 governorates (*muḥāfaẓah* or *muḥāfaẓat*) and one municipality (Amānat al ‘Āşimah).

Name	GEC	GENC	Seat
Abyan أبين	YM01	YE-AB	Zinjibār زنجبار
‘Adan عدن	YM02	YE-AD	Aden عدن
Aḍ Ḍālī’ الضالع	YM18	YE-DA	Aḍ Ḍālī’ الضالع
Al Bayḍā’ البيضاء	YM20	YE-BA	Al Bayḍā’ البيضاء
Al Ḥudaydah الحدبدة	YM08	YE-HU	Al Ḥudaydah الحدبدة
Al Jawf الجوف	YM21	YE-JA	Al Ḥazm الحزم
Al Mahrah المهره	YM03	YE-MR	Al Ghayẓah الغيطة
Al Maḥwīt المحويت	YM10	YE-MW	Al Maḥwīt المحويت
Amānat al ‘Āşimah امانة العاصمة	YM26	YE-SA	Şan‘ā’ (Sanaa) صنعاء
‘Amrān عمران	YM19	YE-AM	‘Amrān عمران
Arkhabīl Suqūṭrā أرخبيل سقطرى	YM28	YE-SU	Ḥadībū حديبو
Dhamār ذمار	YM11	YE-DH	Dhamār ذمار

Name	GEC	GENC	Seat
Ḥaḍramawt حضرموت	YM04	YE-HD	Al Mukallā المكلا
Ḥajjah حجة	YM22	YE-HJ	Ḥajjah حجة
Ibb إب	YM23	YE-IB	Ibb إب
Laḥij لحج	YM24	YE-LA	Laḥij لحج
Ma'rib مأرب	YM14	YE-MA	Ma'rib مأرب
Raymah ريمة	YM27	YE-RA	Al Jabīn الجبين
Ṣa'dah صعدة	YM15	YE-SD	Ṣa'dah صعدة
Ṣan'ā' صمعاء	YM16	YE-SN	Ṣan'ā' (Sanaa) صمعاء
Shabwah شبووة	YM05	YE-SH	'Ataq عتق
Ta'izz تعز	YM25	YE-TA	Ta'izz تعز

#### ***d. Conventional and Anglicized Names***

##### ***Conventional Names***

Name	UFI	UNI	Designation
Aden	420687	9235058	PPLA
Arabia	-3092883	-4361700	RGN
Arabian Peninsula	-3092884	-4361702	PEN
Crater	-3188897	-4507431	PPLA2
Hadhramaut	-3187119	-4504320	RGN
Kamaran Island	-3188535	-4506806	ISL
Mocha	-3183740	-4498096	PPLA2
Perim Island	-3185399	-4501000	ISL
Republic of Yemen	-3193053	-4514479	PCLI
Rub' al Khali	-3098686	-4373401	DSRT

<i>Name</i>	<i>UFI</i>	<i>UNI</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Sanaa	-3191442	-4511768	PPLC
Socotra	-3192284	-4513224	ISL
The Brothers	-3183137	-4497212	ISLS
Yemen	-3193053	14066320	PCLI

### ***Anglicized Names***

<i>Name</i>	<i>UFI</i>	<i>UNI</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Aden	-3182073	11303239	ADM1
Sanaa	-3191447	-4511778	ADM1
Socotra	12339061	18976994	ADM1
Socotra Archipelago Governorate	12339061	18976995	ADM1

### ***e. Unique Geopolitical Situations***

For the latest country-specific boundary dispute information, consult the US Department of State Office of the Geographer and Global Issues.

## **5. Source Material**

### ***a. Preferred Sources***

On May 22, 1990, the Democratic People’s Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) and the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) united to form the Republic of Yemen, or simply Yemen. Sources produced prior to this date may also be considered authoritative.

#### ***Primary Sources***

2004 census dataset of population centers published by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation’s Central Statistical Organization.

1:100,000-scale topographic line maps (191 sheets available) produced by the Military Survey Department of the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen during the 1978–1984 period.

1:100,000-scale topographic line maps (seven sheets available) produced by the Şan’ā’ Survey Authority of the Yemen Arab Republic in 1986.

#### ***Secondary Sources***

1:250,000-scale topographic line maps (eight sheets available) produced by the Director of Military Survey, Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom, in 1974.

1:500,000-scale maps (set of two sheets) produced by the Survey Authority in Zurich, Switzerland, based on UK-produced 1:50K, 1:250K, and 1:500K sources from 1974–1982.

## Appendix A. Glossary of Generic Terms

Generic	Designation Code	Feature Designation
'Alam, Barq, Barqā', Burq, Haḍbah(t), Jabal, Jibāl, Kawlah(t), Kawr, Khashm, Najd, Naqīl, Naṣbah(t), Qa'ām, Qahr, Qahrah(t), Qārah(t), Qarn, Ra's, Samd, Shi'b, Ṭaraf, Ḍahr	mountain	MT
'Aqabah(t), Arḍ, Barq, Barqā, Duqm, Farīd, Firdān, Ḥabīl, Ḥajar, Ḥayd, Ḥishash, 'Irq, Jabal, Jibāl, Jubayl, Khashm, Naṣlah(t), Qārah(t), Qarn, Qāyid, Qurūn, Ra's	hill	HLL
'Aqm, Qanāh(t)	canal	CNL
'Ayn, Ghayl, Nab'	spring(s)	SPNG
'Ayn, Karīf, Naqbah(t)	waterhole(s)	WTRH
'Irq, Khall, Khayṭ, Qawz, Ramlah(t), Rimāl, Shiqāq, Shiqqah(t), 'Urūq	dune(s)	DUNE
'Iyādah(t), Markaz Ṣiḥḥī, Markaz Ṭibbī, Mujamma' Ṭibbī, Waḥdah Ṣiḥḥiyah	clinic	HSPC
Abraq, Barqā', Ḥayd, Jabal, Jibāl, Khashm, Qurayn, Ra's	hills	HLLS
Abwāb, 'Aqabah(t), Bāb	pass	PASS
Ajfār, 'Ayn, Bī'r, Ḥisā', Naqbah(t), Niqābah(t), Qalt, Waqr	water well(s)	WLL
Arāqī, Arḍ, Bilād, Mikhlāf, Qā', 'Uzlah(t)	area	AREA
Arḍ, Batnah(t), Jarā'ib, Jawl, Jaww, Khabt, Qā', Ṣafḥah(t), Sahl, Sayḥ, Wādī	plain(s)	PLN
Āthār, Khirbah(t)	ruin(s)	RUIN
Bāb, Bawwābah(t)	gate	GATE
Bāb, Lakmah(t)	gap	GAP
Baḥr, Bandar, Bay, Ghubb, Ghubbah(t), Khalīj, Khawr	bay(s)	BAY
Bandar, Ghubbah(t)	bight(s)	BGHT
Bank	financial institution	FIN
Bī'r	abandoned well	WLLQ
Bilād	locality	LCTY
Bilād	region	RGN
Bilād	tribal area	TRB
Birkah(t), Jabal, Jarāf, Tal'ah(t)	slope(s)	SLP
Daḥāl, Jaww, Qā'	depression(s)	DPR
Dūq	market	MKT
Duqm, Jabal, Khashm, Qārah(t), Qarn, Ra's	peak	PK
Farīd, Firdān, Jabal, Khashm, Ra's, Tal'ah(t), Ṭaraf	spur(s)	SPUR
Farīd, Firdān, Jabal, Qārah(t), Qarn, Ṣakhrah(t)	rock	RK
Faṣmah(t), Ra's, Ṭurfah(t)	headland	HDLD
Funduq	hotel	HTL
Ghāb	forest(s)	FRST



Generic	Designation Code	Feature Designation
Ghadīr	mud flat(s)	FLTM
Ghār	cave(s)	CAVE
Gharr, Ghayl, Jufrah(t), Khalīf, Khawr, Nukhdah(t), Sā'ilah(t), Sayḥ, Saylah(t), Şayq, Şayqah(t), Sha'ib, Shaṭṭ, Shi'ab, Shi'b, Wādī	wadi(s)	WAD
Ghayl, Jallah(t), Saylah(t), Shi'b, Wādī	section of wadi	WADX
Ḥadā'iq, Ḥadīqah(t), Ḥudayfah(t), Muntazah	park	PRK
Ḥāfah(t), Ḥārah(t), Ḥayy, Miṇṭaqah(t)	section of populated place	PPLX
Ḥammām	hot spring(s)	SPNT
Ḥayd	escarpment	SCRP
Ḥayd, Ḥazm, Jabal, Jibāl, Khashm, Khayṭ, Ṭaraf	ridge(s)	RDGE
Ḥiṣn	castle	CSTL
Ḥiṣn	fort	FT
Ḥuqūl	salt evaporation ponds	MFGN
Jabal	volcano	VLC
Jabal, Jawl, Najd	plateau	PLAT
Jabal, Jibāl, Murtafa', Qurūn	mountains	MTS
Jabal, Khashm	cliff(s)	CLF
Jabal, Khashm	promontory(-ies)	PROM
Jāmi', Masjid, Qubbah(t)	mosque	MSQE
Jāmi'ah(t), Kullīyah(t), Ma'had	college	SCHC
Jawl	upland	UPLD
Jawlah(t)	traffic circle	RDCR
Jaww, Khalīf	valley	VAL
Jazā'ir, Juzur	islands	ISLS
Jazīrah(t), Ḍahrah(t)	island	ISL
Jisr	bridge	BDG
Karīf	crater lake(s)	LKC
Khawr	inlet	INLT
Khawr	lagoon(s)	LGN
Khawr	lake	LK
Kitf, Ra's	point(s)	PT
Maḍīq	marine channel	CHNM
Madrasah(t)	school	SCH
Maḥkamah(t)	courthouse	CTHSE
Mal'ab	athletic field	ATHF

Generic	Designation Code	Feature Designation
Mal'ab	stadium	STDM
Maqbarah(t)	cemetery	CMTY
Marsá	anchorage	ANCH
Marsá, Mīnā	harbor(s)	HBR
Maḥḥaf	museum	MUS
Maydān, Sāḥah(t)	square	SQR
Mazār, Qabr	tomb(s)	TMB
Mazra'ah(t)	farm(s)	FRM
Mīnā'	port	PRT
Muḥāfaẓah(t)	first-order administrative division	ADM1
Mustashfá	hospital	HSP
Naqbah(t), Niqābah(t)	water tank	RSVT
Qā', Ru'ūs	headwaters	STMH
Qaḍā'	second-order administrative division	ADM2
Qafrah(t), Ṣaḥrā'	desert	DSRT
Qism Shurṭah(t)	police post	PP
Ra's	cape	CAPE
Ra's	mesa(s)	MESA
Rambah(t), Ramlah(t)	sand area	SAND
Sabkhah(t)	sabkha(s)	SBKH
Sadd	dam	DAM
Sadd	ruined dam	DAMQ
Sāḥil	beach(es)	BCH
Saylah(t)	section of stream	STMX
Saylah(t), Wādī	stream(s)	STM
Shi'b	reef(s)	RF
Shi'b	ravine(s)	RVN
Shibh Jazīrah(t)	peninsula	PEN
Shiqāq, Shiqqah(t)	interdune trough(s)	TRGD
Sifārah(t)	diplomatic facility	DIP
Sijn	prison	PRN
Ṭawf	levee	LEV
Wādī	intermittent stream	STMI