The background image is a photograph of a severely damaged building. A large section of the wall is missing, revealing a blue-painted interior wall with a large arched opening. A ceiling fan hangs precariously from the remaining structure. In the foreground, there is a large pile of rubble and debris. The scene is set against a clear blue sky, with palm trees visible in the distance. The overall tone is somber and depicts the aftermath of conflict.

Report

A Country Falling Apart

Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2021

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November 2022



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The alternative coast for transporting some goods and people to and from neighboring Horn of Africa countries, after the closure of Mocha port and turning it into a camp. Suwayda Coast, Mekha, Ta'izz



► Background



2021... The year of hunger and protests

While Yemenis were racing against time to overcome the plight of the war in 2021, the pace of hostilities escalated and violence expanded in the governorates of Marib, Shabwa, Hodeidah, Al-Bayda, and Taiz, killing hundreds of civilians. The war has left poor conditions for the residents of those areas. This has caused the displacement of tens of thousands of them, especially in Marib and Hodeidah. The escalating violence has also caused widespread damage to vital infrastructure, including hospitals and service facilities.

In February¹ and March², the oil-rich governorate of Marib (northeast of the country) witnessed an unprecedented level of military mobilization that continued until the end of the year, after the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) intensified their military efforts to control the energy sources there by force.

These battles have created a dire humanitarian situation,³ which has been exacerbated by the siege imposed by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) on Al-Abdiya district in October.⁴ In November, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) raised the alarm about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Marib governorate,

1 "Yemen: The United Nations reiterates its call for an end to violence in Marib as thousands have been displaced over the past weeks", United Nations, February 24, 2021, <https://2u.pw/GU5ve>.

2 "Members of the Security Council condemn the escalation in Marib", United Nations, March 18, 2021, <https://2u.pw/6xDSA>.

3 "Yemen: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is sounding the alarm on the rise in people at risk amid ongoing hostilities in Marib", United Nations, November 24, 2021, <https://2u.pw/M7lvb>.

4 "Yemen: Record displacement of civilians in Marib over the past month - thousands are trapped in Abdiya District", United Nations, October 13, 2021, <https://2u.pw/KE4cp>.

stating that the armed conflict was causing heavy losses among displaced persons, migrants, and host communities.⁵

According to joint United Nations inter-agency data, about 40,000 people have been forcibly displaced within Marib governorate since September, accounting for nearly 70% of all displacement cases in this southeastern governorate since the beginning of the year.⁶

To date, Marib hosts half of the estimated 120,000 newly displaced people in 2021, scattered throughout the country. However, other organizations have noted different numbers of displaced people in Yemen. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center stated that fighting led to the displacement of 377,000 people in 2021, as the frontlines changed in Marib, Al-Jawf, Shabwa, Taiz, and Hodeidah. Additionally, some displacement sites in Marib recorded a tenfold increase in the number of displaced persons between October and December. Floods that swept the country, as well as drought, desertification, and heat waves in other parts of the country, caused the displacement of 84,000 others during the year.⁷

In conjunction with the fighting in Marib, clashes broke out in the adjacent governorate of Al-Bayda, following the control of Al-Zahir district by armed factions affiliated with the so-called “Popular Resistance” loyal to the internationally recognized government (IRG).⁸ However, these forces eventually retreated under force. Another counterattack was launched by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis),⁹ which left the other districts controlled by the recognized government in the hands of the Ansar Allah group.

This military development seems to have encouraged the Houthi armed group to open other battlefronts in the oil-rich governorate of Shabwa, during which it captured

5 “Yemen: The International Organization for Migration (IOM)”, Op. cit., <https://2u.pw/M7lvb>.

6 “UNHCR: The proximity of fighting to residential areas in Marib, Yemen, endangers the lives of civilians, especially displaced persons”, United Nations, November 23, 2021, <https://2u.pw/Xu5zT>.

7 “The Truce in Yemen: Opportunities and Challenges for the Displaced”, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, July 2021, <https://2u.pw/VAAGF>.

8 “After battles with the Houthis... The Yemeni army controls Al-Zahir district”, Al-Jazeera, July 5, 2021, <https://2u.pw/AJOo3>.

9 “The Houthis declare their control over the center of the Al-Zahir district in Al-Bayda, Russia Today, July 8, 2021, <https://2u.pw/HgM8n>.

three districts from which it had been removed, namely Usaylan, Bayhan, and Ein.¹⁰ These clashes have been understood as an attempt to encircle Marib governorate, where fighting took on a violent character. The Houthis' progress towards the city has been described as reckless and slow.

However, following the Houthi expansion, the UAE-backed Southern Giants Forces launched an intensive military operation in early 2022, which brought an end to the control of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) over the three districts of Shabwa governorate, in addition to the adjacent city of Harib in Marib. Yet, the most striking military development remains the withdrawal of the Joint Forces, fighting the Houthi group, from around the city of Hodeidah. These battles, due to their overlap and high military cost, have had a significant impact on the lives of civilians and have exacerbated their suffering. Landmines allegedly planted by the Ansar Allah group have hindered access to aid and civilians, if not violated their right to life and human dignity. There has also been a steady increase in the recruitment of children and their use in hostilities in violation of international humanitarian law.

The governor of Taiz, appointed by the IRG, announced war mobilization in March,¹¹ in what appeared to ease military pressure on Marib governorate. However, the battles ended in sporadic confrontations on the Jabal Habashi fronts (west of the city) and others in the southern districts, such as Al-Ahkum, and did not achieve any significant war gains for both parties.¹² The division of control remained the same. In addition, clashes with medium and heavy weapons took place in the city of Aden on 23 June between two factions of the UAE-backed STC,¹³ reminiscent of other battles that have taken place in the coastal city. In the midst, Mwatana for Human Rights documented the death and injury of civilians.

10 "Yemen: Houthis control two districts in Shabwa governorate", Al-Jazeera, September 21, 2021, <https://2u.pw/tCi32>.

11 "The Governor of Taiz announces the general mobilization to support the battle to liberate the governorate from the Houthi militia", Yemen Shabab TV, March 11, 2021, <https://2u.pw/zh87B>.

12 Khaled Farouq, "Short on trust, weapons and planning, government surge in Taiz fails", Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, May 5, 2021, <https://2u.pw/uaGo8>.

13 "Casualties in clashes between STC members in Aden", Deutsche Welle (DW), October 2, 2021, <https://2u.pw/vHKsP>.

In the context of peace efforts, the United Nations announced, on 6 August, the appointment of Hans Grundberg of Sweden as its new envoy to Yemen.¹⁴ Additionally, the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, signed between the (IRG) and the UAE-backed STC forces, was allegedly obstructed.¹⁵

At the level of the United Nations Human Rights Council, a vote by the member states at the Council's 48th session, in October 2021, ended the mandate of the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE). This development constitutes a serious setback in efforts toward accountability and redress in Yemen, which are dominated by a climate of impunity. On December 2, 2021, Mwatana and more than 60 civil society organizations called upon the United Nations General Assembly to act expeditiously to "establish an investigative mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of serious violations of human rights and the laws of war in Yemen."¹⁶ In a joint statement, the organizations held that "the international community cannot stand by and allow that vote to be the final word on accountability efforts for violations and war crimes in Yemen."¹⁷

On the economic front, 2021 was the year of extreme deterioration that witnessed misguided economic solutions that caused the national currency to collapse.¹⁸ The (IRG) endorsed a significant rise in tariffs on non-essential goods, which led to increased prices for all imports.¹⁹ At the end of October, the local currency witnessed a new record decline in areas under the control of the recognized government.²⁰ The rate of one US dollar reached nearly 1400 riyals in governorates under the government's authority, for the first time in the country's history.

14 "Secretary-General appoints Hans Grundberg of Sweden Special Envoy for Yemen", United Nations, August 6, 2021, <https://2u.pw/jZEsm>.

15 "Yemen: The government accuses the Southern Transitional Council (STC) of disavowing the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement after the STC has threatened to withdraw from the partnership" Al-Quds Al-Arabi, November 10, 2021, <https://2u.pw/M08vU>.

16 "Civil society groups seek urgent UN action on Yemen", Statement, Mwatana for Human Rights, December 2, 2021, <https://2u.pw/HMWHi>.

17 Ibid.

18 "The Central Bank officially announces the injection of the new large-sized 1000-banknote throughout the country", Al-Shari' newspaper, July 29, 2021, <https://2u.pw/pRI3l>.

19 "New fronts in the economic war - The Yemen review", August 2021, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, September 15, 2021, <https://2u.pw/4h5zP>.

20 "Currency collapse and price flames are fueling hunger in Yemen", Al-Quds Al-Arabi, October 26, 2021, <https://2u.pw/3J1lI>.

Prior to the crisis in Yemen, which began with the 2011 protests, the average US dollar rate on the local market was 215 riyals.²¹ The decline in the currency rate led to protests in several Yemeni cities and repeated popular demands for the need to address the riyal crisis, amid warnings of widespread hunger and poverty.²²

The Central Bank of Aden, affiliated with the recognized government, announced the issuance of new riyal banknotes, similar to the old ones (used in Houthi-controlled areas), to reduce the deterioration of banknotes of the new edition.²³ However, this measure was met with another one by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), which made efforts to manage the banknotes in its areas of control and prevent the circulation of the new banknotes based on their serial number, eventually succeeding in this endeavor.²⁴

Although this measure stabilized the US dollar rate in Houthi-controlled areas at 600 riyals,²⁵ the economic situation has continued to deteriorate steadily, with food stuff prices experiencing unprecedented increases, which calls into question claims about the currency's stability.

Amid this continuous deterioration of the economic situation, 2021 was marked as the year of hunger, triggering popular protests in areas controlled by the recognized government and the coalition-backed armed factions. Meanwhile, the repressive policies of the Ansar Allah group undermined the right of civilians to peaceful protest and demonstration, and almost completely limited other forms of expression. Mwatana has documented policies of the parties to the conflict and the various authorities in Yemen to suppress peaceful protests and demonstrations.²⁶

With the beginning of summer in 2021, and the onset of a heat wave, demonstrations

21 "The Yemeni Riyal has fallen against the US dollar, despite the injection of 150 million dollars", Reuters, January 20, 2010, <https://2u.pw/cPCmb>.

22 "Yemen: "The World Food Programme warns of an increase in the number of hungry people due to the reduction of food assistance provided to millions of people", United Nations, December 22, 2021, <https://2u.pw/0028U>.

23 "The Central Bank of Yemen injects old banknotes to the local market", Xinhua Agency, August 1, 2021, <https://2u.pw/9Lg88>.

24 "Due to the issuance of a new banknote... an economic war between the parties to the conflict in Yemen", Al-Jazeera Net, July 4, 2021, <https://2u.pw/X98yq>.

25 "Yemen: The main foreign exchange rates against the Yemeni riyal in Aden and Sana'a, Yemen Future, May 12, 2021, <https://2u.pw/SvDuD>.

26 "Right to peaceful assembly in the context of Yemen's armed conflict", Research paper, Mwatana for Human Rights, June 27, 2021, <https://2u.pw/uCzXu>.

erupted in the city of Aden against the deterioration of electricity services. In mid-March, security forces shot at demonstrators protesting against the deterioration of economic conditions, injuring four of them, followed by other demonstrations in Aden and Taiz for the same reason.²⁷

May also witnessed at least two protests, one against the Saudi/UAE-led coalition that was held responsible by protesters in Aden for the deterioration of services, and another protest at the end of May in Taiz, denouncing widespread corruption and deterioration of services. On June 4, the protest movement was renewed due to a new wave of the local currency's deterioration. The Southern Transitional Authority was accused of launching a campaign to suppress demonstrators and arrest some of their leaders. However, protests did not stop in September and October, which witnessed protests involving women. In October, Aden experienced armed clashes between two of the Security Belt factions. These events emerged under the name of Imam Al-Noubi,²⁸ and caused the death and injury of many people and the destruction of their property, such as shops and cars.

The armed conflict in Yemen erupted in September 2014 when the Iran-backed Ansar Allah group (Houthis) and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh took control of the capital Sana'a by force. Its pace intensified in March 2015 as the Saudi/UAE-led coalition began its military operations against Houthi and Saleh forces in support of the (IRG) of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

27 "Yemen... Injured people by Security forces bullets when dispersing protests in Hadramout Governorate (video and photos)", Russia Today, March 16, 2021, <https://2u.pw/wOK7x>.

28 "Unknown fate of Imam Al-Noubi... Mediation led to the cessation of the clashes in Aden, and its most prominent clauses are as follows", Al Jazeera Net, October 4, 2021, <https://2u.pw/JeL9N>.



The collapse of a large part of the Ruwayshan building, which is inhabited by displaced families .Suftel neighbourhood - Khor Maxar – Aden



► Executive Summary

With more devastation and horrific violations by all parties to the conflict, the war in Yemen is entering its seventh year. The collapse of state institutions has continued in favor of armed groups affiliated with various regional powers, while the war has caused more tragedies for the civilian population, including violations of their inherent rights to life, dignity, and freedom. In addition, developments at the international level have increased the isolation of Yemeni society.

In October 2021, the vote ending the mandate of the United Nations Group of Eminent Experts (GEE), at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council, represented a serious setback in efforts toward accountability and redress in Yemen, which are dominated by a climate of impunity.

In the body of this annual report, Mwatana for Human Rights provides an extensive review of particular violations that occurred and the overall human rights situation in Yemen during 2021. Mwatana, whose work covers most Yemeni governorates, has documented—through fact-finding, evidence examination, and detailed research—hundreds of incidents that violate international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL). Some of these violations may amount to war crimes. The report presents some incidents as examples, shedding light on different types of abuses committed by the warring parties.

Parties to the conflict in Yemen have continued to commit serious violations, undermining Yemenis ability to live, in blatant disregard of basic rules of international law and humanitarian standards. The warring parties, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and armed groups on the ground, such as the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), have increasingly resorted to bureaucratic measures and restrictions that prevent vulnerable groups' access to objects indispensable to their survival. Moreover, airstrikes by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition have caused heavy losses of life and severe damage to vital infrastructure in the country.

As documented in this report, indiscriminate ground attacks on populated areas, with highly indiscriminate weapons like mortars, by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), government forces, armed groups loyal to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, and Saudi border guard forces have caused material damage and human losses. Mines and booby traps left by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) have also claimed the lives of dozens of civilians, including women and children, with a noticeable increase in the number of victims killed or injured compared to 2020.

The report includes cases showing the harsh conditions of detention, including the brutal practices of torture and other forms of inhuman treatment, by the UAE-backed STC, Ansar Allah group (Houthis), and government forces. During the year 2021, Mwatana identified a significant increase in the number of documented incidents of civilians subjected to various types of torture in detention centers run by government forces. Non-official prisons and detention centers remain overcrowded, holding civilian detainees and children.

The Ansar Allah group (Houthis), in particular, as well as government forces and armed groups loyal to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition have been recruiting and using children in combat, as well as security and logistical operations. In addition, Mwatana concluded, based on documented incidents, that the number of incidents of warring parties denying humanitarian access has increased compared to 2020.

The report includes incidents of attacks on hospitals and medical staff. The warring parties are responsible for the continuous targeting of the already dilapidated medical sector during a time of extremely dangerous humanitarian conditions. Consequently, the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), epidemics, and other infectious diseases has been exacerbated. The chapters of this report also incorporate attacks on schools and educational facilities, including various forms of violations and abuse, such as air and ground attacks, and their occupation and use for military purposes. The year 2021 recorded an increase in the number of incidents of violations documented by Mwatana compared to 2020.

Mwatana for Human Rights devotes, for the first time, in its annual report a chapter to abuses committed against African migrants. Parties to the conflict and human trafficking gangs have committed atrocities and heinous violations against African migrants, without the slightest respect for migrants' rights under international human rights law and warring parties' obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. In addition, the chapter highlights new forms of attacks that add to other common patterns of violations, including the use of live ammunition and the running over of civilians with military vehicles. In its annual report, Mwatana has also devoted space to illustrate attacks that affect the civil rights and freedoms of Yemenis during 2021. The warring parties continued their abuses against journalists and media workers. Parties to the conflict have also limited the freedom of movement and subjected civilians to additional arbitrary restrictions that exacerbate their suffering. Government forces and the UAE-backed STC used force to break up peaceful gatherings, including

demonstrations against the deteriorating living conditions in 2021. Finally, the report sheds light on attacks on women's personal freedoms during 2021.



Children in queue for cooking gas during a crisis that lasted for months. Al-Thawra neighbourhood, Mukalla, Hadramout

The Annual Report for 2021 consists of three main sections:

Section 1:

Yemen Conflict and International Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) applies to the ongoing armed conflict in Yemen. Applicable law includes Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (Common Article 3), Additional Protocol II of 1977, as well as customary international humanitarian law. Alongside IHL, IHRL continues to apply.

Section 2:

Violations and Abuses in 2021

This section consists of 13 chapters that deal with the most prominent patterns of civilian harm involving violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen. Moreover, each chapter includes statistics about the number of incidents documented by Mwatana for Human Rights during the year 2021, in addition to a legal brief for each type of violation and some examples.

► Chapter 1: Air Attacks

During 2021, Mwatana documented at least 24 air attacks by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition that caused harm and damage to civilians and/or civilian objects in eight Yemeni governorates, namely Amanat Al-Asimah (municipality of the capital Sana'a), Mahwit, Hajjah, Hodeidah, Al-Bayda, Marib, Shabwa, and Taiz. These attacks killed at

least 28 civilians, including eight children and two women, and injured at least 46 civilians, including 13 children and eight women. Civilian objects protected under IHL have been targeted and damaged in these attacks, including civilian homes in residential neighborhoods, public roads, civilian vehicles, farms, service and commercial facilities, a hospital, a water well, and a warehouse.



24
Air Attacks

46
Wounded



28
Killed



13 children **8** women

8 children **2** women

► Chapter 2: Ground Attacks

During 2021, Mwatana documented nearly 78 indiscriminate ground attacks that killed at least 58 civilians, including three women and 32 children, and injured at least 197 civilians, including 34 women and 85 children.

The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed 53 of these attacks in Hodeidah, Taiz, Marib, Al-Bayda, Al-Dhale'e, Lahj, and Aden. Saudi ground forces bear responsibility for 15 attacks in Sa'ada and Hajjah. Two attacks were committed by government forces in Marib, while six attacks were launched by the UAE-backed Joint Forces, based on the West Coast, in Hodeidah and Taiz. Two attacks were committed by the UAE-backed STC.



78
Ground Attacks

53	Houthis	15	Saudi ground forces
6	Joint forces	2	The government forces
2	Southren Transitional Council		

197
Wounded



58
Killed



85 children **34** women

32 children **3** women

Chapter 3: Landmines

In 2021, Mwatana documented nearly 50 incidents of landmine explosions, killing 36 civilians, including 19 children and three women, and injuring 59 civilians, including 34 children and five women. These incidents were concentrated in Hodeidah, Al-Jawf, Shabwah, Taiz, Sa'ada, Al-Dhale'e, Al-Bayda, Sana'a, Marib, Aden, and Hajjah governorates. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) bears the responsibility for planting these landmines.

50

Landmine explosion incidents



36 killed

19 children 3 women



59 Wounded

34 children 5 women

Chapter 4: Recruitment and Use of Children

During 2021, Mwatana documented the recruitment of 195 children. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for recruiting 80% of these children, with these cases concentrated in the governorates of Sa'ada, Hajjah, Dhamar, Al-Jawf, Al-Bayda, Raymah, Amanat Al-Asimah, Amran, Marib, Al-Dhale'e, Taiz, Hodeidah, and Ibb. Government forces are responsible for recruiting 9% of the total documented cases, concentrated in Marib, Al-Jawf, Shabwa, Lahj, Abyan, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates.

195

Recruited Children



80%

Houthis

9%

The government forces

1%

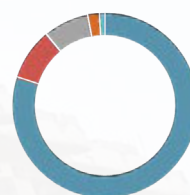
Coalition forces

2%

Joint forces

8%

Southren Transitional Council



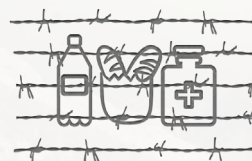
The STC forces bear responsibility for recruiting 8% of the cases, concentrated in Lahj and Abyan, while the Joint Forces are responsible for recruiting 2% in Lahj and Abyan governorates. Coalition forces recruited 1% of the documented cases in Hadhramaut governorate.

Chapter 5: Denial of Humanitarian Access

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 94 incidents of warring parties obstructing humanitarian aid and essential items to civilians. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for 80 incidents in the governorates of Sa'ada, Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Mahwit, Al-Bayda, Amran, and Raymah. Government forces are responsible for five incidents in Taiz, Lahj, and Hadhramaut governorates.

94

Incidents of Denial of Humanitarian Access



80	Houthis
8	Southren Transitional Council
5	The government forces
1	Joint forces

The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council is responsible for eight incidents in Lahj, Aden, Hadhramaut, and Abyan governorates, while the UAE-backed Joint Forces bear responsibility for one incident in Taiz governorate. In addition, the humanitarian crisis was exacerbated by the restrictions imposed by the coalition on the entry of oil derivatives into areas controlled by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis); these derivatives are a vital source for the health and service sectors. Moreover, the coalition continued the closure of Sana'a Airport to commercial flights.

Chapter 6: Arbitrary Detention

In 2021, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of 297 civilian victims, including 15 children and 14 women. In the governorates controlled by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), the group committed 125 incidents of arbitrary detention in Dhamar, Amran, Al-Bayda, Mahwit, Hajjah, Al-Dhale'e, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf, Hodeidah, Taiz, Ibb, Marib, Raymah, Sana'a, and Amanat Al-Asimah.

297



Victims of Arbitrary detention

Including **15** children and **14** women

125	Houthis	48	Southren Transitional Council
108	The government forces	16	Hadhrami Elite Forces

Mwatana also documented 108 arbitrary detention incidents committed by government forces in Marib, Shabwa, Taiz, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates. The UAE-backed STC forces are responsible for arbitrarily detaining 48 victims in Aden, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces are responsible for arbitrarily detaining 16 victims.

Chapter 7: Enforced Disappearance

In 2021, Mwatana documented the enforced disappearance of 141 civilian victims, including eight children and one woman. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for the disappearance of 49 victims in the governorates of Dhamar, Ibb, Hodeidah, Amana Al Asimah,

Taiz, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Al-Bayda, and Amran. Hadi government forces are also responsible for the disappearance of 40 victims in Marib,

Taiz, Mahra, Hadhramaut, and Shabwa governorates, while the forces of the UAE-backed STC bear responsibility for the disappearance of 33 victims in Aden, Al-Dhale'e, and Lahj governorates.

The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite is responsible for the disappearance of one victim in Hadhramaut governorate. Moreover, Eritrean forces detained and forcibly disappeared 18 Yemeni fishermen off the coast of Hodeidah governorate.

141 

Victims of enforced disappearance

Including 8 children and 1 woman

49	Houthis	33	Southren Transitional Council
40	The government forces	18	The Eritrean forces
1	Hadhrami Elite		

Chapter 8: Torture

In 2021, Mwatana documented incidents of torture involving 56 civilian victims, including six children and one woman. The UAE-backed STC is responsible for torturing 23 of those victims in Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates, which resulted in the death of four of them.

The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for torturing 11 victims in Sa'ada, Sana'a, Hajjah, Al-Bayda, Hodeidah, and Amran governorates, resulting in the death of one victim. Forces of the (IRG) hold responsibility for torturing 22 victims in the governorates of Shabwa, Marib, Hadhramaut, Lahj, and Taiz, resulting in the death of four victims.

56
Incidents
of torture



**56 civilian victims including
6 children and 1 woman**

23	Southren Transitional Council
22	The government forces
11	Houthis

► Chapter 9: Sexual Violence

In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 13 incidents of sexual violence, involving three girls, eight boys, and two adult women. All victims were raped, except for two boys who were harassed. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed seven of these incidents in Taiz, Hajjah, Marib, and Amran governorates.

13
sexual
violence incidents



3 girls, 8 boys, and 2 adult women

The (IRG) forces are responsible for three incidents of sexual violence in the governorates of Hadhramaut and Taiz, while the UAE-backed



7	Houthis
3	The government forces
3	Southren Transitional Council

Southern Transitional Council forces bear responsibility for three incidents in Abyan governorate.

► Chapter 10: Attacks on Schools

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 105 incidents of attacks on schools and the use of schools for military purposes. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible

for 92 of these incidents in the governorates of Raymah, Sa'ada, Ibb, Hodeidah, Taiz, Dhamar, Hajjah, Amran, and Al-Dhale'e. Among these incidents, there were two ground shelling incidents that killed two children,



Incidents of attacks on schools or the use of them for military purposes.

two incidents of bombing schools, and 88 incidents of using schools for military purposes.

The (IRG) forces committed two attacks on a school in Lahj governorate. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council bears responsibility for eight incidents of attacks on schools in Hadhramaut and Lahj governorates. The UAE-backed Joint Forces are responsible for two attacks on schools in Hodeidah governorate. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) launched a ground attack on a school occupied by the UAE-backed Joint Forces, based in the West Coast, in Hodeidah governorate, killing one adult and injuring four, including three children and one woman.

Chapter 11: Attacks on Health Care

Throughout the year 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 32 incidents of attacks on hospitals, health centers, and medical staff, involving different types of attacks and violations: 25 incidents of armed incursions and live-fire assaults on medical staff in which two civilians were killed; two incidents of ground attacks in which four civilians were injured, including two children; one air attack; five incidents of arbitrary detention of health workers; one incident of enforced disappearance; and one incident of torture.



Attacks on Health Care

13	Houthis
10	The government forces
8	Southren Transitional Council
1	Coalition forces

Based on Mwatana's documentation of these incidents, Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed 13 of these incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Ibb, Saada, Marib, Raymah,

and Al-Bayda. Government forces are responsible for 10 incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Lahj, Shabwa, and Marib, while the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces committed eight incidents in the governorates of Lahj and Aden. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition committed one incident in Amanat Al Asimah, Sana'a governorate.

► Chapter 12: Other Civilian Harm

In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 25 incidents where civilians were run over by military vehicles, killing 17 civilians, including 10 children, and injuring 22, including 11 children and four women. The (IRG) forces are responsible for three of such incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Marib, and Hadhramaut. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed 10 incidents in the governorates of Hajjah, Sa'ada, Hodeidah, Marib,

Ibb, and Al-Dhale'e. The UAE-backed Joint Forces, based in the West Coast, committed two incidents in Abyan governorate.

The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for 10 incidents in Abyan, Aden, and Lahj governorates. In 2021, Mwatana also documented incidents involving live ammunition that killed 56 civilians, including 20 children and two women, and injured 161 civilians, including 68 children and 21 women.

25



Incidents where civilians were run over by military vehicles



17 killed
10 children



22 Wounded
11 children 4 women

Incidents involving live ammunition



56 killed
20 children 2 women



161 Wounded
68 children 21 women

► Chapter 13: Attacks on African Migrants

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 17 violations against African migrants. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for three incidents of arbitrary detentions

of seven migrants, including a child, and three incidents of torture of three migrants, including a child. Mwatana also documented an explosion of a mine planted by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), injuring a female migrant, and a ground shelling incident, which injured an adult migrant.

Mwatana also documented an incident involving a fire in a detention center run by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), in which 170 people were injured and many migrants were killed.



Violations against African migrants

Mwatana verified that 16 migrants were killed in the fire. Saudi border guards are responsible for four incidents of live ammunition against migrants, injuring nine African migrants, including five children. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces committed two arbitrary detention incidents involving two migrants. Mwatana also documented an incident involving torture of a migrant child, for which human smuggling gangs in Ras Al-Aara area are responsible. Human smuggling gangs are also responsible for the drowning of a boat carrying migrants on board, killing 204 African migrants.

Section 3:

Undermining Rights and Freedoms

This section includes four chapters dealing with some of the main ways in which parties to the conflict have undermined rights and freedoms in Yemen.

► Chapter 1: Press

In 2021, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of nine journalists and press and media workers. Government-affiliated forces are responsible for the arbitrary detention of two male journalists and the disappearance of a female journalist. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite forces are responsible for the arbitrary detention of two journalists, while the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) bears responsibility for arbitrarily

detaining two journalists and one media worker. The UAE-backed Joint Forces arbitrarily detained one journalist in Hodeidah governorate. For nearly five years, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) has been arbitrarily detaining four journalists.

► **Chapter 2: Freedom of Movement**

In 2021, Mwatana documented seven incidents of restrictions on freedom of movement in different Yemeni areas. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for five of those incidents in the governorates of Raymah, Sana'a, and Al-Bayda. Government forces committed one incident in Taiz governorate, while the UAE-backed STC forces committed one incident, causing the death of an adult civilian.

► **Chapter 3: Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Expression**

In 2021, widespread demonstrations took place against deteriorating living conditions and rising prices of essential materials due to the fluctuation of the Yemeni rial's exchange rate against foreign currencies. Mwatana documented different types of violations and attacks by the warring parties to undermine the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, including arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, attacks on demonstrators with live ammunition, and throwing grenades. Mwatana documented 11 incidents in which live ammunition was used against demonstrators, killing three civilians, including a child, and injuring 19 civilians, including six children. Government forces are responsible for nine of these incidents in Hadhramaut and Taiz governorates, the UAE-backed STC forces committed one incident in Aden governorate, and the UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite forces are responsible for one of these incidents in Hadhramaut governorate. The UAE-backed STC forces threw a grenade at demonstrators, killing three children in Aden governorate. Mwatana documented the arbitrary arrest of 30 demonstrators, including four children and a woman. Government forces arbitrarily arrested 22 of these demonstrators, including four children. Four demonstrators were arbitrarily arrested by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces in Lahj governorate. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite forces arrested three demonstrators, including a woman, in Hadhramaut governorate. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) arrested one demonstrator in Ibb governorate. In addition, Mwatana documented the enforced disappearance of nine demonstrators, six of whom were disappeared by the UAE-backed STC forces in Abyan and Lahj governorates, and three were disappeared by government forces in Hadhramaut governorate. Mwatana

also documented the torture of five demonstrators, three of whom were tortured by government forces in Shabwa and Hadhramaut governorates, and two demonstrators were tortured by the UAE-backed STC forces in Abyan governorate.

Chapter 4: Women's Personal Freedoms

In 2021, the severity of abuses committed against women in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthis) armed group increased. The armed group is responsible for multiple and systematic patterns of abuses, especially in the capital Sana'a, perpetuating their repressive authority and threatening rights and freedoms in general. On January 23, 2021, militants of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) stormed a restaurant in Sana'a, expelled female employees and searched the premises without showing any written search warrant as required by law. The militants took some of the workers and one of the executives of the restaurant to the police station, where the executive was forced to write a pledge "not to employ women in any branch of the restaurant." This incident alone resulted in 30 women losing their jobs temporarily. On January 24, 2021, the Ministry of Public Health and Population of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) issued a decision banning the use of "family planning methods" in accordance with what it called the "faith identity." In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 11 incidents involving the restriction of women's freedom of movement in Hajjah governorate over the course of only two days.²⁹ All these incidents occurred under the pretext of a circular that prohibits women from traveling without a mahram (a male escort from her family), especially in cars belonging to professional organizations, which restricts women's right to freedom of movement and violates their right to work. This circular was issued by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) in early 2021.

29 "Ansar Allah (Houthi) group practices gravely undermine women's rights: Moments of hell!", Statement, Mwatana for Human Rights, March 8, 2022, <https://2u.pw/aHXMu>.



*The effects of an air attack at Zubair Ben-Aouam High School, since 2015 and still unrestored today.
Beni Saad Arash -Saqeen -Sadha*



► Key Recommendations

Mwatana for Human Rights calls on the parties to the conflict to:

- Adhere to international humanitarian law, including the fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution.
- Immediately cease unlawful attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including hospitals and schools in densely populated areas.
- Cooperate with and provide unhindered access to United Nations and independent investigators.
- Immediately end the use of weapons that cause severe damage and indiscriminate effects.
- Facilitate safe and immediate access for humanitarian supplies and relief personnel to all affected Yemeni governorates.
- Immediately cease attacks on hospitals and health workers, and immediately cease interfering with humanitarian work, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of other diseases.
- Immediately pay the salaries of civil servants, including medical and educational personnel.
- End the use of anti-personnel, anti-vehicle, and anti-ship mines and provide maps of mined areas to facilitate the process of mine clearance.
- Close unofficial detention centers, release the arbitrarily detained, resolve cases of enforced disappearances, and investigate cases of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and abusive treatment in detention centers.
- End attacks on African migrants and investigate incidents of migrants drowning at sea and fires in migrant detention centers.

- Stop the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in hostilities, and demobilize immediately those in military service.
- Withdraw forces from occupied schools and cease the use of schools for military purposes, including mobilization.
- End sexual and gender-based violence.
- Stop restricting women's personal freedoms and harassing them in the workplace.
- Respect international human rights law, including economic and social rights.
- Support, cooperate fully with, and contribute to efforts to ensure accountability for international crimes, and provide prompt, effective, and adequate reparations as well as other forms of remedies to civilian victims.



| Arch of Triumph - entrance to the city of Hodeida



| Complete destruction of Alnoor School, after being bombing.
Al-Ron - Hais – Hodeida



► Methodology

In order to draft this report, Mwatana for Human rights conducted investigative field research, including thorough investigations and direct inspections of the sites where attacks and incidents took place. Throughout 2021, Mwatana interviewed witnesses, relatives of victims, survivors, medical and human rights workers, and examined documents, evidence, photos, videos, and other physical evidence. During 2021, Mwatana documented 699 incidents, which killed 440 and injured 675 civilians, and include incidents of disappearance, detention, and torture of 494 civilian victims.

This is the fifth annual report published by Mwatana. The report includes an extensive review of the most prominent patterns of international humanitarian law and human rights violations committed by the warring parties in Yemen. Cases involving violations of a set of basic rights and freedoms are also included in the report.

Mwatana has male and female field researchers in 20 Yemeni governorates that collected data by conducting more than 2036 interviews in Arabic with victims, victims' families, eyewitnesses, and medical and humanitarian workers. Mwatana's central research team conducted 82 field visits to remote districts in order to examine the sites of attacks and verify the occurrence of violations. For the interviews, Mwatana's researchers obtained informed consent from survivors and eyewitnesses. The field researchers obtained testimonies and other information independently and securely from primary and reliable sources. In 2021, Mwatana used interviews as a tool to document cases of recruitment of children under the age of 18, instead of using field observation.

The field researchers also documented, whenever possible, other forms of physical evidence, including photographs, supporting documents, and reports that helped verify the occurrence and details of incidents. In some cases, international experts helped analyze images and videos, documented by Mwatana, to identify weapon remnants. The researchers strove to document each incident with a minimum of three independent witness statements, and relied on fewer statements when conditions in the field prevented them from collecting more information. Furthermore, Mwatana did not provide any monetary or in-kind incentives, or any promises to those who gave their statements. Mwatana's team has withheld the identities of some witnesses and survivors in the interest of their safety and to ensure complete confidentiality of their personal information.

In 2021, Mwatana's team encountered many security risks while working on the ground. For example, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) threatened the team on four instances and carried out an armed attack against them; the (IRG) harassed the team in another incident; and the UAE-backed STC was responsible for two incidents of arbitrary detention and threats.

The collected information and the reliability of sources were analyzed and verified by the Research and Studies Unit and the Legal Support Unit at Mwatana's headquarters in Sana'a. . The team of the Research and Studies Unit conducted field visits to several governorates in separate fact-finding missions, and documented some particularly complex incidents. The team began writing this report in early 2022. The report was reviewed and proofread by specialists in the field of international humanitarian law from April to August 2022.

The incidents and patterns of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law included in this report represent examples of the most prominent ones documented by Mwatana during 2021. In no way do they represent all the incidents and patterns that occurred in Yemen that year. Mwatana continues to document violations and abuses that have occurred since the beginning of 2022.



Section 1



Yemen Conflict and International Law

International humanitarian law (IHL) applies to the ongoing armed conflict in Yemen. This applicable law includes Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Additional Protocol II of 1977, as well as customary international humanitarian law. IHRL continues to apply alongside IHL.

The non-international armed conflict in Yemen, which began between the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) and the Yemeni government, now involves multiple warring states and non-state armed groups. Parties directly involved in the hostilities include the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the regular armed forces of the (IRG) of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, and non-state armed groups such as the Ansar Allah movement “Houthis”, the STC, and the Joint Forces on Yemen’s Western Coast. All parties to the conflict, including states and non-state armed groups, are obliged to comply with international humanitarian law applicable to the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

In 2021, Mwatana frequently found that military actions did not comply with basic principles of international humanitarian law, such as the principle of distinction and the protection of civilian persons against attack. Military actions killed, injured, and harmed hundreds of civilian victims.

Parties to the conflict are obligated to respect international humanitarian law, including minimizing harm to civilians and civilian objects. Warring parties must take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks. Forces must avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas, seek to remove civilians from the vicinity of military objectives, and protect the civilian population under their control against the dangers arising from military operations, including by refraining from storing weapons and explosive materials within densely populated areas. One party’s failure to take feasible precautions does not negate the other party’s own obligations under the laws of war. An attacking party must also take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm, including doing everything feasible to verify that the objects of attack are military objectives and giving “effective advance warning” when circumstances permit.

Warring parties are prohibited from launching attacks using indiscriminate weapons, attacks that do not distinguish between civilian and military objectives, and disproportionate attacks that are expected to cause incidental harm to civilians,

civilian objects, or a combination thereof, excessive to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from these attacks.

International humanitarian law, in particular Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions, provides minimum protection to all persons taking no active part in hostilities and requires civilians be treated humanely without any adverse distinction. International humanitarian law also prohibits the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

Common Article 3 provides for a number of protections for civilians, as well as for others, such as sick or captive fighters, who have ceased participating in hostilities. Common Article 3 prohibits the use of violence against them, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, torture, taking of hostages, outrages upon personal dignity, and unfair trial. Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions prohibits, among other acts, collective punishment, acts of terrorism, rape and any form of indecent assault, and pillage.

State parties to a conflict are obliged to investigate war crimes allegedly committed by members of their armed forces and other persons under their jurisdiction. Commanders and civilian leaders can be prosecuted for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility, if they knew or had reason to know that subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes, yet failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent them or punish those responsible. International humanitarian law requires that warring parties provide full reparation for losses resulting from violations.

International human rights law applies during armed conflict. Certain fundamental rights, including the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the right not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment, nor to arbitrary deprivation of liberty, must be respected at all times. Non-state armed groups that perform government-like functions in territory under their de facto control must respect the human rights of individuals under their control.



Section 2



Violations and Abuses in 2021

“

While I was waiting for lunch to be served, I suddenly saw black heavy smoke and dust, with my four children lying on the floor of the room soaked in blood.

”



Chapter 1

Air Attacks

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 24 air attacks by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition that caused harm and damage to civilians and/or civilian objects in eight Yemeni governorates, namely Amanat Al-Asimah (municipality of the capital Sana'a), Mahwit, Hajjah, Hodeidah, Al-Bayda, Marib, Shabwa, and Taiz. At least 28 civilians, including eight children and two women, were killed, and at least 46 civilians, including 13 children and eight women, were injured. These attacks targeted and damaged civilian objects protected under IHL, including civilian homes in residential neighborhoods, public roads, civilian vehicles, farms, service and commercial facilities, a hospital, a water well, and a warehouse.

Through investigations, including interviews with eyewitnesses, victims, and rescuers, Mwatana did not identify military objectives at, near or in the vicinity of the site in the majority of these attacks that targeted civilian objects. In the few cases where Mwatana identified a military objective near the site of the attack, the civilian damage caused by the attack was significant and seemed disproportionate to the apparent military advantage. In none of the attacks did Mwatana find any indication that coalition forces had warned civilians before the attacks.

■ Legal Framework

The rules and principles of international humanitarian law provide protections to civilians, as well as to others not participating in the hostilities. International humanitarian law requires parties to a conflict to take the necessary measures to reduce, to the greatest extent, human suffering during the conduct of hostilities.

International humanitarian law requires all parties to a conflict to distinguish between military objectives and civilian objects, to direct all hostilities against military objectives, and to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm. Warring parties must consider the potential harm to civilian life and the relative value of the military objective before conducting an attack, and refrain from carrying out disproportionate attacks. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, when carried out with criminal intent, are considered war crimes.

■ Examples

On Friday, December 24, 2021, at around 9:45 p.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition dropped four bombs on the complex of the Construction and Installation Branch of the General Telecommunications Corporation in Al-Mahwit city, Al-Mahwit governorate. The first bomb targeted and completely destroyed a warehouse, containing communications and installation equipment and material, while the second bomb landed on another nearby warehouse without exploding. The third bomb targeted a guesthouse, east of the complex, significantly damaging the first floor and partially damaging the second floor, breaking doors and windows. In addition, the fourth bomb hit the guardhouse, north of the complex, significantly damaging the first floor and partially damaging the second floor. The air attack killed three civilians, including a child, and injured seven other civilians, including three children and two women.

One of the rescuers (38 years old) described what happened:

“

We heard strong explosions in a row and a warplane hovering. I realized that it was an airstrike bombing on the Construction and Installation building of the General Telecommunications Corporation. I immediately called the guard of the building and he was shouting at the top of his voice, ‘The bomb killed my family and children.’ I and a group of young people rushed to the place, risking our lives. When we got to the place, we saw buildings covered with black smoke and dust. Glass, construction waste, and iron pieces were scattered all over the place.³⁰

”

30 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a rescuer, on December 28, 2021.

On Thursday, October 14, 2021, at around 6:00 p.m., fighter jets of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition launched a two-strike air attack on the Hajr Tamra area in Al-Jubah district of Marib governorate. The first strike targeted the Hajr Tamra well, where the Al-Jubah water project is located; the second bomb targeted the Matna area's water pipeline, where the communal water tank is located. The incident disrupted the project and prevented five sub-districts from benefiting from the project, namely Wasit, Al-Massial, Aba As-Syyid, Al-Thera'a, and Al-Khaneq.

“

Two days after the Houthis had entered Wasit Al-Jubah area, coalition warplanes intentionally targeted Al-Jubah's water project. I say 'intentionally' because they are not so stupid, as not to distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives,

*said the director of Al-Jubah water ptoject in Marib (58 years old).*³¹

”

According to other witnesses, the airstrike targeted a military vehicle equipped with a 23-mm anti-aircraft machine gun belonging to the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) that was close to the targeted water project.

31 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights, on December 1, 2021.



Chapter 2

Ground attacks

In 2021, Mwatana documented nearly 78 indiscriminate ground attacks that killed at least 58 civilians, including three women and 32 children, and injured at least 197 civilians, including 34 women and 85 children. 53 of these attacks were committed by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) in Hodeidah, Taiz, Marib, Al-Bayda, Al-Dhale'e, Lahj, and Aden. Saudi ground forces are responsible for 15 attacks in Sa'ada and Hajjah. Two attacks were launched by government forces in Marib, while six attacks were committed by the UAE-backed Joint Forces, based in the West Coast, in Hodeidah and Taiz. The UAE-backed STC bears responsibility for two attacks. Parties to the conflict in Yemen continue to launch indiscriminate ground attacks on civilians, mostly using imprecise weapons with wide-area effects. Many of these attacks targeted residential neighborhoods and crowded markets, prompting hundreds of people to leave the areas where they were living to seek safer places.

As hostilities intensified in densely-populated areas, some fighters were stationed in residential neighborhoods and houses to shelter, make preparations or conduct hostilities, endangering civilians and their property. As a result, many civilians were killed and injured, and their property and vital infrastructure like roads, water supplies, and hospitals were seriously damaged.

■ Legal Framework

International humanitarian law prohibits indiscriminate attacks. The use of unguided weapons that cannot be directed at a specific military objective is prohibited under international humanitarian law. Warring parties must choose a means of attack and weapons that can be directed at military objectives and minimize as much as possible any harm to civilians and their property. During the conduct of hostilities, the parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between military objectives and civilian objects.

International humanitarian law requires the warring parties to protect civilians in the areas they control against the dangers of military operations. Forces must avoid locating military objectives in or near densely populated areas. The warring parties must refrain from conducting attacks that are expected to cause disproportionate loss of civilian life, civilian harm, or damage to civilian objects, compared to anticipated concrete and direct military gains. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, carried out with criminal intent, are considered war crimes.

■ Examples:

On Wednesday afternoon, March 17, 2021, a mortar shell landed on a house in Al-Dahdah village, Dimnat Khadir district, Taiz governorate. The mortar shell was fired by forces of Ansar Allah group (Houthis), which were stationed in a farm around 300 meters away to the east of the affected house. The shelling killed one female child and injured six other children and two women, some of them seriously. All the victims were taken to a hospital of MSF in the Al- Hawban area.

The father of four victims (25 years old) told Mwatana,

“

While I was waiting for lunch to be served, I suddenly saw black heavy smoke and dust, with my four children lying on the floor of the room soaked in blood.”³²

”

On Thursday, February 4, 2021, at around 06:07 p.m., a projectile fired by the forces of the (IRG) landed on a street in Al-Hamadi neighborhood, Al-Qasr round area, Salh district of Taiz governorate. The projectile killed four civilians, including three children, and injured 15 people, including eight children who were playing football in the street. All victims were taken to hospitals in Al-Hawban.

The forces of Ansar Allah group (Houthis) were deployed in the area, as it is located within the frontline and one of the areas that is under the group's control. Government forces are stationed about 800 meters west of the site of incident.

³² On April 7, 2021, Mwatana interviewed witness Jalil Abdullah (pseudonym), 25 years old, who is the father of four child victims.

The father of one of the child victims (51 years old) said in an interview with Mwatana,

“

On that day, I returned home from work very exhausted, so I laid down to rest. A few minutes later, I heard a big explosion and I got worried about my sons who were playing outside. I rushed out to the street, and saw a horrifying scene of children and young men lying on the ground. My eldest son Mohammed was screaming in fear while holding his younger brother Munir [10 years old] trying to lift him off the ground. I saw Munir bleeding profusely from his head, and another child lay beside him with his head bashed and his intestines out of his body.³³

”

On Saturday, July 3, 2021, at around 12:00 p.m., a mortar shell fell on a house in Al-Qudayb village, Tuhayta district of Hodeidah governorate. The mortar shell was fired by UAE-backed forces stationed 2 km west of the house, killing one child and injuring five people, including a child.

One of the eyewitnesses (27 years old) stated in an interview with Mwatana,

“

The father of the victims, who also sustained burns, came screaming and asking for help in the village. Since the beginning of the war, we have been going through difficult times. Bullets and shells keep falling on civilian homes. We often remain lying on the ground for too long for fear of being killed.

The witness added, “All the residents took shelter in their homes, except those who were busy rescuing the victims, including myself. When I was in the village myself, I heard about 10 shells. The residents say that the shelling continued even after the injured were taken to hospitals. I felt very sad for them.”³⁴

”

33 Statement obtained by Mwatana from Abdo Mohamed Abdullah Hassan, the father of a child victim. The interview took place on March 7, 2021.

34 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on July 5, 2021.

The area is under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthis), located 2 km away from the frontline.

On Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at around 5:00 p.m., Saudi border guards fired a projectile in Al-Raqu area, Monabbih district of Sa'ada governorate. The projectile landed near two families who were in the area, killing two children and injuring two other children and their mothers. The Saudi border guards' premises and watchtowers are located north of the incident site, about 1 km away.

One of the eyewitnesses (36 years old) said to Mwatana,

“

What happened to them breaks one's heart and makes you loathe this whole life. I ask God to protect us all. What made things more tragic is the fact that they were helpless women with no men to calm them down and reassure them... All the children were crying.³⁵

”

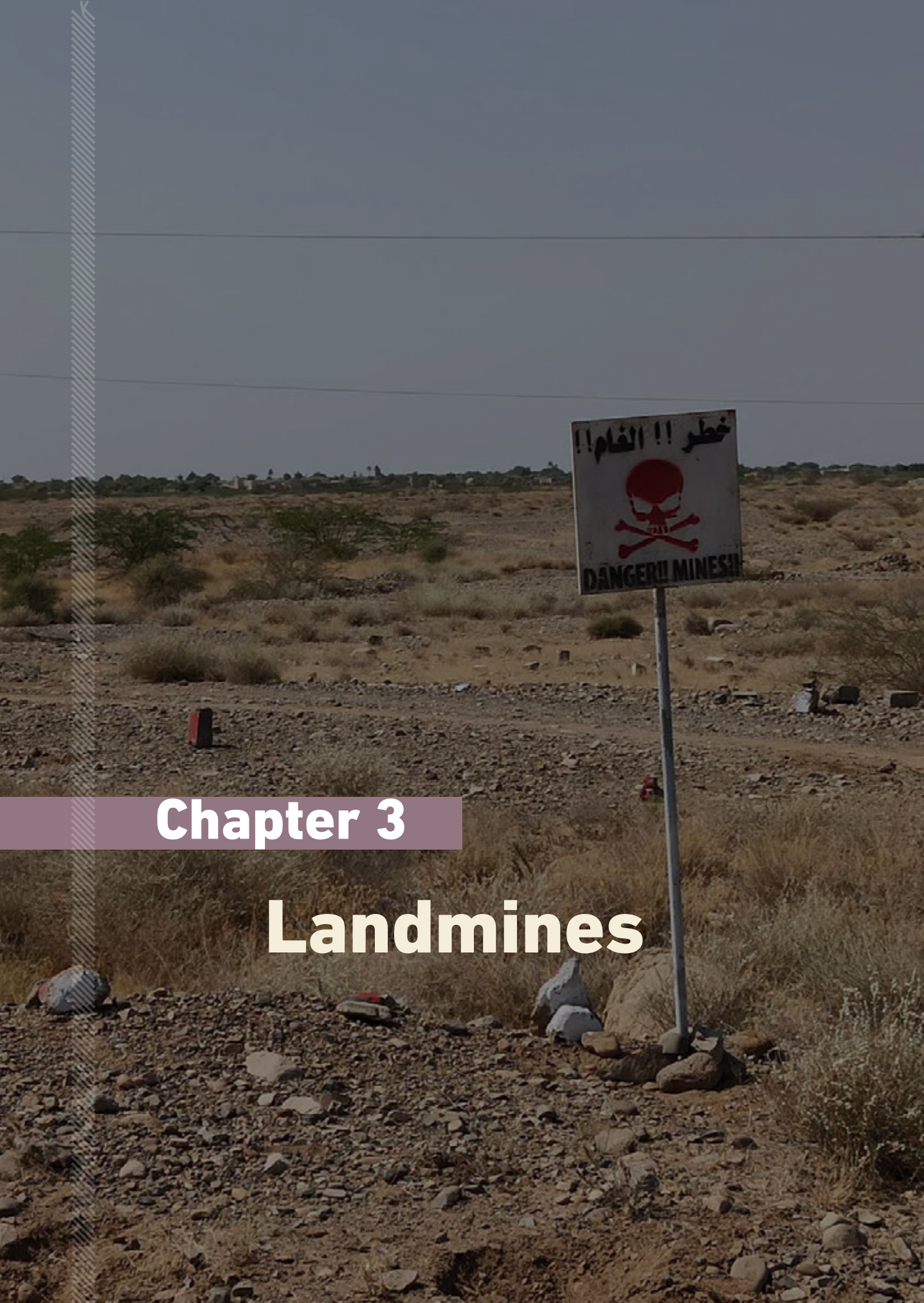
The victims were taken to the Republican Hospital in Sa'ada city. The two children died as soon as they arrived at the hospital.

On Monday, April 4, 2021, at 4:00 p.m., Mwatana documented a similar incident of ground shelling by Saudi border guards in the same area. The attack targeted a house inhabited by six people, killing one female child and a young man and injuring four civilians, including a child and two women.

35 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on June 17, 2021.



A destroyed building which was located within frontline zone between the Joint Forces and the Ansar Allah (Houthis) group. Alkhamseen Street -Alhali-Hodeidah



Chapter 3

Landmines

In 2021, Mwatana documented nearly 50 incidents of landmine explosions, which killed 36 civilians, including 19 children and three women, and injured 59 civilians, including 34 children and five women. These incidents were concentrated in Hodeidah, Al-Jawf, Shabwah, Taiz, Sa'ada, Al-Dhale'e, Al-Bayda, Sana'a, Marib, Aden, and Hajjah governorates. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) planted these landmines.

Since the outbreak of the armed conflict, landmines continued to claim the lives and limbs of Yemenis. They have become a source of daily terror and fear for civilians, mainly in rural areas. Women and children are the primary victims of landmines laid on public roads, because they fetch water and firewood, and herd livestock, in these areas. Furthermore, landmines have forced hundreds of Yemenis to take rugged and other roads far from the usual, now mined, routes.

■ Legal framework

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines. The Convention requires states parties to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines, whether stockpiled or in mined areas, in addition to providing assistance to mine victims. Yemen ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on September 1, 1998.

Landmines, including anti-vehicle mines, must not be used in ways that amount to indiscriminate attacks. Mines are banned because they do not distinguish between civilians and fighters. They continue to kill and maim civilians long after a conflict has ended. Indiscriminate attacks, when carried out with criminal intent, are war crimes.



Vehicles' Mines removed from Al-Kattaba area - Al-Khokha – Hodeidah



Mine Warning signs in a building located in frontline zones between the Joint Forces and the Ansar Allah Group (Houthis), Alkhamseen Street Alhali-Hodeidah



A survivor of a Houthi-planted landmine explosion in Wadi Yirah, Al-Zahir Al-Bayda

■ Examples

On Monday, September 13, 2021, at around 5:30 p.m., a landmine, laid by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), exploded under a vehicle (Toyota/pick-up) in Qataba, Al-Khokha district of Hodeidah governorate, injuring 32 civilians, including 24 children and seven women.

According to witnesses interviewed by Mwatana, the vehicle was carrying civilians, all from one family, who attended a relative's wedding.

One of the female victims (40 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“We happily celebrated the wedding. At 5:30 p.m., we left the wedding and got into the Hilux car along with my children and all our female and child relatives. After we had driven about 1 km and were heading towards the asphalt road, the car suddenly shook and a big explosion occurred.”

The victim continued recounting the tragedy, saying, “I screamed and looked for my children and my brother’s. Everyone was lying on the ground and covered in dirt. It was not easy to recognize them until the dirt was wiped from their faces. The children and women were screaming, and there was blood everywhere.”³⁶

”

36 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a victim, on September 14, 2021

On Friday, April 16, 2021, at around 8:00 a.m., a landmine, planted by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), exploded under a motorcycle in Al-Ja'ashen village, Dhubab district of Taiz governorate. The explosion killed a girl and her father, and injured another child.

The child victims' uncle (38 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“My brother went out with his son and daughter on his motorcycle to herd sheep. At 8 a.m., I heard an explosion and rushed to the explosion site. When I got there, I found my brother's motorcycle split in half, next to a pit in the ground and blood. The Bedouins had already taken my brother and his children home.”

“My nephews are orphaned and without a breadwinner, especially after their older brother was paralyzed by the mine explosion. We and our livestock experience constant harm due to landmines. We have not found anyone to help us clear them,” the uncle added.³⁷

”



| Mine warning sign. Dami - Hias – Hodeidah

37 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victims' uncle, on June 8, 2021



Chapter 4

Recruitment and Use of Children

In 2021, Mwatana documented the recruitment of 195 children. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) recruited 80% of these children, with these cases concentrated in the governorates of Sa'ada, Hajjah, Dhamar, Al-Jawf, Al-Bayda, Raymah, Amanat Al-Asimah, Amran, Marib, Al-Dhale'e, Taiz, Hodeidah, and Ibb. Government forces recruited 9% of the total documented cases of child recruitment and use, concentrated in Marib, Al-Jawf, Shabwa, Lahj, Abyan, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates. The STC forces are responsible for recruiting 8% of these cases in Lahj and Abyan. The percentage of children recruited by the Joint Forces was 2% of the documented cases, concentrated in Lahj and Abyan governorates. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition was responsible for recruiting 1% of the total documented cases in Hadhramaut governorate.

The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) continues to recruit and use young girls for security checks and logistical services such as cooking and washing clothes for fighters. Mwatana documented the recruitment and use of at least 33 young girls by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis). In 2021, Mwatana used interviews to document incidents of recruitment and use of children. In the interest of the children's safety, Mwatana withheld the identities of all children and their parents in this chapter.

■ Legal Framework

International humanitarian law prohibits the recruitment or use of children by armed groups or armed forces. The recruitment of children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to actively participate in hostilities, is a war crime.³⁸ Military commanders of armed forces or armed groups, who knew or had reason to know that the forces under their control were committing or were about to commit such crimes, yet failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures to prevent or repress the commission of these acts—e.g. by demobilizing children who had been recruited—can be held criminally liable.

The Yemeni Child Rights Law provides that children cannot be directly involved in armed conflict, and that no person under the age of 18 years can be recruited.³⁹

38 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in Rome on July 17, 1998, entered into force on July 1, 2002, Article 8(2)(e)(vii).

39 Yemeni Child Rights Law of 2000, Article 45.

■ Examples:

On Wednesday, December 15, 2021, a 12-year-old boy was recruited by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) at a security checkpoint in Rada'a district of Al-Bayda governorate, after he escaped from his uncles' house because of mistreatment.

An eyewitness (45 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“The warring parties have taken advantage of the vulnerability of stray children; they manipulate their minds, cheer them up by giving them weapons, and drive them to death.”⁴⁰

”

On Thursday, February 18, 2021, a 16-year-old boy left his home in Mukalla, Hadhramaut governorate, after he was recruited by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces. He headed to Al-Wadiah land port in Al-Abr district of Hadhramaut governorate, to join the reception camp on the Yemeni-Saudi border. On Saturday, June 19, 2021, the child suffered pelvic injuries as a result of a drone attack by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) on the site where he was, leading to permanent paraplegia.

An eyewitness (32 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“War is not like school camps a child goes to and returns safely from. It involves military camps and armed groups fighting each other, and injuries are more likely to happen at any minute.”⁴¹

”

⁴⁰ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on January 24, 2022.

⁴¹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on November 9, 2021.

In mid-May 2020, a 16-year-old child was recruited by border guard forces of the (IRG) in Al-Khanjar camp in Khabb wa Ash Sha'af District of Al-Jawf governorate. On September 20, 2021, the child was killed by a landmine explosion.

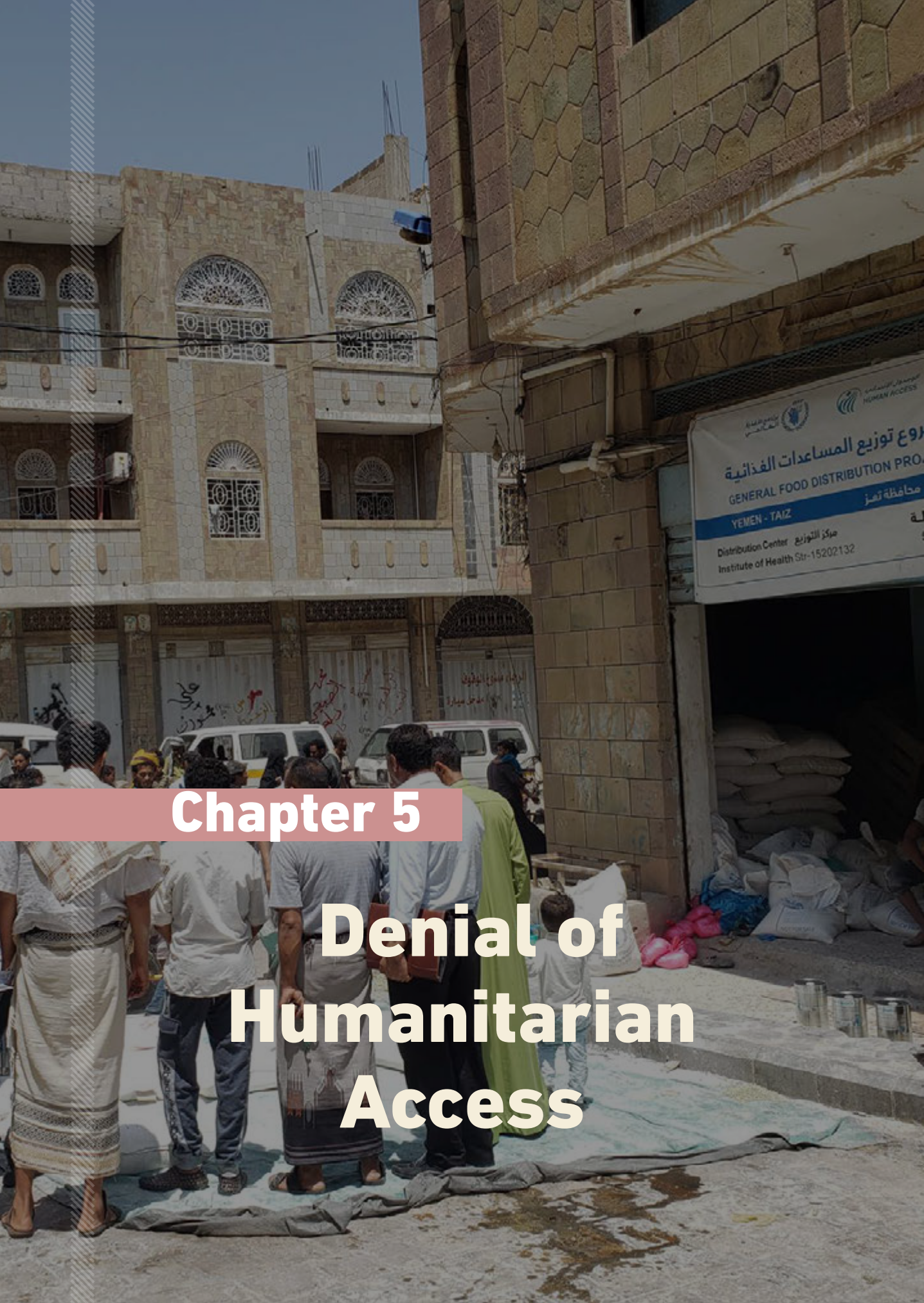
The victim's cousin (22 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“Every day, we lose a relative and a friend because of this damn war. We want this war to end. Enough tragedies.”⁴²

”

⁴² Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the cousin of the victim, a recruited child, on October 31, 2021.



Chapter 5

Denial of Humanitarian Access

In 2021, as with each year during this war, the civilian population in Yemen endured further burdens when trying to meet their basic needs for survival. Violations by the warring parties exacerbated the difficult humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.⁴³

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 94 incidents of warring parties obstructing humanitarian aid and essential items to civilians. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for 80 incidents in the governorates of Sa'ada, Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Mahwit, Al-Bayda, Amran, and Raymah. Government forces committed five incidents in Taiz, Lahj, and Hadhramaut governorates. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council bears responsibility for eight incidents in Lahj, Aden, Hadhramaut, and Abyan governorates, while the UAE-backed Joint Forces are responsible for one incident in Taiz governorate. In addition, the humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by the restrictions imposed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition on the entry of oil derivatives into areas controlled by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis); these derivatives are a vital source for the health and service sectors. Moreover, the coalition continued to close Sana'a airport to commercial flights.

The warring parties have also contributed to the humanitarian disaster in Yemen in other ways. Some of the worst consequences of the conflict are the collapse of the country's service infrastructure and the sharp deterioration of economic and financial indicators. In this regard, one of the main problems is the failure of the Central Bank of Yemen to pay the salaries of pensioners and civil servants.⁴⁴ The restrictions imposed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition on the entry of imported food and fuel into Yemeni ports have aggravated the suffering of civilians.⁴⁵ The humanitarian situation has further deteriorated as a result of the air blockade and the continued closure of Sana'a International Airport to commercial and humanitarian flights.

Parties to the conflict, such as the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) and the government forces affiliated with President Hadi, have imposed tariffs and complex bureaucratic measures that hinder the passage of trade flows and humanitarian aid. Such practices

43 "Yemen", United Nations, <https://2u.pw/9MQWo>.

44 The number of civil servants is about one million, two hundred and fifty thousand. For more information, see: "Inflated beyond fiscal capacity: The need to reform the public sector wage bill", Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, September 23, 2019, <https://2u.pw/7kPI0>.

45 Report of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1, September 3, 2019, p. 266, <https://2u.pw/Q8Kv3>.

have contributed to higher prices and reduced availability of basic commodities like fuel.⁴⁶ The parties to the conflict have imposed complex restrictions on humanitarian organizations and their staff, hindering their freedom of movement in different areas of the country. A joint report of United Nations relief organizations states that, "Nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five in Yemen are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021. Of these, 400,000 are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition and could die if they do not receive urgent treatment."⁴⁷



| Humanitarian aid at a school in Guwerq camp, Tohita, Hodeida

■ Legal Framework

The parties to the conflict are required to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid for civilians in need. They must ensure the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel, which can only be temporarily restricted for reasons of imperative military necessity.

Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited. Under international humanitarian law, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare includes attacking, destroying, removing, or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population (OIS), such as food warehouses, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 270.

⁴⁷ "UN agencies: Acute malnutrition threatens the lives of 2.3 million children under 5 years of age in Yemen", United Nations, February 12, 2021, <https://2u.pw/w1TLq>.

Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies, is a war crime. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was recently amended to include starvation as a method of warfare as a war crime in non-international armed conflicts.

■ Examples:

On Sunday, August 1, 2021, at around 3:00 p.m., the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) prevented an international organization from implementing a food security project, in partnership with a local organization, to distribute food aid to the disabled in Al-Mualla area, Saada city district, Sa'ada governorate. The group changed the project's beneficiaries list. The local organization was unable to implement the fifth round of food aid distribution under this project, which was to benefit 200 persons with disabilities. Therefore, the food baskets were diverted to Haidan district, stronghold of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) in the Walad Ayyash area.

Mohammed Ahmed (pseudonym, 44 years old) said,

“

“The aid was diverted to the sub-district of Walad Ayyash, after it should have been provided to the Office for the Disabled. The food aid was distributed to the residents of Walad Hayydan against our will, under the pretext that they had been affected by the war. Because of the terrible pressure put on us, we had to make the disbursement. We have also received threats that most of our projects there will be stopped.”⁴⁸

”

On Sunday, June 13, 2021, at around 12:30 p.m., five plain-clothed armed men, in a Toyota pick-up, stopped two relief workers of an international organization who were aboard a civilian car, at the large Sa'ilah in Mouza'a district near the village of Al Had, about 5 km northeast of the center of the Mouza'a district of Taiz governorate. They

48 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relief worker, on August 17, 2021.

forced them out of the car. After failing to kidnap the victims, they violently looted the car and everything they had. The looting took place in an area controlled by the UAE-backed Joint Forces.

Murad Ahmed (pseudonym, 30 years old) said,

“

“When they stopped us, they asked us who we were. We answered, ‘We work for an international organization.’ They ordered us to put our car in reverse and park next to theirs. At that moment, I started to get very scared because I found them suspicious. Then they ordered us to get out of the car under the pretext that they would search the car. Their actions were confusing and abnormal. I realized that they were bandits.”⁴⁹

”

On Thursday, January 21, 2021, around 6:00 a.m., the Southern Transitional Council forces stopped humanitarian aid trucks of the World Food Organization at a military checkpoint in Al-Bwaib area, north of Al-Mallah district in Lahj governorate. The aid was intended for 47 elementary schools in different areas of Radfan district in Lahj governorate. This aid used to be distributed daily to 16,555 students.

Ali Sultan (pseudonym, 39 years old) said,

“

“The Security Belt Forces, the security wing of the Transitional Council, took control of this aid to enforce its distribution through them, under their supervision, and according to a plan imposed by the Transitional Council’s authority in the district.”⁵⁰

”

On Monday, November 8, 2021, around 9:00 a.m., government forces, through their representatives, intervened in the distribution of 2,000 food baskets provided by an international organization for distribution to beneficiaries in three residential

⁴⁹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an aid worker, on June 28, 2021.

⁵⁰ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a witness, on January 26, 2021.

neighborhoods in Ghail Bawazeer district, Hadhramaut governorate. They imposed a list prepared by them of areas eligible for the food baskets. They also excluded some of the beneficiaries, who met the selection criteria of the donating organization, from receiving the food aid. On the first day of distribution, they stole bags of sugar from the food baskets before their distribution to the beneficiaries. Moreover, they completely deprived three residential areas of this food aid, leaving more than 300 eligible households without assistance.

Mohsen Hassan (pseudonym, 35 years old) said,

“

“Government forces have deprived entire areas of humanitarian aid. These areas include Hassan Basri square, Sharq Ba Amer square in Al-Mustaqbal neighborhood, and Ba Hamid square in 22nd May neighborhood. In this neighborhood, only 50 out of 250 households received food aid, where humanitarian aid was unfairly distributed. The distribution was based on favoritism and manipulation of beneficiary lists, which is only denied by liars.”⁵¹

”



| Humanitarian aid -Altholth-Hais -Hodeida

51 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a witness, on December 5, 2021.



Chapter 6

Arbitrary Detention

In 2021, Mwatana documented 297 incidents of arbitrary detention of civilian victims, including 15 children and 14 women. In governorates controlled by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), the group committed 125 incidents of arbitrary detention, particularly in Dhamar, Amran, Al-Bayda, Mahwit, Hajjah, Al-Dhale'e, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf, Hodeidah, Taiz, Ibb, Marib, Raymah, Sana'a, and Amanat Al-Asimah. Mwatana also documented 108 incidents of arbitrary detention committed by government forces in Marib, Shabwa, Taiz, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates. The UAE-backed STC forces are responsible for arbitrarily detaining 48 victims in Aden, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates, while the UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces bear responsibility for arbitrarily detaining 16 victims.

Detainees were held in official, unofficial, and secret prisons. Warring parties used arbitrary detention as a means to harass opponents and impose their will on the population in areas under their control.

■ Legal Framework

International humanitarian law and international human rights law prohibit arbitrary detention during international and non-international armed conflicts. Multiple treaties provide that no one may be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Yemen is a party, states: "No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law."

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has held that states may not invoke a state of emergency to justify arbitrary detention. A valid reason for detention, both for initial detention and the continuation of detention, must be provided. To prevent arbitrary detention, there is an obligation to inform people of the reasons for their arrest, to bring them promptly before a judge, and to allow them to challenge the legality of their detention.

Yemen's Code of Criminal Procedure includes basic criminal justice guarantees, including specifying that: "Anyone who is temporarily arrested, due to being suspected of committing a crime shall be presented to the judiciary within 24 hours from the time of the arrest at most."⁵² Additionally, the Code provides that only judges have the right to

52 Code of Criminal Procedure, Republican Decree Law No. (13) of 1994, Article 76.

extend an arrest warrant beyond the first seven days, and stipulates prison sentences of up to five years for officials who wrongly deprive people of their freedoms.

■ Examples

On Friday, January 15, 2021, at 12:00 p.m., seven armed members of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), dressed in military uniforms, arrested the child Saeed Mohsen (pseudonym, 13 years old) in his home in Rahba district, Marib governorate. The child was arrested and transferred to a prison in Al-Sawadiya area, Al-Bayda governorate, on charges of sharing coordinates of Aalfa area, in Rahba district, with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition.

One of the eyewitnesses (32 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“A military pick-up vehicle of the Ansar Allah group, with armed men on board, drove up to the child’s house. They said that the child was wanted for security reasons and that they needed to investigate the incident. When the child heard what they said, he rushed to his grandfather and grabbed his Thawb. He said, while crying and holding his grandfather’s hand, ‘Don’t hand me over to them, grandfather.’”⁵³

”

After two days of detention, the child was released under a guarantee provided by his grandfather.

On Thursday, November 18, 2021, around 12:30 p.m., forces of the (IRG) arrested Anwar Saleh (20 years old) at a security checkpoint, located at the entrance to the city of Marib, Marib governorate, and interrogated him to find out why he wanted to enter Marib city. After his money was taken from him and his personal mobile phone searched, he was detained for three days in a mobile home behind the checkpoint, located in the desert near the northern entrance to Marib city.

53 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on February 11, 2021.

Anwar told Mwatana,

“

“They said that they found videos of the Houthis on my phone and chat messages with Houthi leaders. What they found on my phone were normal Zamels [war poetry adapted into music videos] and normal chat messages with a resident of the region who worked with the Houthis on the west coast frontline in Hodeidah. I asked him on WhatsApp, ‘Where are you, what are you doing, how are you doing, and when will you return home?’... However, they held me in difficult conditions and accused me of being a Houthi leader.”⁵⁴

”

The soldiers released Anwar on the condition that he return to Sana’a.

On Tuesday, March 9, 2021, at around 1:00 a.m., forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, who arrived aboard four Toyota pick-up military vehicles and a police car, stormed the house of Samir Qasim (pseudonym, 53 years old) and arrested him on terrorism charges, in the Al-Buraiqa district of Aden governorate.

Samir told Mwatana,

“

“I was sleeping under a mosquito net when they broke into the house. Immediately, they hit me on the head with a Kalashnikov gun. Blood flowed from my head to my face and clothes. They blindfolded me with a shawl [men’s scarf]. In detention, they started interrogating me, asking: ‘What is your political affiliation?’ I answered clearly, ‘I am a member of the Islah Party.’ He said, ‘Aha, this is what we want!’”⁵⁵

”

Samir was released on Sunday morning, March 28, 2021.

⁵⁴ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on November 20, 2021.

⁵⁵ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on November 20, 2021.



Chapter 7

Enforced Disappearance

In 2021, Mwatana documented 141 cases of enforced disappearance, including of eight children and one woman. Out of these cases, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for incidents involving 49 victims in Dhamar, Ibb, Hodeidah, Amanat Al-Asimah, Taiz, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Al-Bayda, and Amran governorates. Government forces affiliated with Hadi bear responsibility for 40 victims of enforced disappearance in Marib, Taiz, Al-Mahra, Hadhramaut, and Shabwa governorates. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for 33 of the documented enforced disappearances, with these cases concentrated in Aden, Al Dhale, and Lahj. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces are responsible for one victim in Hadhramaut governorate. Eritrean forces arrested and forcibly disappeared 18 Yemeni fishermen off the coast of Hodeidah governorate.

Forcibly disappeared people in Yemen suffer atrocities inside prison cells. Parties to the conflict in Yemen often forcibly disappear civilians for their suspected links to hostile organizations, because their political affiliation is criminalized, or because they hold opposing opinions. One of the primary reasons for the widespread nature of enforced disappearances—often including grave violations that may amount to war crimes—is the impunity enjoyed by all parties to the conflict in terms of criminal accountability and redress for victims. The harm caused by disappearances extends to families, friends, and wider society.

In an effort to reduce enforced disappearances by warring parties, Mwatana provides legal support on cases of enforced disappearance. Mwatana also tries to put pressure on the parties to the conflict to uncover the fate of the disappeared, allow their families to visit them, and refer them to the judiciary in accordance with legal procedures. Nevertheless, some victims whose cases are being followed up by Mwatana remain forcibly disappeared.

■ Legal Framework

Enforced disappearance is prohibited during armed conflict. Enforced disappearances violate, or threaten to violate, a range of rules of international humanitarian law applicable to both international and non-international armed conflicts, including the prohibitions of enforced disappearance, torture and other cruel or inhuman treatment, and murder. The warring parties must take steps to prevent enforced disappearances during non-international armed conflicts, including by registering the names of detainees, and must

take all feasible measures to reveal the fate of the missing as a result of the conflict and provide family members with information about their fate.

Under the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court's founding treaty, the systematic practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity. Hostage taking, seizing or detaining a person, and threatening to kill, injure, or continue to detain them, to compel a third party to act or refrain from acting as a condition for release or safety, is also a war crime under the Rome Statue.

Yemeni law does not criminalize enforced disappearance as such, and Yemen has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Disappearance. However, a comprehensive reading of the constitutional and legal principles enshrined in the Yemeni Constitution regarding fundamental rights and freedoms, including regarding arbitrary detention and torture, would appear to prohibit this practice. Yemen should ratify this Convention and bring domestic law in line with international legal protections.

■ Examples

On Wednesday March 17, 2021, at around 1:05 am, four soldiers of the (IRG)'s Special Security Forces, arrested and forcibly disappeared 14 fishermen, including seven children, on a naval boat for two days. The soldiers belong to Al-Majdaha camp, which is adjacent to the local port of Qana'a in the Bir Ali area of Shabwa governorate's Radhum district. The victims were fishing approx. ten km away from Bir Ali beach when they were arrested. The soldiers seized the victims' boats and mobile phones.

One of the members of the Fishermen Association (48 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“After the opening of Qana'a port by the authorities of Shabwa governorate, the situation for fishermen became disastrous. The sea was the source of income for the people here. Now, they cannot fish as they used to, because of the arrest of fishermen and the ban on fishing in many places.”⁵⁶

”

56 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on April 11, 2021.

The fishermen were released on Friday March 19, 2021.

On April 14, 2021, at around 4:30 a.m., security forces, aboard of six military vehicles (Toyota/pick-up) and one armored vehicle, belonging to the Southern Transitional Council stormed two houses in Kubota area in Al- Mansoura district, Aden governorate. They searched the houses and arrested two civilians and one child (14 years old, male). They also seized their mobile phones and some money, as well as a bus owned by one of those arrested.

The brother of one of the victims (25 years old) said to Mwatana,

“

“My mother, sister, and sister-in-law were terribly frightened when the forces broke into the house with brute force. My brother is still forcibly disappeared along with my neighbor, and we have not seen them since then. No one informed us about the reason for their arrest, and we have not heard any reassuring news about them until now. My brother is the breadwinner of his family; he is the father of four children and his wife is pregnant. His bus, which he uses to support his family, was confiscated.”⁵⁷

”

The child was released on Saturday April 24, 2021. However, Mwatana has not been able to verify the fate of the other two victims or whether they are still forcibly disappeared.

On Monday July 5, 2021, at around 5:40 p.m., five members of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), two in military uniform and three in civilian clothing, aboard a Toyota pick-up, abducted Amin Al-Mswari (pseudonym, 40 years old) from his workplace in a commercial factory in Taiz Street, Al Sabeen district, Amanat Al Asimah, Sana’a. Amin was taken to the Intelligence and Security prison, where he remained forcibly disappeared for three months.

57 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on April 27, 2021.

A relative of the victim (39 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“Despite our active follow-up with the security authorities to find out where Amin was being detained, we could not find out his whereabouts. Three months after his arrest, he contacted us and informed us that he was in the Security and Intelligence prison. He also told us the date when we could visit him. When we visited him, he said that he had not been interrogated or charged of anything in the Security and Intelligence prison.”⁵⁸

”

58 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relative of the victim, on February 15, 2022.

“

The first cell was like a barn for sheep. It was full of food waste and urine and was very dirty. Then I was moved to a very dark and small cell (1x2 meters). During the interrogation, they splashed me with ice cold water. They slapped my back with a strong rope. Two soldiers held me by my hand, tied both my hands, and suspended me. They put very sharply serrated bean cans under my feet, so I hurt my feet when I got tired and my hands weakened. I hurt my feet many times.

”



Chapter 8

Torture

In 2021, Mwatana documented the torture of 56 victims, including six children and one woman. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for torturing 23 of those victims in Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Al-Dhale'e, and Hadhramaut governorates, which resulted in the death of four of them. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) bears responsibility for torturing 11 victims in Sa'ada, Sana'a, Hajjah, Al-Bayda, Hodeidah, and Amran governorates, resulting in the death of one victim. The (IRG) forces are responsible for torturing 22 victims in the governorates of Shabwa, Marib, Hadhramaut, Lahj, and Taiz, resulting in the death of four victims.

Mwatana documented various methods of torture and ill-treatment by the warring parties, such as severe beatings with batons and metal bars, electrocution, kicking, slapping, burning, waterboarding, confinement of detainees in small cells, tying of hands behind the back, and other forms of humiliating and degrading treatment. Mwatana also documented people not receiving necessary medical care after being injured due to torture and ill-treatment.

The continued practice of torture in detention centers by all parties to the conflict is a result of the prevailing impunity enjoyed by warring parties, by obstructing efforts to achieve accountability and due process, as well as the absence of remedies for victims and the failure to hold perpetrators to account.

■ Legal Framework

International humanitarian law and international human rights law prohibit torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment. No circumstances justify such practices. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits torture. Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 provides for the protection of detained persons, including civilians and captured fighters, from "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" as well as "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment sets out a set of requirements for states to prevent, investigate, and prosecute torture, in addition to ensuring redress for victims. Yemen ratified the Convention against Torture in 1991.

Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity constitute war crimes in non-international armed conflicts. Torture is considered a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.

■ Examples

On March 15, 2021, at around 2:00 p.m., in Kuhlān Afar district, Hajjah governorate, 10 masked fighters of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), who were aboard a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up) arrested Salem Hussein (pseudonym, 23 years old) at his father's house on charges of theft. They took him to one of the group's prisons in Hajjah city and did not allow anyone to visit or contact him for five months. Salem was tortured to death in prison.

Saeeda Hassan (pseudonym, 27 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) confiscated the property of Salem's family in Hajjah city, claiming that it's state property. Salem's family filed a court case, and presented title deeds and other documents proving their ownership of the land and houses. Yet, the group forcibly removed them and confiscated their property.”

”

She added,

“

“In August 2021, Salem's uncle went to pay the required amount of money to get Salem released. When the uncle got there, the guards told him that Salem had died of tuberculosis and his body was in the hospital's morgue. Before the burial, Salem's family examined his body and discovered that Salem's neck appeared to have been butchered and that there were burns and deep wounds on his body due to the torture he had been subjected to in prison. Perhaps the real reason Salem was detained, tortured, and killed was to force his family to give up the case against the Houthi group, which took their property and money.”⁵⁹

”

⁵⁹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on October 14, 2021.

In October 2021, around 10:00 a.m., five uniformed soldiers of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, aboard a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up), arrested Marwan Ahmed (pseudonym, 20 years old) at his house, in Khanfar district of Abyan governorate. He was taken to prison, where he was tortured when interrogated for theft.

Marwan's father (57 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“They put my son in prison unjustly. He was ruthlessly tortured for two weeks intermittently. They beat him with sticks and gun butts and electrocuted him. This was all due to personal animosity with a military commander affiliated with the Transitional Council, who lives next to our house, because we are in a personal dispute with him.”

He added, “This military commander uses his position and influence to abuse us. Last year, he arrested Marwan and my eldest son and tortured them in prison until blood shed from their heads.”⁶⁰

”

Two weeks after his arrest, Marwan was transferred to the central prison in Abyan.

Marwan was released on January 19, 2022, as a result of active legal support through his lawyer at Mwatana.

On Sunday, January 3, 2021, at around 10:30 p.m., eight uniformed soldiers of the (IRG), aboard a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up), arrested Amin Salah (pseudonym, 37 years old) near his house, in Ataq district of Shabwa governorate. He was accused of filming an incursion by government forces into a house next to his residence. The victim was enforcedly disappeared in a prison for a whole week and was tortured seven times during his interrogation.

60 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim's father, on December 23, 2021.

Amin told Mwatana,

“

“The first cell was like a barn for sheep. It was full of food waste and urine and was very dirty. Then I was moved to a very dark and small cell (1x2 meters). During the interrogation, they splashed me with ice cold water. They slapped my back with a strong rope. Two soldiers held me by my hand, tied both my hands, and suspended me. They put very sharply serrated bean cans under my feet, so I hurt my feet when I got tired and my hands weakened. I hurt my feet many times.”⁶¹

”

Amin was released on March 30, 2021, under a commercial guarantee*.

⁶¹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on April 18, 2021.

* (A commercial guarantee is provided by a registered trader as a condition of a detainee's release).



Executions

On the morning of Saturday, September 18, 2021, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) executed nine people, following a trial over the murder of a group leader, Saleh Al-Sammad, that failed to meet the minimum requirements for a fair trial.⁶² One of these people was allegedly a minor during his imprisonment. The death sentences were carried out in Tahrir Square in Sana'a in the presence of a number of journalists and hundreds of attendees. The ta'zir (discretionary punishment) was carried out with cheering and dancing in a terrifying attempt to normalize the killing and make it something like a celebration.

62 "Ansar Allah group (Houthis) carries out a brutal execution after unfair trials in the Specialized Criminal Court", September 23, 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights, <https://2u.pw/bmARh>.



Chapter 9

Sexual Violence

In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 13 incidents of sexual violence. Those subjected to sexual violence include three girls, eight boys, and two adult women. All the victims were raped except for two boys who were harassed. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) are responsible for seven of these incidents in Taiz, Hajjah, Marib, and Amran governorates. The (IRG) forces are responsible for three incidents of sexual violence in Hadhramaut and Taiz governorates, while the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces bear responsibility for three incidents in Abyan governorate.

Most victims of sexual violence belonged to vulnerable groups and lived in dangerous environments where they were exposed to all kinds of abuses.

Given the continuing risks faced by survivors and their families, Mwatana provides an overview of the documented incidents rather than describing them in detail.

The true number of victims of sexual violence is likely to be much higher, as fear of social stigma is a barrier to reporting these incidents. Victims of sexual violence face ostracism from families and communities after experiencing sexual violence. They are often blamed for what is considered a loss of honor.

Survivors and their families often do not report crimes of sexual violence due to fear of the security services and the forces to which perpetrators belong.

■ Legal Framework

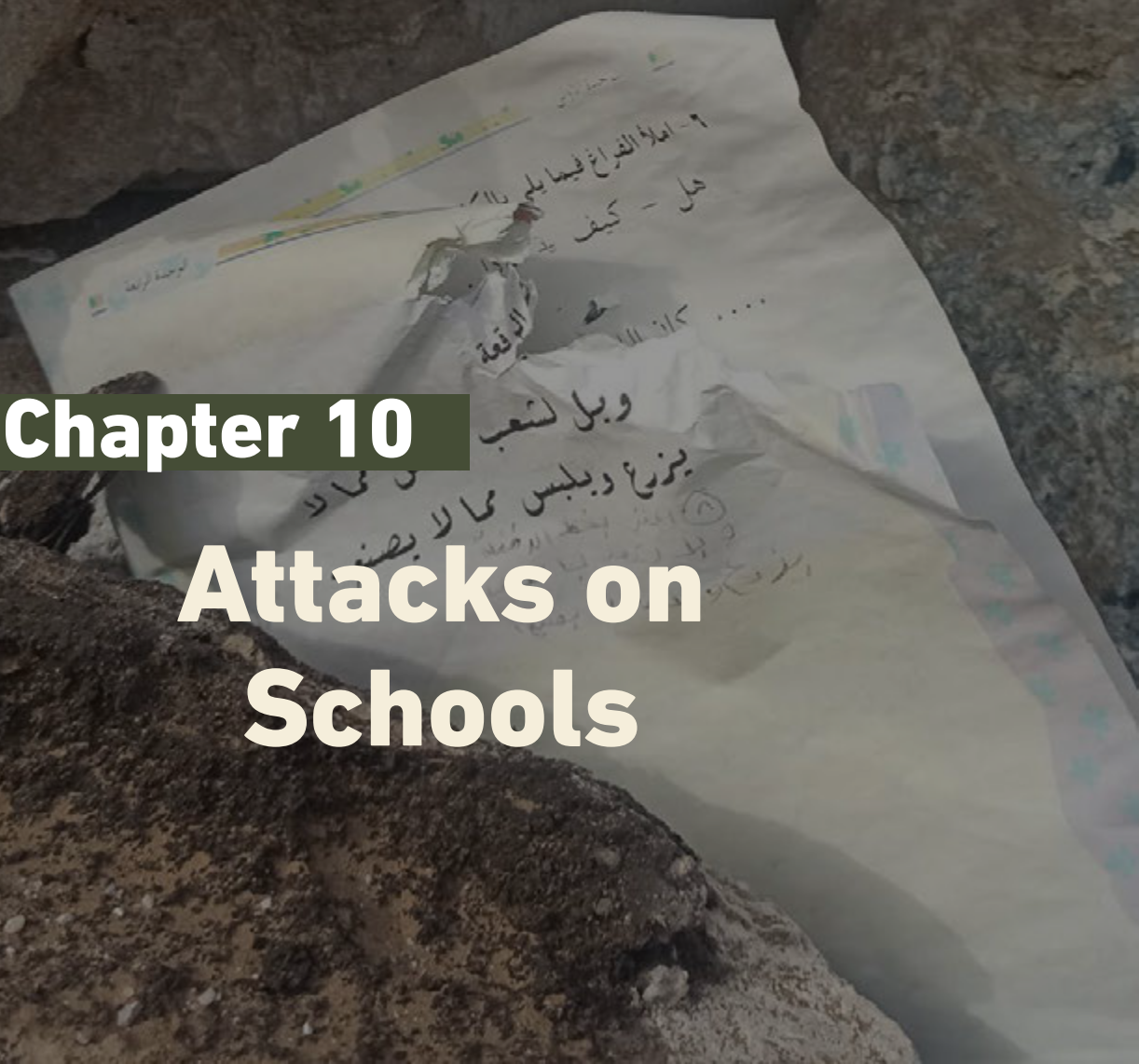
Sexual violence and rape are prohibited during international and non-international armed conflicts. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions prohibits “violence to life and person” including cruel treatment and torture, and “outrages upon personal dignity,” which Additional Protocol II defines as including rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court includes rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes.

In addition, international human rights law prohibits rape and sexual violence, which may amount to a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Chapter 10

Attacks on Schools



In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 105 incidents impacting schools, including attacks on schools and the use of schools for military purposes. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for 92 of these incidents in Raymah, Sa'ada, Ibb, Hodeidah, Taiz, Dhamar, Hajjah, Amran, and Al-Dhale'e governorates. These incidents include two ground shelling incidents that killed two children, two incidents of bombing schools, and 88 incidents of using schools for military purposes. The (IRG) forces committed two attacks on a school in Lahj governorate. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council bears responsibility for eight incidents of attacks on schools in Hadhramaut and Lahj governorates. The UAE-backed Joint Forces are responsible for two attacks on schools in Hodeidah governorate. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) launched a ground attack on a school occupied by the UAE-backed Joint Forces, based in the West Coast, in Hodeidah governorate, killing one adult and injuring four, including three children and a woman.

Parties to the conflict in Yemen have caused severe damage to schools and educational facilities, leading to deaths and injuries among female and male students. Many schools have closed or have become dangerous places due to remnants of projectiles and explosive materials, or the possibility of direct or indirect air and ground attacks. Fighting broke out in several areas, with many schools located in the midst of the hostilities. Schools are also frequently occupied and used for military and combat purposes, including as military barracks, detention centers, places to shelter and supply fighters, or centers for mobilization.

■ Legal Framework

Both international humanitarian law and international human rights law provide for the protection of educational facilities during armed conflict. Warring parties are prohibited from directing attacks on civilian objects, including educational institutions. The parties must distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives at all times, and refrain from launching attacks that have a disproportionate impact on civilian objects.

Warring parties must assume that targets are civilian objects in cases of doubt. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2225/2015 on children in armed conflict also affirms that warring parties must respect the civilian character of schools. The Safe Schools Declaration, adopted by Yemen in 2017, provides guidance to warring parties on how to protect educational facilities from military use during armed conflicts.

Using schools for military purposes during armed conflict puts students, teachers, and administrators at risk by turning schools into targets of attack and disrupting education.



*Damaged chair in a classroom in Al-Mohammadiyah School
Sakibat - Al Qafala – Amran*

■ Examples

On Saturday, March 6, 2021, at around 1:15 p.m., the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) fired a projectile at the Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Zubairi school, in Al-Nusairiya neighborhood, Al-Mudhaffar district of Taiz governorate. The projectile landed on the roof of the school building, creating a crater in the roof. Then, about 25 minutes later, a second projectile landed in the school yard, in the same direction, about 6 meters away from the first projectile. The projectiles came from the east side of the school building, particularly from the Al-Hawban area, Sofitel Hill, about 6 to 7 km away from the site of the incident. As a result of the strong explosion, the windows of a house, located about 10 meters away opposite the place where the first projectile landed, shattered, slightly injuring two children.

The mother of one of the surviving children (35 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“We were shocked with fear and panic. We took shelter under the stairs for fear of another explosion. To this day, out of fear, my children do not enter or sleep in this room. Their father and I sleep in their room, and they sleep in our room.”⁶³

”

1,848 students attend this school: 1,570 male students, in first grade of elementary school through third grade of secondary school, and 278 female students, in first through fourth grade of elementary school. There are also 80 male and female teachers, in addition to 41 male and female volunteer teachers.

On Monday, September 13, 2021, at around 8:30 a.m., masked members of the STC, wearing civilian clothes, stormed Bedairi Basic School in Mukalla district’s Bedairi neighborhood, Hadhramaut governorate. During the school day, they forcibly removed all male and female students from the school under the threat of burning down the school, disrupting the school day. They deprived approximately 959 students of their right to education for four days.

An eyewitness (37 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“The masked men asked the school administration to evacuate the school, or it would be burned down. The school administration sent the students home in groups. The scene was terrible and frightening. The female students cried in the corners and corridors of the school. The female teachers made extraordinary efforts to calm them down, while we took care of the young male children. One of the female teachers passed out from fear, heat, humidity, and running through the corridors to get the students out.”⁶⁴

”

63 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim’s mother, on March 16, 2021.

64 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights, on October 11, 2021.

On Friday, March 05, 2021, at around 9:30 a.m., the (IRG) forces occupied one of the three buildings of Al-Anwar Basic School, in Al-Hamra'a village in the Al-Maqaterah district of Lahj governorate. These forces used the school as a point of supply and food distribution for their fighters on the military sites near the frontlines. The building continued to be used for military purposes from March to November 2021.

Osama Ahmed (pseudonym, 44 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“Supplies and food were delivered to the Al-Anwar School and received by three or four soldiers of the government forces. At times, these soldiers hired students from the school or young people from the area to transport food on donkey backs to fighters of the government forces, who were stationed in the mountains overlooking the northern part of our area.”⁶⁵

”



*A classroom at Al-Hameqani school which was affected by a Saudi-led coalition air attack.
Al-Hameqani -Al-Zahir- Al-Baydah*

⁶⁵ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights, on February 14, 2021.



*A classroom at Al-Hameqani school which was affected by a Saudi-led coalition air attack.
Al-Hameqani -Al-Zahir- Al-Baydah*



*Damaged books lying on the ground in Yunus bin Adaf School.
Khiwan Al-Hamra - Haraf Sufyan*



Chapter 11

Attacks on Health Care

“

The soldier entered my clinic and pointed the weapon at me and loaded it. The incident happened in front of women and children, who became very afraid. I panicked and asked myself what would happen to my children if I was killed. Is it not enough that I am a disabled man?

”

Throughout 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 32 incidents of attacks on hospitals, health centers, and medical staff, involving different types of attacks and violations. 25 of these incidents involved armed incursions and live-fire assaults on medical staff that killed two civilians; two incidents of ground attacks that injured four civilians, including two children; one air attack; five incidents of arbitrary detention of health workers; one incident of enforced disappearance; and one incident of torture. According to Mwatana's documentation of these incidents, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed 13 of these incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Ibb, Sa'ada, Marib, Raymah, and Al-Bayda. Government forces are responsible for 10 incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Lahj, Shabwa, and Marib, while the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces committed eight incidents in the governorates of Lahj and Aden. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces committed one incident in Amanat Al Asimah, Sana'a governorate. The parties to the conflict in Yemen have repeatedly targeted the already dilapidated medical sector during a time of extremely dangerous humanitarian conditions, especially with the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), epidemics, and other infectious diseases.

■ Legal Framework

Hospitals and other medical centers and units are granted special protection under international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law requires that medical personnel, such as doctors and nurses, and those in charge of searching for, collecting, transporting and treating the wounded, are respected and protected. International humanitarian law requires parties to a conflict to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel. Harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention of such personnel is prohibited. Parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate the rapid passage of humanitarian aid, not arbitrarily interfere with it, and ensure the free movement of humanitarian relief personnel, which can only be temporarily restricted in case of imperative military necessity.

Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally directing attacks against buildings, material, medical units and transport, and personnel using the distinctive emblems of the Geneva Conventions in conformity with international law, or intentionally directing attacks against hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives, are war crimes.

Hospitals lose their protection from attacks if used outside their humanitarian function to commit “acts harmful to the enemy.” Even if a hospital is used by an opposing force to commit acts harmful to the enemy, for example to store weapons, shelter fighters capable of fighting or launching attacks, the attacking force must provide a warning to the opposing party to cease misuse of the medical facility, specifying, whenever appropriate, a reasonable time-limit, and to attack only if and after such warning has remained unheeded. Medical personnel also only lose their protection if they commit, outside their humanitarian function, acts harmful to the enemy. International humanitarian law prohibits punishing any person for performing their medical duties compatible with medical ethics, or forcing a person to engage in medical activities contrary to medical ethics. Means of medical transport, such as ambulances, must also be allowed to operate and be protected. They only lose their protection if they are used to commit acts harmful to the enemy.

■ Examples

On Sunday, April 11, 2021, at around 9:00 a.m., UAE-backed forces of the Southern Transitional Council, comprised of two military vehicles carrying about 15 soldiers in military uniforms, stormed a quarantine center established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Radfan district’s Al Badera area, Lahj governorate. They tried to arrest the district’s general director, who is affiliated with the (IRG) and who visited the health center accompanied by two soldiers. The soldiers from both sides loaded their weapons and pointed them at each other; they were about to fire. The incident caused panic and fear among health workers and patients. The military presence lasted nearly two hours.

One of the health workers (34 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“We were about eight health workers providing health care services to people infected with COVID-19 when the incident took place. However, we fled the health center out of fear for our lives, and returned to our homes. Only two workers remained, who had to attend to cases at the quarantine center that day.”⁶⁶

”

66 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a health worker, on June 7, 2021.

On Friday, March 5, 2021, at around 2:30 p.m., the surgery department of Al-Thawra General Hospital, in Al-Shamasi district's Al-Thawra neighborhood, Taiz governorate, was hit by a ground projectile launched by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) stationed on Al-Salal hills, about 2 km from the site of the incident, east of Taiz city. The projectile hit the wall of the gate, injuring two children and their father while they were at the hospital to visit a sick acquaintance. The building's security guard was also injured.

Ali Mohammad (pseudonym, 39 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“I work in the surgery department of Al-Thawra Hospital, but I was on my lunch break when the incident took place. Things turned into a tragedy. I sustained shrapnel injuries to my legs. My family was frightened when they heard the news of my injury that day, and they were in a difficult position.”⁶⁷

”

On Wednesday, July 28, 2021, at around 9:00 a.m., a health center in Kasmah district center, Raymah governorate, ceased providing medical services after the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) had forced the center's management and health workers—13 male and female staff members—to leave their duties and travel to the governorate's center in Al-Jabain to participate in the celebration and commemoration of the anniversary of the so-called Wilayat Imam Ali Bin Abi Taleb. The event was attended by the Minister of Health of the Ansar Allah group, the deputy governors of Raymah governorate, the Ansar Allah group's General Supervisor in the governorate, the Security Director of the governorate, and its Security Supervisor.

A health worker (45 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“All eight male health workers left the health center early in the morning to attend the celebrations. We had no choice but to go. The five female health workers stayed home as the distance is so long and the road is rugged.”⁶⁸

”

⁶⁷ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a staff member at the hospital, on March 6, 2021.

⁶⁸ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a health worker at the health center, on October 25, 2021.

On Wednesday, September 1, 2021, at around 11:00 a.m., a soldier of the (IRG) forces, in Mayfaa district, Shabwa governorate, attacked Dr. Emad Ahmed (49 years old), who works in a health center. The soldier took his colleague's weapon, loaded it, and pointed it at the doctor. He threatened to kill him and insulted him. A military vehicle with eight soldiers on board was waiting for the attacking soldier next to the health center. The doctor has been working in a wheelchair since he became disabled due to a car accident in 2013.

Dr. Emad told Mwatana,

“

“The soldier entered my clinic and pointed the weapon at me and loaded it. The incident happened in front of women and children, who became very afraid. I panicked and asked myself what would happen to my children if I was killed. Is it not enough that I am a disabled man?”⁶⁹

”

⁶⁹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on September 14, 2021.



Chapter 12

Other Civilian Harm

In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 25 incidents where civilians were run over by military vehicles, killing 17 civilians, including 10 children, and injuring 22, including 11 children and four women. The (IRG) forces are responsible for three of such incidents in the governorates of Taiz, Marib, and Hadhramaut. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) committed 10 incidents in the governorates of Hajjah, Sa'ada, Hodeidah, Marib, Ibb, and Al-Dhale'e. The UAE-backed Joint Forces, based in the West Coast, committed two incidents in Abyan governorate. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for 10 incidents in Abyan, Aden, and Lahj governorates. In 2021, Mwatana also documented incidents involving live ammunition that killed 56 civilians, including 20 children and two women, and injured 161 civilians, including 68 children and 21 women.

In 2020, Mwatana also documented incidents involving live ammunition that killed 57 civilians, including nine children and 10 women, and injured 161 civilians, including 83 children and 25 women. Mwatana was unable to determine the party responsible for these incidents.

■ Examples

On the morning of Saturday, October 2, 2021, violent clashes with heavy, medium, and light weapons took place in the Tawila area of Crater district, Aden governorate, between two armed factions affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council forces. The armed clashes resulted in the death of two persons, one of whom was a child, and the injury of six others, in addition to extensive damage to civilian property.

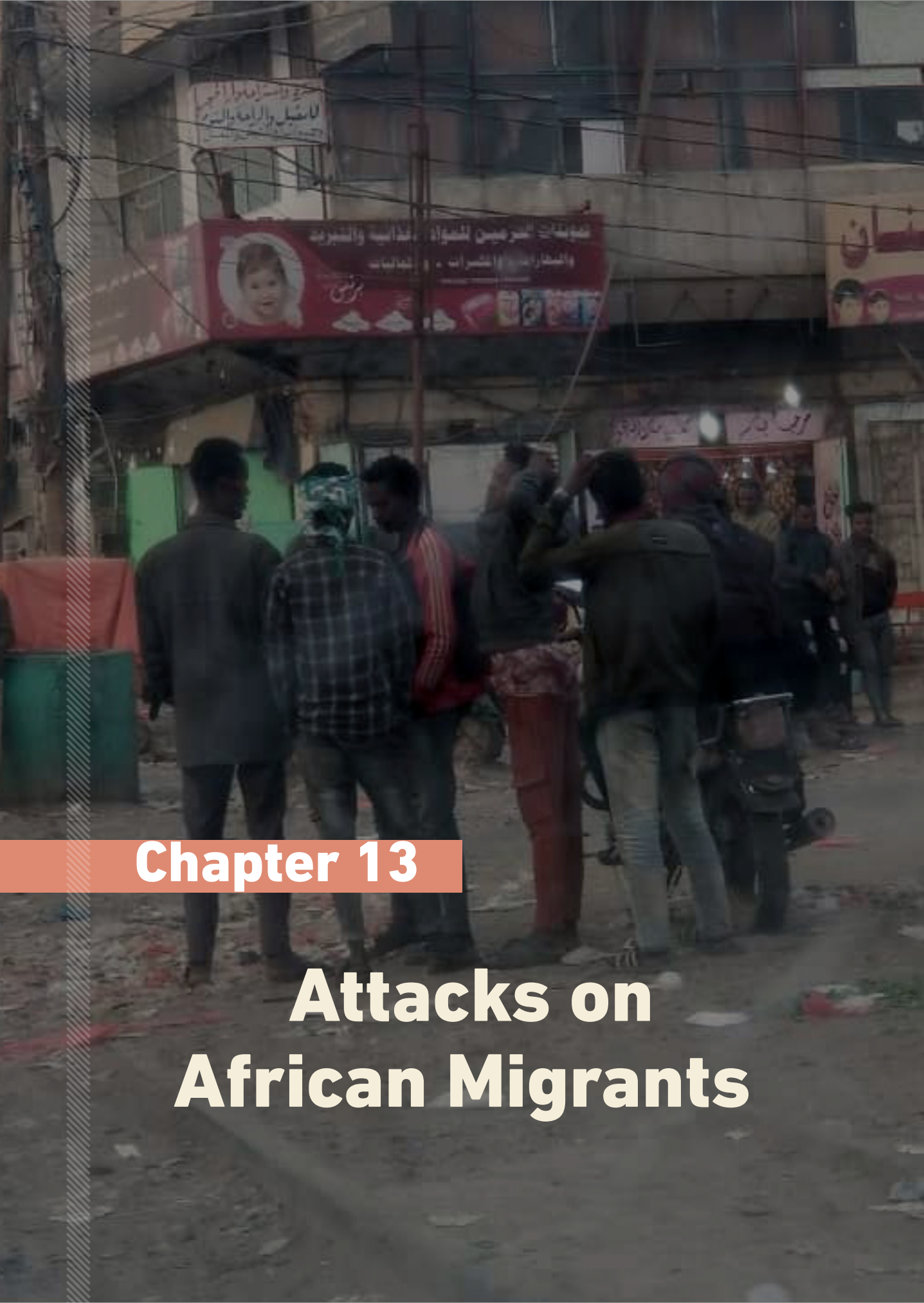
On Sunday, November 7, 2021, at around 8:00 a.m., a child (13 years old) was injured as he left his home to go to school in Al-Swaiq village in Tuhayta district, Hodeidah governorate, by a bullet from a medium weapon from the UAE-backed Joint Forces. The child underwent surgery to remove the bullet from his back. The bullet damaged his right kidney, which doctors at Al-Thawra Hospital in Hawk district had to remove.

On Sunday, June 20, 2021, at around 8:00 p.m., the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) fired live ammunition in Rabba Al-Souk, Hays district, Hodeidah governorate, injuring an adult (21 years old, male). The bullet penetrated under his left shoulder and came out of his chest to hit another child (14 years old, male). The bullet penetrated the child's right thigh.

“

On the morning of the incident, when we were fishing, I saw the smugglers' boats moving intensively in the area, not as usual. I felt that something had happened, because the movements of the boats resembled a previous incident where about two years ago a boat sank and the migrants on that boat died by drowning.

”



Chapter 13

Attacks on African Migrants

In 2021, Mwatana documented at least 17 violations committed against African migrants. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for three incidents of arbitrary detentions of seven migrants, including a child, and three incidents of torture of three immigrants, including a child. Mwatana also documented an explosion of a mine planted by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), in which a female migrant was injured, and an incident of ground shelling, which injured an adult immigrant. Mwatana also documented an incident involving a fire in a detention center run by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), in which 170 people were injured and many migrants were killed. Mwatana was able to verify the killing of 16 migrants in the fire. Saudi border guards committed four incidents involving the use of live ammunition against migrants, injuring nine African migrants, including five children. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces committed two incidents of arbitrary detention that involved two migrants. Mwatana also documented an incident of torture of a migrant child by human smuggling gangs in the Ras Al-Aara area. Human smuggling gangs are also responsible for the drowning of a boat with migrants on board, which killed 204 African migrants.

Parties to the conflict in Yemen and human smuggling networks continue their illegal practices and commit atrocities against African migrants traveling across Yemeni territory to the Yemeni-Saudi borders, without any regard for African migrants' rights, including under international human rights law, and the obligations of warring parties under international humanitarian and human rights law.

■ Legal Framework

Parties to an armed conflict are obligated to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions provides for the protection and humane treatment of civilians in all circumstances, without any adverse distinction based on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. Warring parties must take all feasible precautions to protect civilians, including African migrants, under their control from the effects of attack.

All migrants enjoy human rights under core international human rights treaties, which should be respected and protected, regardless of legal status, whether they are in their country of origin, a transit country, or a host community. States and non-state armed groups, exercising de facto control over territory and population, that are parties

to an armed conflict are obligated to respect the human rights of all persons under their jurisdiction or control.

Victims of trafficking in persons and smuggled migrants also have internationally recognized human rights. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons provides that each state party to the Protocol “shall endeavor to provide for the physical safety of victims of trafficking in persons while they are within its territory.”

■ Examples:

On Thursday, June 10, 2021, at around 3:00 a.m., a boat belonging to human trafficking gangs sank due to overloading, about 7 nautical miles off the coast of Yemen, Al-Madhareba and Ras Al-Aara areas of Lahj governorate. About 208 African migrants were on board, including 42 women, 14 children, and nine girls, who traveled from the coastal region of Hayu in Djibouti. Only four men survived.

When the four survivors arrived on the coast of Ras Al-Aara, human smuggling gangs took them to an unknown location to cover up the incident, as they were responsible for the drowning incident and ran human smuggling activities in the area. They also clandestinely recovered some bodies and buried them at the outskirts of the coast.

An eyewitness (34 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“On the morning of the incident, when we were fishing, I saw the smugglers’ boats moving intensively in the area, not as usual. I felt that something had happened, because the movements of the boats resembled a previous incident where about two years ago a boat sank and the migrants on that boat died by drowning.”

The witness added, “The next day, about 13 nautical miles off Ras al-Ara, I saw three bodies of black migrants floating on the surface of the sea. They were adult young people. I realized that an incident involving the drowning of migrants had occurred near that place.”⁷⁰

”

⁷⁰ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a fisherman (witness), on June 22, 2021.

Mwatana could not identify the names of the drowned migrants, as the victims remained anonymous. According to information and photos of bodies obtained by Mwatana, the bodies were swept away by the wind in the open sea to the north, toward the coast extending into Bab Al-Mandab area, Dhubab district, Taiz governorate. No government agency or humanitarian organization searched for and buried the bodies. Residents of the area found some bodies and volunteered to bury them on the outskirts of the coast, while some bodies were left to decompose on the shores of the area.

On Sunday, March 7, 2021, at around 2:30 p.m., forces belonging to the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) attacked a group of Ethiopian detainees (Oromo) during their hunger strike to protest their arbitrary detention at the Immigration, Passports and Nationality Facility in Amanat Al-Asimah's As-Sabeen district. Nearly 900 migrants were in the overcrowded holding facility at the time. Three soldiers threw projectiles into the facility's detention area with about 350 detained migrants inside, causing heavy suffocating smoke and fire. This resulted in the death of at least 16 migrants and caused severe burns to dozens of others, with the final number likely to be much higher.

According to the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM), the total number of migrants who died in this incident "remains unconfirmed," as official records have not yet been released, while more than 170 of the injured have received treatment, many of whom are still in a critical condition.⁷¹

Regarding this horrific incident, Mwatana stressed in a statement that "international investigations and credible accountability are needed for Yemen [...], including [for] violations and abuses committed against migrants."⁷²

According to information obtained by Mwatana, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) forcibly displaced 266 detained migrants. These migrants were taken, aboard seven closed white transport vehicles, from other detention centers to one of the governorates near Aden governorate, where the migrants were left to complete their way to Aden

71 "Yemen: Urgent humanitarian access for migrant survivors of a deadly fire in holding facility", Statement, UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), March 9, 2021, <https://2u.pw/Ygh0J>.

72 "Ansar Allah (Houthi) group causes death and injury of scores of African migrants in Sana'a", Statement, Mwatana for Human Rights, March 9, 2021, <https://2u.pw/S0myF>.

governorate on foot.⁷³

On Wednesday, February 16, 2021, at around 5:00 a.m., Saudi border guards shot at two migrants, an Ethiopian adult and a child (15 years old), in Al-Raqu area, Munabeh district, Sa'ada governorate, while they were crossing the Saudi border for a work opportunity. They were seriously injured. The victims were taken to a private clinic in Jaraa area, adjacent to the site of the incident, where they received first aid.

A health worker (42 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“The victims were taken for treatment to the Saudi Al-Salam Hospital in Sa'ada. They received treatment for three days. Then they were arrested by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) for being smuggled migrants.”⁷⁴

”



| Group of immigrants in the city of Rada'a - Al-Bayda

⁷³ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with one of the surviving victims, on March 13, 2021.

⁷⁴ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a health worker, on March 10-11, 2021.



Section 3



Undermining Rights and Freedoms

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a stack of old, yellowed papers. A fountain pen with a dark barrel and silver-colored accents lies horizontally across the top of the stack. The papers show signs of age, with some edges frayed and discolored. The overall tone is warm and vintage.

Chapter 1

Press

In 2021, the warring parties continued to engage in arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and inhumane treatment of journalists.

In 2021, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of nine journalists and press and media workers. Government-affiliated forces are responsible for the arbitrary detention of two male journalists and the disappearance of a female journalist. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces are responsible for the arbitrary detention of two journalists, while the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for arbitrarily detaining two journalists and one media worker. The UAE-backed Joint Forces bear responsibility for arbitrarily detaining one journalist in Hodeidah governorate.

In addition, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) has been arbitrarily detaining four journalists for nearly five years. In April 2020, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a sentenced them to death in an unfair trial involving six other journalists. One of the six journalists was released in late April 2020, while the other five were released as part of a prisoner exchange deal in October 2020.

Many press and news websites are still blocked by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), as it controls the company that provides Internet service in Yemen, "Yemennet."

■ Legal Framework

International humanitarian law provides protection to all journalists as civilians. They cannot be direct targets of attack as long as they are not directly participating in hostilities. International human rights law protects the right to freedom of expression. Journalists may not be subjected to any form of repression or violence, such as arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture, for doing their work as journalists. While some limitations may be imposed on the media during times of armed conflict, limitations must be strictly required by the exigencies of the situation and non-arbitrary, and reprisals are prohibited.

The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen reiterates the commitment of the state to work in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all relevant instruments and agreements and international principles. The Constitution recognizes the freedom of expression as an inherent right, stipulating: "Every citizen has the right to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country. The state shall guarantee freedom of thought and expression of

opinion in speech, writing and photography within the limits of the law.”⁷⁵

■ Examples

On Saturday, November 20, 2021, the Security and Intelligence Service of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) in Ibb governorate summoned journalist Majid Yassin (33 years old), who works as a media officer for Itihad Ibb Sports Club. He was subsequently arrested.

A relative of the journalist (42 years old) told Mwatana,

“

“Majid was contacted by the Security and Intelligence Service to present himself to the Service. He told this to his wife and asked her to inform his family if he would return home late. After waiting until the afternoon for him to come home, she called us.”⁷⁶

”

According to the relative, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) allowed Majid’s father and uncle to visit him and bring him some clothes and food. The journalist’s relative believes that Majid Yassin’s arrest was because of some of his posts on Facebook.

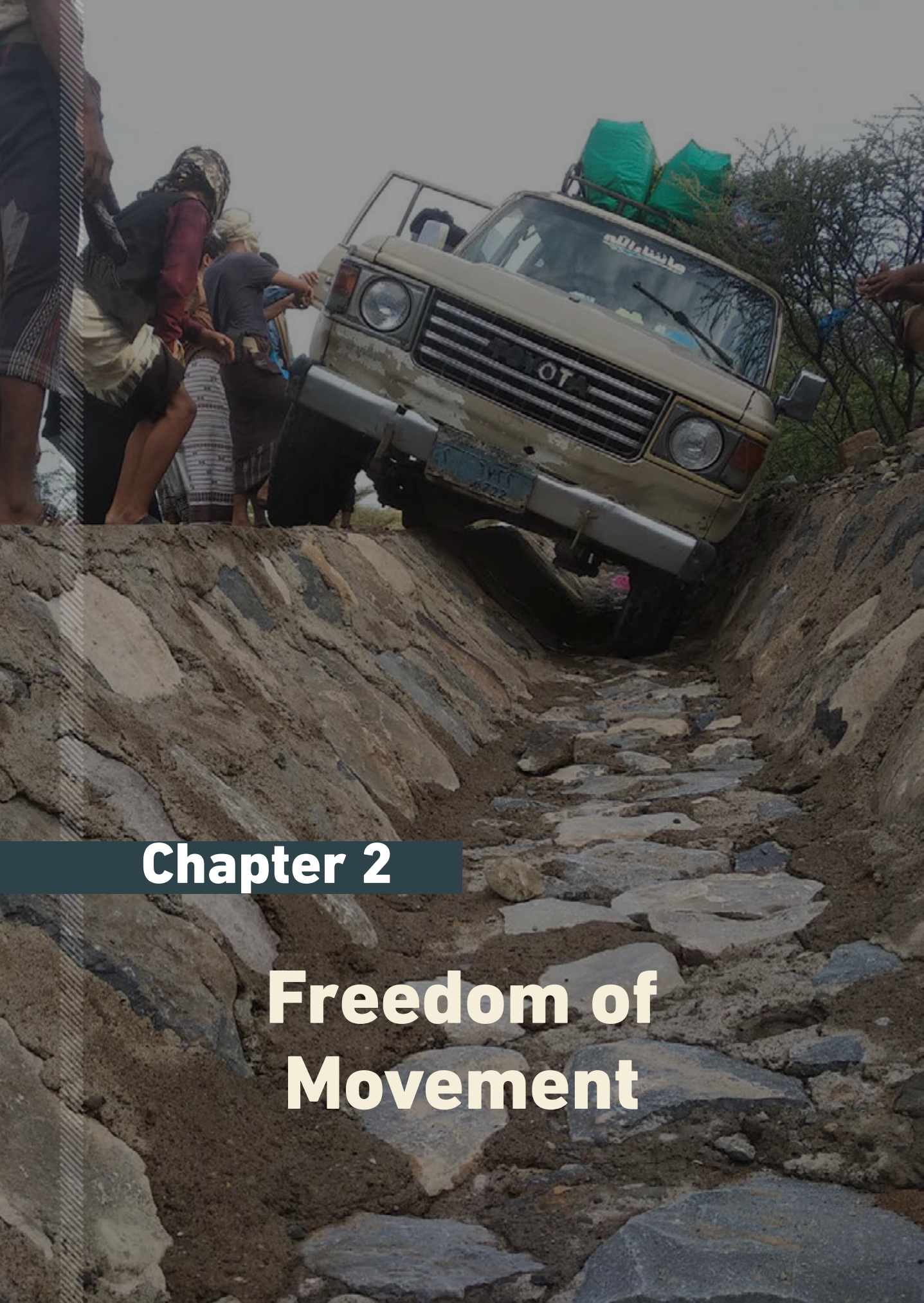
Relatives of journalist Majid Yassin sought the help of some intermediaries and powerful people, which eventually resulted in Majid’s release in January 2022.

On Sunday, April 11, 2021, at around 9:00 a.m., armed forces of the UAE-backed STC, consisting of approximately 15 armed soldiers aboard two military vehicles, arrested media activist Ra’ed Al-Ghazali (36 years old) at a COVID-19 quarantine center in Al-Bareda area, Radfan District, Lahj Governorate, while he was making a media report.

⁷⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Yemen of 1994, Part Two, The Basic Rights and Duties of Citizens, Article 42.

⁷⁶ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relative of the victim, on December 12, 2021.

The armed soldiers confiscated all of Al-Ghazali's personal belongings. He was held with five other detainees in a dark and unventilated container, no more than approx. 6 meters long and three meters wide, without charge, until Tuesday evening, April 13, 2021. His relatives were not allowed to visit him during his detention.



Chapter 2

Freedom of Movement

During the years of war, Yemen witnessed various incidents affecting the right of civilians to move freely. In pursuit of extending their influence, warring parties have infringed on the movement of civilians and subjected them to additional arbitrary restrictions that exacerbate their suffering. Warring parties have imposed movement restrictions for various reasons: discrimination against civilians because of their geographical and political affiliation, and gender, as well as extortion, unlawful gain, and the imposition of unlawful fees.

In 2021, Mwatana documented seven incidents in which warring parties-imposed restrictions on civilians' freedom of movement in different Yemeni regions. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for five of those incidents in the governorates of Raymah, Sana'a, and Al-Bayda. Government forces committed one incident in Taiz governorate, while, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council committed one incident, which caused the death of an adult civilian.

■ Legal Framework

International human rights law, which protects the freedom of civilians to move, remains applicable even in times of armed conflict. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state."⁷⁷

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Yemen, stresses: "Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence."⁷⁸ While the Covenant permits the imposition of some restrictions during conflict, any restrictions must be exceptional and of a limited and temporary nature.

77 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13, para. 1.

78 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12, para. 1.

■ Examples

On Thursday, February 25, 2021, at around 11:00 a.m., victim Abdullah Ahmed (pseudonym, 38 years old) was stopped at a security point of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), in Saraa area, Bilad Al-Taam district, Raymah governorate. He was prevented from entering Raymah until 1 p.m. During the two hours he was held, Abdullah was subjected to threats, verbal abuse, and financial extortion.

Abdullah told Mwatana,

“

“One of the soldiers took my phone to search it and saw that I was listening to songs and said, ‘You have to delete them or I will make you delete them with my gun pointed at your head, Da’ashi [ISIS member].’ I told him that if I were from ISIS, I would not be in the country. He replied, ‘You are in the country as a fifth column.’”⁷⁹

”

On Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at around 9:30 a.m., three civilians from Ibb were arrested at a security checkpoint belonging to the 35th Armored Brigade of the (IRG) forces in Al-Ain area of Al-Maafer district, Taiz governorate, while trying to enter the city of Taiz to obtain passports. The victims were taken to prison.

One of the victims said,

“

“Our mobile phones were taken to search them. While searching our mobile phones, they found a picture of a dead member of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) and some Zamels. They then accused us of belonging to the group and held us for 26 hours. We were released on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, on the condition that we go back to where we came from.”⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on July 8, 2021.

⁸⁰ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with one of the victims, on October 18, 2021.

On the morning of Wednesday, September 8, 2021, Abdulmalik al-Sanbani (30 years old) was killed by armed factions of the STC after he had been held at the Al-Farsha checkpoint in Tor Al-Baha district, Lahj governorate.⁸¹ Abdulmalik was on his way to visit his family in Sana'a after arriving at Aden airport. He had just returned from the USA where he had resided for seven years.



*The asphalt part of Mokha Road to Taiz, full of potholes that cause traffic accidents for travelers.
Al-Wazzaia - The road from Al-Khaleh to Taiz*

81 "Justice requires that the accused be brought to court", Statement condemning the murder of Abdulmalik Al-Sanbani, Mwatana for Human Rights, October 5, 2021, <https://2u.pw/Dcngw>.

A large crowd of people is marching down a city street, holding flags and banners. The street is lined with buildings, including a large, ornate building on the left and a tall, modern building on the right. In the background, mountains are visible under a clear sky. The crowd is dense, and the atmosphere appears to be one of a significant public demonstration or protest.

Chapter 3

Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Expression

During the war, Yemen has witnessed the outbreak of repressive methods and violent practices affecting the freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, clearly indicating the extent of the decline and restriction on civic space and political freedoms in Yemen due to the continuation of the war. In 2021, popular protests and demonstrations erupted in different parts of Yemen because of the dire living conditions experienced by Yemenis due to high prices of food, oil derivatives, and services.

In 2021, widespread popular demonstrations took place against deteriorating living conditions and rising prices of essential materials due to the Yemeni rial's exchange rate fluctuations against foreign currencies. Mwatana documented attacks in which the warring parties undermined the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression in different ways, including arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, attacks on demonstrators with live ammunitions, and throwing grenades. Mwatana documented 11 incidents in which live ammunition was used against demonstrators, killing three civilians, including a child, and injuring 19 civilians, including six children. Government forces are responsible for nine of these incidents in Hadhramaut and Taiz governorates. The UAE-backed STC committed one incident in Aden governorate, while the UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces committed one incident in Hadhramaut governorate. Forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council also used a grenade against demonstrators, killing three children in Aden governorate. Mwatana documented the arbitrary arrest of 30 demonstrators, including four children and a woman. 22 of them were arbitrarily arrested, including four children, by government forces, while the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces arbitrarily arrested four persons in Lahj governorate. The UAE-backed Hadhrami Elite Forces arbitrarily arrested three demonstrators, including a woman, in Hadhramaut governorate. The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) arbitrarily arrested one protester in Ibb governorate. In addition, Mwatana documented incidents of enforced disappearance involving nine demonstrators, six of whom were disappeared by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in Abyan and Lahj governorates, and three were disappeared by government forces in Hadhramaut governorate. Moreover, Mwatana documented the torture of five demonstrators, three of whom were tortured by government forces in Shabwa and Hadhramaut governorates, and two were tortured by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces in Abyan governorate.

■ Legal Framework

International human rights law continues to apply during armed conflict, and protects the right to peaceful assembly and association. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”⁸²

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Yemen ratified, states: “The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law.”⁸³ The International Covenant permits certain restrictions to be imposed on some rights in times of armed conflict or in officially declared public emergencies. However, these restrictions must be of an exceptional, temporary, and limited nature to the extent strictly required by the situation.

The Yemeni Law for the Freedom to Demonstrate stresses that “citizens throughout the Republic, political parties, mass organizations, and professional associations are free to organize peaceful demonstrations and marches.”⁸⁴

■ Examples

On Saturday, August 28, 2021, at around 9:00 a.m., a peaceful demonstration was held, on Al-Odain Street in Ibb governorate, by dozens of tenant in protest against the decision to raise the rents of their stores by more than 200%. Forces belonging to the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) dispersed the demonstrators by armed force. Five demonstrators were arrested and taken to the Criminal Investigation Prison. After the demonstration was dispersed, further arrests were made by masked soldiers in military uniforms aboard three military vehicles (Toyota/pick-up). They pursued the demonstrators and arrested 23 other demonstrators.

82 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 20, para. 1.

83 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 21.

84 Law No. (29) on Organizing Demonstrations and Marches of 2003, Chapter Two, Article 3.

One demonstrator (32 years old) told Mwatana,

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“During the protest, armed groups pursued and dispersed us. They arrested five store tenants. After we were dispersed, we left the place. However, we felt that we should return until the arrested were released. We held another protest. Few minutes later, three military vehicles with armed groups on board returned and arrested all of us. Our mobile phones were taken and searched, after which we were imprisoned. I was interrogated once and accused of causing riots and disturbing the public peace.”⁸⁵

”

On Thursday, September 2, 2021, the arrested demonstrators were released after pledging in writing not to protest again except with the permission of the concerned authorities, in addition to presenting a commercial guarantee.

On Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at around 7:30 a.m., a group of armed soldiers in military uniforms belonging to the Second Military Region of the (IRG), aboard three military vehicles (Toyota/pick-up), prevented a demonstration by residents of Bajaman area in Mukalla district, Hadhramaut governorate. The demonstrators were demanding their children be given employment. Five demonstrators were arrested and held in the security department of Mukalla district.

One demonstrator (39 years old) told Mwatana,

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“We discussed changing the location of the protest to avoid any contact with the soldiers, but we heard the sound of two military police vehicles approaching. The military vehicles stopped in front of us. One of them was only a few meters away from us. Meanwhile, a group of soldiers deployed at the site pointed their guns at the demonstrators' heads, at a very close distance of three meters, and were ready to open fire.”⁸⁶

”

⁸⁵ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on September 6, 2021.

⁸⁶ Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on September 25, 2021.

On Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at around 7:30 p.m., a grenade was thrown by a member of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces at an overnight demonstration against deteriorating living conditions in the city of Aden, Aden governorate. As a result, three children sustained shrapnel injuries and other wounds.

An eyewitness (15 years old) told Mwatana,

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“As the soldiers were standing about 30 meters in front of us, we heard something rolling on the ground towards us. Then we heard a loud explosion and saw a red light and heavy dust. It was a grenade. The boys next to me were screaming. One of them said he was injured on his hand, and the other said there was blood on his palms.”⁸⁷

”

87 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on December 22, 2021.



Protesters against currency collapse and rising prices.
Jamal Street - Mudhaffar - Taiz

A woman wearing a dark hijab is shown from the chest up. Her right hand is raised, with fingers spread, in a gesture that could signify protest, freedom, or a 'stop' sign. The background is dark and out of focus, with some vertical light streaks. The overall mood is serious and contemplative.

Chapter 4

Women's Personal Freedoms

In 2021, the severity of abuses committed against women in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthis) armed group increased. The armed group is responsible for multiple and systematic patterns of abuses, especially in the capital Sana'a, perpetuating their repressive authority and threatening rights and freedoms in general. On January 23, 2021, militants of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) stormed a restaurant in Sana'a, expelled female employees and searched the premises without showing any written search warrant as required by law. The militants took some of the workers and one of the executives of the restaurant to the police station, where the executive was forced to write a pledge "not to employ women in any branch of the restaurant." This incident alone resulted in 30 women losing their jobs temporarily. On January 24, 2021, the Ministry of Public Health and Population of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) issued a decision banning the use of "family planning methods" in accordance with what it called the "faith identity." In 2021, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 11 incidents involving the restriction of women's freedom of movement in Hajjah governorate over the course of only two days. All these incidents occurred under the pretext of a circular that prohibits women from traveling without a mahram (a male escort from her family), especially in cars belonging to professional organizations, which restricts women's freedom of movement and violates their right to work. This circular was issued by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) in early 2021.

On March 8, 2022, Mwatana for Human Rights issued a press release that addressed the situation of women's personal freedoms in the areas controlled by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis).⁸⁸

88 "Moments of hell!", Op. cit., <https://2u.pw/aHXMu>.



► Recommendations

To Member States of the United Nations:

- Support efforts to cease hostilities, achieve lasting and comprehensive peace, and ensure accountability and redress for serious violations and crimes.
- Support efforts to document violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Insist on justice and accountability for possible war crimes, and reparations to civilian victims.
- Support the establishment of an international criminally-focused investigative mechanism to analyze evidence, prepare files, and map civilian harm, to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings and lay the groundwork for credible reparations to civilians.

To the United Nations Security Council:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire in and across Yemen and clearly state that accountability for perpetrators of war crimes and reparations to victims of serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross human rights violations are an integral part of any transitional process in Yemen in order to put an immediate end to rampant abuse.
- Use the tools at the Council's disposal to push for an end to serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross human rights violations, for the full and unimpeded humanitarian assistance, and in support of a political process as the only viable way to end the conflict.
- Emphasize the human rights dimensions of the conflict in Yemen and ensure that there will be no impunity for the most serious crimes.
- Direct the Secretary-General to publish a complete and accurate list of perpetrators in the annual report on children and armed conflict, holding all of them to the same standard.

To France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Other Countries Providing Military Support to the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition

- Immediately cease the sale and transfer of weapons to members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, and suspend sales until the coalition has concretely demonstrated full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law in coalition operations in Yemen, and undertaken comprehensive measures toward effective accountability and redress for all alleged crimes and violations committed throughout the conflict.
- Push the Saudi/UAE-led coalition to lift restrictions and impediments to the flow of humanitarian and vital supplies into Yemen from the land, sea, and air.

To the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition and UAE-backed Forces, such as the Southern Transitional Council and the Joint Forces on the West Coast

- Particularly in light of the millions of Yemenis currently at risk of famine and starvation policies, and without access to adequate health care in Yemen, immediately end all measures exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, including opening all land, sea, and air ports for humanitarian and other critical life-saving goods without delay or impediment, and open all air ports to humanitarian and commercial flights.
- End attacks on civilians and civilian objects, such as markets, farms, civilian infrastructure, and health and educational facilities.
- Support, cooperate fully with, and contribute to efforts to ensure accountability for international crimes, and ensure prompt and adequate reparations for civilian victims and their families.
- Cooperate fully with investigative and judicial entities, where appropriate, so that allegations of violations and abuses committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen can be properly investigated, documented, and the perpetrators thereof brought to account.

- Close unofficial detention centers, release those arbitrarily detained, reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared, and cease systematic practices of ill-treatment and torture.
- Conduct investigations into alleged serious abuses committed against African migrants by smuggling gangs operating in areas controlled by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, hold the perpetrators accountable, and ensure reparations for victims.
- End the restrictions imposed by the UAE-backed STC on the freedom of movement of African migrants, and the practice of arbitrary detention against them.

To the Ansar Allah (Houthis) Armed Group

- Immediately end the use of indiscriminate weapons.
- End the use of anti-personnel, anti-vehicles, and anti-ship mines, and provide maps of mined areas to facilitate the process of mine clearance.
- Respect the protected status of medical facilities and withdraw armed individuals from in or around medical centers.
- • Particularly in light of the millions of Yemenis currently at risk of famine and starvation policies, and without access to adequate health care in Yemen, immediately end all restrictions, denial, confiscations of humanitarian aid and access.
- Prohibit locating military objectives, including concentrations of forces, in populated areas and neighborhoods, or the storage of weapons in or near these areas.
- Stop the recruitment of children, including all those under the age of 18, and cease use of children in hostilities, and demobilize immediately those who are in military service.
- Withdraw forces from occupied schools and cease the use of schools for military purposes, including mobilization.
- Immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared and release them, end executions following trials that do not meet

minimum fair trial standards, and cease systematic practices of ill-treatment and torture.

- Immediately release all journalists currently detained and cease all restrictions on journalists' work.
- End attacks on African migrants and investigate incidents of migrants drowning at sea and fires in migrant detention centers.
- Stop restricting women's personal freedoms, harassing them in the workplace, and restricting their freedom of movement.
- Support, cooperate fully with, and contribute to efforts to ensure accountability for international crimes, and ensure prompt and adequate reparations for civilian victims and their families.

To the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) of Yemen

- Condition consent for the Saudi/UAE-led coalition's ongoing operations in Yemen on their implementation of the aforementioned actions and recommendations.
- Ensure all government and security forces and associated armed units are operating under a unified command structure, and respect international human rights and humanitarian law.
- Immediately release all persons currently arbitrarily detained, reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared and release them, and stop systematic practices of ill-treatment and torture.
- Support, cooperate fully with, and contribute to efforts to ensure justice and reparations for civilian victims, including those who are victims of alleged violations by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the UAE, the USA, and the internationally recognized Yemeni government, ensure such efforts are sufficiently transparent, and disseminate information publicly to allow independent monitoring of the conflict.
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court without delay. And call for criminal accountability for all violations against civilians.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
GEE	United Nations Group of Eminent Experts
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
STC	Southern Transitional Council
IRG	International Recognized Government



Cover photo: The wreckage of the archaeological mosque “Al Noor”, over 700year old, after its destruction, “Kattaba” -Alkhokha - Hodeida

A Country Falling Apart

Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2021

Parties to the conflict in Yemen have continued to commit serious violations, undermining Yemenis ability to live, in blatant disregard of basic rules of international law and humanitarian standards. And while Yemenis were racing against time to overcome the plight of the war in 2021, the pace of hostilities escalated and violence expanded in the governorates, killing hundreds of civilians. The war has left poor conditions for the residents of those areas. This has caused the displacement of tens of thousands of them. The escalating violence has also caused widespread damage to vital infrastructure, including hospitals and service facilities.

In the body of this annual report, Mwatana for Human Rights provides an extensive review of particular violations that occurred and the overall human rights situation in Yemen during 2021. Mwatana, whose work covers most Yemeni governorates, has documented—through fact-finding, evidence examination, and detailed research—hundreds of incidents that violate international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL). Some of these violations may amount to war crimes. The report presents some incidents as examples, shedding light on different types of abuses committed by the warring parties.

In order to draft this report, Mwatana for Human rights conducted investigative field research, including thorough investigations and direct inspections of the sites where attacks and incidents took place. Throughout 2021, Mwatana interviewed witnesses, relatives of victims, survivors, medical and human rights workers, and examined documents, evidence, photos, videos, and other physical evidence. During 2021, Mwatana documented (699) incidents, which killed (440) and injured (675) civilians, and include incidents of disappearance, detention, and torture of (494) civilian victims.

The incidents and patterns of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law included in this report represent examples of the most prominent ones documented by Mwatana during 2021. In no way do they represent all the incidents and patterns that occurred in Yemen that year. Mwatana continues to document violations and abuses that have occurred since the beginning of 2022.



Mwatana
for Human Rights