

# Tragedy until further notice

The Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2022



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**in Yemen 2022**







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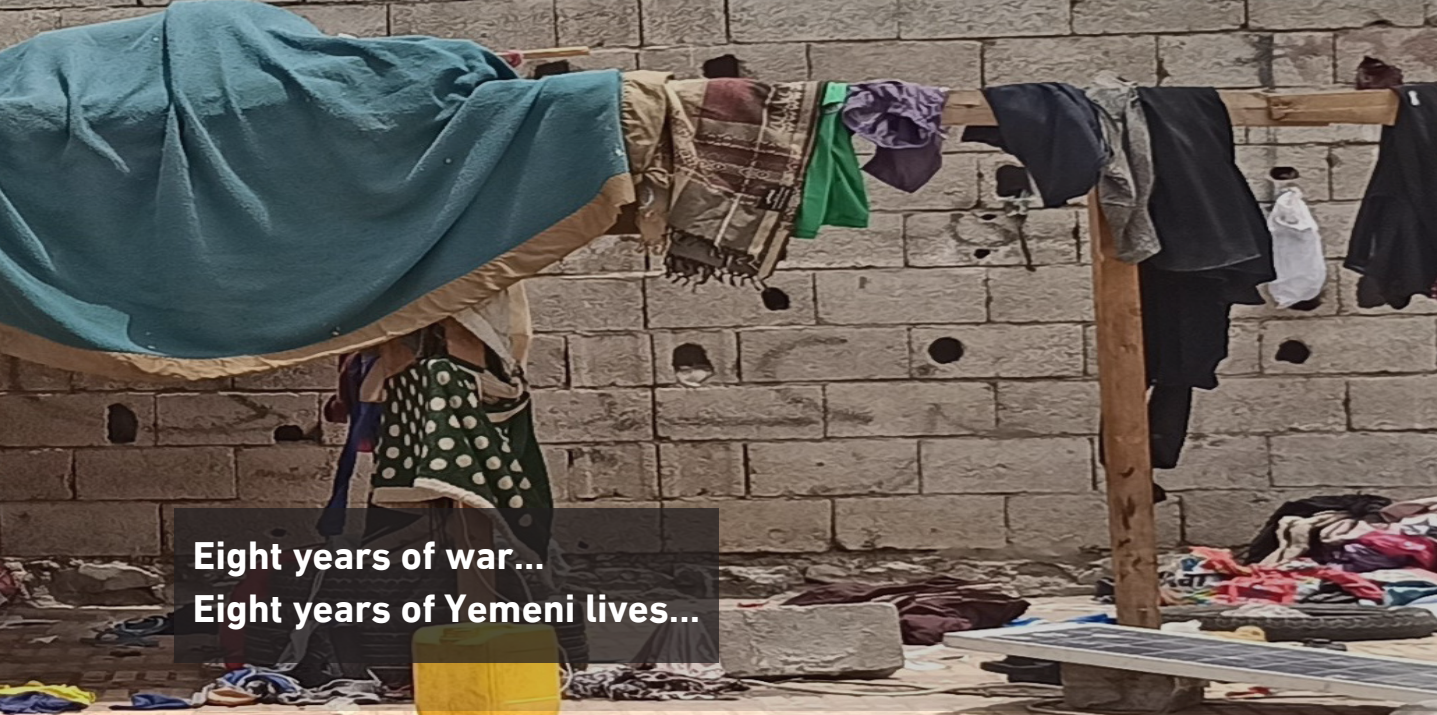
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**Background**



## **Eight years of war... Eight years of Yemeni lives...**

Eight years of war, but also eight years of Yemeni lives, filled with death, injuries, waiting, and displacement. An entire generation opened their eyes to nothing but conflict, knowing little about life beyond it. Some even finished their first days of school, if they were lucky enough to even have that opportunity.

The new year 2022 began with a major military campaign in three districts of Shabwah Governorate. The Giants Brigades, backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), launched an attack on the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group in the districts of Bayhan, Usaylan, and Ain, managing to recapture these three areas along with parts of Harib District of Marib Governorate. The campaign left behind civilian casualties, injuries, and destruction of civilian properties.

This campaign weakened another offensive carried out by the Houthis group on Marib Governorate since February 2021, slowing down their progress. The Houthis had gained control of three southern districts of Shabwah in September 2021, including Usaylan, Bayhan, and Ain, and made advances in four southern districts of Marib (Jubah, Al Abdiyah, Rahabah, and Mahliyah).

Since the beginning of February 2021, the Houthis intensified their attacks on Marib Governorate, aiming to seize it due to its importance as the government's stronghold and the main headquarters of the Ministry of Defense. Additionally, the region holds significant oil and gas reserves and houses a gas station that used to supply electricity to most Yemeni governorates before the war.

Apparently, the Houthis put pressure on the UAE to halt their support for their allies in the Shabwah offensive. As a result, on January 17, 2022, there was an attack on a fuel depot of one of the petroleum companies in Abu Dhabi, causing a major fire and the death of three employees, according to local police.



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In early August, clashes erupted between government forces loyal to the Islah party and forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council in Shabwah governorate, backed by the UAE . These clashes resulted in civilian casualties and injuries and ended with the latter gaining control of the governorate, which houses a large natural gas refinery.

One of the major political developments during the year was the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council on April 7, 2022, in which former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, was removed from power and replaced by Rashad al-Alimi, the former Minister of Interior. Seven other deputies, most of whom have military forces on the ground, were also appointed.

The legitimacy of the Council's formation sparked controversy, as it was carried out after a series of formal procedures, including a conference involving consultations with 800 members of Riyadh's allies, which was rejected by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group<sup>1</sup>. Also in early April, the United Nations (UN), through its Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, sponsored an armistice agreement between the parties to the conflict in Yemen. The agreement sought to accomplish – during the extendable armistice period – the cessation of all offensive military operations on land, air, and sea inside and outside Yemen and the freezing of military frontlines. In addition, under the terms of the agreement, oil derivative ships were allowed to enter the ports of Al Hudaydah, and Sana'a International Airport was partially opened with two commercial flights per week to and from Jordan and Egypt. The truce also included a call for an agreement to open roads in Taiz and other governorates to facilitate the movement of civilians, including men, women, and children.

The parties to the conflict have still not agreed to renew the truce that lasted six months and expired in October 2022. These six months of truce appeared insufficient compared to the significant breaches that occurred during the truce, indicating a lack of genuine intentions to sign a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement.

On the humanitarian front, the conflict parties, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire on April 2nd for two months<sup>2</sup>, which was later extended for an additional four months. Despite the significance of this truce, it was marred by numerous violations<sup>3</sup>, such as incidents on June 2 and August 2, ultimately leading to its termination on October 2, as no agreement on its renewal was reached.

All of this occurred while the country's economic situation remained unchanged. Although the truce achieved much, such as the partial reopening of Sana'a airport and the easing of import restrictions, the siege on Taiz city has not been lifted and there has been no agreement on paying

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1 <https://aawsat.com/home/article/3579351/>

2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115392>

3 Mwatana's statement on violations by the parties to the conflict in Yemen during the truce period:  
<https://www.mwatana.org/posts/yemens-truce>

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government employees' salaries or unifying the divided financial sector.

The World Bank stated that the division of economic institutions between two parties to the conflict, and uncoordinated policy decisions, have exacerbated the social and economic crisis resulting from the ongoing conflict, which has reached its eighth year<sup>4</sup>. Donor fatigue, a sharp rise in global commodity prices, and adverse climatic conditions continue to pose a serious threat to the already precarious social and economic conditions.

Food prices, which have sharply increased, have significantly affected the Yemeni economy, exacerbating the food crisis. Yemen is a net importer of food, and the price spikes have negatively impacted the balance of trade, inflation, and the country's foreign reserves, which currently cover just about a month's worth of imports.

Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine has caused further price increases of vital imports. Wheat, Yemen's second largest import after fuel, is sourced from Russia and Ukraine, making up nearly half of Yemen's wheat imports<sup>5</sup>.

During the past year alone, the devaluation of the currency contributed to a local food price increase ranging between 20% and 30%, and the shocks experienced in the global grain market can strain the budgets of food importers, further weakening food security, according to the World Bank.

The exchange rate of one US dollar in internationally recognized government-controlled areas fluctuates between 1,000 and 1,200 Yemeni rials, while in areas under the control of the Houthis group, it ranges from 600 to 560 Yemeni rials.

Meanwhile, the UN announced that humanitarian needs in Yemen remain extremely high despite a decline in hostilities this year.

The UN Spokesperson's Office stated, «More than half of the population, 17 million people, are facing acute food insecurity, and millions remain displaced.<sup>6</sup>»

According to reports from humanitarian workers, the deteriorating economic situation in the country and the collapse of essential services are the main drivers of suffering in Yemen. Additionally, only half of all health facilities operate at full capacity, and the water network is in a critical state.

As 2022 came to an end, the UN considered the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, which requires \$4.27 billion, to be only 55% funded, leaving a substantial gap for lifesaving aid operations that support 10.5 million people monthly.

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4 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/economic-update-april-2022>

5 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/publication/yemen-economic-monitor-clearing-skies-over-yemen-spring-2022>

6 <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/12/1116277>



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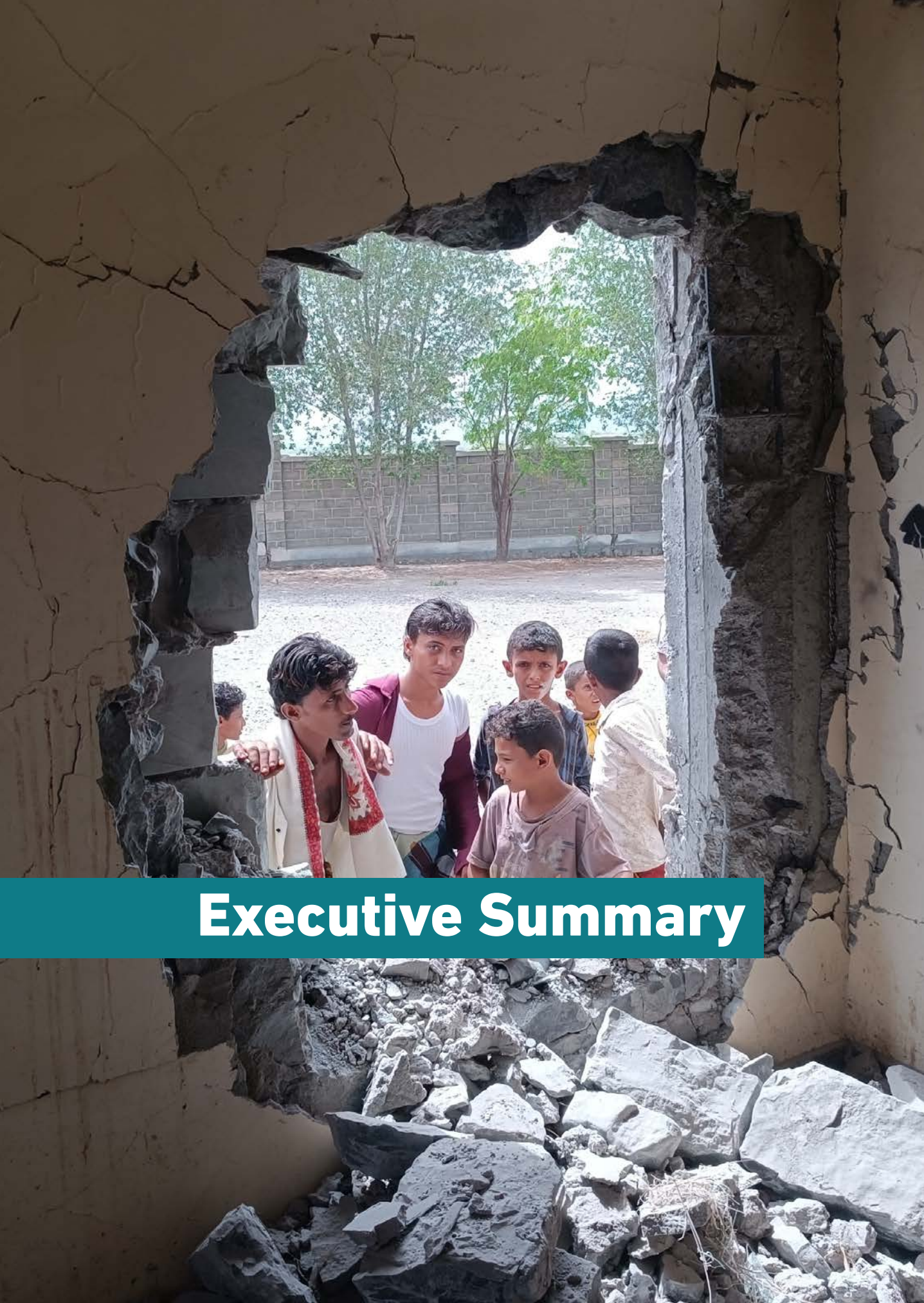
The UN continues to issue constant warnings, calling for intensified international efforts to execute an urgent rescue operation for the «Safer» tanker, carrying around 1.14 million barrels of light crude oil, which is anchored near the port of Hodeidah in western Yemen.

It's worth mentioning that the situation in Yemen deteriorated during the autumn of 2014 after the Houthi armed group took control of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, and expanded its influence to other governorates. Subsequently, a counter-offensive by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition to support then President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi's government began in March 2015, plunging the country into a full-fledged war.

Human rights reports and allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law indicate that all parties involved in the conflict have failed to prevent grave violations against civilians during the eight-year conflict, including during the implementation period of the April 2022 truce.







# Executive Summary

At the completion of the eighth year of armed conflict in Yemen, the year 2022 did not bring good news for Yemenis. There were no signs of an end to the war, except for a fragile six-month truce marked by various violations and abuses committed by all parties involved in the conflict. Yemenis faced another year of horrifying violations, amid the ongoing collapse of state institutions in favor of armed groups affiliated with different regional powers.

Yemenis are left to confront all these violations alone, without any international mechanism to protect them. The termination of the prominent UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen in October 2021 has further exacerbated impunity for the suffering of civilians, leaving the path to accountability and justice vague and uncertain.

In this annual report, Mwatana for Human Rights (Mwatana) provides a comprehensive review of these violations and the human rights situation in Yemen during 2022. Throughout this year, Mwatana, which covers most Yemeni governorates, documented 1,283 incidents resulting in the death of 390 civilians, including 132 children and 21 women, and injury of 920 civilians, including 411 children and 71 women. Mwatana also documented 561 cases of enforced disappearances, arrests, and torture of civilians. These documented violations constitute violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, verified through fact-finding, evidence examination, and detailed research. Some of the violations may amount to war crimes. The report presents different incidents as examples of these violations and abuses, shedding light on the atrocities committed by the violating parties.



In 2022, conflicting parties in Yemen continued to commit serious violations, which have diminished Yemeni's ability to live in peace in blatant disregard of the fundamental rules of international law and humanitarian standards. These parties, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, and the Houthi armed group, increasingly employed bureaucratic measures and restrictions that prevented essential goods from reaching vulnerable populations.

During the first quarter of 2022, air strikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces caused significant civilian casualties and extensive damage to vital infrastructure in the country. These military escalations involved intense aerial strikes on civilian homes and infrastructure. Within the initial three months of the year, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition air strikes resulted in a notable increase in civilian casualties compared to the previous year, 2021.

In addition, this report highlights the indiscriminate attacks on civilian-populated areas perpetrated by the Houthi group, government forces, pro-coalition armed groups, and Saudi border



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guards, which have caused severe material damage and human losses. Landmines and deceptive devices planted by the Houthi group also led to the death of dozens of civilians, including women and children, with an alarming increase in mine explosions compared to what was documented in 2021, particularly after certain areas were opened for civilian's return without proper mine clearance campaigns. Additionally, the report sheds light on incidents involving drones, which show an increase in their use by conflicting parties to cause harm and material damage to civilian targets.

The report further exposes the horrific detention conditions and the practice of torture and other inhumane treatment perpetrated by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, the Houthi group, and government forces. In 2022, Mwatana recorded a notable increase in the number of documented incidents of civilians subjected to various forms of torture in detention centers operated by government forces. Unofficial prisons and detention facilities continue to be overcrowded with civilian detainees, including women and children.

Compared to the previous year, Mwatana observed an increase in the number of children subjected to arbitrary detention and forced disappearance during 2022, which is of great concern due to the growing prevalence of these violations against children by conflicting parties in Yemen.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, government forces, and armed entities loyal to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition have persistently recruited and used children in combat, security, and logistical operations. Additionally, Mwatana concluded, based on documented evidence, that the number of incidents of aid obstruction did not decrease significantly compared to what was documented in 2021.

The report also includes incidents of attacks on hospitals and medical personnel, which shows that the warring parties bear responsibility for the continuous targeting of the fragile medical sector in extremely dangerous humanitarian conditions. This has worsened the spread of epidemics and other infectious diseases, including childhood diseases that Yemen had previously eradicated, such as polio, measles, and cholera.

Furthermore, the report documents attacks on schools and educational facilities carried out through various means, including aerial and ground bombardments, occupation, and military use. Notably, in 2022, there was an increase in the number of violations targeting schools due to intensified campaigns to recruit and mobilize children within educational institutions. Mwatana for Human Rights documented a nearly doubled increase in the number of violations compared to the year 2021.

Furthermore, Mwatana for Human Rights dedicates a section in its annual report to attacks targeting African migrants. In these incidents, the conflicting parties and trafficking gangs committed heinous and brutal violations against African migrants, disregarding international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The report also highlights new types of violations, in addition to the familiar patterns, such as the use of live ammunition and running over civilians with military vehicles.

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The annual report of Mwatana for Human Rights also focuses on violations that impacted the civil rights and liberties of Yemenis during 2022. Conflicting parties continued to violate the rights of journalists and media workers, restricting their freedom of movement and subjecting civilians to arbitrary restrictions that exacerbated their humanitarian suffering. Additionally, the report dedicates a section to violations of women's personal freedoms during the year 2022.

The incidents and patterns covered in this report serve as prominent examples of the human rights violations documented by Mwatana for Human Rights during 2022. They do not represent an exhaustive account of all the incidents and patterns that occurred in Yemen during the same year. Mwatana for Human Rights remains committed to documenting the various violations that have occurred since the beginning of 2023.





**Mwatana's annual report for the year 2022 consists of three main chapters:**

## **Chapter I:**

### **Yemen Conflict and International Law**

International humanitarian law is applicable to the armed conflict in Yemen, including Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, its Additional Protocol II of 1977, and customary international humanitarian law. In addition, international human rights law remains in effect during this period.

## **Chapter II:**

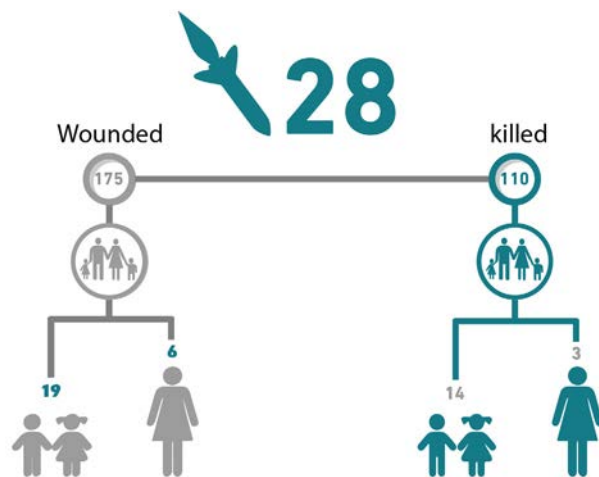
### **Violations and Abuses in 2022**

This chapter comprises 13 sections, which address prominent patterns of civilian harm and violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the conflicting parties in Yemen. Each section includes statistical data on the incidents documented by Mwatana for Human Rights during 2022, alongside a legal introduction to each violation pattern and case studies of such incidents.



## Section I: Air Attacks

During 2022, Mwatana documented at least 28 air strikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, resulting in damages and losses to civilians and/or civilian objects in eight Yemeni governorates: Amanat Al Asimah, Hajjah, Hudaydah, Al Bayda, Marib, Shabwah, Saada, and Al Jawf. These air strikes claimed the lives of at least 110 civilian victims, including 14 children and three women, and injured at least 175 civilians, including 19 children and six women. The attacks targeted and destroyed protected civilian objects, including residential areas, public roads, civilian vehicles, farms, service and commercial facilities, hospitals, schools, water projects, and drug warehouses. Most of these attacks occurred in January 2022. Since the truce took effect in early April 2022, coalition air strikes in Yemen have ceased, but may resume at any time.

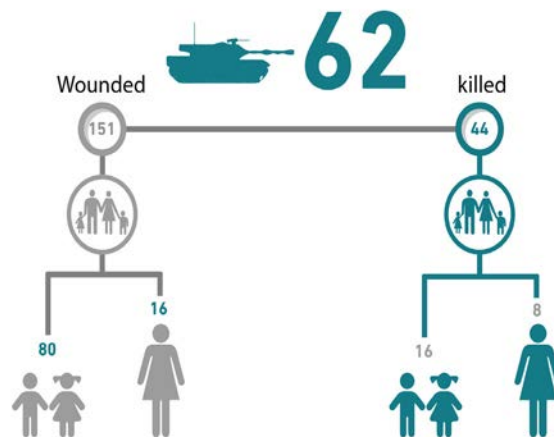


### Drone Attacks:

Mwatana documented 17 drone attacks during 2022, which resulted in the deaths of at least 10 civilians, including five children, and injured at least 40 civilians, including 21 children and five women. The Houthis claimed responsibility for 13 of these attacks in the governorates of Hudaydah, Taiz, Marib, and Amanat Al Asimah. Government forces are responsible for two attacks in Al Dhale'e, while the Joint Forces on the West Coast carried out one attack in Hudaydah. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition is responsible for one attack in Marib Governorate.

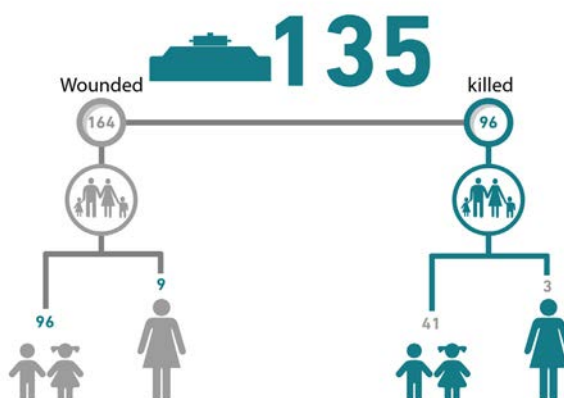
## Section II: Ground Attacks

In 2022, the truce period included, Mwatana documented at least 62 indiscriminate ground attacks, resulting in the deaths of at least 44 civilians, including eight women and 16 children, and injuring at least 151 civilians, including 16 women and 80 children. The Houthis are responsible for 26 incidents, and Saudi border guard forces for 15 incidents. Government forces committed eight incidents, Southern Transitional Council forces eight incidents, and the Joint Forces are responsible for two incidents. Additionally, Shabwa Defense Forces are responsible for one incident, while the Joint Forces in Shabwa carried out one incident. The responsible party could not be determined in one incident. Most of these attacks occurred in Saada (16 incidents) and Taiz (14 incidents), followed by Al Bayda and Shabwah, each with seven incidents.



## Section III: Landmines

The number of incidents of landmine explosions increased significantly in 2022, nearly tripling the number documented by Mwatana in the previous year. During 2022, Mwatana documented at least 135 landmine explosions, resulting in the deaths of 96 civilian victims, including 41 children and three women, and injuring 164 civilians, including 96 children and nine women. These incidents were concentrated in the governorates of Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Al Jawf, Al Bayda, Marib, Sana'a, Taiz, and Saada. The Houthis are responsible for planting all these mines, except for nine incidents where Mwatana could not determine the responsible party.



Additionally, Mwatana documented at least 102 incidents of explosions by war remnants, causing the death of at least 51 civilians, including 36 children and four women, and injuring 207 civilians, including 118 children and 15 women.



## Section IV: Recruitment and Use of Children

Mwatana documented the recruitment and use of at least 108 children, including three girls, by conflicting parties during 2022. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group recruited 81 children, including three girls. Shabwa Defense Forces recruited 10 children, government forces recruited four children, and the Southern Transitional Council forces recruited eight children. The Joint Forces on the West Coast are responsible for recruiting four children, while the Saudi/UAE-led coalition recruited one child.



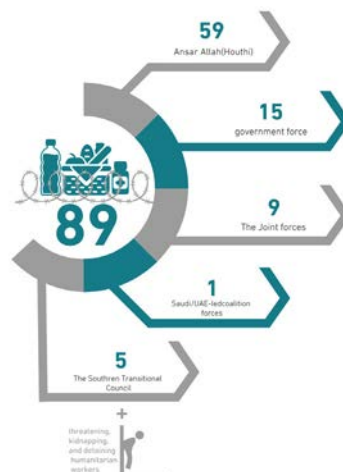
In 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group notably focused on recruiting and mobilizing children in schools, mosques, and summer camps in the areas under their control.

## Section V: Denial of Humanitarian Access

Despite reductions in humanitarian aid to Yemen in 2022, conflicting parties continued to hinder its delivery through looting (including of relief vehicles), obstructing projects, interfering in implementation, and threatening, kidnapping, and detaining humanitarian workers.

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented at least 89 incidents of conflict parties obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and essential supplies to civilians. Ansar Allah (Houthis) is responsible for 59 incidents, while government forces committed 15 incidents and the Joint Forces committed nine incidents. The Southern Transitional Council is implicated in five incidents, including the detention and torture of a relief worker. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition is responsible for one incident.

The incidents of obstructing humanitarian aid were reported in 15 Yemeni governorates, with a concentration in the governorates of Saada, Amran, Lahj , Hadramaut, Marib, Al Mahwit, Hajjah, and Shabwah.



## Section VI: Arbitrary Detention

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of 307 civilian victims, including 48 children and eight women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group committed 159 incidents of arbitrary detention in governorates under their control, including Dhamar, Amran, Al Bayda, Al Mahwit, Hajjah, Al Dhale'e, Saada, Al Jawf, Al Hudaydah, Taiz, Ibb, Marib, Raymah, Sanaa, and Amanat Al Asimah. Additionally, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of 46 civilian victims by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces in the governorates of Al Dhale'e, Abyan, Lahj, and Aden. Responsibility for the arbitrary detention of 38 victims is attributed to internationally recognized government forces in the governorates of Aden, Lahj, Hadhramaut, Taiz, Shabwah, and Marib. Eritrean forces arbitrarily detained 20 Yemeni fishermen at sea. The Joint Forces on the West Coast arbitrarily detained 16 civilians, while Defense Shabwah forces arbitrarily detained nine civilians. Furthermore, the Giants Brigades in Shabwah arbitrarily detained seven civilians, and the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces arbitrarily detained another seven civilians. Armed elements affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula arbitrarily detained three civilians, and two others were arbitrarily detained by human trafficking and smuggling gangs.





In 2022, 28 field lawyers of Mwatana provided legal support to victims of arbitrary detention in 17 Yemeni governorates, offering assistance and legal advice in 873 cases. The team's continuous efforts are aimed at securing the release of arbitrarily detained victims or improving the conditions of their detention, including the medical care, among other issues, and ensuring adherence to national and international laws regarding detention. In 2022, Mwatana succeeded in securing the release of 353 arbitrarily detained individuals to whom they provided legal support, while many victims remain in detention.

## Section VII: Enforced Disappearance

In 2022, Mwatana documented 190 cases of enforced disappearance of civilians, including 14 children and seven women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 71 cases of enforced disappearance, while the Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for 42 cases. Forces of the internationally recognized government and forces loyal to it are responsible for 40 cases, the Joint Forces on the West Coast for 13 cases, Shabwah Defense forces for nine cases, and the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces for eight cases in the governorates of Hadhramaut and Hajjah. Additionally, there were two incidents in which three victims were forcibly disappeared inside Saudi Arabian territory. The Elite Forces in Hadhramaut are responsible for the enforced disappearance of three civilians. Human trafficking and smuggling gangs are responsible for the enforced disappearance of four migrants.



## Section VIII: Torture

In 2022, Mwatana documented the torture of 64 civilians, including five children and one woman. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for the torture of 17 victims. Government forces and forces loyal to the internationally recognized government are responsible for torturing 14 civilians, of whom three civilians died as a result of torture in detention centers. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for torturing 14 civilian victims, leading to the death of three of them in detention centers. In addition, Mwatana documented an incident in which seven migrants were tortured and killed



inside Saudi Arabian territory. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces subjected nine civilians to torture, while the Shabwah Defense forces tortured two victims, and the Hadhrami Elite Forces tortured one civilian.

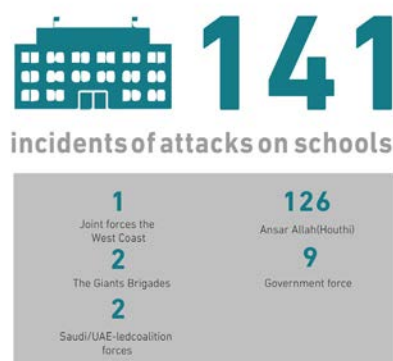
## Section IX: Sexual Violence

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented 25 cases of sexual violence against civilians. The victims included 11 girls, six boys, and one adult woman who were subjected to rape. Additionally, cases of attempted rape were documented, in which three girls and four boys were victims, one of whom was shot for refusing. Government forces are responsible for seven cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Shabwah, Hadhramaut, and Taiz. Sudanese forces committed nine cases of sexual violence in the Governorate of Hajjah. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for four cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Al Hudaydah and Ibb. Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for three cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Shabwah, Aden, and Abyan, while the Giants Brigades in Abyan are responsible for two cases.



## Section X: Attacks on Schools

In 2022, Mwatana documented at least 141 incidents of attacks on schools, including their use for military purposes. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 126 of these incidents, including three drone attacks, one ground attack, and the bombing and destruction of one school. Government forces committed nine incidents, while the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces committed two incidents involving air strikes. The Joint Forces on the West Coast committed one incident, and the Giants Brigades in Shabwah committed two incidents, of which one involved a ground attack. Furthermore, the Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for one incident.



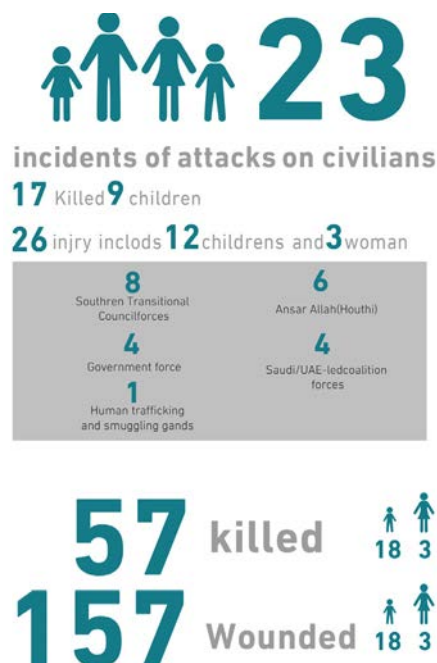
## Section XI: Attacks on Health Care

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented 35 incidents that caused damage to the health care sector, including: eight incidents involving air strikes in the governorates of Amanat Al Asimah, Shabwa, Al Hudaydah, and Al-Jawf; one incident of ground shelling that caused damage to a medical facility; two incidents of shooting resulting in the injury of a health care worker and an attempted murder of a doctor; and six incidents of arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture of eight health care workers, as well as physical assault on a doctor. Government forces are responsible for 14 incidents, while Ansar Allah (Houthis) are responsible for nine incidents. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition committed eight incidents, and responsibility has been attributed to the Southern Transitional Council in three incidents. The Joint Forces on the West Coast committed one incident.



## Section XII: Other Attacks on Civilians

In 2022, Mwatana documented 23 incidents where civilians were run over by military vehicles, resulting in the deaths of 17 civilians, including nine children, and the injury of 26 civilians, including 12 children and three women. The responsibility for eight incidents in the governorates of Abyan and Aden lies with the Southern Transitional Council, which is supported by the UAE. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group committed six incidents in the governorates of Ibb, Hajjah, and Dhamar. Government forces are responsible for four incidents in the governorates of Marib and Shabwa. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition committed four incidents in the governorate of Hajjah, and human trafficking gangs are responsible for one incident. Additionally, Mwatana documented the killing of 57 civilians by live ammunition, including 18 children and three women, and the injury of 157 civilians, including 65 children and 17 women.



## Section XIII: Attacks on African Migrants

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented at least 29 incidents involving violations against African migrants. These incidents resulted in the death of at least eight migrants and the injury of at least 25 migrants, including 15 children and one woman. Saudi border guards committed 13 incidents, while the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for nine incidents. Government forces committed three incidents, and human trafficking gangs are responsible for four incidents. The violations against migrants primarily included the use of live ammunition and ground shelling, especially along the Saudi border, as well as arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture.



### Chapter III:

## Undermining Rights and Freedoms

This chapter includes three sections that address some of the primary ways in which the parties to the conflict have undermined rights and freedoms in Yemen.

## Section I: Press and Freedom of Expression

Throughout 2022, the parties to the conflict continued to subject journalists to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, inhumane treatment, and torture. Mwatana documented 10 incidents affecting 16 journalists and media workers. The responsibility for the arbitrary arrest of seven journalists lies with the Giants Forces in Shabwa, while government forces are responsible for the arbitrary arrest of four journalists and the physical assault on one journalist. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group arbitrarily detained four journalists and media workers.



In 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group continued to arbitrarily detain four journalists, who had been sentenced to death in April 2020 after an unfair trial at the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a. Journalist Wahid Al-Sofi remains forcibly disappeared since 2015.



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## Section II: Freedom of Movement

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In 2022, Mwatana documented 10 incidents of warring parties imposing restrictions on civilian's freedom of movement in different Yemeni regions. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for all these incidents. In this context, Ansar Allah (Houthis) prohibited women from traveling, especially female workers in organizations, without a «mahram» (male guardian) through Sana'a International Airport. The group also required the guardian's approval for overland travel between governorates.

## Section III: Personal Freedoms of Women

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The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group continued to target women through repressive practices that restrict their freedom and rights. The year 2022 witnessed a further escalation of these practices. In March, the authorities of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group strictly enforced the presence of a mahram for female workers during field visits or travel between Yemeni cities. The group also banned women from traveling through Sana'a International Airport, which had been closed for years, unless accompanied by a mahram. Mwatana conducted more than 20 interviews with women who were detained for hours, subjected to questioning, investigation, intrusive searches, and humiliation, had their passports confiscated, and were prevented from traveling. The interviewed women unanimously stated that the authorities of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) deliberately tarnish the reputation of female workers in organizations. They also expressed disappointment at the absence of public support and pressure from international organizations and the UN to act more seriously against these arbitrary and discriminatory measures.

The directives issued by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group prohibiting women from traveling without a mahram are transmitted directly to transportation companies, car rental agencies, and checkpoints. However, Mwatana was able to view written directives addressed by the group to land transport companies and car rental agencies, containing instructions to prevent the movement of women without a mahram. Mwatana also reviewed a traffic permit issued in 2022 by the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and International Cooperation, or known as SCMCHA, which includes the name of an employee and her brother as her companion (mahram).

Requiring the presence of a mahram during a woman's travel also has negative effects and repercussions on other rights of women, such as their rights to work, equal opportunities, access health care, education and training, and family reunification.

At the end of 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group also placed more emphasis on women's clothing and imposed restrictions and conditions under the guise of "Yemeni identity." The group met with the owners of several Abaya sewing shops for women in the capital, Sana'a, and set conditions and restrictions on the appropriate colors, design, and lengths of Abayas.

## 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, schools, and residential homes in densely populated areas.
- 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.
- Support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen related to renewing the truce and reaching a comprehensive ceasefire.
- Cooperate with and provide unhindered access to United Nations and independent investigators.
- Immediately end the use of conventional 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 spread of diseases and epidemics.
- Immediately pay the salaries of civil servants, including medical and educational personnel.
- 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.
- Close unofficial detention centers, release those arbitrarily detained in connection with the conflict, resolve cases of enforced disappearances, and investigate cases of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and abusive treatment in detention centers.

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- 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.









The image shows a close-up, low-angle view of a heavily damaged concrete structure, likely a bridge or overpass. The concrete is light gray and covered in numerous dark, irregular holes and pits of varying sizes, suggesting significant erosion or impact damage. The structure is supported by a base of broken concrete and debris. In the background, a clear blue sky is visible, along with some distant buildings and utility poles. A teal-colored rectangular box is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image, containing the word "Methodology" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# Methodology

Mwatana for Human Rights conducted field investigative research to draft this report. The investigations involved direct inspections of the sites where attacks and incidents took place, as well as in-depth interviews with witnesses, relatives of victims, survivors, doctors, and human rights workers. Throughout 2022, Mwatana's team also examined documents, evidence, photographs, videos, and other physical evidence.

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

Mwatana has field researchers in 19 Yemeni governorates. They collected data by conducting more than 2,672 interviews in Arabic with victims, their families, eyewitnesses, and medical and humanitarian workers. The field researchers team also carried out 130 field visits to remote districts to 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 credible sources. In 2022, 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 documented, whenever possible, other forms of physical evidence, including photographs, documents, and official reports that helped verify the occurrence and details of incidents. In some cases, international experts helped analyze photographs 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, in some cases, relied on fewer statements when conditions in the field hindered them from gathering more information. Mwatana did not offer any monetary or in-kind incentives or promises to those who gave their statements. The identities of some witnesses and survivors were withheld in the interest of their safety and to ensure complete confidentiality.

In 2022, Mwatana's team faced many security risks while working on the ground. The team experienced 20 incidents involving threats, harassment, arbitrary detention, travel bans, and physical assaults in various Yemeni cities, including Sana'a, Taiz, Hadramout, Marib, Hudaydah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Aden, Al Dhale, and Abyan. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 11 of these incidents: the group threatened the team on seven instances, harassed and intimidated the team in another one, arbitrarily detained the team on two instances, and imposed a travel ban in another incident. The internationally recognized Yemeni government is responsible for one incident of arbitrary detention, three incidents of threats, and one incident of harassment and intimidation. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council is responsible for three instances involving threats, one of which involved incitement, while the Joint Forces on the West Coast are responsible for one physical assault incident.



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The collected information was analyzed, verified for reliability, and cross-checked by the Research and Studies Unit and the Legal Support Unit at Mwatana's headquarters in Sana'a. The central research team also conducted field visits to several governorates in separate fact-finding missions and documented some particularly complex incidents. The team started drafting this report at the beginning of 2023. The report was reviewed and edited by experts in the field of international humanitarian law between May 2023 and August 2023.





## **Chapter I:**

# **Yemen Conflict and International Law**



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International humanitarian law applies to the ongoing armed conflict in Yemen. The applicable law includes Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Additional Protocol II of 1977, and customary international humanitarian law. International human rights law continues to apply during the conflict alongside international humanitarian law.

The non-international armed conflict in Yemen, which began between the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group and the Yemeni government, now involves multiple warring states and non-state armed groups. Parties directly involved in the hostilities include the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the regular armed forces of the internationally recognized Yemeni government (under President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi until April 2022 and under the Presidential Leadership Council since then), and non-state armed groups, including Ansar Allah, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, the Joint Forces on Yemen's Western Coast, and the Giants Brigades in Shabwah. All parties to the conflict, including states and non-state armed groups, are obligated to comply with international humanitarian law applicable to the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

In 2022, Mwatana consistently found that many military actions did not comply with fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, such as the principle of distinction and the protection of civilian persons against attack. These military actions killed, injured, and harmed hundreds of civilian victims.

The conflicting parties are obligated to respect international humanitarian law, including taking all necessary measures to avoid harm to civilians and civilian objects during the conflict. Warring parties must also take all feasible precautions to protect civilians 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. The failure of one party 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 harm to civilians, including doing everything feasible to verify that the objects of attack are military objectives and providing «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.

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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.







## Chapter II:

# Violations and Abuses in 2022





**Section I:**

## **Air Attacks**

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In 2022, Mwatana documented at least 28 air attacks by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition that caused harm and damage to civilians and/or civilian objects in eight Yemeni governorates, most of which occurred in January. These attacks resulted in at least 110 civilian casualties, including 14 children and three women, and injured at least 175 civilians, including 19 children and six women. These attacks also damaged civilian objects protected under international humanitarian law, including civilian homes in residential neighborhoods, service facilities, hospitals, schools, a university, a prison, farms, a water scheme, public roads, civilian vehicles, and a drugstore.

The air attacks by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition were particularly concentrated in the first quarter of 2022, with 15 air attacks in January alone, resulting in 96 civilian casualties, as well as significant damage to civilian objects. Since the truce took effect in early April 2022, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition has not conducted air strikes in Yemen. However, these attacks can resume at any time.

Through investigations, including interviews with eyewitnesses, victims, and medical personnel, Mwatana did not identify military objectives at, near or in the vicinity of the sites in the majority of these attacks that targeted civilian objects. In the few cases where Mwatana identified military objectives near the attack sites, the civilian harm resulting from the attacks was significant and appeared 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 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 launching an attack, and refrain from carrying out disproportionate attacks. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, when carried out with criminal intent, are war crimes.

## Examples :

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, at approximately 3:45 a.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces dropped bombs on two wooden houses located in the yard of the General Authority for Social Security and Pensions in As Sabain District, Amanat Al-Asimah. The first bomb struck the house of the building's guard, resulting in the death of eight civilians, including five children and two women. About 15 minutes later, a second bomb hit the second house belonging to one of the Authority's employees, situated approximately 30 meters from the guard's house. Fortunately, 16 civilian members from the person's family managed to escape and hide before the second strike, but a man and a woman were injured by flying shrapnel.

A relative of the survivors, aged 25, recounted to Mwatana,

«When I arrived, the entire yard with the wooden houses inhabited by Bashir Al-Harazi and Muhammad Ghiyath with their families had been completely obliterated. The first strike hit Bashir Al-Harazi's house, and then the second strike hit Muhammad Ghiyath's house. There was no trace left of the houses at the bombing site, except for the families' clothes and scattered children's toys.»

On Friday, January 21, 2022, at approximately 2:40 a.m., Saudi/UAE-led coalition warplanes dropped three bombs on a remand prison (formerly Central Security) in Saada city, Saada Governorate. The prison consisted of approximately 20 wards. The first bomb targeted Ward No. 2 (underground floor), where around 200 prisoners were held, resulting in the complete destruction of its western side. Less than three minutes later, the second bomb struck Ward No. 5, causing damage to the upper ceiling and parts of the lower floor. After about a minute and a half, the third bomb hit the western side of Ward No. 8 located in the building. This bombing led to the death of 66 prisoners and left approximately 113 others wounded, including four children.

A survivor, aged 48, described the harrowing incident to Mwatana, saying,

«The scene was terrifying, with about 50 bodies scattered around. The smell of burnt bodies filled the air, with some trapped under piles of concrete. Some were groaning, saying their feet were broken, while others screamed that their hands were cut off. I found the body of my friend, who had been hit

7 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relative of the surviving family, on March 27, 2022.

by shrapnel in the head, and he died in my arms. It was a huge disaster.<sup>8»</sup>

During the air attack, some prisoners attempted to flee, fearing for their lives. However, the prison guards from Ansar Allah(Houthi ) fired live bullets at them, resulting in the death of 16 prisoners and injuries to nearly 50 others.

On Thursday, January 20, around 10:15 p.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition conducted an air strike on the building of the Public Telecommunications Corporation in Hudaydah Governorate and completely destroyed it, targeting critical civilian infrastructure. Internet monitoring platforms reported that there was almost a complete internet blackout in Yemen from about 1 a.m. on January 21 to January 25. According to the victims' relatives interviewed by Mwatana for Human Rights, the air strike killed five civilians who were in close proximity of the site, including three children who were playing near the building, and injured 20 others, including two children<sup>9</sup>.

The father of one of the victims (45 years old) told Mwatana,

«My son asked me to let him go to the Telecommunications Corporation to watch a football match, as the neighborhood teams often play football in the yard outside the Corporation. Children and young people usually play football there.»

He added,

«I went to take my son back home, and suddenly a powerful explosion occurred, throwing me to the ground and causing me to lose my hearing due to the intensity of the blast. The entire building collapsed on me and the children. I got up, unable to see due to the dust and darkness, and began searching for my son, even though my right foot was broken, and the index and middle fingers of my left hand were severed. I helped rescue some children from under the rubble. One hour later, they told me that they found my son on the other pavement, lifeless.<sup>10»</sup>

## Drone Attacks

Mwatana recently observed the increased use of drones by the parties involved in the conflict,

8 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a survivor who escaped from the prison, on January 24, 2022.

9 Joint statement by Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch regarding the air strikes in January 2022: <https://www.mwatana.org/posts/latest-round>

10 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of one of the victims, on January 25, 2022.



resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.

In 2022, Mwatana documented 17 drone attacks that claimed the lives of at least 10 civilians, including five children, and injured at least 40 civilians, including 21 children and five women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 13 attacks in the governorates of Hudaydah, Taiz, Marib, Amanat Al-Asimah, and Hajjah. Meanwhile, government forces are responsible for two attacks in Al Dhale'e Governorate. The Joint Forces on the West Coast are responsible for one attack in Hudaydah Governorate, and the forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition are responsible for one attack in Marib Governorate.





## **Section II:**

# **Ground Attacks**

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In 2022, Mwatana documented approximately 62 indiscriminate ground attacks that killed at least 44 civilians, including eight women and 16 children, and injured at least 151 civilians, including 16 women and 80 children. The responsibility for these attacks is attributed to various parties involved in the conflict: the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 26 incidents, Saudi border guard forces for 15 incidents, the Joint Forces for two incidents, government forces for eight incidents, Southern Transitional Council forces for eight incidents, Shabwa Defense Forces for one incident, and the Giants Brigades in Shabwa for one incident. Mwatana was not able to determine the violating party in one incident.

These attacks occurred predominantly in the governorates of Saada with 16 attacks and followed by Taiz with 14 attacks. Additionally, seven ground attacks occurred in Al Bayda Governorate, and seven in Shabwa Governorate.

Prior to and during the implementation of the truce, the parties to the conflict in Yemen continued to carry out indiscriminate ground attacks on civilians, often using imprecise and excessively injurious weapons. Many of these attacks targeted residential areas and crowded markets, causing hundreds of civilians to flee their homes and seek safer places.

As the intensity of the hostilities escalated in civilian-populated areas, some fighters from the conflicting parties positioned themselves in residential neighborhoods and houses to seek shelter and conduct military operations from within, putting civilians and their properties at risk. Consequently, numerous civilians were killed and injured, and significant damage was caused to their properties and vital infrastructure, such as roads, water supplies, and hospitals.

## 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. The parties to the conflict 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 warring parties must distinguish at all times 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 also refrain from launching 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 war crimes.

## Examples:

On Sunday, October 30, 2022, around 11:00 a.m., a shell fired by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group struck Al-Siyanah neighborhood, Al-Mudhaffar District, Taiz Governorate, injuring three displaced children while they were herding sheep. All the victims were taken to Al-Thawra General Hospital, located approximately six kilometers to the southeast from the site of the incident.

On the same day, at around 4:00 p.m., another shell was fired by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group on the same neighborhood. The shell hit about 200 meters to the east from the site of the first incident, resulting in the death of two civilians, including a child, and injuring another child.

The Ansar Allah group (Houthis) forces were stationed in Fifty Street in Taiz city, approximately one and a half kilometers to the east from the site of the incident. The targeted location was near a military brigade affiliated with the internationally recognized Yemeni government, about 700 meters to the northwest of the site of the incident. The nearest military checkpoint under the control of government forces was about 350 meters to the south from the main road leading to Bier Basha and vital areas within Taiz city.

A relative of one of the victims (31 years old) told Mwatana,

«I was working at Bier Basha market, about one kilometer from the incident site. At 4:00 p.m., a motorcycle driver informed me about the shelling on my brother's house. The body of my brother (32 years old) was lying in the yard of the house, and my other brother was next to him crying bitterly. The women were also crying and screaming. It was an extremely terrifying and painful scene that I cannot describe. My deceased brother's face was covered in blood. Less than 24 hours later, his four-year-old son, succumbed to his injuries. As for my two-year-old son, who had just started walking, his right foot had been severed.<sup>11</sup>»

On Sunday, May 8, 2022, at around 6:00 p.m., in the area of Al-Raqw/ Waleed Ayyash village, Monabbih District, Saada Governorate, Saudi border guards fired shells at a group of migrants attempting to cross the Yemeni border into Saudi Arabia. The attack resulted in the injury of a 20-year-old Yemeni civilian from Ibb Governorate. The victim was immediately taken to Monabbih Rural Hospital, located about 15 kilometers to the south from the incident site. According to the initial report from the hospital, the victim had

11 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of one of the child victims, on October 31, 2022.



deep wounds on his face and the right side of his body. The report also stated that the victim needed to be seen by a surgeon.

A relative of the victim (35 years old) told Mwatana,

«I received a call from a rescuer informing me that my relative was injured due to shelling by Saudi border guards, and that he took him to a hospital in Saada and would take him to Sana'a. So, he asked me to wait for them in Sana'a. I traveled from Ibb to Sana'a and waited for their arrival. The rescuer arrived with my relative, and I immediately took him to the Doctors Without Borders Hospital in Al-Qaida city, Dhi As Sufal District, Ibb Governorate. There, the doctors performed several operations to remove shrapnel from his body. He was heavily injured on his right side, including his right cheek, and he suffered three broken teeth. He can no longer speak<sup>12</sup>.»

On Sunday, February 6, 2022, around 4:00 p.m., in Al Barman hamlet, Az Zaher District, Al-Bayda Governorate, the Security Belt forces affiliated with the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council bombed Al-Samlan village with various shells and heavy weapons. One of those shells hit the walls of a house, resulting in the injury of two children.

A rescuer (25 years old) told Mwatana,

«Those who commit such crimes against us show disregard for our lives and seem to enjoy our deaths. They never consider offering any assistance to those who become victims of their brutality, whether accidentally or intentionally. They are well aware of everything that happens to us, yet they treat us as if we were animals with no rights or existence. They think they alone deserve to live at the expense of our dignity and blood<sup>13</sup>.»

On Sunday, January 30, 2022, around 12:00 p.m., two little girls and their mother were injured while they were inside their home in Al Jabaliya village, At Tuhayta District, Hudaydah Governorate, due to ground shelling by the Joint Forces that took place in Al Haymah area of Khokha District, south of the village. The incident resulted in the destruction of parts of the house, which was built with palm leaves and wood. The victims were first taken to a hospital in Zabid District, then to a hospital in Hudaydah city. The victims received medical care provided by Save the Children organization at Hudaydah Hospital.

12 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim's relative, on May 24, 2022.

13 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on July 29, 2022.

The father of the two victimized little girls (35 years old) told Mwatana,

«There is no justification for hitting the house as there is no military objective nearby. This is what they call the “giant missile” that reaches a distance of more than 20 kilometers.<sup>14</sup>»



14 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of the two victims, on February 13, 2022.



**Section III:**

## **Landmines**

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The number of incidents involving landmine explosions significantly increased in 2022. Mwatana documented nearly three times as many incidents as the previous year. This escalation was particularly evident after the truce began in April 2022, as some mined areas were reopened for civilians to return to their homes near the frontlines without proper mine clearance campaigns, especially in Hudaydah Governorate, where most of the landmine explosion incidents took place. Most civilian casualties were children.

In 2022, Mwatana documented approximately 135 incidents of landmine explosions, resulting in 96 civilian fatalities, including 41 children and three women. Additionally, 164 civilians were injured, including 96 children and nine women. These incidents were concentrated in the governorates of Hudaydah, Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Al-Bayda, Marib, Sana'a, Taiz, and Saada. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for planting all these landmines, except for nine incidents where Mwatana was unable to identify the violating party.

Moreover, in 2022, Mwatana documented approximately 102 incidents involving explosive devices and remnants of war, resulting in the death of at least 51 civilians, including 36 children and four women, and injuring 207 civilians, including 118 children and 15 women.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in late 2014, landmines have been claiming the lives of Yemenis and causing terror and fear among civilians, especially 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. 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, production, stockpiling, 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.

## Examples:

On Monday, November 21, 2022, around 8:30 a.m., a landmine laid by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group exploded in Wadi Mustaba, Mustaba District, Hajjah Governorate, resulting in the death of two children.



The father of one of the victims (35 years old) told Mwatana,

«My son went out early in the morning with our neighbor's son on a motorcycle to Wadi Mustaba to collect miswak (Arak tree roots) to sell later at the market. While I was at the market, I heard people gathering and talking about a landmine explosion in the valley involving two children who had collected miswak. Immediately, I had a feeling that they were talking about my son and his friend.»

He added,

«I walked with the crowd towards the valley, and my heart was pounding very fast as if it would stop. When we arrived, all I found of my son were torn body parts and tattered clothes! I fled Hiran District to escape death, yet I came here to face death myself.<sup>15»</sup>

On Saturday, September 24, 2022, around 5:30 p.m., a landmine explosion occurred in Al-Ross village, Beit Al-Faqih District, Hudaydah Governorate, planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, resulting in the injury of eight children who were grazing sheep.

The father of one of the victims (35 years old) told Mwatana,

«Our children used to graze sheep in the village of Al-Ross. It was not the first time, as they always graze sheep there. At that moment, I was on my way to my friend's house when I heard a loud explosion that shook the village. The residents were screaming, so I rushed with others to the site of the explosion. When we arrived, the children were screaming, and some of them were running away in panic.»

The father continued,

«My son's left foot was severed. As I looked at his severed foot, my heart ached for him. Our children have become disabled at such a young age.<sup>16»</sup>

On Thursday, March 17, 2022, at approximately 9:00 a.m., a landmine planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group exploded in Wadi Yarrah, Alsulb village, Al Barman sub-district, Al-Zaher District, Al-Bayda Governorate, resulting in the death of one child and injuring another while

15 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of one of the victims, on December 13, 2022

16 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of one of the victims, on September 27, 2022

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they were on their way to the local market.

The father of one of the victims (47 years old) told Mwatana,

«Shortly after my son and nephew went out to the market, I felt a pang in my heart, so I called my son. My nephew answered the phone, screaming, "Help us, Uncle! The donkey we were riding stepped on a landmine, and we have no one to rescue us." I rushed to the site of the scene with my brother. When we arrived, the catastrophe for us was seeing our loved ones' bodies severed and their limbs scattered, and their pure blood had been flowing for a while.»

He continued, describing his tragedy,

«My son lost consciousness, both of his legs were severed, and shrapnel penetrated most of his body. My nephew's left leg was cut off, and his right leg was wounded by shrapnel. I was crying and calling for my son to wake up, but I only heard some of his breathing, which stopped before we reached the health center.<sup>17</sup>»





## **Section IV:**

# **Recruitment and Use of Children**



In 2022, Mwatana documented the recruitment and use of 108 children, including at least three girls, by the parties to the conflict. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group recruited 81 children, including three girls, while the Shabwa Defense Forces recruited 10 children, and government forces recruited four children. The forces of the Southern Transitional Council recruited eight children, and the Joint Forces on the West Coast are responsible for the recruitment of four children. Additionally, forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition recruited one child at the Yemeni border.

Throughout the year, Mwatana observed that the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group focused on recruiting and mobilizing children in schools, mosques, and summer camps in the areas under their control. Mwatana's team conducted interviews to document the recruitment and use of children. For the safety of all children and their parents, their identities have been withheld in this section of the report.

## 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 old, or using them to actively participate in hostilities, is a war crime<sup>18</sup>. 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 – for example 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<sup>19</sup>.

## Examples:

On Wednesday, August 10, 2022, forces of the internationally recognized government of Yemen recruited a 15-year-old child in Al-Matama District of Al-Jawf Governorate. The child was trained for 14 days in Wadi Abidah, Marib Governorate, before being sent to work at a military bakery in the city of Marib, where he distributed bread to military sites.

18 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in Rome on July 17, 1998, Article 8(2)(e)(vii).

19 Yemeni Child Rights Law 2000, Article 45.

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One of the child's relatives (52 years old) told Mwatana,

«We are deeply worried about him and afraid of losing him. We pray to Allah to bring him back to us safely. The boy is our only supporter in this life, as we are a poor family.<sup>20»</sup>

On Monday, June 6, 2022, the UAE-backed Shabwa Defense Forces recruited two 16-year-old children in Belhaf facility, Radum District, Shabwah Governorate. After 40 days of training, the children were assigned to perform security patrols and inspections at checkpoints.

An eyewitness (31 years old) told Mwatana,

«The difficult economic conditions we are facing made parents agree to the recruitment of their children so that they can help them make a living.<sup>21»</sup>

On Thursday, January 20, 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group recruited a 16-year-old child in Al-Saffrah District, Saada Governorate. After training him for a month, the group sent him to the frontlines in Marib, where he was shot dead in early May 2022.

An eyewitness (38 years old) told Mwatana,

«The group begins by containing and encouraging children until they become convinced to go into battle without any concern for the consequences.<sup>22»</sup>

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20 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relative of the child, on November 9, 2022.

21 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a witness, on November 7, 2022.

22 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on May 5, 2022.





## **Section V:**

# **Denial of Humanitarian Access**



The humanitarian situation in Yemen continued to deteriorate in 2022, with continued disruptions to civil servants' salaries, the partial reopening of some ports and main roads, and the worsening of the Yemeni currency. All these factors have left Yemenis heavily reliant on humanitarian aid. However, such aid has steadily decreased during the eight years of conflict, reaching its lowest level in 2022, making it the largest annual decline in any UN-coordinated plan worldwide<sup>23</sup>. The Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan received only 29% of the required funding to provide life-saving aid during 2022, forcing relief agencies to reduce assistance and close programs<sup>24</sup>.

Despite the shrinking humanitarian aid provided to Yemen in 2022, the conflict parties continued to obstruct its delivery through looting, hindering projects and interfering with their implementation, engaging in air strikes and ground attacks, and assaulting humanitarian workers by threatening, kidnapping, and detaining them, as well as hijacking relief vehicles.

Additionally, in 2022, Mwatana documented at least 89 incidents of warring parties obstructing the access of humanitarian assistance and essential supplies to civilians. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 59 of these incidents, while government forces committed 15 incidents, the Joint Forces committed nine, and the Southern Transitional Council is responsible for five incidents, including the arrest and torture of a relief worker. Moreover, forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition bear responsibility for one incident. These incidents of denying humanitarian aid access were documented in 15 Yemeni governorates, with most of them occurring in Saada, Amran, Lahj, Hadramout, Marib, Al Mahwit, Hajjah, and Shabwah.

Furthermore, 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 (Houthi) armed group. These oil derivatives are a vital source for the health and service sectors. Although Sana'a International Airport was partially reopened to commercial flights in May 2022, the flights were limited to only two destinations, Amman and Cairo, and were irregular.

The warring parties have also contributed to the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen in other ways. Some of the worst consequences of the conflict are the collapse of the country's essential service infrastructure and the sharp deterioration of economic and financial indicators. This includes the failure of Yemen's Central Bank to pay pensions to retirees and salaries to civil servants<sup>25</sup>. The restrictions imposed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition on food and fuel imports into

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23 <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/08/1109112>

24 Ibid.

25 The number of public sector servants is about 1.25 million employees. For more information, see "Inflated Beyond Fiscal Capacity: The Need to Reform the Public Sector Wage Bill," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/8102>.

Yemeni ports has further exacerbated the suffering of civilians<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, parties to the conflict in Yemen, such as the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, government forces, and UAE-backed forces, have imposed illegal tariffs and complex bureaucratic measures that hinder the passage of essential commodities and humanitarian aid. Such practices have contributed to price spikes and reduced the availability of essential goods like fuel<sup>27</sup>. The parties to the conflict also imposed complex restrictions on humanitarian organizations and their staff, obstructing their freedom of movement in the different regions of the country.

## 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 not impede humanitarian relief on arbitrary grounds and 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, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.

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 Statue 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 Monday, August 8, 2022, at around 8:00 a.m., an armed group affiliated with the UAE-backed Joint Forces forcibly hijacked a vehicle belonging to an international organization on the coastal road that connects Aden Governorate to Madaribah wa Al-Arah District in Lahj Governorate. The organization, which aids the health sector, had experienced several attacks in the three months prior to this incident, leading it to suspend its activities in the Madaribah wa Al-Arah District until the writing of this report.

26 Report of the Detailed Findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, UN Doc A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (September 3, 2019), p. 266, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A\\_HRC\\_42\\_CRP\\_1.PDF](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A_HRC_42_CRP_1.PDF)

27 Ibid., p. 270.

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An eyewitness (39 years old) told Mwatana,

«Attacking humanitarian organizations and obstructing their work has happened repeatedly in the Madaribah wa Al-Aarh District. This organization was one of the most attacked organizations, despite having significantly improved health services in the district. What happened to the organization has affected the civilian beneficiaries, especially considering the poverty and difficult living conditions resulting from the war.<sup>28</sup>»

On Monday, June 27, 2022, at around 4:00 p.m., the local authority, through its committees affiliated with Yemen's internationally recognized government, obstructed the distribution of humanitarian aid provided by an international charity to 80 beneficiary families in the Al Mukalla District, Hadramout Governorate.

One of the affected individuals (45 years old) told Mwatana,

«I was supposed to receive a food basket, but a committee affiliated with the government prevented the distribution, claiming that the aid was intended for only 80 families, while more than 200 families live in the neighborhood . Not all families in the neighborhood are in need! This action deprived me of the aid. I live on a salary that does not exceed \$70, and I have a family of nine members.<sup>29</sup>»

On Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at around 10:00 a.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group looted household cooking oil from the rations of 1,000 beneficiary families in Saqeen District, Saada Governorate. The cooking oil was part of food aid baskets provided by the World Food Programme.

One of the beneficiaries (34 years old) told Mwatana,

«I went as usual to receive my monthly ration of food aid, but this time, there was no cooking oil included. There had been a directive from the social supervisor in Saqeen that no beneficiary should receive the oil, as it would be sold, and the proceeds would be used to build a meeting hall for the Houthis! When we protested, the Houthis responded, People in other

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28 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on August 18, 2022.

29 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with one of the affected individuals, on July 17, 2022.

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areas have sacrificed their lives, and here you are protesting over a bottle of oil!<sup>30»</sup>





**Section VI:**

## **Arbitrary Detention**

During the year 2022, Mwatana documented the arbitrary detention of 307 civilian victims, including 48 children and eight women. In areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, the group committed 159 cases of arbitrary detention, particularly in the governorates of Dhamar, Amran, Al-Bayda, Al-Mahweet, Hajjah, Al-Dhalea, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf, Al Hudaydah, Taiz, Ibb, Marib, Hajjah, Raymah, Sana'a, and Amanat Al-Asimah. Mwatana also documented the arbitrary detention of 46 civilian victims by forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in Al-Dhale, Abyan, Lahj, Aden. Forces of Yemen's internationally recognized government bear responsibility for the arbitrary detention of 38 civilians in Aden, Lahj, Hadhramout, Taiz, Shabwah, and Marib. Additionally, Eritrean forces arbitrarily detained 20 Yemeni fishermen, the Joint Forces on the West Coast arbitrarily detained 16 civilians, the Shabwah Defense Forces arbitrarily detained nine civilians, the Giants Brigades forces in Shabwah arbitrarily detained seven civilians, and the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces arbitrarily detained seven others. Armed 'members affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) detained three Yemeni civilians and three Ethiopians.

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

In 2022, Mwatana provided legal support to victims of arbitrary detention in 17 Yemeni governorates through 28 field lawyers, offering assistance and legal advice in 873 cases. The ongoing efforts of Mwatana's legal support team aimed at securing the release of arbitrarily detained victims or improving the conditions of their detention, including the medical care, among other issues, and advocating for detention procedures in line with national and international laws. In 2022, Mwatana succeeded in securing the release of 353 arbitrarily detained individuals to whom legal support was provided, while many victims still remain in detention.

## 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 UN 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."<sup>31</sup> In addition, the Code provides that only judges are entitled to 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 Wednesday, November 9, 2022, at around 6:00 a.m., forces of the internationally recognized government arbitrarily arrested Ali Abdo (pseudonym, 52 years old) as he passed the Third Military Zone camp on Sana'a Street in Marib city, Marib Governorate. The forces sought to justify the arrest based on his presence on the same street two days before when a series of explosions occurred at an arms depot in that military camp. He was held in the military police prison for 15 days without any formal charges and was released on November 23, 2022.

One of the relatives of the detainee (27 years old) told Mwatana,

«My relative has been suffering from mental illness for 30 years, but he does not harm anyone. This is the third time he has been arrested by government forces in Marib. We only learned about his arrest after he was released.<sup>32</sup>»

On Thursday, June 23, 2022, at around 9:00 a.m., forces affiliated with the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council conducted a series of arrests in the Habilain area, Radfan District, Lahij Governorate. Armed fighters on board of several military vehicles (Toyota pick-up trucks) arrested 11 civilians, including nine children. All the arrested individuals were taken to an unofficial prison without being formally charged. Later, they were questioned and falsely accused of sexually assaulting a child. According to the victims families, all victims were subjected to physical and psychological torture during their detention. One of them was released after 20 days of detention, while the others remain in custody until the time of writing this report.

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

32 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a relative of the detainee, on November 27, 2022.

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The father of one of the victims (35 years old) told Mwatana,

«We, the abductees' fathers and guardians, continued to demand that we be allowed to visit our children in prison. As a result, we were allowed to visit them on the first day of Eid Al-Adha, July 9, 2022. On that day, we took our lunch to the camp, in which our children are detained, and had it with our abducted children. There were many soldiers surrounding us.»

The victim's father added,

«During the visit, my son told me that he was tortured with electric shocks. Another child had a gun placed against his head, and the soldiers threatened to kill him if he didn't confess to the charges they accused him of. Yet another child had gasoline poured on his body, and he was threatened with being set on fire. Others were pressured and had their hands twisted strongly – these were the methods of torture and coercion used to force them to confess to the charges against them.<sup>33»</sup>

On Saturday, January 29, 2022, around 5:00 p.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group arrested a 14-year-old child named Muhammad Ahmed (pseudonym) at a security checkpoint located at the entrance to Al-Masloub District, Al-Jawf Governorate. The arrest occurred while he was passing by on his motorcycle. The child was taken to the Criminal Investigation Department in the city of Al-Hazm on one of the groups military vehicles. .

The child's brother (22 years old) told Mwatana,

«We don't know why minors are being arrested. My brother is a minor, and there is no charge against him except that he belongs to a specific tribe.<sup>34»</sup>

The child was released after three days of being arbitrary detained.

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33 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the father of one of the victims, on July 26, 2022.

34 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim's brother, on February 12, 2022.



A dark, moody photograph showing the silhouette of a person's head and shoulders behind vertical bars, suggesting imprisonment or confinement.

**Section VII:**

## **Enforced Disappearance**

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In 2022, Mwatana documented 190 cases of enforced disappearance of civilian victims, including 14 children and seven women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for the enforced disappearance of 71 civilians, while forces of the Southern Transitional Council are responsible for 42 victims of enforced disappearance. Government forces together with other forces loyal to the internationally recognized government bear responsibility for the enforced disappearance of 40 civilians. Additionally, 13 civilians were forcibly disappeared by the Joint Forces on the West Coast, nine civilians by the Shabwa Defense Forces, and eight civilians by forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition in Hadhramout and Hajjah. Furthermore, two cases involved three victims who were forcibly disappeared within Saudi territory. Three civilians were forcibly disappeared by the Hadhrami Elite Forces, while four migrants were forcibly disappeared by human trafficking and smuggling gangs.

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

To curb the practice of enforced disappearance by the conflicting parties, Mwatana provides legal support to victims of enforced disappearance. In addition, Mwatana puts 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. However, 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, arbitrary detention, torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment, and murder. The parties to the conflict must take steps to prevent 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 Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, 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 Statute.

Yemeni law does not criminalize enforced disappearance as such, and Yemen has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced 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 Thursday, December 8, 2022, at approximately 11:00 a.m., eight armed fighters affiliated with the UAE-backed Shabwah Defense Forces forcibly arrested two civilians in the city of Ataq, Shabwah Governorate, under the pretext of being wanted persons. The detainees were blindfolded and taken to an unknown location until Thursday evening. Later, they were transferred to a detention facility at Ataq Airport, where the Second Brigade of the Shabwah Defense Forces is located. No one was allowed to visit them.

One of the victims, 25 years old, recounted the ordeal, stating,

«After about 10 minutes driving, the military vehicle stopped, while we were still blindfolded. They put us in what seemed like an empty water tank. The place was dark so that I couldn't see my companion or be seen by him. We asked each other why we were here, but there was no explanation. Around noon, three soldiers came with flashlights and sticks and brutally beat us, focusing most of the beating on my companion. Then, they left us inside the dark tank without food or water. In the evening, they took us blindfolded in a military vehicle to Ataq Airport. We knew it was the airport when we heard someone asking where they were taking us.»

He continued,

«That night, we slept in pain from the beatings. Every bone in my body was hurting. In the morning, I was first to be called for questioning. They took me into a room where there was a young investigator in military uniform. He politely asked me about my education, work, residence, and many personal details. He also asked about another person who was our school mate, and I told him I didn't know his whereabouts. The questioning lasted for about 15 minutes. Then, it was my companion's turn, who was brutally beaten throughout the questioning.<sup>35</sup>»

One of the detainees was released after eight days of detention, while the other was released on February 10, 2023.

On Sunday, June 26, 2022, around 11:00 a.m., a military force affiliated with the internationally recognized government, consisting of four armed individuals wearing civilian and military attire and riding in a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up), arrested a 16-year-old civilian from his workplace in Ramah District, Hadhramaut Governorate. He was taken to the Criminal Investigation Prison in Sayun, where he was indirectly accused of belonging to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group.

On Wednesday, June 29, 2022, the victim was transferred to the central prison in Al-Mukalla, where visitation was denied. However, he was allowed to make a single phone call on July 10. On July 19, 2022, the prison administration allowed the victim's family to provide him with clothes, food, and a sum of money. Three days later, he was allowed to make a two-minute call to his family.

The victim's father (65 years old) told Mwatana,

"My wife and I went to the central prison in Sayun and were told that visitation was not allowed. Later, a staff member of the central prison administration told me that my son was being held in the solitary cell, which they call "Al-Forn" (the oven). We returned from where we came. I couldn't eat or sleep, so we decided to go back to the central prison the next day and try again. Once we got there, we were surprised that he had been transferred to somewhere else. When we asked where he was taken, we were told that Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces had called for him. His mother burst into tears because she was next to me, listening to the conversation with the prison staff. On the second day of Eid Al-Adha, my son called us and said that he was being held in the central prison in Mukalla, then he started crying and ended the call. We could not even know the conditions of his detention. It was the last time we heard from him. We tried to visit him at the central prison in Mukalla, which is about 700 kilometers away, but they did not allow us.<sup>36>></sup>

The prison administration allowed the first visit to the detained child in late August. On December 29, 2022, the Specialized Criminal Court issued an acquittal verdict. Yet, the prosecution appealed the verdict.

On Thursday, May 12, 2022, around 10:00 a.m., five armed individuals, dressed in civilian clothing and driving a military vehicle, who were affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, forcibly arrested a 35-year-old civilian in front of his farm in Al-Durayhimi District, Hudaydah Governorate.



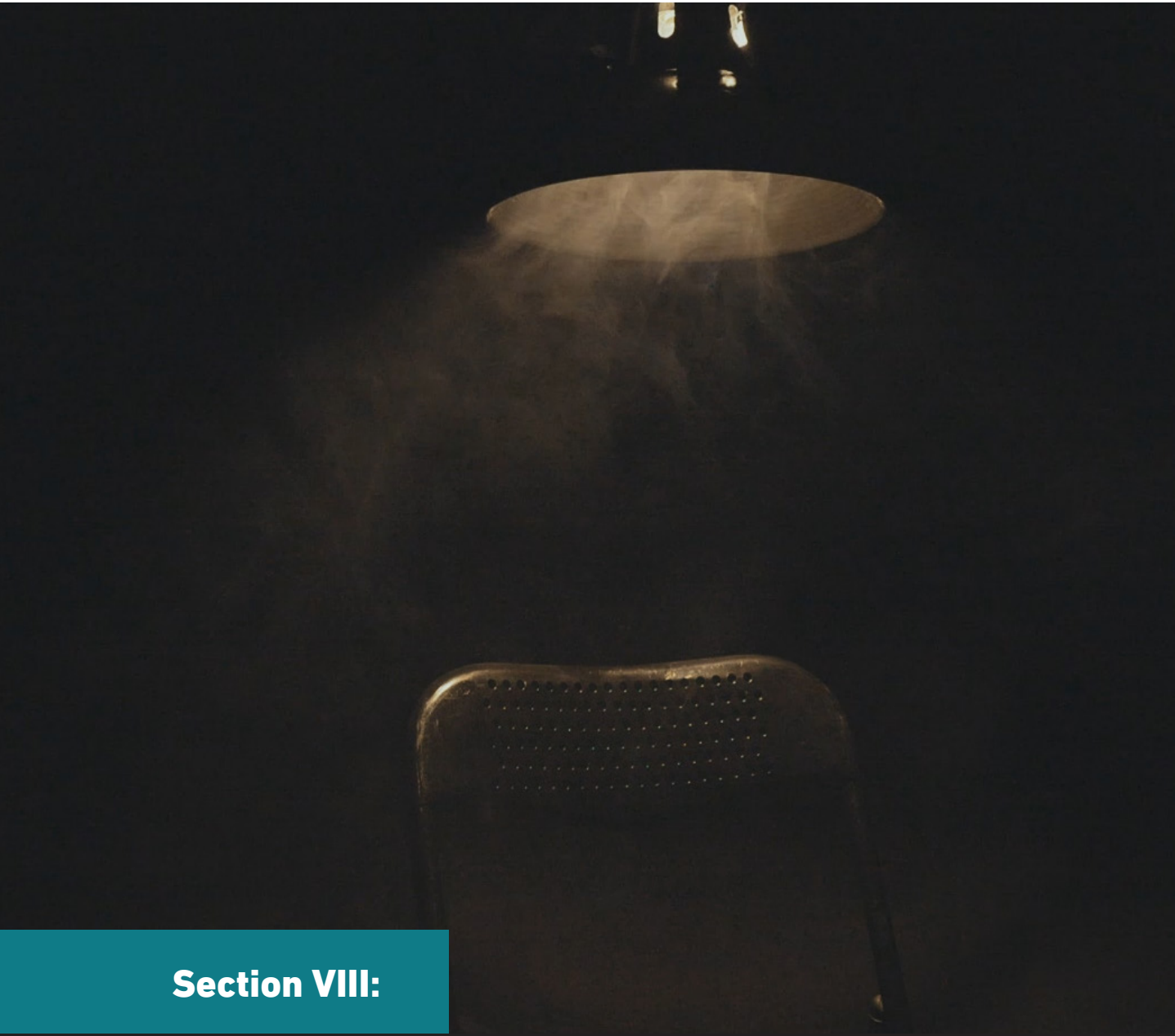
The victim was taken to a nearby security checkpoint and subsequently to the prison of the district's Security Office on charges of filming sites under the group's control. The victim was forcibly disappeared for four days, during which he was denied communication with his family until his release on Sunday, May 15, 2022.

The victim said to Mwatana,

«During the war, I was displaced to Hudaydah city, and after the Joint Forces left Al-Durayhimi, we waited a while to be allowed to visit our homes and farmlands. Despite the landmines planted in the area, I decided to visit my farm. When I reached my farm, I found that the war had changed everything. However, it was less damaged than my neighbor's farm. I grabbed my mobile phone and took some pictures of the damage to the farm. As soon as I left the farm, I was arrested.»

The victim continued recounting his detention and enforced disappearance,

“They took my mobile phone and did not allow me to call my wife to tell her where I was being held and what had happened to me. I knew very well that my wife was helpless and had no relatives to contact to follow up on my situation and secure my release. She didn't even know where I was taken. So, all she could do was wait at home, consumed by worry. On the fourth day of detention, one of the prison guards opened the door of the cell and said, ‘Come on, get up, you are being released.’ It was the happiest moment in my life.<sup>37</sup>”



**Section VIII:**

**Torture**

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In 2022, Mwatana documented the torture of 64 civilian victims, including five children and one woman. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group bears responsibility for torturing 17 victims. Government forces and pro-government forces are responsible for the torture of 14 civilians, three of whom died as a result of torture in detention centers. The forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council are responsible for torturing 14 civilian victims, three of whom died as a result of torture in detention centers. Additionally, seven migrants were tortured and killed within Saudi territory. Forces of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition tortured nine civilians, while the Shabwah Defense Forces tortured two victims, and the Hadhrami Elite Forces tortured one civilian victim.

Mwatana documented various methods of torture and ill-treatment by the conflicting parties, including severe beatings with whips 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 cases of individuals being denied necessary medical care after being injured due to torture and ill-treatment.

The continued practice of torture in detention facilities 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 accountable.

## Legal Framework

International humanitarian law and international human rights law prohibit torture and other cruel, 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 Forms of 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. In 1991, Yemen ratified the Convention against Torture.

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 the civilian population.

## Examples:

On Thursday, August 4, 2022, at approximately 5:30 p.m., in Zinjibar District, Abyan Governorate, two soldiers belonging to forces of the internationally recognized government arrested the child Ahmed Sadiq (a pseudonym, 14 years old) at his home. The child was taken to the police station, interrogated, and tortured on charges of theft.

Ahmed told Mwatana,

«They had no evidence, yet they insulted me and beat me with a water hose and a military belt – it was very strong and painful. I screamed at the top of my voice, begging them to spare me, but they showed no mercy, and the beatings intensified as if I were a dangerous criminal.<sup>38»</sup>

The victim was released two days after being detained and tortured.

In April 2022, around 10:00 p.m., in Maghrib Ans District, Dhamar Governorate, Ali bin Mohammed (a pseudonym, 33 years old) was arrested at his home by eight armed individuals in a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up) who were affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group. He was assaulted with rifle butts. Ali was detained in a detention center run by the Security Office in the district. On the second day, he was transferred to the Political Security Prison in Dhamar, where he was tortured with beatings using sticks and threatened with execution until he would confess to recruiting fighters and sending them to government forces in Marib Governorate. His family was not allowed to visit him until after one month of his detention.

Ali (33 years old) told Mwatana,

«When I asked them about the reason for my arrest, they would tell me to shut up, calling me a traitor and mercenary. They interrogated me multiple times, beating me with sticks on my feet and torturing me to force me to confess. But I resisted the pain and denied all their baseless charges.<sup>39»</sup>

After two months of arbitrary detention and torture, he was released following the intervention of a local community leader.

38 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on August 10, 2022.

39 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on September 23, 2022.



In January 2022, around 7:00 p.m., in Dar Saad District, Aden Governorate, two masked fighters wearing military uniforms, aboard a military vehicle (Toyota/pick-up) and affiliated with forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, arrested Qasim Mohammed (a pseudonym, 21 years old) close to his residence on charges of selling banned substances. Qasim was detained for eight days at a police station in the governorate and was tortured until he lost consciousness before being handed over to his family.

The victim's mother (53 years old) told Mwatana,

«When I visited my son for the first time, I saw marks of beatings on his body. There was a green spot beside his left eye, and his right shoulder was reddish. When I tried to touch my son, he screamed loudly and said, "Oh mother, my whole body hurts," and tears filled his eyes. He said, "I swear to God, mother, I haven't done anything."

The mother added,

«The day they released my son, I went to visit him, but the soldiers told me he was in the hospital. I collapsed at that moment, screaming, "They killed my son, they killed my son." I learned from one of the soldiers that he was beaten the previous night until he lost consciousness. I waited at the police station, and in the evening, they brought him to me and said, "Take your son and go, we apologize for what happened, it was just a suspicion, and your son is innocent."<sup>40</sup>



**Section IX:**

**Sexual Violence**

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During the year 2022, Mwatana documented 25 cases of sexual violence. Eleven girls, six boys, and one adult woman were raped, while three girls and four boys experienced attempted rape, with one of them being shot for refusing. Government forces are responsible for seven cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Shabwah, Hadramawt, and Taiz. Sudanese forces committed nine cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Hajjah. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for four cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Al Hudaydah and Ibb. Forces of the Southern Transitional Council committed three cases of sexual violence in the governorates of Shabwah, Aden, and Abyan. Additionally, the forces of the Giants Brigades are responsible for two incidents of sexual violence in Abyan Governorate.

On October 23, 2022, Mwatana released a public statement regarding incidents of sexual violence committed by Sudanese forces in the border Governorate of Hajjah<sup>41</sup>.

Given the ongoing 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 often face ostracism from their families and local communities after experiencing sexual violence. They are often blamed for what is considered a loss of honor.

In many cases, survivors and their families do not report crimes of sexual violence due to fear of the security authorities and the forces to which the 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 sexual violence and rape, which may amount to a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

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41 <https://www.mwatana.org/posts-en/sexual-violence-in-hajjah>.



**Section X:**

## **Attacks on Schools**



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In 2022, Mwatana documented at least 141 incidents of attacks on schools or the use of schools for military purposes in Yemen. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group is responsible for 126 incidents of these incidents, including three drone strikes, a ground attack, and the bombing of a school. Government forces are responsible for nine incidents. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition committed two incidents involving air strikes on schools. In addition, forces of the Giants Brigades in Shabwah are responsible for two incidents, including a ground attack, while the Joint Forces committed one incident in Hudaydah, and forces of the Southern Transitional Council one incident.

During 2022, there was a noticeable escalation in the number of attacks on schools due to intensified campaigns for mobilization and recruitment of children in educational institutions. The parties to the conflict in Yemen caused severe damage to schools and educational facilities, resulting in casualties and injuries among 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. Battles in various areas led to many schools falling within conflict zones.

Moreover, schools have been repeatedly occupied and used for military and combat purposes, including as military barracks, detention centers, places to shelter and supply fighters, or centers for mobilization and recruitment.

## 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 to the conflict must distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives at all times and refrain from launching attacks that have a disproportionate impact on civilian objects. In cases of doubt, warring parties must assume that targets are civilian objects.

UN Security Council Resolution 2225/2015 on children in armed conflict 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 endangers students, teachers, and administrators by turning schools into targets of attack and disrupting education.

## Examples:

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, at around 3:00 a.m., Al-Sayyad Elementary School for Boys and Girls in Makram village, Kamran District, Al Hudaydah Governorate, was bombed with three missiles by Saudi/UAE-led coalition warplanes. The school was completely destroyed as a result of the attack. The school used to accommodate approximately 100 male and female students. The premises of the school consisted of eight classrooms, along with administrative offices and two restrooms.

One of the village residents (34 years old) told Mwatana,

«While we were sleeping, we heard three loud and consecutive explosions. I thought it was Judgment Day due to the intensity of the blasts and the glowing light that covered the village. The only school in our village had been leveled to the ground.<sup>42</sup>»

On Thursday, May 26, 2022, at around 8:00 a.m., forces of the internationally recognized government stormed the building of Shibam Governmental Kindergarten for Children in New Shibam District, Hadhramout Governorate. They converted the kindergarten into a security office and detention center, after constructing additional buildings inside the premises. The kindergarten's building used to have eight classrooms and administrative offices, accommodating about 130 children.

An eyewitness (35 years old) stated to Mwatana,

«They took advantage of the building being empty during the summer vacation and occupied it by force! We condemned the action, but they did not respond to our condemnation. The community members are unable to challenge or oppose these actions due to the overwhelming power of the military in the region. They have militarized our lives, and now they are militarizing the lives of our children.<sup>43</sup>»

- On Wednesday, August 3, 2022, at approximately 3:00 p.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group used three classrooms of the Abdullah Manna' Basic and Secondary School for Boys in Ahma At-Talh village, Sahar District of Saada Governorate, as a base for its militants. The school has 24 classrooms, a laboratory, and administrative offices, accommodating about 800 students.

42 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with one of the village residents, on March 31, 2022.

43 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on December 25, 2022.

An eyewitness (50 years old) stated to Mwatana,

« I feel furious towards the supervisor of the Houthis in the area, who turned a school, where the best students of Saada are, into a military base.<sup>44</sup>»





**Section XI:**

## **Attacks on Health Care**

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In 2022, Mwatana documented 35 incidents that adversely impacted the health sector. These incidents included eight air strike attacks in Amanat Al Asimah, Shabwa, Hudaydah, and Al Jawf governorates, one ground attack that caused damage to a medical facility, two instances of live-bullet shootings resulting in injuries to two male and female health workers, one attempted assassination of a medical doctor, six cases of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture of eight health workers, and one physical assault against a medical doctor.

Of these incidents, government forces are responsible for 14 incidents, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group for nine incidents, Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces for eight incidents, the Southern Transitional Council for three incidents, and the Joint Forces on the West Coast for one incident. The warring parties in Yemen have repeatedly targeted the already dilapidated health sector during a time of extremely dire humanitarian conditions, particularly with the spread of 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, including from harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention. Parties to a conflict must allow and facilitate the rapid passage of humanitarian aid, not arbitrarily interfere with it, and ensure the free movement of humanitarian workers, 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, materials, 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 attack if used outside their humanitarian functions 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 Monday, February 28, 2022, at approximately 11:00 p.m., armed militants affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group stormed a hospital in Hajjah Governorate. The incident caused panic among the health care staff and patients, who thought that the hospital was being evacuated because it might be the target of air strikes by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition. As a result, 908 male and female patients were evacuated from all hospital wards, and around 1,315 Doctors Without Borders employees had to stop working. The hospital remained under the control of the armed group until March 5, 2022.

An eyewitness (35 years old) recounted to Mwatana,

«I arrived on that day from Hudaydah Governorate for my wife's delivery at the hospital. After my wife delivered the baby, the nurse informed me that my wife had given birth to a girl but was suffering from bleeding and needed to stay at the hospital for another day. At 11:00 p.m., I heard people screaming that the coalition's warplanes were about to strike! All shops closed, and all cars parked in front of the hospital had left.»

The eyewitness continued narrating his ordeal,

«A female doctor came out of the hospital and asked me to take my wife out of the hospital. There were no cars available, and I didn't know anyone in Abs city. I was worried about my wife as she was bleeding, and I was also afraid of the air strikes. I was desperate, knowing not what to do. There was a small passage between the hospital and a shop, so I spread a blanket, distributed by the Doctors Without Borders organization, for my wife and newborn daughter to sleep on, and I stayed to guard them until morning.<sup>45</sup>»

On Thursday, June 16, 2022, at approximately 7:00 p.m., armed groups affiliated with forces of the internationally recognized government entered the operations room at Al-Thawra General Hospital in Salh District, Taiz Governorate. They alleged that the doctors had not adequately treated their injured fighters, causing panic among the medical staff, and leading to the closure of the operations building for two days. This also resulted in depriving dozens of patients of receiving essential health care services.

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A medical staff member (37 years old) shared with Mwatana,

«Seven military vehicles stormed the hospital, and they entered the operations building with their weapons. They violently broke the doors and windows of one of the operating rooms and the anesthesia room, and verbally assaulted the health care workers. Fortunately, there was a back door, and most of us managed to escape through it and avoid their brutality.<sup>46</sup>»

On Friday, January 6, 2022, at approximately 5:00 p.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition's warplanes struck with a single bomb Mawkas Health Center in the Mawkas village, Biyahan District, Shabwah Governorate. The attack resulted in the complete destruction of the Center's warehouses and part of its western fence. This incident led to the shutdown of health services at the Center for eight days. The Mawkas Health Center consisted of several wards, including emergency care, maternity care, inpatient care, laboratory, and vaccination.

An eyewitness (37 years old) stated to Mwatana,

«The health center receives on a daily basis around 20 to 40 cases, most of whom are children. The health center provides health care services to approximately 4,000 civilians.<sup>47</sup>»

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46 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a health worker, on June 20, 2022.

47 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with an eyewitness, on June 5, 2022.



## **Section XII:**

# **Other Attacks on Civilians**

In 2022, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 23 incidents where civilians were run over by military vehicles, resulting in the death of 17 civilians, including nine children, and injuring 26 civilians, including 12 children and three women. The forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council bear responsibility for eight of these incidents in the governorates of Aden and Abyan, while the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group are responsible for six incidents in the governorates of Ibb, Hajjah, and Dhamar. Forces of the internationally recognized government are responsible for four incidents in the governorates of Marib and Shabwah. Additionally, four incidents were committed by Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces in the Governorate of Hajjah, and one incident by a migrant smuggling gang.

Furthermore, in the year 2022, Mwatana documented the killing of 57 civilians by live ammunition, including 18 children and three women, and the injuring of 157 civilians, including 65 children and 17 women.

## Examples:

On Monday, August 8, 2022, at around 11:00 a.m., a civilian (50 years old) was killed by the gunfire of the internationally recognized government forces while he was driving his car with three other civilians in Al-Nasb Street in the Al-Thaqafa neighborhood of Ataq city, Shabwah Governorate. The bullet penetrated the victim's chest from the left side, and for three hours no one was able to provide immediate assistance to the victim because of ongoing shooting in the area.

On Tuesday, July 26, 2022, at approximately 11:30 p.m., clashes occurred between two factions belonging to the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces, resulting in a 17-year-old child being injured while sitting with his friends in their neighborhood in Dar Saad District, Aden Governorate. The bullet penetrated the victim's back and remained lodged there. He was then taken to a Doctors Without Borders hospital for initial treatment. After an X-ray was taken, it was found that the bullet was located directly under his heart. As a result, the doctors were unable to perform surgery on the victim at that time.

On Saturday, January 8, 2022, at around 3:30 p.m., in Al-Berman hamlet, Az Zahir District, Al-Bayda Governorate, persons at a checkpoint of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group opened fire on a medium-sized transport bus (Hiace model, old version) driven by a child (12 years old) with his father. The child was injured as the bullet penetrated his lower back from the left side, tearing a part of his intestines and lodging in his abdomen.





## **Section XIII:**

# **Attacks on African Migrants**



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In 2022, Mwatana documented at least 29 incidents of violations committed against African migrants, resulting in the death of at least eight migrants and injuring at least 25 others, including 15 children and women. Saudi border guards are responsible for 13 incidents, while the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) is responsible for nine incidents. Government forces committed three incidents, and human trafficking and smuggling gangs committed four incidents. The violations against migrants primarily involved the use of live ammunition and ground shelling, especially on the Saudi-Yemeni borders, in addition to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture.

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

In September 2022, Mwatana issued a statement about the discovery of seven dead bodies of migrants near an unofficial detention center on Saudi territory<sup>48</sup>.

## 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 UN 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."

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48 <https://www.mwatana.org/posts/migrants-bodies>

## Some Examples:

On Thursday, March 31, 2022, at approximately 3:00 a.m., a soldier from the forces of the internationally recognized government opened fire on two Ethiopian migrants on Sixty Street in Ataq city, Shabwah Governorate, seriously injuring them.

One of the Ethiopian migrants (20 years old) stated to Mwatana,

«My friend and I were sleeping on pieces of cardboard in front of the Capital Hotel in Ataq, like every day, because they give us food. Suddenly, someone woke us up. He was wearing a military uniform with a weapon pointed at us, and next to him were two other people in civilian clothes.»

The Ethiopian migrant added,

«The soldier demanded that we give him the money we had. We raised our hands, and the other two individuals searched us, taking our money and mobile phones. When I resisted, the soldier fired shots in front of us to frighten us, but the bullets rebounded off the ground and injured us.<sup>49</sup>»

On Thursday, May 12, 2022, at approximately 4:30 a.m., Saudi border guards launched a projectile at Wadi Al Gheel, near the border market of Al-Raqo in Monabbih District, Saada Governorate, causing injuries to a 16-year-old Ethiopian migrant who was attempting to cross the border to work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

An eyewitness (27 years old) told Mwatana,

«Two Ethiopian migrants, along with a third injured person, came to Al-Raqo market and asked me to take them to Al Salam Hospital in Saada. I rushed in my car as I was familiar with the border market and Saudi borders, where firing can be random and arbitrary, sometimes with bullets and other times with mortars.»

The witness continued,

«The tragedies don't stop at the Saudi border in Al-Raqo market area, with killings, injuries, and arrests. This incident is just one example of what

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Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with one of the victims (with an interpreter), on April 5, 2022.

happens here, as many others have died and decayed in the Saudi border valleys and ravines.<sup>50</sup>»

On Thursday, September 1, 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group recruited a 17-year-old Ethiopian girl in Al Mawasila village, Monabbih District, Saada Governorate. She received 20-day training on using weapons and guarding prisons before she managed to escape to the Saudi-Yemeni border area at Al-Raqo market, in northern Saada, Monabbih District. There she was shot by Saudi border guards. She was then taken to Al Salam Hospital in Saada for medical treatment. Afterwards, she was detained for one month in a private prison called garden prison run by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group.

The Ethiopian girl (17 years old) told Mwatana,

«After 20 days of training, I fled to the main street during lunchtime when no one was around. A person secretly picked me up in a car and took me to Dhihyan District. He met a member of one of the smuggling gangs. When I told him my story, he almost cried and gave me 2,000 Saudi riyals. Then I went to Al-Raqo border market. On September 23, I was shot in my left leg by Saudi border guards.»

The Ethiopian girl continued her ordeal,

«I was taken to Al Salam Hospital in Saada for treatment. I knew I would be arrested, but at that moment, I only wanted to survive. Afterward, I was detained for a month in the Garden Prison in Saada city, where I experienced all sorts of torment. Later, they released me in exchange for 1,500 Saudi riyals, which was all the money I had left.<sup>51</sup>»

Throughout 2022, the parties to the conflict continued to subject journalists to arbitrary

50 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with a witness, on August 18, 2022.

51 Interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights with the victim, on November 27, 2022.

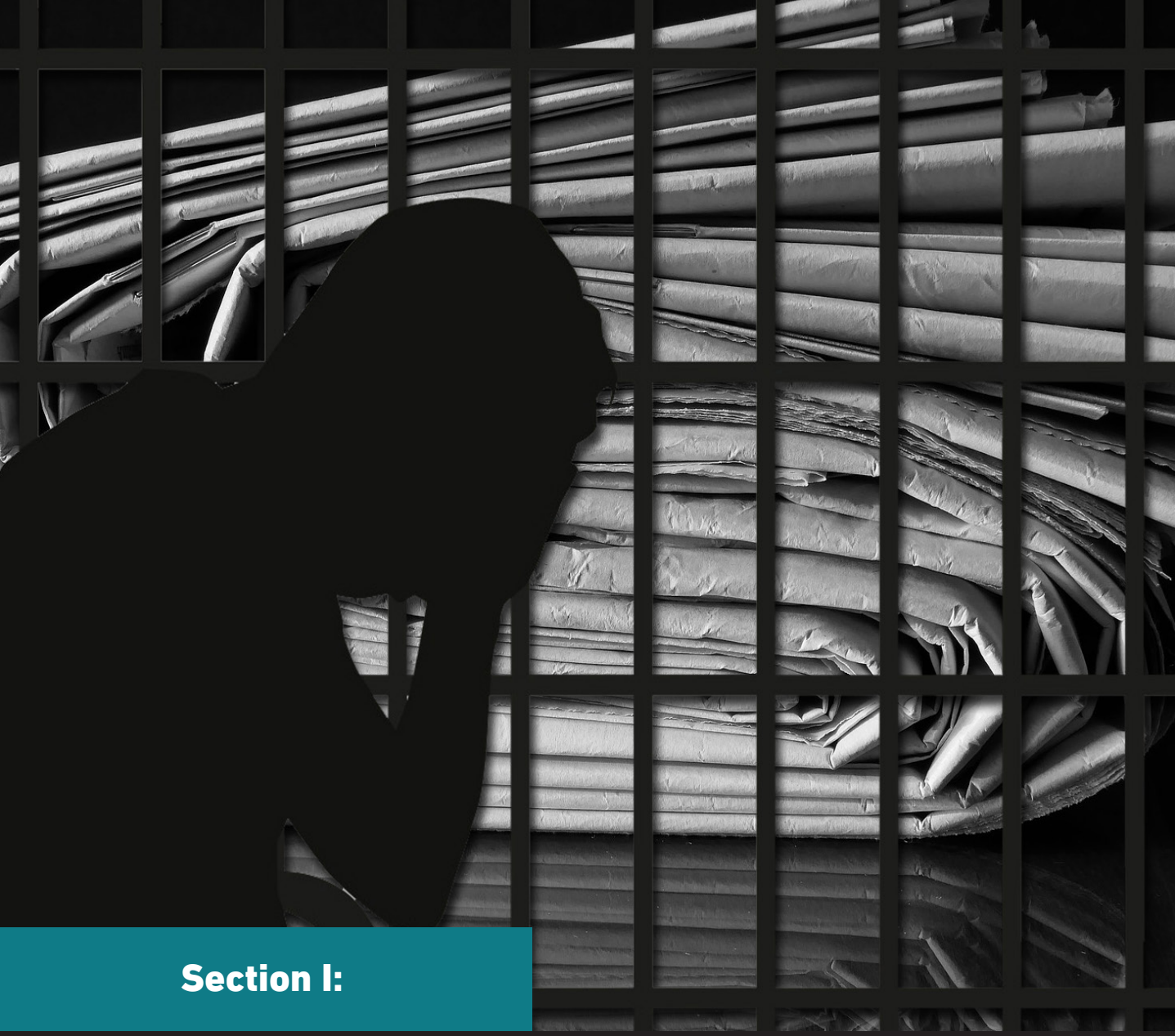




## Chapter III:

# Undermining Rights and Freedoms





**Section I:**

**Press and Freedom of Expression**

detention, enforced disappearance, and various forms of inhumane treatment and torture. Mwatana documented 10 incidents that affected 16 journalists and media workers. The Giants Brigades forces in Shabwah are responsible for the arbitrary detention of seven journalists. Forces of the internationally recognized government bear responsibility for the arbitrary arrest of four journalists and the physical assault of one journalist. Additionally, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group arbitrarily arrested four journalists and media workers.

In 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group continued to arbitrarily detain four journalists<sup>52</sup>. These journalists were sentenced to death in an unfair trial at the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a in April 2020. The journalist Waheed Al-Soufi has been forcibly disappeared since 2015.

Many press and news websites are still blocked by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group, which controls Yemen's Internet provider, «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 UN 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."<sup>53</sup>

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52 They were released on April 16, 2023, in what was called a "prisoner exchange deal," see: <https://rsf.org/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%AB%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B2>

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

## Some Examples:

During the second half of December 2022, forces of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group arrested four social media activists in Sana'a for criticizing the deteriorating living conditions. On Wednesday, January 11, 2023, the first court hearings of these four activists began at the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a on charges of incitement and disrupting public order. On March 23, 2023, the court handed down various prison sentences, with a maximum of three years, in addition to shutting down their social media channels and imposing a fine of approximately 10 million Yemeni rials on each of them. Fifteen days after the verdicts were issued, forces of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group released three of the activists on the pretext of a pardon from the Supreme Political Council, while the fourth activist was not covered by the pardon.

On Monday, June 6, 2022, at around 10:30 a.m., six soldiers affiliated with internationally recognized government forces assaulted a journalist (33 years old) on the public street – Sixty Street – in Ataq, the center of Shabwah Governorate, while filming a demonstration of general security soldiers demanding payment of their overdue salaries, which took place in front of the General Security Office.

The journalist (33 years old) said,

«The soldiers attacked me without any warning, hitting me with their hands and rifle butts. One of them asked, "Who allowed you to film? Give me your phone." I tried to distance myself from them, and the protesters helped me and protected me from them. Then, two of the protesters pulled me away and told me to get in my car and leave.<sup>54</sup>»

On Thursday, June 16, 2022, at around 5:00 p.m., forces of the UAE-backed Giants Brigades arrested six media professionals in the Al-Shabika area, Ataq District, Shabwah Governorate, while they were shooting a film about the governorate for tourism purposes. The media professionals were detained in Mura camp which is a military camp, which is affiliated with the Giants, for two days before they were released. Their mobile phones and all filming equipment were confiscated.



## **Freedom of Movement**



During the years of war, Yemen witnessed various incidents that affected civilians' right to freedom of movement. All parties to the conflict have infringed on the movement of civilians as a means of control and subjected them to additional arbitrary restrictions that exacerbate their suffering. Warring parties have imposed restrictions on the right to movement for various reasons, including discrimination against civilians because of their geographic and political affiliation, as well as extortion, unlawful gain, and the imposition of unlawful fees.

In 2022, Mwatana documented 10 incidents in which parties to the conflict imposed restrictions on civilians' freedom of movement in different areas of Yemen. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group bears responsibility for all these incidents. In this context, the Houthi armed group prohibited women, especially female workers in organizations, from traveling without the presence of a "mahram" (a male guardian of her family) through Sana'a Airport. They also required the permission of a guardian for any land travel between governorates.

## 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."<sup>55</sup>

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."<sup>56</sup> While the Covenant permits the imposition of some restrictions during conflict, any restrictions must be exceptional and of a limited and temporary nature.

## Some Examples:

On Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at around 9:00 a.m., a citizen named Haider Ahmed (a pseudonym, 35 years old) was detained at Al-Safra checkpoint of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group in Majzar District, Al Jawf Governorate, while traveling from Sana'a Governorate to Hadhramout Governorate. He was held for 48 hours before being released.

Haider (35 years old) said to Mwatana,

«At the checkpoint, one of the soldiers asked for our identification cards. After five minutes, he returned the ID cards to the other passengers but didn't return mine. He asked me to step out of the car, and the driver to continue towards his destination. When I asked him the reason, he said, "You are enlisted with the aggression forces." I remained detained at the

<sup>55</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13, para. 1.

<sup>56</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12, para. 1.



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checkpoint until 5:00 p.m.. After that, I was transferred to the Security Office of Al Hazm District, and they released me after two days. They told me, "You can go, we didn't find anything against you!" This is not the first time I've been detained.»

Haider had twice before experienced similar incidents of detention and confinement by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group. The first incident took place on December 5, 2020, at a security checkpoint located at the entrance to Al Hazm city, Al Jawf Governorate, while Haider was traveling from Marib Governorate to Sana'a Governorate. He was held for three days without any charges being brought against him. The second incident of detention occurred on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at a security checkpoint in Al Jawbah District, Marib Governorate; he was detained for one day and one night.

Haider additionally told Mwatana,

«People are detained merely because they are from a certain area or tribe. I have suffered from this arbitrariness, and I hope this strange phenomenon disappears from our society<sup>57</sup>.»

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group continued to target women through oppressive practices



### **Section III:**

## **Personal Freedoms of Women**

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that restrict their freedom and rights. The year 2022 witnessed an increase in such practices, as the authorities of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group strictly imposed the presence of a mahram for female workers during field visits or travel between Yemeni cities. Additionally, the group banned women from traveling in general through Sana'a International Airport, which had been closed for years, unless accompanied by a mahram.

The directives issued by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group prohibiting women from traveling without a mahram are sent directly to transportation companies, car rental agencies, and checkpoints. However, Mwatana was able to see written directives issued by the group to land transport companies and car rental agencies, containing instructions to prevent the movement of women without a mahram. Mwatana also reviewed a traffic permit issued in 2022 by the Houthi's Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and International Cooperation (known as SCMCHA), which includes the names of a female employee and her brother as her companion (mahram).

Requiring the presence of a mahram during a woman's travel also has negative effects and repercussions on other rights of women, such as their rights to work, equal opportunities, access health care, education and training, and family reunification.

Mwatana conducted more than 20 interviews with women who were detained for hours, subjected to questioning, investigation, intrusive searches, and humiliation, had their passports confiscated, and were prevented from traveling. The interviewed women unanimously stated that the authorities of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group deliberately tarnish the reputation of female workers in organizations. They also expressed disappointment in the absence of public support and pressure from international organizations, including the UN, to take more serious actions against these arbitrary and discriminatory measures.

Samah Ali (a pseudonym, 40 years old) was one of those women who suffered from these arbitrary measures. In late December 2022, Samah got the opportunity to participate in a health care training outside Yemen. She needed to travel through Aden International Airport. As Ansar Allah (the Houthis) prohibited women from traveling without a mahram, her father had to go to the Houthi-run Ministry of Interior to obtain a travel permit for her. However, they refused to grant him the permit unless he provided them with copies of the IDs of the family members she would stay with in Aden. Despite providing everything they asked for, they still denied giving him a permit for his daughter, causing Samah to miss the opportunity for training and qualification.

At the end of 2022, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group also placed more emphasis on women's clothing and imposed restrictions and conditions under the guise of "Yemeni identity." The group had a meeting with the owners of several women's Abaya sewing shops in the capital, Sana'a, and set conditions and restrictions on the appropriate colors, design, and lengths of Abayas.

On March 8, 2022, Mwatana issued a statement addressing several measures carried out by the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) to undermine women's rights, including their right to access reproductive health services in some of their controlled areas and their right to freedom of movement<sup>58</sup>.



58 "Ansar Allah (Houthi) Group Practices Gravely Undermine Women's Rights: 'Moments of Hell !,'" Mwatana for Human Rights, March 8, 2022, <https://www.mwatana.org/posts-en/undermine-women>.





# Recommendations



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## To the Member States of the United Nations:

- Support the efforts of the United Nations' Special Envoy for Yemen to renew the truce and achieve a comprehensive and permanent cessation of hostilities, ensuring accountability and redress for serious violations and crimes under international law.
- Sustain continuous support for 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 case files, and map civilian harm, to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings and lay the groundwork for credible reparations to civilian victims.

## To the United Nations Security Council:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire in and across Yemen, supporting the efforts of the United Nations' Special Envoy for Yemen to renew the ceasefire and achieve a comprehensive cessation of hostilities, 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 delivery of humanitarian aid, and in support of a political process as the only viable path to resolve 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.
- Put pressure on the parties to the conflict to engage in a process of unconditional exchange of all civilian detainees affected by the war.

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## **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 or 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 forward 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:**

- Actively contribute to the United Nations-led talks to renew the ceasefire in Yemen.
- 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

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by smuggling and trafficking 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 Southern Transitional Council on the freedom of movement of African migrants, and the practice of arbitrary detention against them.

## **To the Ansar Allah (Houthi) 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.

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## To the Internationally Recognized Government 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 that 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 United States of America, 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.















# Tragedy until further notice

## The Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2022

At the completion of the eighth year of armed conflict in Yemen, the year 2022 did not bring good news for Yemenis. There were no signs of an end to the war, except for a fragile six-month truce marked by various violations and abuses committed by all parties involved in the conflict. Yemenis faced another year of horrifying violations, amid the ongoing collapse of state institutions in favor of armed groups affiliated with different regional powers

In this annual report, Mwatana for Human Rights provides a comprehensive review of violations that constitute violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the parties to the conflict. The report also provides the human rights situation in Yemen during 2022. Throughout this year, Mwatana, which covers most Yemeni governorates, documented 1,283 incidents resulting in the death of 390 civilians, including 132 children and 21 women, and injury of 920 civilians, including 411 children and 71 women. Mwatana also documented 561 cases of enforced disappearances, arrests, and torture of civilians

The incidents and patterns covered in this report serve as prominent examples of the human rights violations documented by Mwatana for Human Rights during 2022. They do not represent an exhaustive account of all the incidents and patterns that occurred in Yemen during the same year. Mwatana for Human Rights remains committed to documenting the various violations that have occurred since the beginning of 2023

Mwatana for Human Rights conducted field investigative research to draft this report. The investigations involved direct inspections of the sites where attacks and incidents took place, as well as in-depth interviews with witnesses, relatives of victims, survivors, doctors, and human rights workers. Throughout 2022, Mwatana's team also examined documents, evidence, photographs, videos, and other physical evidence, from January to December 2022. The report was also reviewed and edited by experts in the field of international humanitarian law between May 2023 and August 2023



**Mwatana**  
for Human Rights