

Fields of Death

Civilian victims of landmine incidents 2016 - 2024

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November 2024



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Glossary

Ottawa Convention	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
CCW	Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.
Protocol II of the CCW	Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices.
Rome Statute	Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child.
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross.
UN	United Nations.
The Houthis	Ansar Allah.
UAE	United Arab Emirates.
IRG forces	Internationally Recognized Government Forces.
STC	Southern Transitional Council





Executive Summary

The “Fields of Death” report, prepared by Mwatana from June 2023 to the end of April 2024, reviews the direct and indirect effects resulting from the use of landmines in the current Yemeni conflict. It highlights the massive scale of landmine proliferation and the nature of the locations where they have been planted. The report addresses the impact of this violation, which becomes increasingly dangerous and harmful as military operations decrease and many internally displaced persons (IDPs) return to their homes. This is a pattern of violation with long-lasting effects, potentially extending for decades after military operations cease, if responsible authorities do not take effective measures to clear and secure the mined areas with determination and responsibility. The “Fields of Death” report is divided into four main chapters, in addition to the introduction, methodology, and recommendations.

The first chapter of the report provides an overview of the armed conflict in Yemen, its origin, development, and the current humanitarian situation. It also offers a historical perspective on the use of landmines within the Yemeni context and describes various efforts by some entities to remove these indiscriminate weapons. The chapter concludes with a summary of prohibitions and bans on the use of landmines, particularly anti-personnel mines, under international law.

The second chapter discusses the direct effects of landmine usage, such as death and injury, as well as the indirect effects, including starvation, restricted movement, psychological impacts, and the hindrance of displaced residents’ return to their homes.

In the third and fourth chapters, the report reviews the mine-contaminated governorates, beginning with the most affected, Al-Hudaydah Governorate, and concluding with Ibb Governorate. These chapters include a general description of each governorate, the military landscape, the extent of landmine proliferation, and their impact on the population and public life. Additionally, both chapters present several documented examples of violations in each governorate.

The structure of the report is based on 512 landmine incidents documented by the Mwatana team from January 2016 to March 2024 across 14 governorates: Al-Hudaydah, Taiz, Al-Jawf, Hajjah, Marib, Al-Bayda, Sana’a, Al-Dhale, Lahij, Saada, Shabwah, Abyan, Aden, and Ibb. During this period, 1054 interviews were conducted. According to the report’s findings, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 96% of the documented incidents, while 4% or fewer are attributed to other parties.

The report shows a concentration of landmines in areas controlled or previously controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations directed at the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, other parties to the conflict, non-governmental organizations, the international community, and entities involved in mine clearance.

The report addresses the issue of landmines, specifically both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, but primarily focuses on anti-personnel mines due to their widespread presence in Yemeni regions. The legal framework referenced is based on the Ottawa Convention concerning anti-personnel mines only, while the Conventional Weapons Convention is referenced regarding anti-vehicle mines. Overall, the report relies on various rules and principles of international humanitarian law.

512

Landmine incidents

January 2016 - March 2024

14

Governorates

4% Other parties



96% The Ansar Allah
(Houthi) group





Introduction

Landmines represent one of the most severe and widespread forms of human rights violations. Despite their use as both a concept and a weapon of war dating back to the pre-medieval era, continuous advancements in their manufacturing have produced various types differing in precision, range, and impact. The military industry has long focused on developing these deadly devices, leading to an array of lethal varieties that have become a staple in numerous conflicts around the world. Even with the establishment of laws and regulations aimed at banning or at least restricting the use of such weapons, they continue to be deployed extensively in different regions worldwide. Yemen, in particular, has not escaped the legacy of intermittent conflicts from the late 20th century, only to find itself embroiled in a new conflict that has transformed vast areas of its land into fields of death. The indiscriminate and brutal planting of landmines has wreaked havoc, disregarding their long-term effects on civilians, nature of life, and livelihoods.

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Yemen, landmines have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians and forced hundreds of survivors to live with disabilities that have robbed them of the ability and right to live a normal life. These landmines have left indelible scars on their memories and inflicted tragedies beyond comprehension. Most of these victims are children who were never given the chance to know or aspire to a safe life, with their dreams crushed before they could even begin.

The “Fields of Death” report aims to shed light on the scale of landmine-related violations documented by Mwatana from 2016 to March 2024. It examines the direct and indirect impacts of these violations, the planting and use of landmines throughout the current conflict, and identifies the responsible parties and the criminal liability associated with the use of landmines, particularly anti-personnel mines, in the armed conflict. Additionally, the report highlights Yemen’s obligations as a State party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.¹

The report will, in part, focus on the governorates most heavily contaminated with landmines, highlighting several instances of violations in each governorate to briefly illustrate the nature of these patterns and the predominant locations where landmines have been planted. Additionally, through a series of recommendations, the report will outline the key measures and actions needed to mitigate the impacts of these violations, provide justice for the victims, address the conditions of the affected groups, hold perpetrators accountable, and establish sufficient and effective safeguards to prevent the recurrence of such violations.

This report addresses the issue of landmines, specifically both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, but primarily focuses on anti-personnel mines due to their widespread presence in Yemeni regions.

1 Yemen signed the Ottawa Convention on 4 December 1997, ratified it on September 1, 1998, and entered into force on 1 March 1999. <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/states-parties/yemen/>

A photograph of a red crane arm and a concrete structure. The crane arm is red and extends from the top left towards the center. The concrete structure is light gray and has some dark markings on it. The word "Methodology" is overlaid in white text on a dark gray rectangular background at the bottom center. The background shows a clear blue sky and some distant structures.

Methodology

The findings of this report are based on interviews conducted by Mwatana's field team, consisting of researchers across various governorates. The team conducted 1054 interviews with primary sources, including survivors, victims' families and friends. The methodology also includes field investigations and in-depth research carried out by the team from 2016 to March 2024. This includes field visits to various areas, including closed and high-risk areas, to examine incident sites and violations. Additionally, hundreds of supporting documents, such as medical reports, identification documents, testimonies, photographs, and videos, were scrutinized at multiple levels for accuracy.

From January 1 to 4, 2024, Mwatana held a training workshop in Sana'a for its field research team. The workshop covered various human rights violations, the locations of mined areas, and the prevalence of landmines in each governorate.

Mwatana for Human Rights has a field team operating in 20 governorates. The team regularly undergoes intensive and diverse training on methods of verification and documentation of human rights violations. They employ rigorous verification techniques, and the information they gather undergoes thorough scrutiny and review at multiple levels by central researchers, research officers, and relevant departments and units.

A close-up, high-angle shot of a person's hands working on a circular metal component, possibly a wheel or a disc, on a sandy surface. The person is wearing a patterned shirt and sandals. The component has a central hole and a small red dot in the center. The background is a vast, flat, sandy landscape under bright sunlight.

Chapter One: Overview

First: An Overview of the Conflict in Yemen

Throughout its modern history, Yemen has never experienced long-term political and military stability. At the beginning of 2011, Yemen joined the wave of the Arab Spring, a series of widespread popular uprisings against ruling regimes in most Arab countries. The squares of Yemen filled with tens of thousands of protesters demanding the ousting of President Saleh's regime. These protests grew daily, and as Saleh lost control, he decided to use violence to suppress the uprising. The country then entered a dark period of violations, with security deteriorating and President Saleh losing his grip on power. This empowered the opposing civil, tribal, and military factions.

During this period, Saudi Arabia intervened as a principal mediator through what became known as the "Gulf Initiative." This initiative led to the peaceful transfer of power to Saleh's deputy, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who was endorsed and chosen through elections in which he was the sole candidate.

The transitional phase began, during which a comprehensive national dialogue was held, a draft of a new constitution was formulated, and the Yemeni military was restructured. The parties involved in the dialogue reached a preliminary agreement on the fundamental issues regarding the State's structure and the type of governance.

Despite the apparent consensus during the transitional phase, the gap between political parties widened as their visions and ideas remained divergent. Meanwhile, religious factions were biding their time, seeking to capitalize on the looming void to achieve their objectives and exploit the emerging opportunities.

In 2014, the Houthis (an armed religious faction) imposed a siege on the capital, Sana'a, after having taken over the governorates of Amran and Saada. Within days, the capital fell into their hands. Meanwhile, in southern Yemen, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had already gained control of vast areas in the governorates of Abyan and Hadramaut. It appeared that the State the Yemenis had dreamed of was on the brink of collapse.

On September 21, 2014, Ansar Allah (the Houthis) announced their complete control over the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, placing the then-President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi under house arrest until he managed to escape to Aden and subsequently to the Saudi capital, Riyadh. On March 26, 2015, the Yemeni conflict entered a new phase as Saudi

Arabia announced the formation of a coalition of over 10 countries, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to participate in the military operation known as “Operation Decisive Storm.” The operation aimed to restore legitimacy in Yemen and eliminate the threat posed by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group to Yemen and the region, according to the operation’s announcement.

Over the ten years of conflict, the number of factions in Yemen increased due to splits among the main conflicting parties and the emergence of new groups. In May 2017, southern forces announced the formation of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a political and military body supported by the UAE that seeks the independence of South Yemen, which comprises the governorates that formed the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen before the unification of Yemen in May 1990.

In January 2018, tensions between the STC and the internationally recognized government forces (IRG forces) escalated, reaching their peak when armed groups affiliated with the STC took control of the Republican Palace in the temporary capital, Aden, following a series of clashes. The Coalition States intervened to de-escalate the situation, and the clashes stopped temporarily, only to resume in 2019. That year, the STC forces regained control of the Republican Palace and key military camps in Aden. Since then, the STC’s forces and their affiliated armed groups, represented by the Security Belts and Elite Forces, have effectively controlled most of the southern regions, directly overseeing government offices and local communities.

In the northern governorates controlled by Houthi and Saleh forces, events were even more dramatic. A fierce dispute arose between former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who wielded significant control and influence, and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. This conflict culminated in a tragic end for Saleh, who was killed by Houthi elements on December 4, 2017. This incident marked the unofficial end of the Houthi-Saleh alliance, leaving the Houthi group as the sole ruler of most northern governorates.

Following the death of his uncle, Tariq Saleh, a military figure from the former regime, managed to escape Houthi control. Shortly thereafter, he announced the formation of a new armed forces called the “Guardians of the Republic,” backed by the UAE. These forces gradually extended their influence over several areas along Yemen’s western coast.

On April 7, 2022, the internationally recognized President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi transferred his powers to a Presidential Leadership Council composed of eight members and chaired by Rashad Al-Alimi. This move further diversified the number of conflicting parties in Yemen, which now include the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the STC with its various formations, the Joint Forces, and the IRG forces, primarily composed of factions led by the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah Party).

Throughout the years of conflict, the goals of the conflict parties have varied according to the policies of their supporters, with the focus shifting towards controlling strategic areas and resource-rich regions. With the multiplicity of conflicting parties and the division of Yemen's geographic territory among them, the suffering of Yemeni civilians has intensified and diversified. Each party to the conflict acts as a self-contained state, enacting regulations and laws to bolster its control and dominance. They measure their power and compare their capabilities with those of their rivals based on the restrictions they impose on civilians. Additionally, the methods of inflicting harm on Yemeni civilians have become more varied. The civilians' suffering is no longer limited to direct violations, despite their magnitude and brutality. The conflict in Yemen has caused extensive damage with far-reaching consequences that affect all members and groups within Yemeni society.

Second: The Humanitarian Situation in Yemen

The ongoing armed conflict, now in its tenth year, has pushed Yemeni families to the brink. Yemenis are facing hunger, disease, and displacement, while millions of children lack protection, struggle to access clean drinking water, and have an uncertain educational future.

Since the conflict began in Yemen in September 2014, all parties involved have consistently committed widespread violations against civilians, flagrantly disregarding their rights under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Civilian suffering has reached unprecedented levels. Millions of Yemenis are struggling to obtain food, drinking water, and basic health services across all 22 governorates.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over 20 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services. Malnutrition rates among women and children are among the highest in the world. The conflict has led to the collapse of the healthcare system, with maternal mortality rates being the highest in the Arab region.

With the announcement of the longest truce in the history of the Yemeni conflict, brokered by the UN on April 2, 2022, civilians in Yemen rushed to return to their homes and villages after years of displacement in internal refugee camps. They harbored hopes of reclaiming their lost lives. However, landmines and explosive remnants left by the warring parties in fields, roads, pastures, and near water sources were waiting for them. These hazards prevented them from accessing their livelihoods and limited their access to food and water sources due to repeated explosions. This situation was exacerbated by the failure of the conflicting parties to at least provide minefield maps and conduct necessary surveys to clear the areas of landmines

This situation has further compromised civilians' food security and access to clean water, leading to an increase in preventable diseases. It has deprived them of their right to education and access to healthcare, within a healthcare system that is nearing collapse. All of this is unfolding amid a deteriorating economy and a humanitarian crisis that humanitarian organizations have described as the worst in the world for years.

Third: An Overview of Landmine Use in Yemen's Recurrent Conflicts

The use of landmines in the current Yemeni conflict, which began in 2014, is not new. Previous cycles of conflict have also seen excessive use of landmines, and many areas still suffer from their effects decades after they were planted.

The most recent use of landmines prior to the current conflict occurred in 2011, when the Republican Guard planted anti-personnel landmines in the Bani Jarmouz area north of the capital, Sana'a. Several landmine incidents occurred at that time, and this was considered a serious violation of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention (Ottawa) on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-

Personnel Mines , to which Yemen is a Stateignatory Party.²

The earliest recorded use of landmines in Yemen dates back to the 1960s and 1970s during the civil war between the Yemen Arab Republic in the north and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south. Both sides extensively used landmines in various combat zones to disrupt and hinder enemy advances and to protect strategic areas.

Thousands of landmines were planted across many regions of Yemen, including agricultural lands, roads, and other areas. Yemen later joined the Ottawa Convention and committed to destroying its stockpile of anti-personnel mines, becoming one of the first countries to do so. However, the sporadic use of landmines in subsequent periods raised questions about Yemen's adherence to the treaty³. The use of landmines by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in the current conflict has clearly demonstrated this issue. Notably, the group has declared its commitment to the treaty and other international agreements ratified by Yemen.[FS1] [Sally2] [FS3]⁴

Fourth: Demining Efforts in Yemen are Inconsistent with Essential International Standards

International standards for mine action aim to guide and unify operations related to the detection, destruction, and clearance of landmines, ensuring the safety of demining teams, protecting civilians, and minimizing the humanitarian and economic impact of mines on local communities. These standards encompass several aspects⁵:

- 2 Human Rights Watch. (2013, May 27). Yemen: Investigate, Respond to Landmine Use Reports: Civilians Maimed, Killed by Recently Laid Antipersonnel Mines. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/27/yemen-investigate-respond-landmine-use-reports>
- 3 SWI, towards a world free of mines, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ara/%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%85/2928390>
- 4 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/letter_from_the_yemeni_foreign_ministry_to_human_rights_watch_on_landmines.pdf
- 5 IMAS, International Mine Action Standards, <https://www.mineactionstandards.org/#:-:text=The%20purpose%20of%20IMAS%20is%20to%20promote%20and,land%20release%20to%20risk%20education%20and%20victim%20assistance.>

1. **Technical Standards:** These include the technical specifications for devices and equipment used in demining operations, as well as the methods and techniques employed in detecting and destroying landmines.
2. **Occupational Safety and Health:** These standards involve measures to protect demining teams and workers from mine-related hazards, including necessary training and the use of personal protective equipment.
3. **Information Sharing and Mutual Assistance:** This involves the exchange of information and expertise, and the provision of mutual assistance among entities engaged in demining operations.
4. **Training and Competence:** Appropriate training must be provided to demining team members, equipping them with the skills needed to handle mines and explosives.
5. **Safe Demining Procedures:** Special procedures should be implemented to safely remove mines, utilizing special tools and advanced techniques to deactivate and destroy mines without triggering explosions.
6. **Warning and Guidance:** Clear signs and warnings must be provided to local populations regarding mine-contaminated areas and unsafe zones.
7. **Documentation and Evaluation:** All demining activities should be documented, and the results should be evaluated to update data on mines and contaminated areas.

In Yemen, demining teams and their organizing bodies do not adhere to these standards. Numerous organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have reported that demining efforts are often haphazard and unsafe. In many monitored cases, demining personnel allowed civilians, including crowds of children, to stand just meters away from active demining operations. They moved and handled mines without removing detonators and carried out their work without protective equipment, such as blast helmets or bulletproof vests.⁶

6 Human Rights Watch. (2019, April 22). Yemen: Houthi Landmines Kill Civilians, Block Aid: Cease Use of Banned Weapons; Expand and Improve Demining. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/22/yemen-houthi-landmines-kill-civilians-block-aid>

The lack of compliance with international demining standards results in chaotic operations that often lead to casualties. Additionally, the failure to share information about mine types and locations makes it difficult to provide adequate training to deminers, which is crucial for ensuring that these vital efforts are conducted safely and effectively.

Fifth: Landmines and International Law

The use of anti-personnel landmines is prohibited under the Ottawa Convention, which bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel mines⁷. Yemen is a party to this treaty, having ratified it in 1998, and it came into force in March 1999.

Customary International humanitarian law also prohibits the use of indiscriminate weapons⁸ or the conduct of indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects⁹. Landmines are considered indiscriminate weapons because they cannot distinguish between civilians and military personnel. The principles of international humanitarian law mandate avoiding unnecessary suffering, while landmines cause long-term suffering and damage that persist beyond the end of conflicts. This makes their use prohibited under international humanitarian law and constitutes a blatant violation of its rules and principles.¹⁰

The use of other types of landmines, such as anti-vehicle mines, and other explosive devices is not covered by the Ottawa Convention, but are restricted under Articles 3 and 7 of Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).¹¹

7 Article 1 Ottawa Convention. <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/the-convention/text-of-the-convention/>

8 Rule 71: “The use of weapons which are by nature indiscriminate is prohibited”. ICRC (2005). Customary IHL Database. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule71>

9 Rule 11: “Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited”. ICRC (2005). Customary IHL Database. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule11>

10 Rule 81: “When landmines are used, particular care must be taken to minimize their indiscriminate effects”. ICRC (2005). Customary IHL Database. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule81>

11 Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/ccw-amended-protocol-ii-1996?activeTab=undefined>

Starvation or the denial of humanitarian access is considered a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court.¹² Although the use of landmines itself is not classified as a crime against humanity, their systematic use and placement in vital civilian areas essential for accessing food, resulting in the starvation of civilians, elevates it to such a crime.

Under international human rights law, which remains applicable during armed conflicts, the use of landmines as seen in the Yemeni context violates numerous fundamental rights. These include the right to life, the right to food, the right to education, and the right to freedom of movement. This use also breaches several international agreements to which Yemen is a party, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)¹³ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹⁴, among others.

12 In accordance with Article 8 (2) (b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute is a war crime “Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions”. Yemen signed the Rome Statute on 28 December 2000 but has not ratified it yet. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>

13 Yemen ratified the ICESCR on February 9, 1987.
https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-3&chapter=4#EndDec

14 Yemen signed the CRC on 13 February 1990 and ratified it on May 1, 1991.



The photo shows the suffering of a child victim of war who was injured by an explosive device - a remnant of the war left by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, around 2:50 PM, in a grazing slope in Wadi Al-Daqq - Al-Daqq area - Jerada village - Al-Hiyash subdistrict - Al-Taffa District - Al-Bayda Governorate.



Chapter Two:

The Effects of Using Landmines in the

The effects of landmine use in armed conflicts can be divided into two categories: direct effects, which are associated with landmine explosions and the resulting civilian casualties, and indirect effects, which refer to the broader, long-term consequences of landmine use. These indirect effects were a significant factor in the international prohibition of landmines and the establishment of regulatory legislation. This chapter of the report will discuss the various impacts of landmine use in different areas of Yemen by the warring parties, primarily the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, which is responsible for approximately 96% of the incidents documented by Mwatana for Human Rights and its field team, as follows:

First: Direct Effects of Landmines

The direct effects of landmine use in the context of the Yemeni conflict refer to the damage caused by landmine explosions across various regions of Yemen during the period covered by the report. This damage is represented by the killing and maiming of individuals. Landmines planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in predominantly civilian areas—including roads, pastures, farms, valleys, and residential neighborhoods—have resulted in 950 casualties, comprising both fatalities and injuries. Among these victims are 559 children and 123 women.

Many civilians have lost their lives to these hidden death traps, which pose an omnipresent threat to civilians across various areas. Landmines have been indiscriminately planted in agricultural lands, roads, and pastures, leaving civilians unable to identify safe areas. As a result, they were often forced to take risks, with some surviving and others falling victim to these concealed killers. Among the victims were children playing near their homes or in fields, fathers returning to their homes, and farmers attempting to cultivate their mined lands.

During the reporting period, Mwatana's team documented 537 landmine incidents, resulting in the deaths of 210 civilians, including 169 children and 30 women. Some of these individuals were breadwinners for their families, leaving their dependents to face significant psychological, economic, and social challenges. These families struggled to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare, forcing them to confront poverty, grief, and trauma simultaneously.

Survivors of landmine explosions often suffered severe injuries and mutilations. Anti-personnel landmines, as a form of unconventional weaponry, typically cause serious and often fatal injuries. The type of injuries caused by landmines varies depending on factors such as the type of mine, its design, location, and duration in the ground. Common injuries include:

- **Limb Loss (Amputation):** One of the most common and impactful injuries from anti-personnel mines is the loss of limbs. Explosions can result in the amputation of lower or upper limbs, leading to permanent disability and significant life changes for the victim.
- **Severe Physical Injuries:** Anti-personnel mines can cause severe physical injuries, including burns, penetrating wounds, fractures, and severe lacerations, all of which are life-threatening.
- **Facial and Eye Injuries:** Anti-personnel mines can also cause injuries to the face and eyes, leading to blindness or severe facial disfigurement. These injuries have a profound impact on the victim's life and may require prolonged specialized medical care.
- **Internal Injuries:** Anti-personnel mines can cause serious internal injuries to organs such as the lungs, liver, and kidneys, posing a significant threat to the victim's life.

According to documentation by Mwatana for Human Rights, 740 civilians, including 390 children and 93 women, have been injured due to the explosion of anti-personnel mines during the period covered by the report. These injuries have resulted in various disabilities, leaving many victims dependent on others for basic daily activities such as walking, mobility, and self-feeding. Some have suffered sensory impairments like loss of hearing or sight, which significantly impacts their ability to communicate, comprehend, and engage in daily life as they did before.

These injuries, particularly those resulting in permanent disabilities, often have severe psychological effects on the victims. They frequently suffer from trauma, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and social isolation. The constant need for assistance and care can exacerbate their psychological distress, leading to feelings of worthlessness or the belief that they are a burden on their caregivers. This psychological strain is compounded by the lack of adequate support, medical care, and rehabilitation services necessary to help them adapt to their disabilities and improve their quality of life. Proper rehabilitation and reintegration into society are crucial for enabling them to participate fully and overcome the physical and psychological impacts of their injuries.



We used to come here for grazing all the time. There were no contaminants here, otherwise, we wouldn't have come close; they [conflicting parties] plant landmines continuously without even bothering to inform or warn us. Our lives are worthless to them. We don't know from which direction death will come; from the ground or the sky! It's as if we were born just to be killed!



Second: Indirect Effects of Landmines

The killing and maiming caused by landmines during wars and conflicts represent a dark side of their impact that persists for years after the conflict ends, not ceasing with the end of military operations. The indirect effects of landmine use are no less severe than their direct impacts. Landmines are often used as tools of war to instill fear and create obstacles, primarily targeting civilian populations. They are commonly planted to prevent enemy advancement and to hinder opposing forces from gaining control of certain areas. This means they are not only placed on battlefronts and military sites (which itself constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and the laws of war) but also in civilian areas far from combat zones.¹⁵ These locations may include roads, mountain paths, pastures, or farms, leading to tragedies that extend beyond killing and maiming. The catastrophic impact on the lives of individuals who do not become immediate landmine victims is profound, making many civilians indirect victims of this type of weapon in various ways.

The data collected by Mwatana for Human Rights during the reporting period highlights that most landmines were planted in purely civilian areas rather than military sites. Among the 512 incidents of landmine explosions documented by Mwatana from January 2016 to March 2024, 165 incidents occurred on public and secondary roads: 99 on secondary roads and 66 on main public roads. Additionally, 230 incidents took place in areas crucial for the livelihood of local populations, such as pastures, farms, valleys, and commercial and service facilities. This significantly exacerbates the indirect effects of landmine use in the ongoing Yemeni conflict.

The indirect effects of landmine use in the current conflict by the warring parties, particularly the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, can be summarized into four main impacts as follows:

● Starvation

Starvation stands at the forefront of the indirect effects of widespread landmine use. Landmines contributed to starvation by:

15 Rule 7 of the Customary International Humanitarian Law provides “The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacks may only be directed against military objectives. Attacks must not be directed against civilian objects” ICRC (2005). Customary IHL Database. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule7>

- Disrupting cultivation, agricultural production, grazing activities, and access to water. Many landmines are planted in agricultural areas and fertile lands, rendering them unfit for cultivation. This leads to the destruction of crops or prevents locals from harvesting crops in already cultivated fields, reducing agricultural production and negatively affecting the ability to provide food and meet the population's needs. Mwatana documented 50 incidents in farms and agricultural fields, representing only the incidents that resulted in civilian casualties. Hundreds of fields and agricultural lands in many regions, including Al Hudaydah, Taiz, and Al Bayda, have become abandoned due to landmines. Residents cannot cultivate their lands or even dare to approach them, as these areas may mean a likely death.

One resident told Mwatana, "Landmine incidents occur in places we assume to be safe, while most of the lands we know are contaminated, so we don't go near them." Another, who lost his son in a pasture in Al Bayda, said: "We used to come here for grazing all the time. There were no contaminants here, otherwise, we wouldn't have come close; they [conflicting parties] plant landmines continuously without even bothering to inform or warn us. Our lives are worthless to them. We don't know from which direction death will come; from the ground or the sky! It's as if we were born just to be killed!"

Another witness told Mwatana, "We rely on grazing and farming. We have no other source of income. With pastures and fields contaminated with landmines, we lost our primary source of income." He added, "There are no warning signs or markers indicating the presence of landmines. We usually identify contaminated areas after accidents occur, either to the locals or their livestock. Places become contaminated with landmines overnight."

The ongoing and indiscriminate planting of landmines, without regard for the harm caused to civilian populations, has resulted in repeated incidents and a pervasive state of fear and anxiety among residents. The absence of maps delineating contaminated areas from safe zones, coupled with the lack of warning signs, exacerbates this situation. Consequently, civilians are restricted in their movements and are unable to access agricultural areas and food sources, as they cannot ascertain whether these areas are mined. Many farmers and herders are reluctant to work on lands suspected of being contaminated, fearing injury or death, which places them and their families at significant risk of starvation.

Of the total landmine incidents documented by Mwatana, 128 occurred in pastures, resulting from either herders or livestock stepping on the mines. Additionally, 46 incidents took place in valleys used for firewood gathering, farming, herding, and water collection. Therefore, residents in mine-contaminated areas face significant difficulties in accessing water for drinking, household use, and irrigation. These figures and the locations of the landmines highlight the immense humanitarian catastrophe resulting from their use. Civilians are forced to choose between death and starvation. Even more distressing is their awareness that this threat will persist long after the war ends, as long as landmines remain in their lands and near their sources of livelihood.

- **Preventing and Restricting Access to Humanitarian Aid:** The widespread presence of landmines is one of the key obstacles hindering the work of relief teams and restricting humanitarian access, especially food assistance. With landmines scattered across main and secondary roads, it has become increasingly difficult for residents to reach this aid, contributing to the starvation of civilians.

- **Impact on Trade and Goods Transportation:** The proliferation of landmines affects trade and the transport of essential goods, as many contaminated areas include roads, both main and vital routes. This results in delays in the delivery of goods, increased transportation costs, and consequently higher prices. With the lack of income sources, obtaining indispensable needs at inflated prices poses a significant challenge for civilians living in mine-contaminated areas.

● **Restrictions on Movement and Mobility**

Among the total incidents documented by Mwatana, 165 occurred on roads, both main and secondary. This figure highlights the extensive spread of landmines on roadways, underscoring the significant impact of landmine proliferation on movement and mobility to and from, or within, contaminated areas. Therefore, residents are forced to seek alternative routes, often rough and remote, to avoid death or injury from landmines. Consequently, accessing essential services such as healthcare and education becomes

exceedingly difficult for the population. This situation creates a cascade of negative impacts, notably depriving residents, especially children, of educational services and preventing access to necessary healthcare for all, including pregnant women.

Many families in landmine-contaminated areas, such as Al-Bayda and Al-Hudaydah, resort to using donkeys or motorcycles to meet their basic needs. They often traverse narrow paths inaccessible to cars or larger vehicles. Distances that once took minutes to cover now take hours. Despite these precautions, residents in mine-contaminated areas remain at risk, frequently witnessing explosions and casualties firsthand.

● Psychological Effects

The widespread presence of landmines in residential areas, roads, farms, and other civilian spaces causes significant short- and long-term psychological impacts on residents, especially children. The most notable effects include:

- **Anxiety and Fear:** Individuals living in mine-contaminated areas experience constant anxiety and fear for their personal safety and that of their families. They feel perpetually insecure and unable to move freely. Many families have started preventing their children from playing outside or running errands, fearing they might be harmed by the pervasive landmines. For many, mobility has become a daunting and risky endeavor that could result in death.
- **Psychological Trauma:** Witnessing scenes of death and hearing frequent explosions cause severe psychological trauma. Those who lose loved ones to landmine accidents suffer enduring emotional distress.
- **Sleep Disorders:** People affected by the prevalence of landmines, particularly children who have witnessed explosions, suffer from sleep disturbances such as insomnia, nightmares, night terrors, and difficulty concentrating.
- **Chronic Anxiety and Nervous Tension:** The continuous threat to personal safety leads to chronic anxiety and nervous tension. Individuals may become overwhelmed by negative thoughts and expectations.

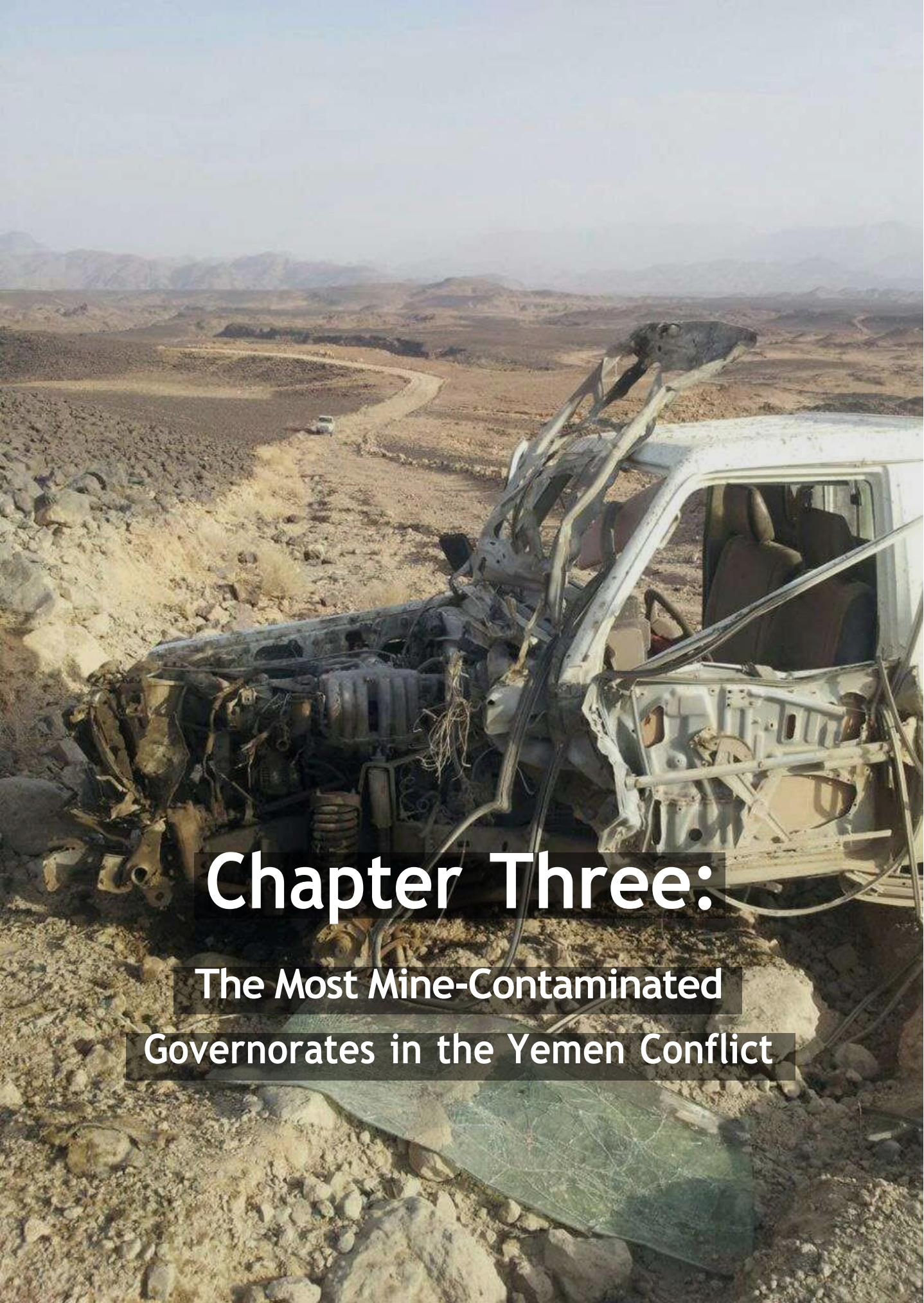
Repeated exposure to violent scenes and explosions can intensify these psychological effects, potentially causing behavioral disorders, particularly in children. Despite often being low on the priority list, addressing the psychological impacts of landmine

proliferation and accidents is crucial. It requires serious attention and intervention, including the provision of psychological support services, rehabilitation, and other necessary measures to mitigate the psychological toll on civilian populations, especially children.

● **Hindering the Return of Displaced Residents to Their Homes and Areas**

Residents displaced by military operations face significant challenges in returning to their homes due to the fear of landmines and explosive contamination. Numerous families who have returned to their original areas have found death awaiting them.

Out of all documented incidents, 40 occurred in residential neighborhoods, and 15 took place in homes coinciding with the return of civilian residents after the cessation of military activities. The widespread presence of landmines in residential areas, homes, and various types of roads prevents many residents from returning to their original areas, forcing them to endure the hardships and high costs of displacement.



Chapter Three:

The Most Mine-Contaminated
Governorates in the Yemen Conflict

For the purpose of this report, the governorates contaminated with landmines have been classified in two categories. Heavily contaminated and less mine-contaminated governorates based on the total number of documented landmine incidents during the period covered by the report. These governorates will be discussed in order from the most affected to the least affected:

First: Al-Hudaydah Governorate



Al-Hudaydah is located in the western part of Yemen, extending along the western coastal strip overlooking the Red Sea. It covers an area of approximately 117,145 km² and consists of 26 districts according to the latest administrative division.

Al-Hudaydah tops the list of Yemeni governorates most contaminated by landmines, with varying levels of contamination across the districts of Al-Khawkhah, Hays, At-Tuhayata, Ad-Durayhimi, Al-Hali, and Al-Hawak, as well as the Al-Jah area in Bait Al-Faqih District. Some of these contaminated areas have become uninhabitable due to the severe level of contamination. The landmine contamination in the governorate dates back to early 2017 when the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group began planting landmines in Al-Khawkhah District, followed by Hays, At-Tuhayata, and other districts.

From January 2016 to March 2024, the period covered by this report, Al-Hudaydah witnessed numerous armed clashes, making it a focal point at various times during the ongoing conflict. Despite the April 2022 truce, which reduced armed clashes in most conflict zones, sporadic skirmishes still occur. Throughout this period, Al Hudaydah

saw intense competition among the conflicting parties in Yemen for control, due to its strategic importance and its coastline along the Red Sea. This competition has prevented any single party from gaining full control. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group controlled most of the governorate until November 2021, when the Joint Forces led by Tarek Saleh, the nephew of the former president, seized control of some districts. Currently, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group controls most of the governorate, while the Joint Forces control Al-Khawkhah and parts of Hays and Al-Jarrahi districts. Notably, Al-Khawkhah and Hays are among the areas contaminated by landmines, which were planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group before their withdrawal to impede the advance of opposing forces. Overall, landmines are concentrated in areas controlled or previously controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

Mwatana for Human Rights documented 142 landmine incidents in Al Hudaydah from January 2016 to March 2024, with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group responsible for 141 incidents and the Joint Forces for one incident. These incidents resulted in 318 civilian casualties, including 160 children and 21 women.

The widespread presence of landmines in the governorate has led to significant displacement and loss of livelihoods. Only 19 of the incidents documented by Mwatana's team in Al-Hudaydah occurred in unprotected areas like military camps or uninhabited regions, while 123 incidents took place in civilian areas, including 51 on main and secondary roads, and 71 distributed among homes, residential neighborhoods, farms, valleys, and commercial facilities. This indicates that most incidents had no military necessity, reflecting the nature of the areas where landmines were planted. As a result, residents must navigate rough and distant detours to reach their destinations; journeys that once took 15 minutes now take 3-4 hours. Most rely on scarce humanitarian aid or are forced to migrate to other regions in search of work amid a lack of employment opportunities. Many face the choice between starving or risking their lives in farming or herding amidst widespread, indiscriminate landmine threats. The psychological effects on residents in contaminated areas are severe, with persistent fear and anxiety. The inability to afford relocation costs forces them to stay in hazardous areas where safe living conditions are no longer available.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Al-Hudaydah Governorate

On Thursday, March 26, 2020, around 08:00 a.m., in Al Ma'arif village, Ad-Durayhimi district, Al-Hudaydah Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the immediate death of two brothers (9 and 10 years old - males) upon detonation. the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is held responsible for planting the landmines in the area.

The father of the victims told Mwatana, “My sons Montaser and Sultan (pseudonyms) went to fetch water with two donkeys. Each of them rode a donkey, and the family was waiting for their return with water so that we could all go to a wedding party at my brother’s house, where two of his sons were getting married. After they left, we heard the sound of a landmine explosion. Soon, some neighbors came to my house and told me what happened to my sons. We rushed to the incident site, and I saw the dead donkeys while my sons were rushed to the field hospital. When I arrived at the hospital, I found my sons had passed away, their bodies torn apart... This incident turned our lives into a tragedy and turned the wedding into mourning. There was no longer a celebration, only tragedy and sorrow.”¹⁶

On Friday, May 28, 2022, around 11:00 a.m., in Beit Al Shaihal village, Hays district, Al Hudaydah Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine exploded as a motorcycle passed by. This tragic incident resulted in the death of a 16-year-old boy and an adult male. Both sustained severe injuries from the blast and bled for 28 hours at the scene. They were not rescued due to fear among local residents of further mine explosions.¹⁷

On Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at approximately 5:00 p.m., a landmine exploded in an agricultural field in the Ruba' Al-Hadhrami area, east of the ring road in Hays district, Al Hudaydah Governorate. The explosion occurred while children were playing football, resulting in the deaths of two children and injuries to three others, aged between ten and fourteen.

16 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victims’ father in Ad-Durayhimiyah district, Al-Hudaydah governorate, on September 1, 2020.

17 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Hays district, Al Hudaydah governorate, on January 14, 2023.

An eyewitness reported that one of the deceased children leapt to head the ball, and as he landed, his foot triggered the landmine, causing it to explode. Ali Qasim (a pseudonym) told Mwatana:

“I was playing soccer with a group of children and young people from the neighborhood, about twenty of us, mostly children. I saw one of the kids jump to head the ball, and when his feet touched the ground, a landmine exploded with a terrifying blast. I saw body parts flying through the air, others running to escape death, while I was frozen in place. I saw one child whose entire body was torn apart; I only recognized him by the shoe still on his severed foot. I also saw the hand of another killed child, when some people brought it back from a nearby valley.”

He continued, “There was a plastic bag near me where we kept the balls and some players’ clothes; we emptied it and used it to collect the body parts. I will never forget these scenes as long as I live.”¹⁸

On Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at approximately 1:30 p.m., a landmine exploded on a secondary road in the northern Al-Salam neighborhood, Al-Hali district, Al Hudaydah Governorate. The explosion injured two children and one adult man.

The victims were returning from gathering firewood on a donkey-drawn cart when the incident occurred. They were taken to Al-Thawra General Hospital for treatment. Following the incident, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group forces in the area summoned the victims’ relatives to a police station, where they were questioned about the incident and their statements were taken, but no assistance was provided to the victims.

One victim’s father told Mwatana, “I went with my son and two of his friends to collect firewood in the eastern Al-Salam neighborhood, as we have been doing recently. On the way back, I was riding a donkey-drawn cart, and my son and his friends were on another cart about twenty meters behind me. Midway, I heard a very loud explosion. I turned around and saw smoke filling the area, obscuring my view. I rushed to the site

18 An interview conducted by Mwatana with an eyewitness in Hays District of Al-Hudaydah Governorate on February 14, 2023.

and heard my son screaming in pain from his injured leg. Nearby, his friends were also screaming, having been hit by shrapnel. I realized a landmine had exploded. There were no warning signs on the road where the landmine went off. We passed through there daily without knowing it was mined.”¹⁹

Second: Taiz Governorate



Taiz Governorate is located in the southwestern part of Yemen. It covers an area of approximately 10,008 km² and is divided into 23 districts according to the latest administrative division.

The areas contaminated by landmines in Taiz Governorate are concentrated in three main directions, controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group: the eastern, western, and northern areas. These include regions both within the city and in rural areas. Among the most heavily mined areas are the Al-Qasr Roundabout Road in the eastern part of the city, as well as the Osaifra roads- the 40-meter road, Ghurab Street, the Shar’ab Junction, and other roads.

Due to landmine contamination, residents are forced to use the southeastern route, which includes rugged mountainous roads like the Jabal Habashi Road and the Al-Aqrod Road, to avoid mined areas. This greatly complicates mobility, one of the many negative

¹⁹ An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victim’s father in Al-Hawk District of Al-Hudayadah Governorate on February 25, 2024.

impacts of landmine proliferation in the governorate.

In addition to the roads, landmines are scattered indiscriminately across many villages. One notable example is Al-Shaqab village in Saber Al-Mawadim district, located about 40 km from the city center. This village is one of the most heavily mined areas, with mines planted in agricultural terraces, roads, residential neighborhoods, and near military areas. Besides Al-Shaqab, other heavily mined areas include Abaar, Salah, Hassanat, and various regions in the Maqbana district such as Al-Twair, Al-Kuiha, Al-Majaa, Al-Abdila, and Al-Qahefa. Additionally, areas in the Jabal Habashi district in the southwestern part of the governorate, as well as several coastal regions like Maoza' and Al-Wazi'iyah districts, and the Al-Bawawi desert in the Mokha district, are all contaminated with landmines that continuously threaten civilian lives and have caused numerous hardships.

During the reporting period, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 118 landmine incidents in Taiz Governorate, resulting in 246 civilian casualties, including 98 children and 45 women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 117 of these incidents, while the responsible party for one incident could not be determined.

Out of all the documented incidents, only five occurred near battlefronts, in mountainous areas, or in uninhabited regions. In contrast, 113 incidents took place on roads, in residential neighborhoods, civilian infrastructure, valleys, and homes. This includes 50 incidents on main and secondary roads, underscoring the lack of military necessity and highlighting the predominance of landmines in civilian areas.

Landmines are concentrated in areas controlled or previously controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Since the onset of the armed conflict in Yemen in September 2014, Taiz Governorate has witnessed numerous clashes and has been subjected to a severe blockade for several years due to the closure of its main roads and the presence of conflict parties.

The widespread presence of landmines has severely restricted freedom of movement, making access to clean drinking water difficult and causing many residents to lose their primary sources of income. Landmines are spread across farms, pastures,

and areas used for firewood collection, severely impacting activities such as herding, farming, and gathering firewood, which are the main sources of livelihood for many. Consequently, there has been an increased dependence on humanitarian aid and significant displacement of residents to various parts of the country.

At present, the geographical control of Taiz Governorate is divided among three main conflict parties:

IRG forces: The IRG forces control the districts of Al-Shamayatatn, Al-Mawasit, and the coastal areas, as well as large parts of As-Selw, Al-Qahirah, Salah, and Al-Mudhaffar districts. They also hold limited areas of Sam'e district.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group: It controls the districts of Al-Ta'iziyah, Shar'ab al-Salam, Shar'ab al-Rawnah, Dimnat Khadir, Maqbanah, Mawiyah, Hayfan, Al-Misrakh, Saber al-Mawadim, Jabal Habashi, and large parts of Sam'e district. They also have control over limited areas of Salah, As-Selw, and Al-Mudhaffar districts.

The Joint Forces Led by Tariq Saleh: They control the districts of Al-Mokha, Al-Waziyah, Mawza', and Dhubab.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Taiz Governorate

On Tuesday, July 25, 2017, at approximately 8:30 a.m., an anti-vehicle landmine exploded on a secondary road in the village of Al-Samasim, Al-Mokha District, Taiz Governorate. The explosion involved a white 1984 Toyota Hilux double-cab carrying a family, resulting in the death of a newborn baby girl (2 months old). The blast threw the baby out of the vehicle, causing her head to strike a rock and her brain to be exposed, leading to her immediate death. Another girl (4 years old) and two women sustained serious injuries.²⁰

A witness told Mwatana for Human Rights, "On Tuesday, July 25, 2017, around 8:30 in the morning, I was in the village of Al-Kudayha, about 1.5 km west of the explosion site. I heard a loud explosion from the east, so I hurried to the site in Al-Samasim village, approximately 40 km northeast of Al-Mokha district center. I discovered that the

20 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Mawza' District, Taiz Governorate, on August 21, 2019.

explosion was caused by an anti-vehicle landmine planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Upon arrival, the driver of the damaged vehicle and some local residents saw me and handed me the deceased baby girl and asked me to take her to her grandfather (her mother's father) in my village (Al-Kudayha) for burial, allowing them to focus on rescuing the injured. I took the baby, and a group of armed Houthi fighters arrived to document the incident. One of them asked me to place the baby girl under a tree for filming. I complied out of fear. He then asked me to say on camera that a coalition airstrike was responsible for the casualties, but I refused, stating that I had not witnessed the incident.”

On Friday, April 16, 2021, at approximately 8:00 a.m., in the village of Al-Ja'ash, located in the Al-Omari area about 10 km east of the center of Dhubab District in Taiz Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine exploded, hitting a man and his two children (a boy and a girl) while they were moving through the pasture on their motorcycle to graze their sheep. The explosion resulted in the deaths of the girl (17 years old) and her father, both of whom sustained severe injuries, leading to the amputation of their lower limbs and their immediate death. Additionally, the boy (16 years old) suffered a broken vertebra in the middle of his spine, a cut on the heel of his left foot, a ruptured spleen from the impact, several shrapnel wounds in his right leg and thigh, and a shrapnel wound in his left thigh.²¹

Amin Ali Al-Haj (a pseudonym), a relative of the victims and an eyewitness, told Mwatana for Human Rights, “At around 6:00 a.m., on Friday, April 16, 2021, my brother Mohamed left his house to graze the sheep, accompanied by his son and daughter, in the village of Al-Ja'ash located in the Al-Omari area, about 10 km east of the center of Dhubab District, Taiz Governorate. They released the sheep from the house towards the pasture and followed on their motorcycle. About 4 km west of our village, they moved through the pasture, knocking down the fruits of ‘Al-Haraz’ trees [a type of thorny tree with small fruits eaten by sheep] with sticks to feed the sheep. After finishing with one tree, they would move to the next, continuing this pattern until they had finished with the nearby trees and then rode their motorcycle to search for more trees. While moving on their motorcycle, a landmine exploded, splitting the motorcycle in half and

21 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Dhubab District, Taiz Governorate, on June 8, 2021.

killing my brother and his daughter, and injuring his son. The explosion occurred at 8:00 in the morning. I was in my house in the same village when I heard the explosion. I immediately rode a motorcycle to the scene with some villagers and found that some residents had already moved the victims to their home. We found the motorcycle split in two, traces of blood, and a large crater caused by the explosion. I believe the landmine was anti-vehicle due to the large explosion and significant impact it caused.”

On Monday, December 6, 2021, at approximately 9:00 a.m., in the village of Al-Tufaili Al-Ulya, Shamir area, Maqbanah District of Taiz Governorate, a landmine exploded in a bus carrying a number of displaced citizens. The explosion resulted in the deaths of two men and injured five others, including three children, with varying degrees of injuries. Due to ongoing armed clashes in the area at the time, it was impossible to provide immediate medical assistance to the victims, and they could not be evacuated for medical treatment until two days after the incident.²²

22 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Maqbana District, Taiz Governorate, on December 8, 2021.

Third: Hajjah Governorate



Hajjah Governorate is located northwest of the capital, Sana'a, and shares borders with Saada Governorate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the north, Amran Governorate to the east, Al Mahwit and Al Hudaydah Governorates to the south, and the Red Sea along with part of Al Hudaydah Governorate to the west. It covers an area of approximately 8,227 square kilometers and consists of 31 districts according to the last administrative division of 2004.

The situation in Hajjah Governorate is similar to other areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group or those they have previously controlled. It is heavily contaminated with landmines and is classified among the six most mine-contaminated governorates, following Al Hudaydah and Taiz, based on documentation by Mwatana for Human Rights during the period covered by the report.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group controls most of the districts in Hajjah, except for the districts of Harad and Midi and the western region of Bani Hasan, which are controlled by the IRG forces. Additionally, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces are also present in significant numbers in Harad District.

During the period covered by the report, from January 2016 to March 2024, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 55 landmine incidents in Hajjah Governorate. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 50 of these incidents, the IRG forces for 4 incidents, and the Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces for one incident. These incidents resulted in 90 civilian casualties, including 72 children and 6 women, either killed or injured.

All documented incidents occurred in pastures, farms, valleys, and residential areas. None of the documented incidents took place near a frontline or military zone, negating any military necessity for planting these landmines.

Hajjah Governorate is considered a volatile area due to its border with Saudi Arabia. Landmines are scattered indiscriminately across roads, residential neighborhoods, and near homes. Many residents, unable to flee to safer areas, are forced to live with the constant threat of landmines. Consequently, many civilians continue to lose their lives, while those who remain live in perpetual fear and anxiety, constantly wondering when they might become the next victims of the hidden dangers surrounding them.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Hajjah Governorate

On Saturday, August 20, 2022, in Bani Jibril Farm, Al-Mazaf Village, Bani Hassan Subdistrict in Abs District, Hajjah Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the deaths of three young civilian men. The incident happened while the victims were riding a motorcycle. Despite efforts to transport them to Abs Hospital, they succumbed to their severe injuries and were buried in the same village where the incident occurred.

The father of one of the victims told Mwatana for Human Rights, “Anas was at home when two of his friends came and asked him to go with them to the farm where they worked to help plant seeds. My son went with them on the motorcycle they were riding. Before reaching the intended farm, an anti-vehicle landmine exploded, tearing them apart. I was at home at the time, and one of my neighbors came to deliver the news of the death of my son, who had been sitting next to me less than fifteen minutes earlier. I couldn’t contain myself and screamed in horror and helplessness. When his mother

heard the news, she fainted and kept calling out his name and his brother's name, who had died less than a year ago because we couldn't afford the medication for his diabetes. I went to the scene, gathered my son's remains, and brought him back to his mother to say her final goodbye. Her tears have not dried for him or his brother to this day."²³

On Thursday, July 13, 2023, at approximately 10:00 a.m., in Tinah Village, Abs District, Hajjah Governorate, an incident involving anti-personnel landmine explosions occurred, resulting in the deaths of four people, including three children (aged 14, 15, and 17, all boys) and one adult man. Their bodies were torn apart by the explosion, leading to their immediate deaths.

The incident happened as the children were on their way to the sea in the Behais area for fishing. They stepped on anti-personnel landmines, which exploded, dismembering them. The victims were buried on the same day in Tinah Village.

An eyewitness told Mwatana for Human Rights, "The victims passed by me while I was working in a farm in the village. They mentioned they were going fishing. I warned them that the area was dangerous and suggested they buy fish from the market if they craved it, but they replied that they had no money. I wished them safety and resumed my work. About half an hour later, I heard a loud explosion coming from the direction of the sea. I rushed, along with some villagers, towards the explosion site. We were shocked to find body parts scattered around. When we gathered the remains, we couldn't identify which parts belonged to whom, so we collected them in one bag and brought them back to the village. The victims' families tried to recognize them, but it was impossible. They had become a pile of flesh, so we buried them in a single grave."²⁴

On Thursday, February 1, 2024, at around 8:00 a.m., in Bani Al-Mash Village, Bani Hassan Subdistrict, Abs District, Hajjah Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the death of a 14-year-old boy. The explosion caused severe injuries, including the amputation of his

23 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victim's father in Abs District, Hajjah Governorate, on September 6, 2022.

24 An interview conducted by Mwatana with an eyewitness in Abs District, Hajjah Governorate, on August 20, 2023.

both legs from the knees, the right hand at the wrist, and the left arm at the elbow. Additionally, shrapnel penetrated his chest and abdomen and damaged his face. The incident occurred while he was herding sheep. The boy remained unconscious until he passed away two days after the explosion.

The victim's brother told Mwatana for Human Rights, "My brother Badr, along with two of our other brothers, went to Bani Al-Mash Village to check on our house, which we had fled to Bani Kadeesh Village. We usually go to check on it from time to time and stay there if there are no clashes or battles in the village. When my brothers arrived at our house, they went out to herd the local people's sheep for a small fee we lived on. Badr ran quickly to catch some sheep that had escaped and stepped on a landmine, which exploded. I was at our home in Bani Kadeesh when I heard the explosion and realized it had happened in Bani Al-Mash, where my brothers were. I took my motorcycle and rushed to the village. I found my brothers screaming and pointing to Badr, who was lying on the ground covered in blood, with his right hand completely severed nearby. Badr wasn't screaming or in pain; he was calm, with a deathly pallor. I placed him on the motorcycle, wrapped his severed hand in my scarf, and took him to the hospital. He remained there for two days before he passed away.

Fourth: Al-Jawf Governorate



Al-Jawf Governorate is located northeast of the capital, Sana'a, at a distance of 143 km. It borders Saada Governorate to the north, the Empty Quarter desert to the east, parts of Marib and Sana'a Governorates to the south, and Amran and Saada Governorates to the west. The governorate is divided into 13 districts according to the latest administrative division. It is also known for its rich oil reserves.

The IRG forces control parts of the governorate, including the desert areas of Al-Rayan and parts of Khab wa Al-Sha'af District, as well as part of Al-Hazm District. There have been no updates to the control map since 2022, although the governorate witnessed numerous clashes before 2022 as both sides vied to control its districts. Notable conflicts include the armed confrontations in June 2015, during which the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group took control of the governorate center, and the December 2015 clashes, which saw the IRG forces regain control of the governorate center and several areas previously held by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

From 2015 to 2020, the confrontations between the two sides persisted, sometimes intensifying and at other times subsiding. The most severe clashes occurred in March 2020, when the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group managed to capture the governorate center and most parts of the governorate, which remain under their control to this day.

The governorate suffers from the widespread risk of landmines, which continually cause civilian casualties. From January 2016 to March 2023, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 49 landmine incidents in the governorate. These incidents resulted in 136 civilian casualties, including 57 children and 26 women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for all documented incidents in the governorate.

Like other mine-contaminated governorates, the residents of Al-Jawf face significant challenges. The presence of landmines restricts their freedom of movement and impedes their main sources of livelihood, such as agricultural activities, grazing, and wood collecting, as these areas are now contaminated. This adds to the burdens created by the longstanding marginalization of the governorate, which has been characterized by poor services and limited job opportunities. Such marginalization has led a large portion of the population to rely on agriculture and grazing for their economic activities. However, the widespread planting of landmines has turned these activities into sources of threat and danger.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Al-Jawf Governorate

On Friday, March 30, 2018, at approximately 9:30 a.m., east of the Afai area in Bart Al-Enan district, Al-Jawf governorate, a landmine exploded under a civilian vehicle traveling along the desert road. The explosion resulted in the deaths of all five passengers, including three children.

Landmines have been widespread in the Afai area (the eastern gateway to the Bart Al-Enan district) since the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group withdrew from these regions in December 2017. Despite the demining teams having removed many landmines, a significant number remain, continuously endangering the lives of civilians.

A witness told Mwatana, “On the morning of Friday, March 30, 2018, a landmine exploded under a civilian vehicle on the eastern road of the Afai area, in the desert region. The vehicle was carrying a man, his wife, their two children, and their grandchild. We, the residents of the area, arrived at the scene about half an hour after the explosion. The car and the victims were still on fire. The father and mother were burned inside the vehicle, while the three children were lying on the ground next to the car.”²⁵

On Saturday, June 27, 2020, at approximately 2:00 p.m., in the Al-Jaroub area of Al-Motoun district, Al-Jawf governorate, a landmine explosion injured three girls aged between 13 and 17. The incident occurred while they were collecting firewood in the area.

One of the victims told Mwatana, “My sister, our friend, and I were collecting firewood from a valley in Al-Jaroub area. My sister was dragging a tree trunk on the ground when it seemed to hit a landmine, which then exploded. At first, I didn’t feel my injury; I was more worried about my sister and our friend who were screaming in pain. Then, when I saw my foot bleeding, my fears intensified.”

The victim’s father told Mwatana, “I would have lost my daughters if it weren’t for God’s care. My daughters survived, but they are now plagued by fear and disfigurement. My daughters, the rest of my family members, and all the residents of the area are afraid to walk any path. We never know when or where mines are planted in these

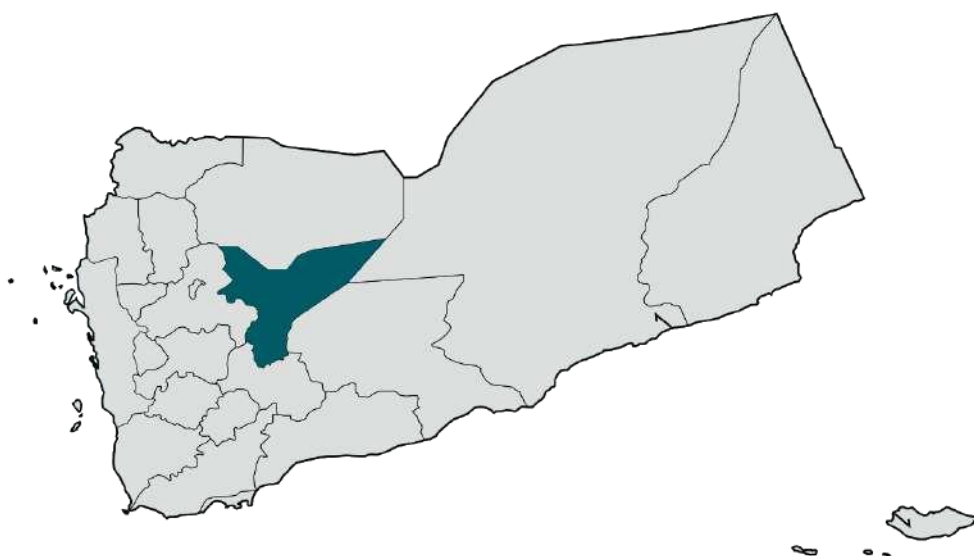
25 An interview conducted by Mwatana with an eyewitness in Bart Al-Enan, Al-Jawf Governorate, on May 7, 2019.

crucial areas for collecting wood, farming, or fetching water.”²⁶

On Monday, August 30, 2021, around 9:00 a.m., in Wadi Hirab, north of Al-Hazm district, Al-Jawf governorate, a landmine exploded under a vehicle carrying a nomadic family, resulting in the deaths of three civilians, including two girls. The incident occurred as they were on their way to fetch water from the valley.²⁷

On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, around 10:00 a.m., on a desert road in the Al-Yatimah area, Khub wa Al-Sha’af district, Al-Jawf governorate, a landmine exploded under a Hilux vehicle carrying a man and his two daughters. This resulted in the death of one girl and injuries to her father and sister. The explosion also rendered the vehicle completely disabled. The victims were on their way to their camel pastures when the incident occurred.

Fifth: Marib Governorate



26 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a victim’s father in Al-Motoun District, Al-Jawf Governorate, on October 21, 2020.

27 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Al-Hazm District, Al-Jawf Governorate, on October 31, 2021.

Marib Governorate is situated in the center of the Yemeni Republic, approximately 173 km west of the capital Sana'a. It shares borders with Al-Jawf governorate to the north and Shabwah and Al-Bayda governorates to the south, while Hadhramaut and Shabwah governorates lie to its east. Its area spans 17,405 square kilometers and comprises 14 districts according to the latest administrative division as of 2004.

Currently, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group controls 10 out of the 14 districts of the Marib governorate, which are the least densely populated areas. Conversely, the IRG forces control three vital and densely populated districts in the governorate: Marib, Al-Wadi, and Raghwan. These districts represent the core and pivotal areas of the governorate, serving as a significant stronghold for the IRG forces in Yemen. Additionally, the STC controls Harib district that borders Shabwah governorate.

Landmines are concentrated in the areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, including the areas of Al-Abdiyah district (Al-Lajmah, Al-Ghanimiyah, Al-Hajlah, Mukhlq, Wadi Al-Aqta', Al Balghith sub-districts, and Al Awad sub-districts), Al-Mahliyah district (Qaniyah, Khaddar Al-Arajaa, Ibn Hammad, Makhba' Al-Qardai, Qarn Al-Suqour, and Al-Ar, Masouda), Serwah district (Anshar, Al-Rabiah, Al-Matar, Al-Zighan, Al-Juhfa, Atiyas, Al-Hamajirah sub-districts, Al-Milh, Al-Ashqari, Al-Haqil, Al-Mushaibk, Hailan, Al-Bara, Al-Mashajah, Al-Deirah, Al-Dushush, Al-Mukhdarah, Al-Diq, and Marthad), and some areas of Al-Jubah and Rahbah districts.

These landmines have caused various forms of suffering, posing a significant obstacle for residents to access water sources, main livelihoods such as grazing and firewood collection areas, and agricultural lands. For example, one-third of the area of Serwah district is entirely contaminated with landmines, preventing displaced persons from returning to their homes due to widespread minefields.

During the period covered by the report, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 41 landmine incidents in Marib governorate, resulting in the injury and death of 83 civilians, including 43 children and 7 women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for all documented mine incidents in the governorate.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Marib Governorate:

On Monday, August 10, 2020, around 12:00 p.m., in Al-Sharikah neighborhood, Marib City, Marib Governorate, an incident of a landmine explosion took place, resulting in the injury of three siblings aged between 4 and 9 years.

The father of the victims told Mwatana, “I took my family to Al-Jufeena area for a picnic to entertain my children. When we arrived, my son Hamam told me he found ten nails in the area and placed them in a water bottle, taking them home. At home, one of my sons took out one of the nails, which turned out to be a landmine fuse. He started playing with it near his siblings, causing a loud blast. The children began screaming. My son ran out onto the street seeking help, his clothes stained with blood. At that moment, I was in a nearby grocery store and heard the screams, seeing people gathering. I rushed back home. Together with some neighbors, we provided first aid to the children. My heart was torn with fear and sorrow for our situation and theirs.”²⁸

On Saturday, February 19, 2022, around 04:30 p.m., in the village of Atiyas, Serwah district, Marib governorate, an incident involving an anti-vehicle mine explosion occurred. This resulted in the deaths of three adult civilians. Following the incident, the bodies were retrieved by the victims’ families, with assistance from some villagers, and buried in Atiyas village graveyard.

The elder brother of one of the victims recounted to Mwatana, “My brother Majdi used to occasionally ride his motorcycle to search for spent copper bullet casings in areas where clashes occurred between the IRG forces and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, collecting whatever he could find to sell and make use of.

On Saturday, February 19, 2022, around 04:30 p.m., while I was visiting a relative in a nearby village, I heard a loud explosion. I initially thought it might have been a landmine exploding among some sheep, a sight we’ve unfortunately grown accustomed to.

28 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victims’ father in the city of Marib, Marib Governorate, on August 16, 2020.

By evening, I noticed my brother was missing and asked villagers about him, but no one knew his whereabouts. It struck me then that he had gone out as usual to search for bullet casings, and the sound of the explosion I had heard earlier echoed in my mind once more. Anxiety and fear crept into my heart. I remembered he had gone with two relatives, so I asked their families if they had returned, but they confirmed they hadn't.

Gathering some villagers, we cautiously headed towards the blast site, fearing the darkness and the potential minefields. Searching carefully, around 08:00 p.m., we found Majdi and remnants of his motorcycle. He had passed away, his right leg severed from the thigh, his right arm severed from the shoulder, drenched in blood. The sight horrified me beyond words, and I couldn't contain myself; I wept bitterly. We gathered his remains and continued searching for the others. We found their remains scattered over a wide area due to the force of the explosion. They were badly mutilated, and we could only identify one by his face; we couldn't collect all of their remains. We took them home.

The next morning, we returned to the same place to search for the third person. We found his remains scattered far apart due to the blast's intensity. He was severely torn, and we could only identify him by a piece of his clothing. It was an unimaginably horrific scene, leaving a deep wound and lasting impact on me. I couldn't shake that memory, each recollection of my brother replaying our days together.”²⁹

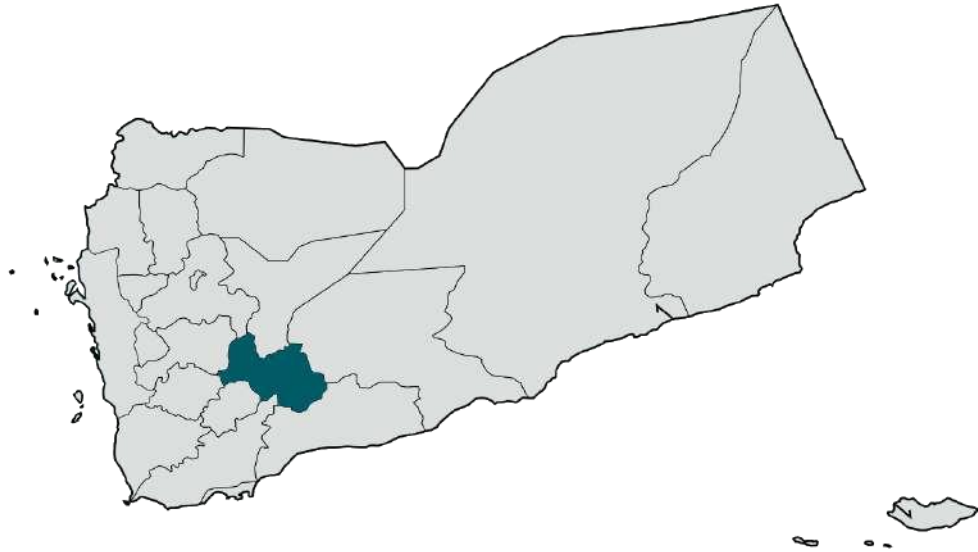
On Tuesday, May 9, 2023, around 4:00 p.m., in the village of Ablah, Al-Sharq sub-district, Harib District, Marib Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the death of Ms. Nadia Ghaleb Saeed (a pseudonym - 30 years old/female). She suffered scattered shrapnel wounds across her body and her right foot was severed. She succumbed to her severe injuries. The incident occurred while she was herding sheep in one of the village pastures near the frontlines between the Giants Brigades and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

It is noteworthy that the victim's family was unable to reach her on the day of the incident due to the restrictions imposed by the conflicting parties, preventing them from accessing the site. The following morning, after coordinating with military leaders from both sides of the conflict, the victim's family was permitted to search for her, retrieve

29 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a victim's brother in Serwah District, Marib Governorate, on May 24, 2024.

her body, and then proceed with her burial.³⁰

Sixth: Al-Bayda Governorate



Al-Bayda Governorate is one of the central governorates, located southeast of the capital Sana'a, approximately 268 kilometers away. It borders parts of Marib and Shabwah governorates to the north, parts of Shabwah and Abyan governorates to the east, parts of Abyan, Lahij, and Aden governorates to the south, and parts of Aden, Ibb, and Dhamar governorates to the west. Its area covers 9,314 square kilometers and consists of 20 districts according to the latest administrative division of 2004.

Al-Bayda Governorate has been a focal point of conflict among various parties throughout the years of conflict in Yemen due to its location in the central region between northern and southern governorates. Prior to the conflict, the presence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), ISIS, and Salafist forces in parts of the governorate led to intense armed clashes involving the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the IRG forces, and the STC. The geographical control over Al-Bayda Governorate is divided among several factions and parties, with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group predominantly controlling most districts, while the IRG forces control limited parts of some districts. The STC controls certain areas in districts adjacent to southern governorates such as Al-Nasifah

30 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Harib District, Marib Governorate, on May 13, 2023.

in Al-Zaher district. Additionally, other groups like the Islamic State (ISIS), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and Salafist forces remain present in the governorate in limited capacities and scattered locations.

In addition to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, non-state armed groups including ISIS, AQAP, and Salafist forces have been documented to use and plant landmines in various areas of the governorate.

Mwatana for Human Rights documented 41 landmine incidents in Al-Bayda Governorate from January 2016 to March 2024, resulting in 72 civilian casualties, including deaths and injuries of 41 children and 6 women. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group was responsible for 35 incidents, while ISIS was responsible for 5 incidents, and one incident was attributed to Salafist forces in the governorate.

The widespread presence of landmines in the governorate has restricted movement and posed challenges in accessing food and water sources due to contamination of agricultural fields, pastures, grazing areas, and both secondary and main roads with mines. During visits to Al-Bayda Governorate, it is common to see many civilians traveling on foot or on donkey-back, navigating rugged mountain roads cautiously due to the mines and explosive devices scattered throughout the area.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in Al-Bayda Governorate

On Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at approximately 10:00 a.m., an explosion incident occurred due to an ISIS remnants landmine in the lower Nawbat Al-Mattar area, Al-Mattar village, Qaifa Al Muhan Yazeed sub-district, Al-Quraishiyah District, Al-Bayda governorate. The explosion injured a man while he was grazing sheep in the village's pasture.³¹

This incident resulted in the man sustaining multiple shrapnel injuries to his legs, hands, eyes, upper chest, neck, face, and lips. His wounds were severe, deep, and life-

31 An interview conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights in Al-Quraishiyah District, Al-Bayda Governorate, on September 9, 2023.

threatening, leading to the amputation of his right leg below the knee joint and the amputation of his left leg below the knee, complete damage to his right eye, partial damage to his left eye, extensive muscle, skin, and tissue loss in his right forearm, a torn tendon in his right hand, and numerous deep, bleeding wounds across other parts of his body.

The victim told Mwatana, “I inadvertently stepped on the landmine and heard a buzzing sound emanating from it, like the sound of bees. Fear gripped me instantly, clouding my thoughts. I looked around and saw a large rock nearby, so I thought to jump behind it to minimize potential injuries from the explosion. But as soon as I lifted my foot, it detonated with a loud blast, hurling me a great distance.”

He added, “For the past 10 years, we have been suffering losses of human lives and livestock, which constitute the main source of livelihood for most villagers. That day was not unexpected for me and the people of my region; it was just my turn!”

An eyewitness, the victim’s nephew, recounted to Mwatana, “I heard a loud explosion coming from the village pasture. I rushed towards the location, images of people previously injured by mines in our village swirling in my head. As I hurried to reach the scene, I came across a severed foot on the roadside, intensifying my fears. When I reached the pasture, I saw my uncle ‘Obbad’ in critical condition, fighting for his life alone amidst the stunned crowd of villagers gathered nearby, all fearful of approaching him.”

On Monday, August 17, 2020, at approximately 9:00 a.m., an anti-personnel landmine, a remnant of ISIS, exploded in the Najd Al-Shawahirah area, Al Qaifa sub-district, Wald Rabi’a district, Al-Bayda governorate. This explosion resulted in the death of a 9-year-old boy and severe injuries to a 12-year-old girl. The girl’s right leg was severed above the knee, and she suffered fractures in her left leg and thigh, multiple shrapnel wounds across her left leg, and fractures in her left hand. The incident occurred while the children were fetching water from a nearby village well when the boy stepped on the landmine, which exploded, killing him and injuring his sister.³²

32 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Dhamar City, Dhamar Governorate, on October 18, 2020.

The mother of the victims told Mwatana, “I was preparing lunch for my children when I heard an explosion. I didn’t pay much attention at first because we hear such sounds almost daily. Moments later, I heard women screaming outside. When I went out to see what had happened, I saw my son in incomplete pieces, and my daughter ‘Altaf’ lying unconscious with her leg severed. I was overwhelmed with a mix of sorrow and panic. I stood there, crying for myself, my children, and our lives after the loss of my son and the disability of my daughter. Every time I look at my daughter and see her lost childhood, I feel a deep sadness and mourn my son ‘Hamdi,’ who lost his life so innocently.”

On Sunday, January 1, 2023, at approximately 2:00 a.m., in Al-Reida area, Al-Tuffah village, Al Bujair sub-district, Mukayras district, Al-Bayda governorate, a landmine left by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group exploded, killing a 15-year-old boy. His body was torn to pieces, and his father was injured by multiple shrapnel. Additionally, a rescuer, a 38-year-old man, sustained multiple shrapnel injuries to the right side of his face, neck, chest, and right shoulder. This occurred while the boy and his father were grazing sheep in the village pasture (Shab al-Jabal al-Sadd pasture). The boy stepped on the mine, which then exploded. When the rescuer attempted to transport the victims to a nearby medical center on his motorcycle, another landmine exploded.³³

The third victim (the rescuer) told Mwatana, “I was working on my farm with some villagers when I heard an explosion in the nearby valley. I rushed with some workers to the pasture and was met with cries of ‘My son Ziyad is dead.’ The father was writhing on the ground, trying to stand, perhaps due to his injuries or the shock of seeing his son blown to pieces before his eyes. I quickly went back to my farm, got my motorcycle, and intended to help them, even though I was terrified of becoming a victim myself. As I approached the pasture on my motorcycle, I hit another mine, which exploded, and I lost consciousness until I woke up in the hospital.”

The deceased child’s brother recounted to Mwatana, “To this day, I cannot forget the sight of my brother torn to pieces, nor my father’s anguished cries as he reached out to us, saying faintly, ‘Ziyad is dead.’ I gathered my brother’s remains and returned to the village for burial. My father underwent treatment, but he still suffers from his injuries,

33 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Mukayras district, Al-Bayda Governorate, on April 6, 2023.

and I live in constant fear with every step I take in the village.”

On Tuesday, July 21, 2020, at approximately 10:00 a.m., a booby trap exploded in Horan Village, Horan Al-Ala sub-district, Radman District, Al-Bayda Governorate. The explosion resulted in the death of a 67-year-old woman, whose body was torn to pieces upon touching the booby trap. A 9-year-old girl was also injured, sustaining shrapnel wounds to her face, neck, and hands.³⁴

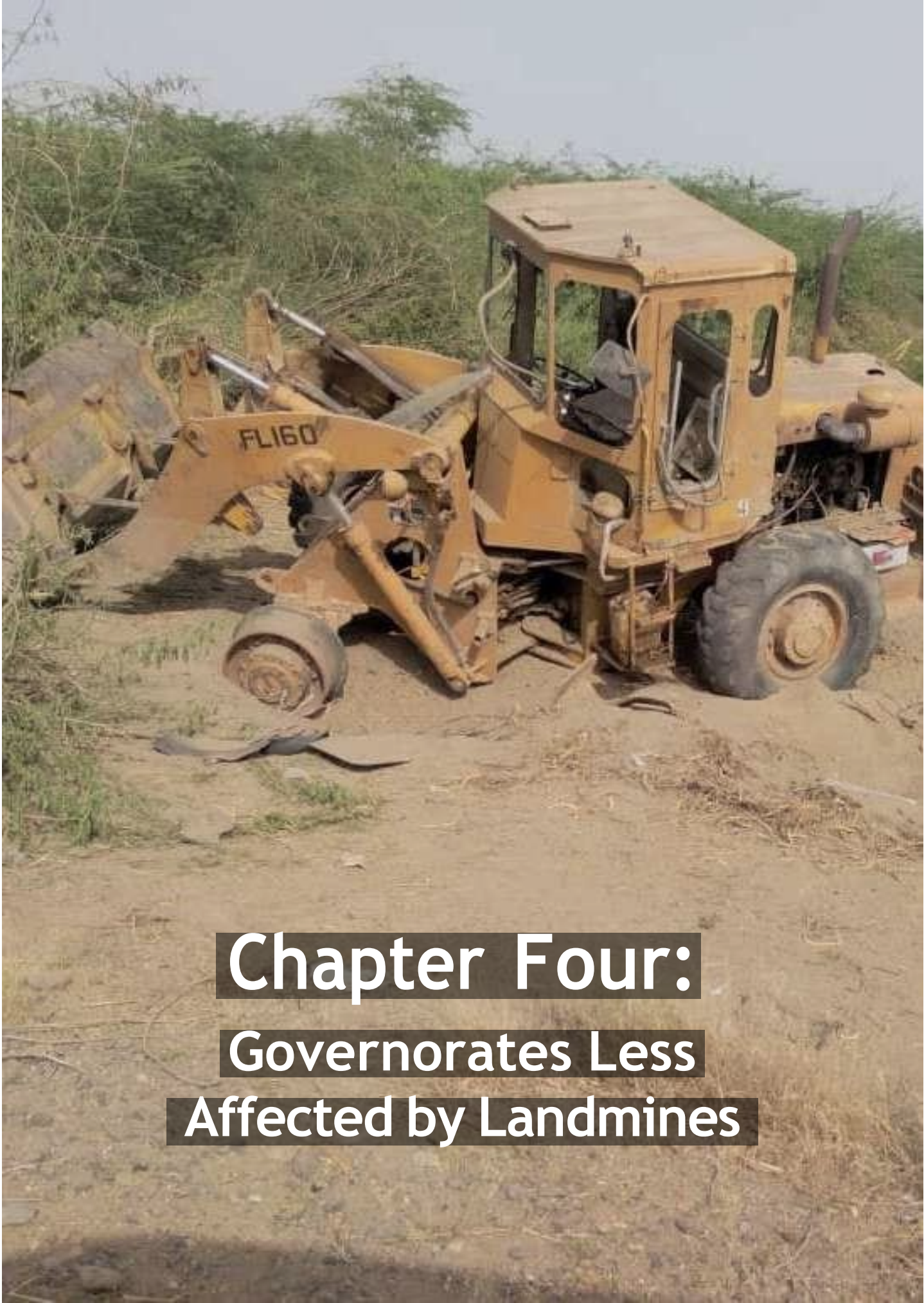
This incident occurred when the deceased grandmother and her injured granddaughter went to fetch water from a rainwater collection pool. The grandmother inadvertently triggered the booby trap, causing it to explode.

A relative of the victims told Mwatana, “My mother and my niece went to graze the sheep in a nearby pasture. My mother then headed to a rainwater collection pool, followed by my niece. As my mother touched a thin wire, it exploded; it was a booby trap connected to that wire! I was at home when I heard the explosion and immediately rushed to the village to see what had happened. Along with many villagers, we ran towards the sound of the explosion. When I arrived at the pasture, I was horrified by what I saw. My mother was reduced to just her torso, her limbs severed and scattered in different directions. I felt dizzy and lost consciousness. When I woke up at home, I hoped it was all a nightmare, but I was confronted by the reality of my mother’s remains lying next to me, with her limbs wrapped in separate cloths, ready for burial.”

34 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Radman District, Al-Bayda Governorate, on August 30, 2020.



Image of a landmine warning sign on one of the vital roads - Al-Safraa / Assilan district / Shabwa - 2024/01/28



Chapter Four:

Governorates Less

Affected by Landmines

For the purpose of this report, Mwatana for Human Rights classified eight out of fourteen landmine-contaminated governorates as being less affected compared to others. This classification is based on documented incidents during the period covered by the report. The governorates, listed from the most to the least affected, are: Sanaa, Al-Dhale, Saada, Shabwa, Lahij, Abyan, Aden, and Ibb.

Sanaa Governorate tops the list with the highest number of documented incidents. Mwatana's team recorded 26 incidents in this governorate, resulting in 36 civilian casualties, including 23 children and 5 women. Following Sanaa, Al-Dhale Governorate witnessed 22 incidents, leading to 39 civilian casualties, including 27 children and 7 women.

Saada and Shabwa Governorates each experienced 11 incidents, totaling 22 incidents between them. These incidents resulted in 49 civilian casualties in both governorates, including 31 children and 2 women. Lahij, Abyan, Aden, and Ibb Governorates reported 10, 6, 3, and 2 incidents respectively, causing 40 civilian casualties, including 20 children and 3 women.

Out of the 91 total landmine incidents documented by Mwatana for Human Rights in these governorates, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 84 incidents. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the STC are each responsible for two incidents, totaling four incidents between them. The Ansar al-Sharia and the Saudi/UAE-led coalition are each responsible for one incident. One incident was attributed to an unknown party.

Out of the eight northern governorates, three—Sana'a, Saada, and Ibb—have been under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group since the onset of the armed conflict and have not been controlled by any other party. In contrast, four southern governorates—Abyan, Aden, Lahij, and Shabwah—are currently under the control of the STC. There is also a limited presence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Ansar al-Sharia in Shabwah and Abyan. These armed factions are known to use landmines, including anti-personnel landmines. According to Mwatana's documentation, three incidents in Abyan are attributed to Ansar al-Sharia, while Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is responsible for one incident in Shabwah. The remaining documented incidents are the responsibility of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and occurred in areas previously controlled by the group during the ongoing Yemeni conflict.

Residents of these areas suffer from the widespread presence of landmines and explosive remnants, which significantly impede mobility and movement. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that many of these devices are located on both primary and secondary roads.

Examples of Landmine Incidents in the 8 Governorates

Sana'a Governorate

On Saturday, October 3, 2020, in Al-Sawad area, Al-Arbaeen Street, Sanhan wa Bani Bahloul District, Sana'a Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the death of a 12-year-old boy and the injury of his 25-year-old mother. The incident happened while the mother and her child were taking out the trash to an area near their house.

The father of the child victim told Mwatana, "On the day of the incident, I was working in the city when some locals from our area came and informed me that a gas cylinder had exploded in my house. I was running heavily, as if I were carrying tons of weights on my back, and my movement became more difficult. In our area, there is a garbage dump where we let the trash accumulate and burn it every two or three months. On the day of the incident, my wife and child went out to dispose of the garbage. It was 4 p.m. on Sunday, October 4, 2020. When I arrived at the scene, I saw people gathered at a distance from the house. I rushed to where people were gathered; the mother was lying on the ground in one direction, and my son in the other, with no one having provided aid to them! It was too late to save my child. He had died from shrapnel that pierced his small heart."³⁵

On Sunday, February 7, 2021, around 1:00 p.m., in the Maswara area of Nehm District, Sana'a Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in the death of a young girl and injuring two other children aged between 12 and 15 years. Their injuries included shrapnel wounds to the face, chest, hands, and legs. The incident happened while they were herding sheep on a mountain about 1 km from their home.

35 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victims' relative in Sanhan wa Bani Bahloul District, Amanat Al-Asemah Governorate, on October 6, 2020.

A surviving victim told Mwatana, “It was around 1:00 p.m. when I was herding sheep with two girls from the village. We were going to sit down and take a break when suddenly the landmine exploded near us. The two girls lost consciousness near me; one of them regained consciousness and stood up. I told her to go and get help, and she hurried off, but we were in a remote area far from any settlements. She returned with help after about three hours. Once the rescuers came, they took me to a hospital. I couldn’t see or recognize any of them. I was only hearing the other injured girl near me groaning, but I couldn’t do anything for her. I couldn’t move from my spot, and she eventually died. Her condition was much worse than mine. I tried to look at her, but her facial features had changed due to the explosion. I was later told that her eyes had been dislodged, and her face was disfigured.”³⁶

Al-Dhale Governorate

On Friday, March 15, 2019, around 1:00 p.m., in the village of Ramah, Al-Ashour Isolation, Qatabah District, Al-Dhale Governorate, a landmine attributed to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group exploded under a 17-year-old boy. The boy sustained multiple shrapnel wounds, the most severe of which caused the amputation of his left hand at the wrist, along with shrapnel injuries to his left eye, cheeks, and forehead. The incident occurred while the boy was herding sheep in the Al-Qasbah area, located 300 meters west of his village.

The victim’s brother told Mwatana, “My brother Salem left home at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 15, 2019, to herd sheep in the nearby valleys and areas around the village. After spending four hours herding, Salem decided to return home with the sheep for lunch and to rest a bit. At around 1:00 p.m., Salem stepped on a landmine in Al-Qasbah, 300 meters west of the village. The explosion was loud enough for the villagers and those in nearby areas to hear. Since there was ongoing fighting at the southern entrance of Damt City, many villagers thought the explosion was due to artillery shelling, and some expected more explosions to follow. None of us suspected it was a landmine. Some people in the nearby valley saw dust rising from the Al-Qasbah area and the sheep fleeing because of the explosion. A few farmers rushed to the site and found my brother

36 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a surviving victim in Ma’een District, Amanat Al-Asemah Governorate, on February 9, 2021.

Salem lying on the ground, unconscious and bleeding heavily. One of them called us, and upon hearing the news, we hurried to the scene. We found my brother soaked in blood and barely conscious due to the significant blood loss. Salem now lives in an abnormal state. We are unsure if it is due to the blood loss he experienced or if he has suffered psychological trauma. He is not the same as he was before the incident; he has lost part of his memory and cannot comprehend things the first time they are explained. Before the injury, he was known for his intelligence and love for work.”³⁷

Saada Governorate

On Thursday, June 9, 2022, around 10:00 a.m., in the Wabilah area, Al-Zahir district, Saada Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, injuring four children while they were herding cattle in the area.

The father of one of the victims told Mwatana, “My son and my nephew went to the village to herd cattle and sheep, while I was at home. My wife came and told me she had an uncomfortable feeling and asked me to check on the children. I went to the village and saw them herding together with two other neighbor children. I watched them from a distance. Around 10:00 a.m., one of the neighbor’s children suggested they gather to have breakfast they brought with them. As they finished, one of them tripped on his shoe and fell. While trying to get up, his foot landed on a landmine that exploded. All the children, including my son and nephew, were injured right in front of me. I faced two choices: either risk entering the valley to help them - knowing I too could fall victim to another mine - or stay helpless, waiting for help or death. I was frantic and confused in my place. The neighborhood residents gathered and I begged them to do something to help the children, but the fear gripped us all. I lost hope as they bled and stopped moving, believing they had lost their lives. After about ten minutes, a military vehicle carrying armed men affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group arrived at the scene with a mine detector device. They managed to reach and evacuate the victims. Since then, I have not known a peaceful night’s sleep, reliving the explosion in my nightmares everynight.”³⁸

37 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victim’s brother in Qatabah District, Al-Dhale Governorate, on March 14, 2022.

38 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the father of one victim in Al-Dhaheer District, Saada Governorate, on July 3, 2022.

On Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 11:00 a.m., in the Al-Naasho - Wad Ayyash area, Haydan district, Saada Governorate, a landmine planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group exploded, resulting in the death of two children and injuring a girl. They aged between 8 and 13 years. The injuries included shrapnel wounds to their hands, legs, faces, necks, and chests. The incident occurred as the three children were returning from school (Al-Ridwan School), and one of them stepped on the mine, triggering the explosion.

One of the first responders told Mwatana, “I was riding my motorcycle in the area when I saw a group of students running in fear. I asked them what had happened, and they informed me about an explosion that had injured a group of children. I quickly rode my bike to the scene and found the children lying on the ground. Two of them were screaming in pain, and the third was fighting for his life. I called my brother and asked him to rush his car to the scene. I tore my scarf and used it to bandage the children’s wounds, but one of them passed away while I was trying to bandage his leg. When my brother arrived, we transported them to Haydan Hospital in the district center. Upon arrival to the hospital, the second child passed away, and the girl was rushed into surgery. The scene was horrifying for me, especially the screams of the child who died in the hospital, and the sight of his parents crying for him.”³⁹

On Friday, October 2, 2020, at approximately 11:00 a.m., in the Al-Raqo area of the Monabbih district, Saada Governorate, near the Saudi-Yemeni border, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in injuring a young man. Shrapnel caused the severing of his left leg below the knee, while his right foot sustained wounds from multiple fragments.

The incident occurred as the young man attempted an illegal crossing (smuggling) into Saudi Arabia. After the explosion, he was rushed to Al-Salam Hospital in Saada. Witnesses attribute responsibility for the incident to the Saudi border guards, who planted the mines to prevent human smuggling into Saudi Arabia. The victim is from the Eyael Yazeed district in Amran Governorate.

39 An interview conducted by Mwatana with an eyewitness in Haydan District, Saada Governorate, on November 23, 2023.

The victim told Mwatana, “I was on my way to smuggle into Saudi Arabia, after feeling desperate of my jobless life. When I reached the barbed wire on the Yemeni-Saudi border, there was a small opening where smugglers had crossed before. I thought I was lucky because it wouldn’t take long to dismantle the wire. I entered through the opening with two companions, one from Rimah Governorate and the other from Ibb Governorate. As I hurried to walk through, my left foot stepped on a mine that exploded immediately. My companion from Rimah carried me back to the Al-Raqo area, where they provided initial medical care. My foot was in excruciating pain. I had 1,000 Saudi Riyals which I gave to the Rimah companion to pay for the ride to Saada (500 for the car fare and 500 for him). I arrived at Al-Salam Hospital in Saada, where the pain intensified. I reluctantly consented to the amputation. They took me into the operating room, and my foot was amputated below the knee. When I woke up, I was furious why they had amputated it below the knee! But my uncle, who arrived while I was in the operating room, calmed me down. Later, I returned home to my family in Jabal Eyael Yazeed district. Most of the time, I feel tremors like electric shocks in my amputated leg, and the other leg bears the scars of shrapnel. I’m not the same anymore and I won’t be. I am alive but feel dead.”⁴⁰

On Saturday, January 11, 2020, around 09:00 a.m., in the Al-Zubairat area of Wadi Al Abu Jabara, Ketaf wa Al-Buqaa district, Saada Governorate, an incident involving an anti-personnel landmine explosion resulted in the death of a 13-year-old boy and the injury of another boy (12 years old). The incident occurred while the boys were herding sheep in a valley near their home.⁴¹

Shabwa Governorate

On Wednesday, December 27, 2017, around 03:00 p.m., in the village of Dakam, Bayhan district, Shabwa Governorate, a landmine explosion occurred, resulting in injuries to three boys aged between 13 and 17 years. They sustained various shrapnel wounds and deep injuries.

40 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the surviving victim in Jabal Eyael Yazeed District, Amran Governorate, on November 15, 2020.

41 An interview conducted by Mwatana in Ketaf wa Al-Buqaa District, Saada Governorate, on November 10, 2020.

The incident happened while the children were playing near their home when the boy “Mubarak” stepped on a landmine that was planted in the ground; it exploded among them.

One of the rescuers told Mwatana, “A group of children were playing about twenty meters from my house. On their way back home, Mubarak stepped on a landmine that exploded, causing severe and deep wounds to him. I shouted for the villagers to gather and saw three children sustained varying degrees of injuries bleeding. We first rescued Mubarak because his condition was critical, then returned to help the other two children. This incident instilled fear among the children and villagers, leading many parents to keep their children at home for safety.”⁴²

On Wednesday, January 2, 2019, around 11:30 a.m., in the village of Al-Saha, Wadi Al-Khair area, Bayhan district, Shabwa Governorate, an anti-personnel landmine exploded, injuring a 15-year-old girl while she was herding sheep. She sustained shrapnel wounds that resulted in the amputation of her left leg below the knee and injuries to her right foot and leg.

The victim’s brother told Mwatana, “I was at home when I heard the explosion. I called my father to ask if he knew anything about the source and location of the explosion. He told me that an anti-personnel landmine had exploded under my sister, Sana’, when she stepped on it among some rocks, causing her left leg to be amputated. I rushed to the location my father described and found Sana’ in a critical condition, surrounded by my siblings, my father, and her friend who was herding sheep with her. We made pressure bandages for both legs and carried her from the scene to where our car was parked, which was a two-hour walk. As I carried her, I feared she might not survive.”

He added, “My sister now lives in a devastated mental state as she became disabled. Her friend, who witnessed the explosion and saw Sana’s leg blown off and heavily bleeding, is also in a state of shock and deep sorrow.”⁴³

42 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a rescuer in Bayhan District, Shabwa Governorate, on January 12, 2018.

43 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victim’s brother in Shabwa District, Shabwa Governorate, on January 10, 2019.

Lahij Governorate

On Thursday, February 28, 2019, around 10:00 a.m., in the village of Qaradh, Zeiq area, Al-Qubaytah district, Lahij Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine exploded under a civilian car, LandCruiser Pickup, carrying humanitarian aid from the Norwegian Council. The aid, consisting of biscuits meant for distribution to approximately 551 students at Ali Abdul-Mughni School in Zeiq, was completely destroyed along with the vehicle. The explosion also injured a 14-year-old boy with severe shrapnel wounds and caused psychological trauma to a young man who was with him.

A cousin of the victims told Mwatana, “My nephews were transporting humanitarian aid—biscuits provided by the Norwegian Council—intended for eight schools in Al-Qubaytah district, Lahij Governorate. Shadi was driving the car, loaded with biscuits, accompanied by Ayman, who was responsible for distributing the aid to the targeted schools.”

On Thursday, February 28, 2019, the two victims left their home in the Al-Dahi area of Al-Qubaytah district, Lahij Governorate, heading towards the Karesh area (the center of Al-Qubaytah district) to transport humanitarian aid as usual. Around 10:00 a.m., in the village of Qaradh, near Ali Al-Mughni School, an anti-vehicle landmine exploded under the right side of the car’s front.

With no one around to help them, Ayman sustained shrapnel injuries to his legs, resulting in the amputation of his right foot above the ankle, fragmentation of the right shinbone, and additional wounds to his thigh and calf. Shrapnel also hit his face, with one piece piercing his right eye, necessitating its removal. After the explosion, he lay on the ground beside the car, bleeding profusely and unconscious.

The driver, Shadi, did not suffer direct injuries but experienced a severe panic attack, losing his composure. He now suffers from severe psychological trauma due to the incident. Immediately after the explosion, he ran from the car in a state of hysteria, screaming and running aimlessly along the mountains in the area until a resident of his

villager found him and brought him back home.⁴⁴

Abyan Governorate

On Thursday, November 23, 2017, around 6:20 p.m., on a side road in Al-Mahfad district, Abyan Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine left by Ansar al-Sharia exploded under a civilian car, disabling it and killing two young men inside. One of the victims died instantly, while the other succumbed to his injuries three days later.

The incident occurred while the young men were en route to the Al-Mahfad government complex to deliver breakfast to the workers there.

An eyewitness told Mwatana, “At six o’clock in the morning, I was standing on the street waiting for transportation to the market. At that moment, Tareq and Nashwan passed by in a civilian car on their way to the Al-Mahfad government complex and offered me a ride, as the market is close to the complex. I got in with them, and when I reached the market, I said goodbye and went on my way. Just a few minutes later, everyone in the market and I heard a loud explosion that shook the area. We heard people shouting that an explosion had occurred near the government complex. I rushed to the scene and was shocked to see the car I had just been in reduced to a heap of metal. Tareq was bleeding heavily, and Nashwan was in pieces. We gathered Nashwan’s remains into a box, and Tareq’s condition deteriorated further. He died a week after the incident.”⁴⁵

Aden Governorate

On Monday, June 29, 2020, around 10:00 a.m., in the Bir Ahmed area, Al-Buraiqa district, Aden Governorate, an anti-vehicle landmine explosion resulted in the deaths of four people, including a child.

44 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a relative of the victim in Al-Qubaytah District, Lahj Governorate, on May 7, 2019.

45 An interview conducted by Mwatana with an eyewitness in Al-Mahfad District, Abyan Governorate, on January 10, 2018.

An eyewitness, a relative of the victims, told Mwatana, “I went with a group of my family members to the Bir Ahmed area to inspect a piece of land we own. We divided into two cars. I went ahead with my group, and the other car followed. It seems that the second car veered slightly off the path, triggering an anti-vehicle landmine that caused the car to catch fire. Two of those who were in the car died instantly from the burns they sustained, while the other two succumbed to their severe injuries later on, caused by both the explosion and the ensuing fire.”⁴⁶

Ibb Governorate

On Wednesday, June 23, 2021, around 5:00 p.m., in the village of Al-Di’ah, Jabal Addanah, Bani Mansour sub-district, Ba’dan District, Ibb Governorate, a suspected landmine explosion injured two boys (aged 13 and 15). The incident occurred while they were herding sheep. They were subsequently taken to Al-Thawra General Hospital in Ibb city for treatment. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is held responsible for the explosion, as the area was a Houthi military site during the 2015 armed clashes between the group and the National Resistance.

The mother of one of the victims, an aunt of the other, told Mwatana, “At 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, my 13-year-old son left our home in the village of Al-Di’ah, Bani Mansour sub-district, Ba’dan District, Ibb Governorate, to herd sheep with my nephew at the valley of the village. Around 5:00 p.m., I was sitting at our doorstep, about 950 meters from the incident site, and saw the sheep on Jabal Addanah with the boys trying to bring them back. Suddenly, a loud explosion echoed through the area, and I saw dust rising where the boys were. I started screaming and crying, running towards the site in fear. When I reached the foot of the mountain, a nearby village woman had already called her father, who brought the boys down. Seeing my son’s legs bleeding and my nephew with a head injury made me faint due to high blood pressure. The explosion has left both boys with severe physical and psychological scars, causing lasting disabilities. The incident has also taken a toll on us emotionally and financially, as my husband’s work in agriculture is our only source of income.”⁴⁷

46 An interview conducted by Mwatana with a relative of the victims in Al- Buraika District, Aden Governorate, on November 4, 2020.

47 An interview conducted by Mwatana with the victims’ relative in Al-Dhaheer District, Ibb Governorate, on July 1, 2021.





Recommendations:

To the Ansar Allah (Houthi) Group:

- Fully adhere to the principles of the Ottawa Convention, to which Yemen is a party and which the group has pledged to uphold. This includes an immediate cessation of the use of all types of mines, particularly anti-personnel mines, the destruction of their stockpiles of mines, and the cessation of manufacturing and importing mines.
- Hand over maps of explosive mines and booby traps to any relevant international entity for their disposal and removal.
- Facilitate mine clearance operations, including granting visas to experts and approving the entry of technical and protective equipment for deminers.
- Take effective measures to provide reparations to victims and their families, including adequate compensation and support for their rehabilitation programs.
- Establish independent and impartial bodies to investigate the use of mines by its forces and hold those responsible accountable.
- Mark mined areas with clear warning signs to prevent further casualties, recognizing that the group is responsible for planting these mines and aware of their locations.

To Other Parties to the Conflict:

- Immediately cease the use of all types of mines and explosive devices, destroy any stockpiles they possess, and commit to not manufacturing or importing them.
- Establish independent and impartial bodies to investigate the use of mines by their forces and hold those responsible accountable.
- Promote and support the activities of mine clearance entities in locating and removing mines.
- Provide adequate support to victims and take necessary measures for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

To Mine Clearance Entities:

- Disclose information about the types of mines found, their locations, usage patterns, and quantities to prevent future use.
- Properly train working teams to avoid risks while removing mines.
- Follow international standards in dealing with mines to ensure safe and sound operations, avoiding risks to working teams and civilians during mine removal.
- Coordinate efforts and provide shared databases among all entities working on mine removal in various areas.

To Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society:

- Support mine removal activities and provide working entities and teams with the latest information and appropriate equipment for their work.
- Support training activities for teams and entities working on mine removal.
- Intensify activities to educate civilians about the dangers of mines and provide information on their locations whenever possible.
- Contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into society and provide necessary psychological and medical support to them and their families.
- Promote coordination among entities and teams working on mine removal and organize their efforts.
- Continue monitoring and reporting mine incidents, identifying contaminated areas and responsible parties.

To the International Community:

- Provide necessary assistance to Yemen for the disposal of stockpiles of mines, explosive devices, and booby traps.
- Establish an international criminal investigative mechanism to investigate

serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the excessive use of anti-personnel mines in the Yemeni conflict.

- Monitor the compliance of all parties, including the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, with the Ottawa Convention banning AP mines, and holding violators criminally accountable for breaching the convention.
- Support UN-led peace efforts in Yemen, ensuring that human rights issues, including accountability for perpetrators and reparations for victims, are priorities in any future peace programs.



Cover photo: A member of the MASAM Mine Action Team surveys the area next to Milat School in Al-Dhubab District, Taiz, which was a fighting area. The school building in the background was destroyed by coalition airstrikes after it was used by the Houthis. September 2019.

Fields of Death

Civilian victims of landmine incidents 2016 - 2024

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Yemen, landmines have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians and forced hundreds of survivors to live with disabilities that have robbed them of the ability and right to live a normal life. These landmines have left indelible scars on their memories and inflicted tragedies beyond comprehension. Most of these victims are children who were never given the chance to know or aspire to a safe life, with their dreams crushed before they could even begin. The casualty figures continue to rise due to the refusal of responsible parties to disclose maps of mined areas, including villages, farms, and roads where civilians are forced to return, living in constant fear of sudden death.

The "Fields of Death" report, conducted by Mwatana from June 2023 to the end of April 2024, reviews the direct and indirect effects resulting from the use of landmines in the current Yemeni conflict. It highlights the massive scale of landmine proliferation and the nature of the locations where they have been planted. The report addresses the impact of this violation, which becomes increasingly dangerous and harmful as military operations decrease and many internally displaced persons (IDPs) return to their homes. This is a pattern of violation with long-lasting effects, potentially extending for decades after military operations cease, if responsible authorities do not take effective measures to clear and secure the mined areas with determination and responsibility.