STUDY

UNSAFE HAVENS

A Study on the Displacement Crisis and the Suffering of Displaced Persons in Yemen

Mwatana for Human Rights

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Executive Summary

The major political shifts in Yemen since 2011 have led to profound changes in the dynamics of power within the country, resulting in the decline of political solutions in favor of military actions. On September 21, 2014, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group seized control of Sana'a, the capital, and several northern governorates through military force. This development triggered regional and international intervention, culminating in a large-scale military operation led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on March 26, 2015, encompassing the entire country. These operations, alongside other consequences of the conflict, have caused the displacement of 4.5 million people and the world's worst humanitarian disaster in one of the Middle East's poorest nations.

After more than a decade of conflict and armed interventions, the humanitarian crisis persists. Despite relative calm since April 2022, marked by a reduction in large-scale military operations following a truce agreement between the warring parties, humanitarian needs remain significant and ongoing. According to UN agencies, more than half Yemen's population (18.2 million people) require humanitarian assistance. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) represent the most vulnerable and needy group, having lost their homes and possessions, as well as their personal security, family stability, and their civil right to a dignified life. Additionally, many have faced severe violations and risks before, during, and after displacement.

This study, conducted by Mwatana for Human Rights in collaboration with a local expert, covers the period from September 2014 to October 2024. It aims to examine the conditions of IDPs in displacement camps and document the risks and violations they face in their areas of origin, during displacement journeys, and in host areas.

The study also sheds light on abuses perpetrated by host communities against IDPs and investigates the root causes of displacement, the conditions in displacement camps, and the broader impacts of displacement, including the relationship between IDPs and host communities. Furthermore, the study explores humanitarian response mechanisms to assist IDPs and the challenges these responses face.

Data Collection Methodology

The study's data collection process was conducted in two phases:

1. **First Phase:** Quantitative data was gathered using a semi-structured "Displaced Families Interview Form" and an "Observation Form" to assess the conditions of displaced families.

2. **Second Phase:** Qualitative data was collected using an "In-depth Individual Interview Form" and a "Focus Group Discussions Guide."

All tools were designed to align with the study's objectives, focusing on displacement causes, risks, violations, camp conditions, the impact of displacement on IDPs and host communities, and response mechanisms from 2014 to 2024.

Key Findings

1. **Causes of Displacement:**

   A. **Indiscriminate Shelling:** Widespread ground and air bombardments by conflicting parties led to insecurity, forcing civilians to flee their homes, some multiple times, to escape airstrikes, ground offensives, and forced recruitment campaigns.

   B. **Racial Discrimination:** The conflict exacerbated racial and sectarian discrimination and hate speech, targeting individuals and groups based on political, religious, ethnic, or geographic affiliations, driving them to seek safer areas.

   C. **Landmines and Explosives:** Extensive contamination of residential areas, farmland, roads, and water sources with landmines and improvised explosive devices caused injuries and deaths, prompting residents to flee.

   D. **Lack of Basic Services:** The conflict-induced collapse of essential services, rising unemployment, and limited access to livelihoods forced many to abandon their homes in search of better living conditions.

2. **Violations Against IDPs:** The results of in-depth interviews with displaced household heads and focus group sessions indicate that the displaced individuals have been subjected to multiple violations by all parties to the conflict, including: Ansar Allah group (Houthis), the Southern Transitional Council (STC), the Internationally recognized government forces, the joint forces, and the Saudi / UAE led Coalition .These violations include:

   A. **Forced Evictions:** The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group forcibly expelled civilians under the pretext of ensuring their safety, employing inhumane threats.

   B. **Targeting of Civilians:** Warring parties, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the internationally recognized government, and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, conducted attacks ignoring the principle of distinction between civilians, civilian objects, and military targets.

   C. **Restrictions on Movement:** IDPs faced severe restrictions on movement, including arbitrary stops, searches, and the confiscation of personal belongings by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the Southern Transitional Council.

D. **Looting:** IDP properties in areas of origin were often looted by conflicting parties following displacement.

E. **Arbitrary Detentions and Raids:** In some areas, IDPs were subjected to arbitrary detentions and repeated raids on displacement sites, especially in Aden.

F. **Sexual Harassment and Verbal Abuse:** IDPs, particularly women and children, faced abuse, harassment, and derogatory remarks in displacement areas under different authorities.

3. **Conditions in Displacement Camps:** While most camps are close to public services and have some access to water, their infrastructure remains inadequate. Camps rely on worn tarpaulins, which offer minimal protection from extreme weather. Sanitation and privacy concerns, coupled with vulnerabilities to climate-related hazards, such as floods and storms, compound the suffering of displaced populations.

4. **Impact of Displacement:** The study indicated that most displaced persons feel frustrated due to the significant and negative changes that displacement has caused in their lives. The main forms of suffering resulting from displacement are as follows:

A. **Fluctuating Relationship with the Host Community:** At the beginning of their displacement, many displaced persons faced problems with the host community. However, these issues began to decline as the duration of displacement increased and the displaced were integrated into the host community. Exceptions include some tribal areas like Al-Jawf and Abyan, where displaced persons did not face significant problems.

B. **Tension Due to Resource Sharing:** The tension between displaced persons and the host community is attributed to the sharing of the community's limited resources, the targeting of displaced persons for humanitarian aid, and their use of essential services such as water and fuel. However, such problems were not reported in some areas like Hays and Al-Khokha in Al-Hudaydah Governorate, where displaced persons integrated easily with the host community.

C. **Lack and Scarcity of Income Sources:** Most displaced persons suffer from a lack or scarcity of income sources, especially with the decline in humanitarian assistance provided to them in recent years.

D. **Begging and Child Labor:** The phenomena of begging and child labor are widespread among the displaced, as many families rely on their children's work, depriving them

of education and sometimes leading to the recruitment of children by conflict parties to secure income for the families.

E. **Family Dispersal:** The study showed instances of family dispersal due to displacement to distant areas or due to divisions in religious, political, or sectarian affiliations.

5. **Humanitarian Response Mechanisms:** At the onset of displacement, most displaced individuals received food assistance, shelter supplies, and cash aid, and they expressed satisfaction with the level of response at that time. However, in recent years, the aid provided has significantly decreased, with many not receiving any assistance for a period of 6 to 7 months. Tents and makeshift shelters have deteriorated without replacement, and there has been little provision of psychological support services.

   The study indicated clear shortcomings in humanitarian aid, characterized by randomness and focusing on immediate responses to urgent needs rather than on economic empowerment and capacity building. This leaves displaced persons dependent on assistance for a prolonged period. Displaced individuals in Sayoun, Hadramaut Governorate, complained about not receiving humanitarian aid like their peers in other governorates.

6. **Return and Settlement Intentions:** IDPs' willingness to return to their areas of origin depends on several factors, including the removal of threats, such as landmines, cessation of armed clashes, and assurances of compensation for destroyed properties. Based on these conditions, IDPs fall into three groups:

   A. Those who find their lives better after displacement and prefer not to return.

   B. Those eager to return despite the risks.

   C. Those linking their return to the end of the conflict and restoration of safety and stability.

This comprehensive study highlights the dire circumstances faced by IDPs in Yemen, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable solutions to address their immediate and long-term challenges.

Study Recommendations

In light of the findings highlighted in the study, the following recommendations are made:

First: Recommendations to All Parties to the Conflict

1. **Adherence to International Humanitarian Law:** All parties to the conflict must adhere to the rules and principles of international humanitarian law and cease committing violations against civilians in all categories, including displaced civilians.

2. **Compliance with International Human Rights Law:** All parties must respect international human rights law in their dealings with civilians, particularly displaced persons. This includes ensuring fundamental freedoms such as freedom of movement, the right to access decent employment opportunities, and adherence to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

3. **End to Racial Discrimination:** All parties must immediately cease all forms of racial discrimination based on color, ethnicity, geographical affiliation, family background, or any other discriminatory basis. They must take effective measures to combat hate speech and discriminatory practices against civilians, particularly displaced persons, ensuring humane treatment in all circumstances.

4. **Cessation of Threats and Violations Leading to Displacement:** All parties, especially the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the Southern Transitional Council, must immediately halt all forms of threats, abuses, and violations that force civilians into displacement and internal displacement.

5. **Release of Arbitrarily Detained Individuals:** All parties must immediately release all arbitrarily detained individuals and disclose the fate of forcibly disappeared civilians, particularly displaced persons who are arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared.

6. **Facilitation of Humanitarian Assistance:** All parties must ensure safe and rapid access to humanitarian aid for displaced persons, remove barriers hindering such assistance, and support humanitarian organizations and donors in planning and executing relief operations without obstacles.

7. **Provision of Protection Services:** All parties must provide necessary assistance and protection services to displaced persons, improve the conditions in displacement camps, including protective fencing, and remove sources of danger, such as military gatherings near displacement sites, to ensure the safety and security of the displaced.

8. **Effective Reporting Mechanisms for Violations:** All parties must establish effective

mechanisms for reporting violations or assaults against displaced persons in camps and displacement sites, thereby reducing such violations and holding perpetrators accountable.

9. **Resolution of Land Issues in Displacement Camps:** All parties must urgently address and resolve land disputes concerning displacement camps situated on privately-owned land belonging to host community civilians. This must be done in a manner that prevents harm or abuse against displaced persons and avoids repeated displacement.

10. **Improvement of Camp Infrastructure and Services:** All parties must improve the infrastructure of displacement camps and ensure essential services, including upgraded housing units, sanitation, water, electricity, education, and healthcare.

11. **Restoration of Civil Documentation:** All parties must address issues related to displaced persons' loss of identification and official documents, ensuring they can resume normal activities and access all their rights.

12. **Provision of Decent Employment Opportunities:** All parties must create decent employment opportunities for displaced persons to enable dignified living, build their capacities, and equip them for suitable jobs. Additionally, they should support initiatives promoting social integration and participation for displaced persons.

13. **Demining and Clearing Explosive Hazards:** All parties, particularly the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, must work on clearing and removing landmines and handing over relevant maps. They must also facilitate humanitarian demining efforts to eliminate hazards and prepare for the voluntary return of displaced persons to their original areas.

14. **Clearing War Remnants:** All parties must clear unexploded ordnance and other remnants of war, facilitate their removal by humanitarian organizations, and ensure the safe return of displaced persons to their original areas.

15. **Integration into Host Communities:** All parties must integrate displaced persons into host communities and ensure their access to essential services without harmful discrimination.

Second: Recommendations to Donors and Humanitarian Organizations

Based on the study's findings, displacement has become increasingly complex due to

its prolonged duration and the overlapping political, security, and economic dimensions. Accordingly, the study recommends the following to donors and humanitarian organizations:

1. **Assessing the Needs of Displaced Persons**: Conduct studies to identify the specific needs of displaced persons and thoughtfully plan responses to address emerging needs and ensure comprehensive coverage.
2. **Implementing Targeted Responses:** Work on executing well-planned and structured response operations to minimize random interventions that fail to address the urgent needs of displaced persons. Consider the climatic conditions of displacement camps and sites to ensure optimal benefit for the displaced population.
3. **Supporting Sustainable Livelihood Programs:** Prioritize programs and activities that contribute to sustainable income for displaced persons, including economic empowerment initiatives. Avoid relying solely on immediate humanitarian aid, such as in-kind or cash assistance.
4. **Capacity-Building for Displaced Persons:** Support programs that build the capacities of displaced individuals and prepare them to enter the labor market, enabling them to secure sustainable income and decent job opportunities.
5. **Enhancing Protection Services:** Strengthen protection services for displaced persons, including psychological support, child-friendly spaces, and other essential services that are largely lacking in the camps and displacement sites covered by the study.
6. **Collaborating with Local Authorities to Improve Environmental Health:** Coordinate with local authorities to enhance environmental health in displacement sites through programs that promote awareness and health education to reduce the spread of communicable and infectious diseases.
7. **Addressing Sanitation and Environmental Concerns:** Work with local authorities to solve sanitation and environmental hygiene issues, improving conditions in various displacement camps and sites.
8. **Promoting Integration with Host Communities:** Support activities and programs that facilitate the integration of displaced persons into host communities, including enrolling displaced children in schools attended by host community children and ensuring equal access to healthcare and psychological services.
9. **Raising Awareness Among Host Communities:** Raise awareness within host

communities on appropriate ways to interact with displaced persons, emphasizing their rights and the importance of supporting them to reduce negative attitudes and practices.

10. **Fostering Social Cohesion:** Implement activities and programs to integrate displaced persons with host communities, such as organizing joint events, workshops, and other initiatives that promote coexistence and integration.

11. **Conducting Regular Evaluations:** Perform periodic studies to evaluate the impact of humanitarian interventions, ensuring their quality and ability to meet the most pressing needs of displaced persons.

Third: Recommendations to the International Community

The international community, including the United Nations with its various bodies, influential states at the global level, and international organizations and entities, should work on the following:

1. **Developing International Frameworks on Internal Displacement:** Establish international instruments and legal frameworks to regulate internal displacement. These frameworks should define the rights of displaced persons and the obligations of states and local authorities toward them as a group with special status. This should ensure the enactment of clear and stringent legislation to protect the rights and dignity of displaced persons under all circumstances.

2. **Supporting Peace Efforts in Yemen:** Promote and encourage peace efforts in Yemen and work toward achieving a definitive ceasefire. This would help eliminate sources of danger that have been major drivers of displacement in Yemen and pave the way for the voluntary return of displaced persons to their original communities and areas.

3. **Prioritizing Human Rights, Transitional Justice, and Accountability:** Ensure that human rights, transitional justice, and accountability are central to peace efforts. This includes providing redress to civilian victims, particularly displaced persons, and ensuring justice and fairness for them.

4. **Supporting Humanitarian and Civil Society Efforts in Yemen:** Strengthen the efforts of humanitarian and human rights organizations, as well as civil society activities in Yemen. This support would enable the assessment of the diverse needs of displaced

persons and other vulnerable groups and ensure a high-quality response to these needs.

5. **Advocating for Referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC):** Push for the referral of the Yemen case to the ICC and work toward establishing criminal investigation mechanisms to address violations and international crimes committed against civilians in Yemen, including displaced persons.

Chapter One: General Framework

Introduction

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group seized control of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, by force on September 21, 2014, triggering an armed conflict that continues to date. Subsequently, they managed to take control of several other Yemeni governorates. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group takeover of Sana'a and other governorates was followed by the intervention of regional and international forces in the conflict, most notably the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which launched its first military operation in Yemen on March 26, 2015, under the name "Operation Decisive Storm." More than ten countries participated in the operation.

These interventions had catastrophic repercussions across the country, affecting the economy, deteriorating healthcare and education services, and causing deep and long-lasting civilian harm, directly impacting the lives of civilians.[1] As a result, the humanitarian situation deteriorated sharply, and poverty rates soared; United Nations estimates indicate that 18.2 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection services. Additionally, airstrikes and various military operations have led to massive waves of displacement, with 4.5 million people displaced due to the conflict, according to UN estimates. The United Nations has classified the humanitarian situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.[2]

The issue of internal displacement has not received adequate attention or response from the conflicting parties, de facto authorities, existing local authorities, or international organizations concerned with displacement and the rights of displaced persons in accordance with international humanitarian law[3] and human rights law. Amid military operations and on-the-ground confrontations, displaced persons have been among the most affected by the devastating consequences of the armed conflict. They were forced to flee, leaving behind their homes, lands, and possessions in search of safety and survival, seeking refuge in safer areas for protection and a secure livelihood.

Internal displacement has created extremely harsh and distressing conditions for the affected population. Families have been separated, social ties disrupted, and relationships destabilized. Educational opportunities have been lost or diminished, while displacement has resulted in deprivation of basic necessities such as food, water, medicine, and opportunities

1 Mwatana (2021), Death Falling from the Sky: Civilian Harm from the United States' Use of Lethal Force in Yemen during the period from January 2017 – January 2019, March 2021, www.mwatana.org.

2 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2024, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian Programme Planning Cycle, January 2024.

3 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Internal Displacement (2020). Shining a light on internal displacement: A vision for the future, September 2020.

for a dignified livelihood.[4] Moreover, displaced persons have been subjected to acts of violence, including assaults on camps, kidnapping, and rape. Whether internally displaced persons gathered in camps, fled to rural areas to escape potential sources of violence and persecution or sought refuge among impoverished communities similar to themselves, they have remained the most vulnerable segment of the population, in dire need of protection and assistance.

Mwatana Organization documented numerous violations against displaced persons in Yemen between 2014 and October 2024. A total of 396 violations were recorded in 19 Yemeni governorates (Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Al-Hudaydah, Ibb, Abyan, Aden, Sana'a, Taiz, Hadramawt, Amran, Lahj, Marib, Al-Bayda, Al-Dhale, Al-Mahwit, the Capital Municipality, Dhamar, Shabwah, Sana'a, and Saada). The most prevalent violations were incidents of denying humanitarian aid access to displaced persons, with 143 cases documented. Additionally, 36 incidents of live fire were recorded, along with 34 incidents involving explosive devices, 33 incidents of ground attacks, 29 cases of recruitment and use of displaced children, 25 incidents of aerial attacks, and 19 incidents involving landmines that injured displaced persons. Furthermore, 12 cases of arbitrary detention and 11 incidents of sexual violence were documented, in addition to other violations.[5]

With the complexity of the political landscape in Yemen, its divisions, and the turbulent and consecutive events in the region, the tragedy of displacement remains ongoing for millions, as prolonged displacement offers no apparent way out. Many IDPs are unable or find it extremely difficult to access even the most basic rights, such as building a home that provides them with security and stability in their place of displacement. This is due to various factors, including the persistence of the causes that forced their displacement. It is possible that second and third generations will be born while families remain in displacement, far from their original homes.[6]

Displaced persons often live on the outskirts of cities, in deserts, or in remote areas far from essential services. The sudden nature of displacement frequently results in the loss of vital documents such as personal identification, passports, birth certificates for children, educational certificates, and property ownership records. This renders displacement a catastrophic event that causes long-term suffering to both the displaced and their host

4 Amnesty International (n.d.), "Excluded: Living with disabilities in Yemen's armed conflict".

5 The information was obtained from the archive of Mwatana for Human Rights in October 2024.

6 Ibid.

communities, especially when these communities are already grappling with economic challenges and weak infrastructure and essential services.[7]

In the absence of a functioning state and accountability, the conflict in Yemen has been marked by grave violations and brutal crimes that contravene international humanitarian law.[8] Violations against displaced persons are recurrent, and opportunities for a dignified life are scarce in a country classified as one of the poorest in the Middle East[9] and plagued by political instability for over a decade.

The study aims to shed light on the issue of internal displacement during the period from September 2014 to October 2024 by working towards achieving the following objectives:

Study Objectives

Primary Objective:

The study seeks to examine the conditions of displaced persons in displacement camps and assess the risks and violations they have been or may be subjected to by the parties to the conflict through the following specific objectives:

Specific Objectives:

1. Identify the causes of displacement and the risks displaced persons face during their transition from their original places of residence to areas of displacement.
2. Highlight the direct and indirect violations committed against displaced persons.
3. Examine the conditions of displacement camps, the adequacy of services available, and their primary challenges and needs.
4. Analyze the direct impacts of displacement on host communities.
5. Assess the humanitarian response mechanisms provided to assist displaced persons and the challenges or restrictions conflict parties impose on humanitarian aid.

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7 International Labour Organization (ILO) (n.d.), Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market, www.ilo.org/migrant

8 Amnesty International (n.d.), "Excluded: Living with disabilities in Yemen's armed conflict".

9 The Team of Inter- Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (n.d.). Inter- Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis.

Methodology

To achieve the study's objectives, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in two distinct phases as follows:

Quantitative Tools:

Two tools were developed for collecting quantitative data:

- **Displaced Household Interview Form:** A semi-structured interview tool combining closed-ended questions and a few open-ended questions. It aimed to explore the reasons for displacement, the living conditions of displaced households, the risks and violations they faced due to displacement, and the economic and social impacts of the armed conflict on displaced households.
- **Observation Form:** This form was designed to assess the conditions of displacement camps and the availability of basic services within them. It consisted of 28 items answered with "Yes/No," with additional space for recording aspects of camp conditions not covered in the form, as well as open-ended notes from data collectors during field visits to the camps and interviews with heads of households.

Qualitative Tools:

Based on the results of the first phase (quantitative data collection) from displaced households in 68 camps and shelter centers, and to enrich the findings obtained in the initial phase, the following qualitative tools were developed:

- **In-Depth Individual Interview Form:** This form consisted of two sections: The first section contained a series of open-ended questions addressing the core topics relevant to the study's objectives. The second section included general data about the characteristics of camps, displacement sites, and demographic information about displaced household members, aimed at identifying the extent of needs and the availability of basic services.
- **Focus Group Discussion Guide:** A guide was developed to enrich the findings of the first phase. It included a set of open-ended questions aligned with the study's objectives, accompanied by a form to collect demographic data about the focus group participants, such as age, gender, educational level, and more.

Data Collection and Targeted Sample

Phase One (Quantitative Data):

During this phase, data was collected using the Displaced Household Interview Form and the Observation Form as follows:

1. **Displaced Household Interview Form**

   - The study targeted displaced individuals residing in displacement sites, such as camps and shelter centers, excluding those living in private residences. Using a semi-structured Family Head Interview Form, data was collected during the first phase through individual interviews with 400 heads of displaced households. These interviews were conducted across 68 displacement sites (60 camps and 8 shelter centers) located in 12 Yemeni governorates: Amanat Al-Asimah (Sana'a City), Al-Jawf, Al-Hudaydah, Ibb, Abyan, Aden, Sana'a, Taiz, Hadhramaut, Amran, Lahj, and Marib[10].

   - These governorates were selected based on preliminary data gathered by Mwatana's field teams, which highlighted the concentration of displaced populations in the targeted areas. The study also ensured the inclusion of governorates controlled by different conflict parties, including the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the Southern Transitional Council, the internationally recognized government forces, and the Joint Forces led by Tareq Saleh on the western coast.

2. **Observation Form**

   Data about displacement sites were also collected by completing observation forms for all 68 camps and shelter centers. This aimed to assess the suitability of living conditions in these sites and the availability of basic services within or near them. Field researchers completed 68 observation forms, documenting the characteristics of camps and shelter centers, along with qualitative and general observations not covered in the forms during their field visits to displacement sites in this phase.

Phase Two (Qualitative Data):

1. **In-Depth Individual Interviews**

   To enrich the study's findings and explore the suffering of displaced individuals and the violations of their rights before, during, and after displacement, researchers

10 Al-Hudaydah and Taiz governorates were duplicated due to them being under the control of different parties to the conflict.

conducted 39 in-depth individual interviews with heads of displaced households in 39 displacement sites across 12 Yemeni governorates.[11] These interviews included displaced individuals residing under the control of various conflict parties, including the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the Southern Transitional Council, the internationally recognized government forces, and the Joint Forces.

2. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

For the same objectives, six FGDs were conducted (three with female heads of households and three with male heads of households) via Zoom from October 17 to October 28, 2024. The Project Management team at Mwatana, with the assistance of researchers based in the targeted governorates, organized and coordinated the focus group discussions, preparing suitable venues and facilitating communication with participants during the sessions via Zoom. Participants from different governorates were brought together in a single location where the sessions were conducted. The focus group discussions aimed to include participants from various governorates under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, the internationally recognized government forces, and the Joint Forces. However, the planned FGDs in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group could not take place due to several concerns raised by displaced individuals residing in those areas.

11 The second phase targeted the same governorates as the first phase of data collection, in addition to Hajjah Governorate.

Chapter Two: The Legal and Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

First: The Legal Framework

Introduction:

International law distinguishes between individuals who have crossed borders and those who remain within the borders of their own country. If individuals cross their national borders, they become refugees and are covered by international refugee law. However, if individuals fleeing conflict are unable to cross their country's borders, they remain classified as "internally displaced persons" (IDPs). Internally displaced persons do not constitute a distinct legal category, as they remain under the protection of their national laws since they have not crossed international borders.

International humanitarian law (IHL) provides protection to internally displaced persons as civilians and non-combatants. It prohibits attacks on civilians who are not engaged in hostilities and obligates warring parties to preserve their lives and ensure their protection under the provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, its 1977 Additional Protocols, customary humanitarian law, human rights law, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. These principles obligate warring parties to take all necessary measures to avoid harm to civilians and prevent their displacement.

In times of peace, the legal framework for protecting IDPs is comprised of national laws and human rights agreements applicable in their country. During times of conflict, however, they are protected under international humanitarian law as civilians or combatants who have ceased participating in hostilities. This legal framework outlines the obligations to protect the rights of forcibly displaced individuals.

1. Who Are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)?

The 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define IDPs12 as:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.13

12 In this report, the term internally displaced persons will be replaced with displaced persons, as this is the term used in the Yemeni context and is the most common for internally displaced persons.

13 International Committee of the Red Cross (2014). International Humanitarian Law: (Answers to Your Questions), International Committee of the Red Cross, December 2014, p. 73.

IDPs often move to multiple locations in search of safety and stability during their displacement. These diverse and dynamic patterns create significant challenges in tracking their movements and providing them with protection. Displacement can lead to violations of international humanitarian law, such as attacks on civilians, mistreatment, destruction of property, sexual violence, and restricted access to healthcare and other essential services.

It is noteworthy that no legally binding global instrument explicitly addresses the rights of IDPs.14 However, international humanitarian law includes provisions for preventing displacement and protecting IDPs as part of the civilian population. As such, they are entitled to the same protection as other civilians.

2. Classification of the Conflict in Yemen

Despite the involvement of numerous regional and international forces and actors in the Yemeni conflict, which began in 2014, it is classified, for various reasons, as a non-international armed conflict. Accordingly, the legal framework governing non-international armed conflicts applies to Yemen.15 This classification does not exempt the parties involved from adhering to the rules of international humanitarian law,16 which are legally binding on all non-state actors alike.

However, these rules are often disregarded. While most states have recognized the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the United Nations, which are rooted in fundamental human rights principles, there remains an urgent need for stronger commitment to these principles to address the escalating challenges caused by the worsening internal displacement crisis in Yemen. This crisis has displaced approximately 4.5 million people, according to reports by international organizations, placing a significant burden on local authorities and conflict parties across all Yemeni governorates.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation is classified as the worst humanitarian disaster globally. International humanitarian law (the law of armed conflict) contains important provisions that prohibit the forced displacement of people and the suffering resulting from it

14 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2017), Internally displaced persons and international humanitarian law, Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law.

15 Human Rights Watch (2015). Questions and Answers: The Conflict in Yemen and International Law https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2015/04/07/267889

16 Mwatana for Human Rights (2018), "Woes of Arabia Felix: The Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2017", Annual Report, May 15, 2018, www.mwatana.org.

while ensuring the right to protection for those forced to flee.17

3. International Humanitarian Law and the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons

International humanitarian law (IHL) encompasses a set of rules designed to limit the effects of armed conflicts for humanitarian reasons. It protects those who are not involved in or who have ceased to participate in hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare.

IHL applies different rules to international and non-international armed conflicts.[18] It remains in force during both peacetime and periods of armed conflict, and it relies mainly on the effectiveness of treaties ratified by the concerned state and on customary international law.[19]

IHL identifies violations of rights, including attacks on civilians, mistreatment, destruction of property, sexual violence, and restrictions on access to healthcare and other essential services. Displaced persons, as part of the civilian population, are entitled to the same protections from the consequences of war as other civilians.[20]

There are two main branches of IHL: Geneva Law and Hague Law, named after the cities where these laws were codified. Additionally, the protocols added to the Geneva Conventions in 1977 are integral to this framework. Regarding civilian protection, the Fourth Geneva Convention is the key global treaty related to the rights of civilians, including internally displaced persons, during armed conflicts.

In contrast, the Hague Conventions establish rules concerning the rights and obligations of warring parties in conducting hostilities, explicitly limiting the methods and means of warfare. However, this aspect is beyond the scope of this report, which focuses on the rights of internally displaced persons.

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17 International Committee of the Red Cross (2014). International Humanitarian Law: (Answers to Your Questions), International Committee of the Red Cross, December.

18 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (New York: United Nations, 1998), and Richard Perrotchaud, International Migration Law (Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, 2004), p. 18.

19 Jean-Marie Henckaerts and Louise Doswald-Beck (2007). Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I: Rules, International Committee of the Red Cross, translated by Mohsen Ijmal, Geneva, Switzerland.

20 Ibid.

a. The Fourth Geneva Convention

In 1949, following the end of World War II, states adopted the four Geneva Conventions, which remain the cornerstone of international humanitarian law. Among these, the Fourth Geneva Convention was the first treaty under international humanitarian law to specifically address the protection of civilians during armed conflict. The provisions emphasizing civilians include:[21]

- Foreign civilians present on the territory of conflict parties, including refugees.
- Civilians in occupied territories.
- Detained or interned civilians.
- Members of medical and religious services or civil defense units.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions provides minimum protections during non-international armed conflicts. It is considered a condensed treaty, representing the minimum standards that combatants must not violate. The rules contained within Common Article 3 hold the status of binding law and apply to non-international armed conflicts occurring within the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties. The article mandates each party to the conflict to adhere to the following minimum provisions:[22]

1. **Humane Treatment:** Individuals not actively participating in hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms or who are incapacitated by illness, wounds, detention, or other causes, must be treated humanely without adverse distinction based on race, color, religion, belief, gender, birth, wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end, the following actions are prohibited:

   b. Violence to life and person, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture.

   c. Taking of hostages.

   d. Outrages upon personal dignity, including humiliating and degrading treatment.

   e. Passing sentences and carrying out executions without a prior judgment by a regularly constituted court that affords all internationally recognized judicial guarantees.

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21 International Committee of the Red Cross (2014). International Humanitarian Law: (Answers to Your Questions), International Committee of the Red Cross, December.

22 Ibid.

b. The Additional Protocol I to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949

The Additional Protocol I, adopted in June 1977, complements the protections provided by the four Geneva Conventions for the wounded, sick, shipwrecked, and medical personnel. It also establishes several rules for protecting civilian populations from the effects of hostilities, acts of violence, or threats that spread terror among civilians.

Chapter II of the Protocol includes a series of articles dedicated to civilian protection:

- Article 51: Safeguards for civilians.
- Article 52: General protection for civilian objects from attacks or counter-attacks, such as homes, places of worship, and similar civilian infrastructure.
- Article 54: Protection of objects and materials essential for the survival of the civilian population. This article explicitly prohibits starving civilians as a method of warfare and bans attacks on areas, agricultural crops, food supplies, irrigation systems, drinking water facilities, and other vital resources.
- Article 55: Protection of the natural environment, prohibiting actions that may cause environmental harm resulting in adverse effects on human life and the survival of civilian populations.
- The chapter also includes measures specifically aimed at protecting women and children:
- Article 76: Guarantees the protection of women from any form of violation, ensuring respectful treatment and the implementation of all possible measures to safeguard them.
- Article 77: Provides protection for children against violations, specifying measures to ensure their safety.
- Article 78: Details procedures for the evacuation of children, ensuring their welfare during such processes.[23]

23 International Committee of the Red Cross (n.d.). Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, https://www.icrc.org/ara/resources/documents/misc/5ntccf.htm.

c. Additional Protocol II to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949

In cases of non-international armed conflicts, Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Convention supplements Common Article 3 by emphasizing that every person not actively participating in hostilities or who has ceased to participate is entitled to protection. International humanitarian law safeguards civilians and individuals who have stopped participating in hostilities, ensuring their right to protection.

Notably, international humanitarian law does not recognize the designation of "combatant" in non-international armed conflicts, nor does it acknowledge the status of "prisoner of war." This implies that members of non-state armed groups who bear arms in such conflicts may be prosecuted and punished under the domestic laws of the state experiencing hostilities.[24]

Common Article 3 provides a minimum standard of protection during non-international armed conflicts. It is considered a "mini-treaty," establishing a baseline standard of conduct that combatants must not violate. The rules articulated in Common Article 3 are also recognized as customary law.

In addition to these protections, Protocol II includes further provisions:

- Article 13: Protects civilians from dangers arising from military operations.
- Article 14: Safeguards indispensable objects to the survival of the civilian population.
- Article 17: Prohibits the forced displacement of civilians due to reasons related to the conflict unless such displacement is necessary for their safety or imperative military reasons. In such cases, the displaced civilians must be received and provided with adequate shelter, healthcare, nutrition, and other necessary conditions.[25]

4. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

There is no international legal instrument specifically addressing the protection of IDPs. Instead, they are protected under their national laws, human rights law, and international humanitarian law. However, these laws and rules are often scattered across various instruments. Therefore, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were introduced to clarify ambiguities and address gaps in previous frameworks.

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24 International Committee of the Red Cross (2014), International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

25 International Committee of the Red Cross (n.d.). Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, https://www.icrc.org/ara/resources/documents/misc/5ntccf.htm.

The Guiding Principles document comprises 30 principles that address the needs of forcibly displaced individuals worldwide. These principles outline rights and guarantees related to their protection and are derived from international human rights law and international humanitarian law, aligning with both.

The Guiding Principles apply to all stages of displacement, providing protection against arbitrary displacement and ensuring equality in rights and freedoms under national and international law without discrimination between individuals or groups (Principles 1 and 4), regardless of legal status or other similar criteria.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement establish the responsibility of local authorities to provide protection and humanitarian assistance (Principle 3) and outline measures to prevent displacement and arbitrary displacement (Principles 5, 6, and 7). They mandate that authorities (or parties to the conflict) ensure protection and assistance during displacement, safeguarding the rights to life, dignity, liberty, and physical, mental, and moral integrity, and security for affected individuals (Principles 8 and 11). The principles affirm that every person has the inherent right to life, protected from arbitrary deprivation (Principle 10), as well as the right to liberty, personal security, and freedom of movement (Principles 12 and 14). They also include protections against forced return or resettlement (Principle 15) and prohibit the recruitment of children or forced conscription (Principle 13). Additionally, they guarantee IDPs the right to know the fate and whereabouts of missing relatives and to reunite with family members (Principles 16 and 17). The principles further emphasize the right of IDPs to an adequate standard of living, including access to shelter, food, medical care, and appropriate clothing (Principles 18, 24, and 25), and ensure respect and protection for humanitarian workers (Principle 26). IDPs are entitled to necessary health services, with particular attention to the needs of women (Principle 19), the right to education (Principle 23), and legal recognition, including the provision of personal identification documents (Principle 20). Property and assets left behind by IDPs are also protected (Principle 22). Authorities must take steps to ensure the voluntary return of IDPs (Principle 28) and guarantee non-discrimination against those who return, providing compensation or restitution for lost property (Principle 29). Finally, relevant authorities and humanitarian organizations are tasked with facilitating and assisting IDPs in returning, resettling, and reintegrating into society (Principle 30).

5. Rules of International Humanitarian Law

Both the First and Second Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions include provisions for the protection of civilians from the effects of hostilities. Among these provisions are the following:

A. Ensuring Protection for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Although there is no specific international instrument dedicated solely to protecting IDPs, they are protected under their respective national laws as civilians with the same rights as the general population, as well as under international legislation such as human rights law and international humanitarian law. The Geneva Conventions, which form the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, protect any individual or group of individuals who are not actively participating or have ceased to participate in hostilities.[26] The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Principle 1) affirm that IDPs enjoy equal rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as other citizens of their countries. Principle 4 mandates the application of these principles to IDPs without discrimination based on gender, race, religion, social status, or any other criteria.

Additionally, Rule 131 of customary international humanitarian law stipulates that all possible measures must be taken to ensure that affected civilians are received under satisfactory conditions in terms of shelter, healthcare, physical and psychological safety, security, and nutrition while ensuring that family members are not separated.[27] Principle 16 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement affirms the right of IDPs to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, access the gravesites of deceased family members, and maintain respect for their family lives. Furthermore, Principle 17 recognizes the right of IDPs to family reunification when displacement has separated them.

International humanitarian law emphasizes the principle of distinction, which requires parties to a conflict to consistently distinguish between civilians and combatants to avoid harm to civilians, whether as individuals or groups. Article 51 of the First

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26 International Committee of the Red Cross (2014). International Humanitarian Law: (Answers to Your Questions), International Committee of the Red Cross, December.

27 Treatment of Displaced Persons, Rule No. 131, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule131

Additional Protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention[28] underscores the necessity of preventing harm through indiscriminate attacks, bombardment, or the use of civilians as human shields. It also prohibits exploiting civilians as a means of warfare, as stipulated in Principle 10(2)(c) of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. These principles mandate protection from displacement by preventing and mitigating situations that could lead to displacement (Principle 5) and affirm the right of every individual to protection from arbitrary displacement from their residence, assault, or starvation (Principles 6, 10/1, and 10/2).

Additionally, the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (Articles 13, 52, and 54) provides for the protection of civilian objects and resources essential for the survival of civilians, as elaborated in Article 14 of the same protocol. The Guiding Principles on Displacement (Principles 2, 4, 5, and 6)[29] also mandate the protection of agricultural land, farms, food supplies, produce, livestock, drinking water, irrigation systems, and all resources vital for human survival. International law prohibits targeting civilians except when they are directly participating in hostilities and emphasizes refraining from attacks on civilian objects essential to the population's survival, such as schools, hospitals, and factories, unless they are being used or are making a direct contribution to hostilities.[30]

Article 55 of Additional Protocol I stipulates the protection of the natural environment from severe, long-term damage that could harm the health and survival of the population, such as targeting farms, livestock, natural water sources, and other indispensable resources or using prohibited weapons that pose significant risks to civilians.[31] IDPs have the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within or outside camps or other residential areas, as outlined in Articles 42 and 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.[32] Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 133 mandates respect for property rights and the right of IDPs to safely and

28 International Committee of the Red Cross (n.d.). Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts.

29 University of Minnesota, Guiding principles on Internal Displacement, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/IDP-guiding.html

30 International Committee of the Red Cross (n.d.). Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts.

31 Ibid

32 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, dated August 12, 1949, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949?activeTab=

voluntarily return to their homes and habitual places of residence once the reasons for their displacement no longer exist.[33] The rules prohibiting parties to the conflict from targeting civilians and civilian objects or conducting indiscriminate hostilities include the following:

- The prohibition on starving civilian populations and destroying objects indispensable for their survival.
- The prohibition on collective punishment, often manifested in the destruction of homes.
- The obligation of parties to allow relief shipments to reach civilians in need.[34]

B. Special Protection for Certain Groups

International humanitarian law accords special attention to specific groups within the population, such as children and women, through various legal provisions. Articles 76 and 75(2) of the Additional Protocol I to the Fourth Geneva Convention emphasize granting women special respect and protection against rape, forced prostitution, any other form of indecent assault, killing, torture, mutilation, physical punishment, or violations of personal dignity. Article 76(1, 2, 3) particularly prioritizes the protection of pregnant women and mothers of young children who depend on them, including avoiding imposing death sentences on pregnant women or mothers whose young children rely on them in any conflict-related offenses.[35]

Principle 4 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement stipulates that "children, especially unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, mothers with young children, female heads of households, persons with disabilities, and the elderly are entitled to protection and assistance as their conditions require, as well as treatment in accordance with their needs."[36]

Additionally, Article 4(2)(a) of Additional Protocol II to the Fourth Geneva Convention

33 Treatment of Displaced Persons, Rule No. 131, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule133

34 Customary International Humanitarian Law Rules, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1

35 Articles 75 (2) (a) and 76 of the Additional Protocol I of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977?activeTab=

36 See footnote 29

safeguards physical and mental well-being, prohibiting any harm, torture, physical punishment, cruel treatment, or violations of personal dignity.[37] Paragraph 3 of Principle 18 of the Guiding Principles[38] obliges the authorities responsible for internally displaced persons to make special efforts to ensure women's participation in planning and distributing essential supplies and assistance for displaced persons. Similarly, Paragraph 3 of Principle 23 calls for the full and equal participation of women in educational programs. Paragraph 2 of Principle 19 further mandates special attention to women's health needs, ensuring their access to reproductive health services and appropriate counseling for victims of sexual violence and other abuses.[39]

Article 77(1) of the Additional Protocol I to the Fourth Geneva Convention mandates the protection of children and imposes a special obligation to safeguard them against any form of indecency they may be exposed to. The responsibility for providing aid and protection lies with the parties to the conflict. Paragraph 2 of Article 77 further holds the parties to the conflict accountable for taking all possible measures to prevent the involvement of children under the age of 15 years in hostilities and to prevent the recruitment of minors by any party. Likewise, Article 4 (3) (c) and (d) of the Additional Protocol II to the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 15 years into armed forces and their participation in hostilities. This protection remains in effect even if they directly engage in hostilities. Principle 13 of the Guiding Principles prohibits the recruitment of displaced children or their participation in hostilities. Additionally, paragraph (3) (e) of Article 4 of Additional Protocol II, and Article 78 of Additional Protocol I concern the temporary evacuation of children from areas of active conflict to safer places, accompanied by responsible individuals such as parents or guardians. Principle 13 of the Guiding Principles on Displacement also prohibits the recruitment of children by any party to the conflict. Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates the operation of facilities for the care and education of children and requires all necessary measures to facilitate the verification of children's identities and registration of their lineage. It also prohibits altering their personal status

37 International Committee of the Red Cross (n.d.). Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ru/ihl-treaties/apii-1977?activeTab=

38 In this report, wherever the term "Principle" is mentioned, it refers to the principles outlined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement document issued by the United Nations.

39 See footnote 29.

or placing them in affiliated formations or organizations.[40]

C. Forced Displacement and Arbitrary Detention

Displaced persons have the right to protection from being returned to any location where their lives, safety, freedom, and/or health would be at risk, or being forcibly resettled in such locations (Principle 15(d)). Paragraphs (1 and 2) of Principle 12 affirm the right of IDPs to personal freedom and security and prohibit arbitrary detention, imprisonment, or confinement in camps except under the most extreme exceptional circumstances. Such detention must not last longer than necessary for those circumstances. Paragraph (3) of Principle 12 mandates the protection of IDPs from arrest and detention on discriminatory grounds due to their displaced status. Furthermore, paragraph (4) of Principle 12 prohibits the taking of IDPs as hostages under any circumstances.

Principle 15(d) prohibits the collective or individual forcible transfer of persons or their deportation from their places of residence to other territories, in accordance with Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention[41], unless such transfer is in their best interest to avoid risks associated with armed conflicts. International law classifies the forcible transfer of civilians as a war crime and a grave breach, whether within the state's borders or across international boundaries, including their forced displacement or relocation from their lands and places of residence unless for the purposes of ensuring their safety or due to military necessity.

Under Article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, when security requirements necessitate precautionary measures, IDPs may be detained or subjected to house arrest in cases similar to forced displacement. Moreover, pursuant to Article 5(1) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions and Rule 99 of customary international humanitarian law,[42] arbitrary arrest or detention is prohibited in all cases during non-international armed conflicts.

Other key provisions included in the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva

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40 Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-50

41 The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, dated August 12, 1949.

42 International Humanitarian Law Databases. International Committee of the Red Cross, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/

Conventions, which concerns the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, and the 1977 Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, which addresses the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts.[43]

International humanitarian law prohibits the forced displacement of civilians from their places of residence unless it is necessary for their safety or due to imperative military necessity. If properly respected, the general rules of IHL can ensure the protection of civilians and work to prevent displacement. Additionally, they can provide protection during displacement when it occurs.

D. Livelihoods and Humanitarian Assistance

During conflicts, large numbers of internally displaced persons require the provision of humanitarian assistance without discrimination or ulterior political or military objectives (Principle 24). Necessary measures must be taken to ensure adequate housing, food, health, safety, and sanitation for IDPs. The primary duty and responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs lies with national authorities (Principle 25(1)). These authorities are also responsible for facilitating the free passage of humanitarian aid (Principle 25(2)) and ensuring the safety and protection of humanitarian personnel, their transportation means, and the supplies they deliver against any act of violence or attacks (Principle 26). Humanitarian organizations and other concerned parties must also uphold fairness and due consideration for the protection requirements of IDPs' rights (Principle 27).

Additionally, the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 55) and Article 49(3) impose the primary responsibility on parties to an armed conflict to meet the basic needs of populations under their control. This is further affirmed by Article 69 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, Article 17(1) of the Second Additional Protocol, and Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

In cases where controlling parties lack the necessary human and financial resources to fulfill their humanitarian responsibilities toward IDPs, or for other reasons, impartial humanitarian organizations must be allowed unhindered access to deliver assistance to IDPs. This is mandated by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, Articles 49 and 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 69 of the First Additional Protocol, Article 17(1) of the Second Additional Protocol, and Rule 131 of customary international

43 Ibid

humanitarianlaw.[44]

During armed conflicts, international law prohibits attacking, destroying, or removing objects and resources essential for the survival of civilian populations, such as food supplies, crops, livestock, drinking water installations, and irrigation works.[45] This is stipulated in Article 54(2) of the First Additional Protocol and Article 14 of the Second Additional Protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as Rule 54 of customary international humanitarian law. Furthermore, international humanitarian law prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, as per Article 54(2) of the First Additional Protocol and Article 14 of the Second Additional Protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Parties to a conflict are also obligated to ensure and guarantee access to essential medical services for IDPs without harmful discrimination. In cases where there are wounded individuals among IDPs, they must receive medical care without delay or discrimination, except for medical necessity. To achieve this, respect and protection must be provided for medical personnel, facilities, and transportation means. This is mandated under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions; Articles 16–21, 23, 55, and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; Articles 10–21 of the Additional Protocol I to the Fourth Geneva Convention;[46] and Articles 7(2), 8, 9, 10, and 11 of the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions.[47]

E. Protection of Personal Property and Possessions

The concept of civilian objects includes housing, land, and personal property, such as residences, agricultural land, farms, or tangible assets like vehicles that constitute private ownership. International humanitarian law grants protection to these civilian objects[48] through various rules and provisions, imposing prohibitions beyond the direct targeting of civilian objects. Civilian properties must not be seized or looted. Principle 21 of the Guiding Principles provides for the protection of the property and assets of

44 Ibid.

45 International Committee of the Red Cross (2017), Internally Displaced Persons and International Humanitarian Law, Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre (2024). Protection of Housing, Land, and Property Rights During Armed Conflicts, Syria, funded by the European Union, May 2024.

displaced persons from looting, direct or indiscriminate attacks, or being subjected to retaliation. Paragraph (1) of Principle 21 specifies that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their property or possessions.[49]

International humanitarian law prohibits the seizure or looting of the property and possessions of displaced persons and criminalizes such acts under international criminal law. Looting typically refers to the appropriation of private property for personal use, unrelated to military necessity. Looting is prohibited under Rule 51 of international humanitarian law and Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Additionally, the Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies looting as a war crime. This rule applies to both international and non-international armed conflicts.

International humanitarian law obligates parties to conflict to respect housing, land, and property rights of civilians. It prohibits the confiscation of private property under Article 49 and Article 33(2) of the Geneva Convention, Article 4(2)(g), and Article 17(2) of Additional Protocol II. Article 14 of Additional Protocol II also prohibits attacking or destroying civilian objects indispensable to civilians' survival.[50] Moreover, international humanitarian law forbids direct attacks on civilian objects, which must not be the target of direct or indiscriminate attacks, as outlined in Articles 48, 51, 52, and 85 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.[51] Principle 29 of the Guiding Principles further stipulates that competent authorities are responsible for assisting displaced persons, returnees, and/or those resettled in reclaiming their property and possessions abandoned or confiscated during displacement.[52]

The issue of protecting objects and property is part of the general protection concept in Article 13(1) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions concerning non-international armed conflicts. This prohibition reflects customary international law binding on all parties in both international and non-international armed conflicts.[53] The prohibition of destroying or seizing adversaries' property is an established rule in

49 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/IDP-guiding.html.

50 Article 14 of Additional Protocol II, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ru/ihl-treaties/apii-1977/article-14?activeTab=

51 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2017), Internally displaced persons and international humanitarian law, Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, December 2017.

52 See footnote 49.

53 International Committee of the Red Cross Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law, and the Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre, 2024.

customary international humanitarian law for both types of conflicts. Destruction of civilian objects, whether private or public property, is permissible only if they constitute legitimate military objectives and solely under highly restrictive circumstances justified by imperative military necessity.[54]

F. F. Education

The laws, regulations, and principles governing internal displacement consistently affirm that children have the right to special respect, protection, and access to educational services during international and non-international armed conflicts. This is in accordance with Rule 135 of Customary International Humanitarian Law,[55] Article 78(2) of Additional Protocol I to the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 4(3)(a) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Convention, and Principle 23 of the Guiding Principles.

These principles stipulate that displaced children in non-international conflicts must receive appropriate education, including religious and moral education, in accordance with the wishes of their parents or guardians. In cases where children are without parents,[56] the responsibility falls on the relevant authorities to provide facilities for training and education, particularly for displaced children and women. Primary education should be compulsory and free of charge, ensuring respect for the cultural identity, language, and religion of displaced persons.

G. Identity Documents for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

One of the common challenges faced by displaced children and their guardians is the issue of identity verification due to displacement conditions and the loss of official documents, such as birth certificates, educational records, passports, or other official documents. De facto authorities are required to take all necessary measures to facilitate this for IDPs, in accordance with Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. States or local authorities are also obligated to ensure that detained civilians obtain essential documents if they lack them, as stipulated in Article 97(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

54 Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre, May 2024, See footnote 48.

55 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2017), See footnote 51.

56 Additional Protocol I, Article 78(2), and Additional Protocol II, Article 4(3)(a) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Principle 20 of the Guiding Principles further establishes that IDPs have the right to be recognized before the law wherever they may be. Authorities are responsible for issuing the necessary documents to enable them to enjoy and exercise their legal rights. This includes facilitating the issuance of new documents and replacing those lost due to displacement without imposing any conditions, such as requiring the displaced person to return to their habitual place of residence.[57]

H. Voluntary Return

IDPs have the right to voluntarily and safely return to their homes or habitual places of residence as soon as the reasons for their displacement cease to exist. In situations of armed conflict, Rule 133 of customary international humanitarian law mandates the protection of IDPs' property rights, ensuring that real estate and possessions are not subject to looting, pillaging,[58] direct or indiscriminate attacks,[59] or used as cover for military operations or objectives.[60] Moreover, such properties must not be destroyed or seized as acts of revenge[61] or collective punishment.[62]

Principles 28 and 29 of the Guiding Principles affirm the right of IDPs to return and resettle in their habitual residences as follows: [63]

- Responsibilities of Authorities: It is primarily the responsibility of the competent authorities to create conditions and provide means that enable IDPs to return voluntarily, safely, and with dignity to their homes or habitual places of residence or to settle in another part of the country voluntarily. These authorities must also facilitate the reintegration of returning or resettled IDPs.
- Participation of IDPs: Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of IDPs in planning, managing, and implementing their return, resettlement, and reintegration.

57 See footnote 49.

58 Rule 133, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule133

59 Rule 11,12,13 of Customary International Humanitarian Law.

60 Article 51 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

61 Article 52 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

62 Article 75(2)(d) of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

63 See footnote 49.

Second: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Since 2011, Yemen has undergone numerous transformations that have resulted in significant shifts in the balance of power within the Yemeni landscape, leading to a decline in political engagement in favor of military action. On September 21, 2014, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group seized control of the capital, Sana'a, and other areas of the country by force. Within four months of their takeover, they placed President Hadi and his government under house arrest. However, President Hadi managed to escape to Aden and subsequently to Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

This was followed by the formation of a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which launched its first operations in Yemen with intensive airstrikes in the early hours of March 26, 2015. These airstrikes, along with other military operations and the various repercussions of the conflict, resulted in widespread destruction of infrastructure, civilian casualties, displacement, and significant harm to the population. It marked the onset of a protracted and widespread war that has engulfed all Yemeni governorates.

For more than a decade, Yemenis have continued to endure the horrors of war, destruction, and the loss of loved ones, homes, and communities. This war has also caused a massive wave of displacement, affecting approximately 4.5 million people, according to United Nations estimates.[64]

1. Displacement in Yemen

Yemen has endured nearly a decade of successive crises and armed conflict, and the humanitarian crisis persists. Despite the relative calm brought about by a reduction in major military operations since April 2022, which slightly eased pressure on civilians following a truce signed between Yemeni parties under UN auspices (officially ending on October 2, 2022), the decline in military activities—including airstrikes by the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition—has continued beyond the truce's formal expiration and up to the drafting of this study.

While this notable reduction in military operations has occurred, humanitarian needs remain vast and ongoing, especially concerning IDPs forced to leave their homes due to the conflict or other causes such as rain and flooding triggered by climate change. This includes

64 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Program Cycle Planning, January 2024.

events like Cyclone "Tej," which impacted certain eastern regions of the country.

Reports from international relief agencies indicate that the humanitarian crisis continues, with high and persistent levels of need for humanitarian assistance. Civilians in Yemen continue to suffer from the devastating effects of armed conflict, displacement, and the loss of their homes and belongings.[65]

In 2023, climate changes, such as Cyclone "Tej" and other extreme weather events, significantly increased the frequency of humanitarian needs and displacement, worsening the humanitarian situation for displaced persons. Climate-related displacement reached its highest levels, with 75% of new displacements attributed to rains and floods caused by Cyclone "Tej". Additionally, 319,445 individuals were reported to have been affected by floods and ongoing armed conflict in 2023,[66] further deteriorating the living conditions of vulnerable populations, including IDPs residing in fragile camps that offer no protection from summer heat or winter cold.

The displaced lost essential shelter materials, their belongings were scattered, and their fragile tents were blown away. Camps turned into swamps and polluted pools of water mixed with sewage. According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the homes of at least 8,800 households were completely or partially damaged.[67]

In March 2024, heavy rains caused significant damage to housing, shelters, and displacement camps, as well as to the homes of host communities. The damage extended to public infrastructure, including schools, roads, and health facilities, while floods destroyed already fragile livelihoods. The most affected governorates by the rains and floods included Al-Hudaydah, Hajjah, Ma'rib, Sa'dah, and Taiz. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in August 2024,[68] approximately 19,575 households were affected in Hajjah and Al-Hudaydah, 9,769 households in Ma'rib, 5,321 households in Taiz, and 3,620 households in Sa'dah, bringing the total number of affected households to 38,285 (approximately 268,000 individuals).

Additionally, heavy rains and floods in August 2024 caused a humanitarian tragedy in the

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 International Organization for Migration (IOM). Report by the International Organization for Migration, Yemen: Updates on the Humanitarian Crisis, People on the Move, and IOM's Response, March 2024.

68 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Yemen: Flood Flash Update No. 02 (Regional and Sectoral Details) (As of 13 August 2024).

Milhan District of Al-Mahwit Governorate. Six sub-districts were severely impacted by floods, leading to landslides and rockfalls that resulted in dozens of casualties and missing persons, the complete destruction of 50 homes, and significant damage to another 50 homes. Further damage was inflicted on infrastructure, including roads and water supply networks.[69]

In the context of displacement in Yemen, the ongoing conflict has clearly exacerbated the increase in the number of displaced households. The second quarterly report of 2023, "Rapid Displacement Tracking," issued by the IOM,[70] indicated that 1,016 households (comprising 6,096 individuals) were displaced between April 1 and June 30, 2023. The IOM interventions primarily targeted Ma'rib Governorate (500 households), followed by Taiz Governorate (301 households). The primary cause of displacement was conflict (88%), while economic factors, such as salary suspensions and rising costs, accounted for 12%. Natural disasters contributed to a very small portion of displacement, at less than 1%.

2. Humanitarian Situation in Yemen

Yemenis are enduring severe humanitarian conditions, described in 2018 as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.[71] Despite nearing the tenth year of the armed conflict that began in September 2014, humanitarian needs remain immense.[72] The conflict has disrupted the lives of civilians in their homes and villages, forcing them to leave behind their houses, possessions, and memories. Waves of displacement have continued, intensifying with the escalation of the armed conflict on March 26, 2015, following the start of airstrikes by the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This has significantly exacerbated displacement, reaching 4.5 million people[73] across most Yemeni governorates.

As of this study's preparation, the humanitarian situation remains critical, with the crisis ongoing and humanitarian needs persistent. More than half the population, approximately 18.2 million people, require humanitarian assistance and protection services. Around 17.6 million people suffer from food insecurity, and malnutrition rates are alarmingly high, with nearly half of children under five experiencing moderate to severe stunting. It is estimated that

69 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Yemen: Flash Flood Update No. 03 (Milhan District, Mahwit Governorate) 29 August 2024.

70 IOM, Yemen — Rapid Displacement Tracking Update (01 April - 30 June 2023).

71 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2019.

72 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2024.

73 Ibid.

17.8 million Yemenis need healthcare services, including 5.5 million women of reproductive age (15-49 years), 2.7 million pregnant or breastfeeding women suffering from malnutrition, and 6.3 million women requiring protection from violence.[74] The deteriorating Yemeni economy, severe infrastructure damage, and the collapse of basic services have significantly escalated and prolonged humanitarian needs across most Yemeni governorates. The 4.5 million displaced people continue to suffer, with many experiencing repeated displacement over the past decade.[75]

Reports from United Nations agencies highlight a funding shortfall for addressing Yemen's humanitarian crisis due to shifts in international conflict dynamics, such as the Ukraine and Gaza crises. For instance, UN humanitarian situation reports in 2023 indicated that only 40% of the required funding for Yemen's 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan was secured.[76] Despite these challenges, 229 humanitarian organizations provided assistance to approximately 8.3 million people monthly. This aid included food, nutrition, healthcare, WASH, education, cash assistance, shelter support, and essential protection services.[77]

On the other hand, inadequate infrastructure at IDP sites, such as a lack of latrines and sanitation systems, has led to the spread of diseases, including fever, diarrhea, and mosquito-borne illnesses.[78] In late 2023, reports from the IOM highlighted outbreaks of diarrhea and cholera in Taiz, Aden, and areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.[79] The IOM responded by supporting health centers in treating diarrhea, establishing 16 oral rehydration points, ensuring water supply systems were treated, and implementing hygiene promotion activities in the affected areas.

74 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNFPA Humanitarian Response in Yemen, 2024.

75 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Yemen, Humanitarian Updates, Issue (1), January-February 2024.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 See footnote 75.

79 International Organization for Migration (IOM). Report by the International Organization for Migration, Yemen: Updates on the Humanitarian Crisis, People on the Move, and IOM's Response, March 2024.

Chapter Three: Review and Analysis of Study Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a review and analysis of the study's main objectives, which were collected in two phases through quantitative data regarding the living conditions of 404 families distributed across 68 camps located in 12 Yemeni governorates, controlled by various conflicting parties: the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the internationally recognized government, the Southern Transitional Council, and the joint forces led by Tariq Saleh. Data regarding the structure of the camps participating in the study were collected using an observation form.

In the second phase, qualitative data were collected using in-depth interview forms, which included 39 interviews with heads of displaced households and 6 focus group discussions involving 41 male and female participants from the governorates covered by the study.

This chapter will address the demographic data of the study participants and then present and analyze the key themes around which the study's objectives revolve, including:

- Causes of displacement.
- Violations faced by the displaced.
- Objective description of displacement camps.
- The consequences of displacement, including the relationship with the host community.
- Humanitarian response mechanisms to assist the displaced and the challenges they face.
- This will be done following the results of data collection through the different methods used in the study's methodology, which are as follows:

1. **In-depth Interviews**

The in-depth interviews included 39 displaced individuals, heads of displaced households, of whom 26 (67%) were male and 13 (33%) were female. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 70 years, with an average age of 43 years and a standard deviation of 11. The number of individuals per displaced household ranged from 1 to 10, with an average of 7 individuals.

The interviews included:

16 (40%) displaced individuals from camps and shelters in governorates controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

11 (28%) displaced individuals from camps and shelters in governorates controlled by the internationally recognized government.

8 (21%) displaced individuals from camps and shelters in governorates controlled by the Southern Transitional Council.

4 (10%) from districts under the control of the joint forces in the western coastal areas.

The majority of the sample, 22 (56%), were displaced once, 15 (39%) were displaced twice, one case was displaced three times, and another case was displaced five times.

2. **Focus Group Discussions**

A total of 41 heads of displaced households participated in the focus group discussions, including 21 (51%) females and 20 (49%) males residing in 17 camps. Their ages ranged from 20 to 62 years, with an average age of 39 years.

The participants were distributed in terms of marital status as follows:

- 31 (76%) were married.
- 4 (10%) were divorced.
- 6 (15%) were widowed.

Regarding the participants' educational level, most of them had certificates at the basic education level:

- 13 (32%) had completed secondary school or attended some years of secondary education.
- 2 (5%) had a university degree.
- 2 (5%) were in graduate studies.

The participants came from 17 camps distributed across 12 districts:

- Zinjibar (Abyan Governorate).
- Seiyun, Mukalla, Al-Hajar (Hadramout Governorate).
- Al-Khoukha, Hays (Al Hudaydah Governorate).
- Marib City, Al-Wadi, Sirwah (Marib Governorate).

- Tuban (Lahj Governorate).
- Al-Ghail (Al-Jawf Governorate).
- Al-Buraika (Aden Governorate).

Discussion and Analysis of Results

First: Reasons for Displacement

The main reasons for displacement, according to the study's findings, are as follows:

1. Random Air and Ground Bombing: The indiscriminate bombing campaigns launched by the conflicting parties throughout the conflict, in addition to frequent clashes near and around residential areas and sometimes within them, created an increasing sense of insecurity among individuals and communities. Moreover, the fear of being targeted for recruitment led individuals and groups to flee to other areas to protect their lives and the lives of their families.

2. Lack of Services and Basic Needs: The absence or scarcity of essential services, a consequence of the conflict, as well as limited employment opportunities and difficulties in civilians' access to their workplaces in pastoral and agricultural sectors, contributed to displacement. The worsening living conditions due to the conflict and other factors also significantly pushed people to migrate to other areas.

3. Racial Discrimination: Racial discrimination, which coincided with the outbreak of the armed conflict, along with hate speech and attempts to harm individuals or groups due to their political, religious, ethnic, or geographic affiliations or other discriminatory reasons, were significant causes of displacement. Additionally, some individuals and groups faced threats such as the risk of execution, detention, or other forms of harm, which made them vulnerable to violence by the warring parties in their original areas and compelled them to seek refuge in safer zones.

4. Landmines and Explosive Devices: The spread of landmines and unexploded ordnance in certain areas, along with casualties among civilians in these areas, drove many people from contaminated regions to safer areas.

The following section details how these factors contributed to displacement, as reported in the different stages of the study's data collection.

The quantitative results indicated that some individuals were forced to flee more than

three times. During the in-depth interview, one displaced woman from Sana'a Governorate mentioned that she had been displaced five times before finally settling in Marib. According to the initial data collected through the in-depth interviews (second phase of data collection), most of the displaced individuals in the camps participating in the study had been displaced once, with this group estimated at 22 cases (56%) of the total sample, based on the interviews. Fifteen cases (39%) had been displaced twice, while one case had been displaced three times, and another case had been displaced five times. This repeated displacement occurred for several reasons.

According to the quantitative results (first phase of data collection), the main reasons for displacement were life-threatening dangers, with an estimated 42% of those displaced citing this as their reason. Some individuals had to flee again due to a lack of job opportunities in agriculture or livestock breeding, with 25% of those displaced multiple times attributing their displacement to these factors. Additionally, 7% were displaced again due to inadequate essential services such as healthcare, education, and water availability. Another 5% cited mobility challenges or the need to access food aid as reasons for their repeated displacement. For example, some displaced individuals from Al-Jawf, Al-Hudaydah, and Taiz Governorates mentioned that they had been displaced more than once. One individual mentioned living in a relative's home in the host community, but after feeling uncomfortable, they moved to another governorate where they found their relatives and tribe members and eventually settled there.

A. Indiscriminate Shelling and Military Clashes

Displaced individuals in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group explained that one of the reasons for their displacement was the fear of random shelling. Many families were displaced due to insecurity, artillery and aerial bombardment, civilian casualties, as well as road closures, shortages of essential goods, and landmines. As a result, civilians could not remain in their homes or places of residence, which were at risk, and many of them fled, leaving everything behind due to the terror they experienced. One said, "We fled, carrying only what was light in weight and valuable in price."

However, the displacement waves in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group were not synchronized with the coalition airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE in March 2015. Displacement waves also occurred in the second half of 2014, coinciding with the entry of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group into the capital, Sana'a. One displaced individual pointed out:

I fled my home because of the conflict between the warring parties in 2014. My house was close to the confrontation between the two parties (the first being the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the second being the internationally recognized government forces), and we were in the line of fire, so I decided to leave my village, 'Halwan,' one of the villages in Al-Ghail District in Al-Jawf Governorate, which was under fire, forcing me to flee. The internationally recognized government forces, supported by the Islah Party, took control of my house after I left, turning it into a stronghold for launching shells, and it was severely damaged. Now, the house is destroyed.

Displaced individuals near the Saudi Arabian border highlighted that one of the main reasons for their displacement was the intensity of aerial bombardment by the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These areas experienced violent and fierce aerial strikes, in addition to heavy artillery and mortar shelling from the Saudi side. Many civilians fell victim to this bombing and destruction, with numerous people, animals, and livestock killed, forcing the residents of these areas to leave their villages and homes in search of safety. One of them described it as follows:

We fled because of the continuous random shelling by the warring parties—the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the internationally recognized government forces, the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and Saudi forces. Our district was subjected to violent bombing and almost complete destruction of the infrastructure. We lost our homes and workplaces, making life impossible in our village, and we no longer felt safe due to the hysterical and indiscriminate targeting of homes and infrastructure, which led us to flee to Al-Jar in Al-Jawf Governorate. After we fled, our homes in the places we left were bombed.

Displaced individuals from areas near the Yemeni-Saudi border explained that the difficult conditions they faced in these areas, as they were located on the frontlines between the warring parties, caused them to live under psychological stress, filled with fear and anticipation due to the constant explosions and intense clashes between the warring parties, as well as witnessing aerial bombardment. These conditions were a major reason for large displacement waves from these areas, including areas near the former Houthi-controlled customs border (Haradh) and southern areas in Al-Hudaydah Governorate, such as Abs, Al-Lahiah, and Al-Zuhrah. Additionally, the fear of conscription of their male children also contributed to displacement, along with the lack of basic services and closed markets, which made obtaining water a significant challenge, according to their descriptions.

Moreover, the destruction of infrastructure in these areas, including government facilities such as the police station in Bani Awid village in Haradh District, Hajjah Governorate, caused some cases of displacement. The intensity of military confrontations on the ground and artillery shelling between the warring parties played a role in driving citizens to leave their homes and villages. As one displaced person stated: "The reason for our displacement was the intensification of battles between the warring parties (the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the internationally recognized government forces), which resulted in the explosion of homes and numerous casualties, including travelers on the road connecting the center of Al-Jawf Governorate with Al-Mutun District."He added:

As a result of the worsening humanitarian situation due to aerial bombardment and military confrontations between the two warring parties, which led to the closure of businesses and markets and the halt of all forms of life, even going out to look for food in the farm or going to the market carried great risks. Therefore, many villagers decided to flee, leaving our villages and homes.

The reasons for displacement varied across Yemeni governorates. In the village of Al-Buqayrah in the Lawdar district of Abyan Governorate, clashes between the Southern Transitional Council forces and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in 2022 led to the displacement of the village's residents. One of the affected individuals reported:

The clashes spread to our village, and the warring parties used the village's resources for their own purposes, resulting in casualties, including dead, wounded, missing, and detained members of our village. Additionally, explosive devices and landmines were spread, and many villagers were killed or injured. The school and health center were occupied and turned into military barracks. To this day, the homes of citizens are continuously raided, and people are arrested or killed by both parties, each believing that the villagers are working for the other side.

The situation and causes were similar in areas controlled by the joint forces. One displaced woman from the Beit Bish area in the Hays District, which is part of the western coastal region in Al-Hudaydah Governorate, mentioned that their displacement was due to the loss of her young brother as a result of an airstrike by the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition, in addition to her father being shot in the leg and the intensification of ground clashes between the warring parties. Fighters from the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group took control of the high ground surrounding the village and began attacking both the internationally recognized government forces and civilians in the area,

instilling fear among the population and forcing them to leave the village. They fled to the Al-Khokha District in the western coastal region of Al-Hudaydah Governorate, and from there, they were displaced once again to Abyan Governorate with the help of a charitable organization.

Furthermore, the results of the focus group sessions with a group of displaced women from areas in Al-Hudaydah Governorate controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, particularly from the center of the governorate and the neighboring districts of Beit al-Faqih and Al-Durayhimi (16-Kilometer), indicated that one of the reasons for their displacement was the intensity of aerial bombardment and airstrikes by the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition. Civilians had received leaflets urging them to leave their areas.

In areas controlled by the internationally recognized government and the Joint Forces, most of the displaced people indicated that the reasons for their displacement were the conditions and environment caused by the armed conflict, as well as the airstrikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition. These airstrikes threatened civilian lives through the arrival of shrapnel from the battles and projectiles hitting civilian homes.[80] This led to large waves of displacement from various areas, particularly those that experienced intensified airstrikes, ground clashes, or campaigns of arrests and detentions, or where Ansar Allah (Houthi) group attempted to lure some civilians to attend training courses and enlist them in the fighting fronts, prompting them to flee, leaving their homes out of fear for their lives from the aerial bombardment or from the scenes of death, challenges, and difficulties they faced.

Some displaced individuals pointed out that their areas had become frontlines, forcing residents to flee to other safer areas. Many others mentioned that their locations were near military confrontations, with shells and shrapnel reaching or landing near their homes. An example of this is the displaced people from Maqbanah in Taiz Governorate. One of them explained, saying:

The coalition's airstrikes hit near our house, close to the government hospital next to us, and one of the houses was hit. Military vehicles were targeted, and there were also confrontations between the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the internationally recognized government forces, so we feared for our lives and decided to flee.

80 It should be noted here that most of the displaced individuals in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government are those who fled from areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group to Marib, Hadramaut, Al-Mokha, Al-Khoukha, and other regions.

Another displaced person from the Al-Muzaffar neighborhood in Taiz City stated:

The shells were landing near our home. We felt scared, so we had to move to Bani Wahban, but because of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group asking and forcing us to attend their cultural and military training courses in preparation to enlist us in the fighting fronts, we moved again from Shar'ab to the Al-Dabwa camp in the Al-Qahirah District of Taiz.

Displacement often occurs repeatedly for many displaced individuals. For example, one person from the village of Al-Qahifa in Maqbanah, Taiz, explained that he fled because the area had become a conflict zone, saying:

We couldn't escape the shells or sniping anymore, and our village became a frontline and uninhabitable, so we fled to the Bani Bakari district in the Jabal Habshi district of Taiz. I stayed there for about two years, but this area also became a conflict zone and unsafe, with clashes occurring and shells landing near us, so I moved to the Al-Malika camp in the Al-Suway district of the Mu'afar district.

Thus, the painful journey of civilians is repeated as they move from one displacement site to another.

In light of the above, and according to the results mentioned earlier, it is evident that the various parties to the conflict have failed to take the necessary measures to protect civilians and have not adhered to the principle of distinction between military and civilian targets, as stipulated in the guidelines for the protection of displaced persons. They have also failed to respect international humanitarian law, which provides for the protection of civilians and civilian objects under Article 4 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 21 of the same convention, and the Additional Protocol I (Article 51), which guarantees civilians the right to general protection against the dangers arising from military operations. Furthermore, it also calls for the respect and protection of land and sea transportation equally with the facilities referred to in Article 18 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The reasons outlined in the findings regarding displacement constitute clear evidence of violations of the rules and principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. Moreover, these actions violate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which prohibit targeting the homes of civilians who are not taking part in hostilities or those who have ceased to do so. Principle 5 of the Guiding Principles states

that "all authorities and relevant international parties must respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances, in order to prevent and avoid situations that may lead to displacement."[81]

B. Racial Discrimination and Hate Speech

Politically motivated and racist harassment are among the main reasons hindering the ability of displaced civilians to live with dignity, as these practices are often aimed at removing individuals who oppose the controlling party from the area.

For example, a displaced woman from the Ma'in District in the capital Sana'a, which is under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, spoke about the detention of her husband by the aforementioned group. As a result, the family was forced to leave their home in Sana'a during the early years of the armed conflict and airstrikes, after her husband was accused of being an agent for the Saudi-UAE-led coalition. The husband was charged with providing "coordinates of Sana'a's authorities' locations" to target them with airstrikes, which compelled the family to flee to Wadi Ahmad in the capital. Due to the lack of schools there, they were forced to move again to Marib, where they settled in the Al-Wadi District in the Al-Masil area. In this context, the displaced woman said:

After we fled, my husband joined the fronts of the internationally recognized government forces, where he worked on a military crew to earn a salary, as we had no income. While participating in the Al-Alam front, he was detained by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and is still being held to this day. Whenever he contacts us, he is very distressed by the situation he is enduring.

On the other hand, a displaced man from the Beit al-Faqih District in Al Hudaydah Governorate mentioned that he was harmed by one of the supervisors affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, who intentionally oppressed him without justification. This led to his dismissal from his job at the Islamic Relief Organization in the district and his being barred from entering his farm in the "Al-Jah" area on the western coast, which is controlled by the internationally recognized government forces. The displaced man had frequently visited his farm to inspect and take care of it, but due to these raised suspicions, which led to his arrest by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group for 25 days,

81 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/IDP-guiding.html

he decided to flee.

The results of the in-depth interviews and focus group sessions, which align with the study's quantitative findings, indicated that 15% of households were displaced due to fear of arrest or forced recruitment. One displaced individual, after escaping the grip of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, explained that he decided to flee to Aden but was unable to settle due to a popular campaign demanding the expulsion of people from northern regions from areas under the control of the Southern Transitional Council. In this context, he said: "I was harassed everywhere, so I became afraid and fled to Abyan, even though I was working as an accountant in a restaurant with a good salary and living in a house provided free of charge by the restaurant owner."

He noted that the restaurant owner was forced by the local authorities in Aden to end the employment of northern people, and was asked to stop in a friendly and polite manner. When the displaced person realized he was no longer welcome, he had no choice but to move to Abyan.

Among the other reasons for displacement were threats, verbal abuse, and mockery faced by civilians in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Members of the group threatened them with arrest unless they immediately left the border areas, such as Haradh and Abs in Hajjah Governorate. Additionally, the lack of essential services, such as food, medicine, and water, forced them to flee.

Several displaced individuals from Al Hudaydah Governorate also mentioned the threats posed by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. One of them spoke about being threatened with execution or forced participation in combat. He explained that the threats extended to a group of his relatives and neighbors, including the principal of a school. They were taken from inside the school, along with the principal, and hidden in distant prisons. He further clarified that some of them were released, bearing signs of torture, including the school principal.

C. Risks of Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance

Landmines are one of the primary causes of displacement for many residents of villages and cities from their original areas. For example, this occurred in the districts of Al-Durayhimi, Hays, and Al-Qataberah in Al-Khoukha, Al Hudaydah Governorate; Al-Mahjirah and Sirwah in Marib Governorate; Al-Burh in Taiz Governorate; and areas in Al-Jawf Governorate, such as Khub and Ash-Shaf. Residents of these areas were displaced due to the threats posed by landmines.

These findings are consistent with those indicated by the quantitative study, which showed that landmines contribute to 4% of displacement cases. Many displaced individuals, especially from Al Hudaydah and Sirwah, confirmed that the detonation of landmines near their relatives forced them to decide to flee. Al-Durayhimi district in Al Hudaydah witnessed violent events where landmines surrounded the area, compelled the residents to leave their homes and properties, which were later destroyed due to airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition forces. This led to the destruction of farms and the deaths of livestock, some of which were also stolen. Participants in the study noted that landmines were planted by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group around villages to hinder the advancement of the internationally recognized government forces and the Joint Forces, obstructing civilian movement. The displaced people explained that the indiscriminate planting of landmines around villages and homes targeted the warring parties as they departed; nonetheless, civilians became the real victims of these landmines when attempting to return. Additionally, the Mwatana for Human Rights organization documented at least 618 landmine incidents and 575 explosive remnants of war incidents from the beginning of the armed conflict in September 2014 until October 2024, the period covered by this study. Responsibility for these incidents was distributed as follows:[82]

590 landmine incidents and 345 explosive remnants of war incidents were attributed to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

100 explosive remnants of war incidents were attributed to the internationally recognized government forces.

44 explosive remnants of war incidents were attributed to the Southern Transitional Council.

27 explosive remnants of war incidents and one landmine incident were attributed to the Joint Forces.

The remaining incidents are attributed to other parties, such as the Saudi-led coalition, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and other terrorist organizations.

These figures, representing only a part of the total documented violations (i.e., the part that Mwatana's field team was able to access and document in recent years), do

82 Mwatana for Human Rights, Interactive Map of Human Rights Violations in Yemen, https://maps.mwatana.org/ar?page=1&sort=newest&perpetrator=PERPET002

not imply an exhaustive account, highlighting the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by landmines, which continue to claim civilian lives and leave tragic scars that obstruct daily life and tarnish the future.

D. Living Difficulties and Lack of Basic Services

According to the results of the study's first phase of data collection, the lack of job opportunities led to the displacement of 25% of individuals. The findings from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that living difficulties were a key factor driving some displaced persons to leave their areas. The armed conflict in Yemen has resulted in exorbitant price hikes, a sharp decline in job opportunities, and a loss of a dignified livelihood for civilians.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Al Hudaydah Governorate explained that they had been forced to flee in search of job opportunities to improve their living conditions. Others from various governorates mentioned that their displacement was driven by the cessation of life activities and the disruption of markets, especially for those dependent on daily wage work. This led to rising unemployment and an inability to provide sufficient income for families. One IDP from Hays district in Al Hudaydah summarized the situation, saying:

The battles between the warring parties intensified, life became harder, prices soared, and we couldn't find work. Our living conditions worsened, and we were overwhelmed by hunger and poverty. We also suffered from landmines and compulsory recruitment campaigns by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, and we feared being taken for conscription.

In another example, an IDP woman from Al Hudaydah, who had moved to the city of Tabun in Lahj Governorate, stated that one of the reasons for her displacement was that she no longer felt secure or stable in her hometown, where she had lived her entire life. She also struggled to provide food for her children after her husband was detained by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. She said:

When I decided to work, I couldn't find a job. I couldn't leave my children alone at home to search for work, and I didn't want to beg. I couldn't pay the rent, and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group took my husband and imprisoned him for four years. I found myself unable to manage the family's affairs amid the war. Most of the houses in the area where I lived were destroyed, and my children would be deprived of education. When my husband was released, he found it difficult to find work, so he decided to migrate to Saudi Arabia. At that time, Yemenis were not allowed entry into the Kingdom, so he

decided to enter through smuggling routes via Saada, and after that, we lost contact with him

In some cases, displacement was an attempt to survive and a search for new hope, as was the case with an IDP woman from Hajja to Seiyun. Her husband was kidnapped by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group for a month and a half in Al Hudaydah, after which she received the news of his death. The IDP found herself without support from her husband's family, who demanded that she leave the house after a shell destroyed their home. This forced her to leave everything behind and flee with her child to Hadramout Governorate.

The proximity of clashes to residential areas also forced civilians to flee due to the terror caused by explosions and the difficulty of meeting daily life requirements, such as access to markets and hospitals. Participants in the study sample confirmed that the outbreak of war in the Nihm area of Sana'a Governorate, coupled with the difficulties in living conditions, limited resources, and the remoteness of Nihm from the city, as well as the difficulty of moving to secure daily necessities, led many citizens to flee to Madghal and then to the Wadi area in Marib Governorate. When the fighting reached Madghal and the intensity of explosions, as described by one IDP, the residents fled to the Wadi, and many IDPs from Madghal and Sirwah followed, which led to the establishment of the Al-Sweida camp.

On the other hand, IDPs in areas under the control of the Joint Forces, such as Al-Jarahi and Hays in Al Hudaydah Governorate, reported that the war between the warring parties (the Ansar Allah – Houthi forces, the Joint Forces, and some affiliated brigades) exacerbated living conditions and halted daily activities, such as going to farms, markets, or sending children to school. The IDPs noted that this coincided with ground clashes and heavy airstrikes, leading to casualties. As a result, residents fled from the village of Al-Bagheel in Al-Jarahi, from the village of Al-Kadhah in Jabal Ras to Hays, and then to Al-Khokha, all of which are located in Al Hudaydah Governorate.

Second: Violations and Abuses Against Displaced Persons in Various Areas

1. Violations Committed by Parties to the Conflict Against Displaced Persons

Quantitative data from the study's first phase indicated that displaced persons were subjected to numerous abuses, including security and safety threats. Specifically:

- 21% experienced gunfire incidents.
- 22% faced theft.
- 12% were forced to perform hazardous work.
- 15% suffered physical assaults, including beatings and kicking.
- 11% of cases involved the forced recruitment of children under 18 years old.
- 5% involved incidents of kidnapping.
- 1% involved incidents of rape.

According to the interactive map of human rights violations in Yemen,[83] which documents violations from September 14, 2014, to October 2024, a total of 16,058 violations were recorded, affecting 29,805 civilians, most of whom were women and children. The documented violations span 32 patterns, including:

- Air and ground attacks.
- Landmines and explosive devices.
- Live ammunition.
- Arbitrary detention.
- Enforced disappearances.
- Torture.
- Sexual violence.

83 Mwatana for Human Rights, Interactive Map of Human Rights Violations in Yemen, https://maps.mwatana.org/ar.

- Recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.
- Attacks on schools and hospitals.
- Assaults on historical and archaeological sites, among others.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group was found responsible for 9,262 violations, while the Saudi/UAE-led coalition was accountable for 1,559 violations. The internationally recognized government forces were responsible for 2,555 violations, and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces committed 2,010 violations. The Joint Forces were responsible for 362 violations, while other parties, including Eritrean forces, the U.S.-British coalition, terrorist organizations, Israeli forces, and others, were accountable for 310 violations documented by Mwatana.

These figures underscore the gravity and scale of violations inflicted on civilians by various parties to the conflict.

Abuses such as abduction, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance continue to be practiced by various parties to the conflict over many years. During the period covered by the study, Mwatana documented 3,526 incidents of arbitrary detention, 1,409 cases of enforced disappearance, and 16 incidents of abduction.[84] Of these, 434 incidents of arbitrary detention and 134 cases of enforced disappearance were documented within a single year, 2023.[85]

These statistics underscore the persistent and widespread perpetration of violations against civilians, in clear contravention of the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, including the right to citizenship, the right to a stable and secure life, and the right to the sanctity of the home. Such practices also violate international laws and treaties ratified by the Republic of Yemen, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified on February 9, 1987), and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ratified on November 5, 1991).

The findings of the current study indicate that various parties to the conflict have committed numerous violations against displaced civilians. For example, one displaced

84 Ibid.

85 Mwatana for Human Rights, The Legacy of Gunpowder, Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2023 report, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/621cfefe2b950d85b2a1e2d1/6698bfc715639017bbcd26f1_Annual%20Report%202023%20Ar%20(1)-%D9%85%D8%B6%D8%BA%D9%88%D8%B7.pdf

woman who fled from Al-Hodeidah to Tuban, Lahj, reported that the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group detained her husband for four years. Another displaced individual recounted reckless actions by a member of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, describing how the individual brandished a weapon following a verbal altercation. However, bystanders quickly intervened to defuse and control the situation.

One pattern of violations faced by displaced persons was forced displacement. Some land and farm owners reported being compelled to leave their lands, abandoning their livestock and possessions. Describing the situation, one displaced individual said, "It was as if we were evicted from our land under the pretext of ensuring our safety." Such acts constitute violations of the 6 and 9 principles of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which stipulate the protection of individuals from arbitrary displacement from their homes or places of residence and prohibit the displacement of farmers and pastoralists who depend on their lands and have deep emotional ties to them.[86]

After leaving their villages and lands, some attempted to return to check on their properties but faced significant obstacles that prevented them from doing so. These individuals suffered substantial losses, including their farms, livestock, and homes. In other cases, displaced persons who risked returning to their hometowns were devastated to find much of their property gone. Others reported that their belongings had been stolen or looted in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group,[87] in blatant disregard for international humanitarian law, specifically Article 33(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 4(2)(g) of the Additional Protocol II. The confiscation of displaced persons' assets and property was often accompanied by mistreatment and threats of detention if they refused to leave the area, as reported by participants in the study.

In a related context, a displaced individual from Hajjah reported being threatened with detention by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group due to his affiliation with the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah Party). He also mentioned facing difficulties in accessing humanitarian aid. Instances of arbitrary actions and threats forcing displaced persons to abandon their properties were frequently reported, along with a lack of adequate protection for displaced persons and their belongings by the controlling parties to the conflict. These actions stand in stark violation of international humanitarian law,

86 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/IDP-guiding.html

87 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2017), Internally displaced persons and international humanitarian law, Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law.

international human rights law, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Specifically, they contravene Principle 5, which emphasizes the prevention of conditions leading to displacement or the forced migration of civilians from their homes and places of residence. They also violate Principle 7, which mandates that authorities consider all possible alternatives to avoid displacement before making any decision that would lead to it. Furthermore, they breach Principle 21, which guarantees the protection of property and possessions under all circumstances.

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Displaced individuals fleeing areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group to territories controlled by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) often faced significant and repeated mistreatment during their displacement journey. This included verbal abuse, bullying, or condescension, as frequently reported by participants in the study. One individual described these actions as "bullying and thuggery," coupled with regionally charged language used by security personnel at checkpoints controlled by the conflicting parties along the public roads connecting Houthi-controlled areas with STC-controlled territories. The conduct at these checkpoints, characterized by irresponsible actions, undermined the principles of humane treatment and left displaced persons feeling humiliated and unequal, as if they were not Yemenis, according to several accounts.

Numerous displaced individuals interviewed for the study reported difficulties encountered at checkpoints, including insults, excessive searches, and prolonged detentions without clear justification. Such practices also violated local customs and

traditions. One displaced person recounted:

At the entrance to Aden, specifically at the Rabat checkpoint in Dar Saad, some soldiers attempted to search women's bags, claiming there were no female police officers available. One even demanded that my wife speak so he could hear her voice and confirm she was a woman, despite the presence of children with us. We felt humiliated and degraded as if we were refugees from an African country and not in our own land. They ignored Yemeni customs and traditions, forgetting that we are their brothers with the same rights as citizens of the Republic of Yemen. We are entitled to all the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Yemeni Constitution, including the right to move freely within the country.

These violations explicitly contradict local and international laws, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which affirm the full equality of rights and freedoms of internally displaced persons with other citizens under domestic and international law.

According to displaced persons, the actions of influential figures operating under the authority of the Southern Transitional Council did not stop there. The series of violations continued against IDPs residing in displacement camps in Aden. These violations took various forms, as detailed by displaced individuals participating in focus group discussions. They reported that campaigns were carried out to detain displaced men and women for engaging in begging or collecting plastic bottles and other recyclable metal waste from garbage bins. These materials are collected and sold, providing a vital source of income for many displaced families.

Participants in the focus group discussions stated that police and security forces conducted these campaigns between June and August 2024. During these campaigns, displaced persons were detained for extended periods, ranging from weeks to months. They were interrogated and threatened with transfer to the central prison. Their release was contingent on signing a pledge to cease begging and paying a monetary fine ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 Yemeni riyals.

Such practices violate Principle 3 of the Guiding Principles, which establishes that the primary responsibility for the protection of IDPs lies with national authorities. It underscores that the local authorities in control of an area are obligated to ensure the protection and provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons within their jurisdiction.[88]

88 See footnote 86.

Regarding the threats posed by landmines, the study's quantitative results indicate that mines restrict freedom of movement for 25% of the participants. Displaced persons frequently complained during focus group discussions and in-depth interviews about the mines that limited their mobility in areas such as Al-Hudaydah, Al-Barah, "Khub wa Ash Sha'af" in Al-Jawf, and Al-Majzar in Sirwah, Ma'rib Governorate, where several mines exploded.

Displaced persons reported incidents where groups of children entered areas contaminated with explosive remnants, resulting in explosions that claimed the lives of seven children, severely injuring a 10-year-old boy who lost his leg, and paralyzing a woman after her spinal cord was damaged.

The tragedies caused by landmines were further highlighted by narratives from displaced women during focus groups. One family returned to their original home, and while tidying up, they moved a mattress that triggered a mine, killing four members of the same family.

In this context, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 183 incidents involving landmines and explosive remnants in a single year—2023.[89] These incidents predominantly occurred in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, in regions they previously held, or on former frontlines during the conflict. Governorates such as Al-Bayda, Al-Hudaydah, Al-Jawf, Sa'dah, and some districts in Ma'rib and Taiz are among the areas heavily contaminated with mines.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 96% of landmine incidents and 71% of incidents involving explosive remnants recorded in 2023. In comparison, the Southern Transitional Council, the internationally recognized government forces, and the Joint Forces are collectively responsible for less than 4% of these incidents.

Among the violations experienced by displaced persons in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government forces and the Joint Forces is the disregard for the principle of distinction between military targets and civilian objects. This principle, a longstanding and fundamental tenet of international humanitarian law and customary law, is explicitly referenced in Article 48 of the First Additional Protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Nevertheless, in Yemen, displaced persons reported losing their sense of safety in their areas and homes, which were often destroyed by aerial bombardments with residents inside.

89 Mwatana for Human Rights (2024), Human Rights Situation in Yemen 2023 (The Legacy of Gunpowder), annual report, www.mwatana.org.

The areas from which civilians were displaced were active frontlines between the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and the Joint Forces led by Tariq Saleh. Civilians fleeing from Houthi-controlled areas to Joint Forces-controlled areas were prohibited from traveling or leaving at night. They also reported that their phones were inspected to ensure they were not communicating with anyone in Joint Forces-controlled areas, even if those individuals were family members or relatives. Some were detained and interrogated, reflecting severe restrictions on freedom of movement, a fundamental civil right protected under national legislation, international humanitarian law, and the additional protocols to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

One displaced individual shared his experience during his journey to Seiyun, describing repeated verbal mockery and discriminatory treatment similar to what displaced persons faced when traveling to areas controlled by the Southern Transitional Council. At one checkpoint, guards demanded that his wife step off the bus to verify that she was a woman, despite her husband presenting their marriage certificate. The guards were not satisfied and continued to mock them, making discriminatory remarks such as, "You northerners want to take over our land" and "Your kind, you northerners." Many displaced persons reported hearing numerous degrading and discriminatory comments like these from members of the host community in southern governorates.

A displaced woman traveling with her family from Al-Ta'iziyah district, under the control of the internationally recognized government forces, to Aden reported distressing treatment during their journey. At one checkpoint, a soldier demanded she lift her veil (niqab, covering her face and head), questioning whether she was a man in disguise. She stated that the treatment of displaced persons was inhumane and violated Yemeni traditions. She added, "I was forced to step off the bus at multiple checkpoints, each time accompanied by offensive and regionally biased remarks, such as: 'You are Dahabisha, you are spies, we will drive you out of Aden,' and 'We will separate from the North,' along with many other hurtful comments."

Another displaced woman from Taiz described further harassment upon arriving at a displacement camp. "We were repeatedly mocked and verbally harassed by other displaced persons in the camp, as the camp was designated for marginalized

groups.[90] Additionally, children from displaced families were subjected to beatings." This testimony aligns with the quantitative findings from the study's initial phase, which indicated that physical assaults, including scuffles and kicking, accounted for 15%, alongside verbal abuse, insults, and other degrading language.

Among the violations prevalent in certain areas, such as the city of Seiyun, are those related to sexual harassment against children. A displaced mother in Seiyun expressed her fear and concern for her children after two of them were subjected to sexual harassment. A motorcycle driver harassed the first child, while the second was targeted by an older man while on his way to a barbershop. The perpetrator deceived the child by pretending to offer a ride to the barbershop. The man, exploiting the child's trust, attempted to lure him with an offer of 50,000 Yemeni rials. However, the child remained alert, managed to escape, and sought help from the police. The mother voiced her constant fear for her children and the need to restrict their movement due to these incidents.

Quantitative findings indicate that 17% of the study sample reported restrictions on movement among displaced persons. During the study period, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 204 cases of sexual violence,[91] including 45 incidents that occurred in 2023, ranging from sexual harassment and rape to sexual exploitation.[92]

Displaced individuals from Al Hudaydah residing in camps in Seiyun reported instances of discrimination and unfair treatment in public facilities, including Seiyun General Hospital. One witness recounted an incident of mistreatment faced by a displaced woman from Al Hudaydah, residing in the Madoudah camp in Seiyun, during her emergency trip to the hospital for childbirth. The witness explained that the discriminatory behavior ignored or overlooked the fact that displaced persons are civilians within the territory of the Republic of Yemen and are entitled to health and psychological care under the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, particularly Principles 1 and 3, which place the responsibility for protecting displaced persons in areas under local authority control on national authorities. The witness shared the

90 A group of the population characterized by dark skin, found throughout the country, is believed to be descendants of the Abyssinian occupation of Yemen in the pre-Islamic era. However, they currently hold Yemeni citizenship and enjoy full constitutional and legal rights. Nevertheless, on a social level, they face racial discrimination and widespread poverty and deprivation for various reasons.

91 Mwatana for Human Rights, Interactive Map of Human Rights Violations in Yemen, https://maps.mwatana.org/ar.

92 Ibid.

following account:

My wife accompanied a pregnant displaced woman from Al Hudaydah to Seiyun General Hospital. Upon their arrival, the pregnant woman, who required immediate medical attention, was asked to open her legs for an examination by a medical intern. The woman refused, as she was unaccustomed to such procedures in her place of origin, where gynecologists are predominantly women. She struggled to accept the situation, and the on-duty female doctor responded harshly and insultingly, saying, 'Either you open your legs for the examination or go to give birth in the street.' My wife, having experience in childbirth as a midwifery graduate, tried to resolve the situation by approaching the head nurse, but she responded insultingly and repeated what the on-duty doctor had said about giving birth in the street. In an effort to salvage the situation, my wife informed them that the pregnant woman had agreed to let the male doctor examine her in exchange for an injection to help dilate her cervix. As labor intensified, my wife was forcibly removed from the delivery room as a companion. The mistreatment escalated to the point where the pregnant woman was denied even drinking water. Thankfully, she managed to give birth before the intern arrived. She wept tears of relief because she was not assisted by a male doctor. Despite delivering the baby, the abusive behavior and verbal insults persisted, even from the cleaning staff, who said, 'You Northerners, why did you come here?' and refused to clean the area under the woman who had just given birth. My wife had to clean the area herself before returning with the woman and her baby to the camp.

The displaced man added, "What was shocking is that everyone in the hospital seemed united in their inhumane and discriminatory behavior. My wife overheard the cleaning staff saying, 'Let her companion clean up for her,' even though they had collected the full fees." He concluded, "We endure it because this is not our land."

Regarding the violations experienced by displaced persons residing in Marib Governorate, participants in focus group discussions indicated that the families and relatives of displaced persons in Marib had been subjected to threats by the authorities of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. In some cases, these threats escalated to imprisonment, with demands that the families bring their displaced relatives from Marib.

One displaced woman stated that she had previously worked as a Quran teacher in the city of Amran, while another taught at a Quran memorization center affiliated with an adult literacy program in Dhamar Governorate. Both were compelled to teach

the ideological material of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, known as al-Malazim (the Lieutenant), a series of booklets authored by the group's founder, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi. These booklets focus primarily on religious topics and serve as a core reference for the group's ideology. The displaced women did not comply with these demands, which led to the closure of the Quran memorization center. One woman fled Amran for Marib, abandoning all her possessions in Amran to safeguard her life.

Displaced persons in Marib also highlighted the violations they faced due to confrontations between Marib's native tribes and fighters from the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. For instance, in Bidbida (their place of origin), when the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group seized control, residents feared that their children would be forcibly recruited. Additionally, these confrontations resulted in numerous deaths and injuries, detentions, and the suspension of children's education. Consequently, civilians in these areas, who prioritized their children's education, were forced to flee to Al-Wadi District, specifically the Masil area.

Similarly, residents of Sirwah experienced indiscriminate attacks and shelling on homes while families were inside. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group also used explosive devices to demolish houses. These actions contributed to widespread displacement and significant harm to civilian populations in the region.

The findings from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews revealed instances of arbitrary detention involving heads of displaced families from areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, as well as displaced persons in Marib. One displaced woman reported that her husband had been detained by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Another displaced woman spoke about the difficulty of obtaining information about arbitrarily arrested and forcibly disappeared individuals, causing psychological suffering for their families. These families oscillate between hope for their return and despair due to the prolonged absence and lack of information.

Additionally, a displaced woman in Marib recounted her ordeal during the journey to Marib, which passed through the city of Dhamar, where she was detained by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. She stated:

We were three women accompanied by a young boy, no older than 14. We were detained in a hotel in Dhamar and prohibited from leaving under the pretext that one of my sisters held a military rank—a baseless claim, as she is a nurse. We could leave only after intermediaries from Taiz, who had connections with the Ansar Allah (Houthi)

group, intervened on our behalf.

Displaced persons in some camps in Taiz governorate occasionally face threats from landowners of the camps, as in the case of Al-Shadhili Camp, in addition to threats from some members of the host community to dismantle tents, evict the displaced, or demand rent payments. A similar incident occurred in Al-Shaheed Hamoud Camp in Al-Mokha, where the landowner asked the displaced to leave the camp and prohibited them from building on the land. In Al-Malika Camp in Al-Ma'afir, Taiz, displaced persons were forced to pay the landowner a monthly rent of 2,000 Yemeni riyals. This situation was repeated in Hisn Shaddad Camp in Abyan, where the landowner demanded the displaced people to pay rent or vacate the premises. These violations occurred even though the Executive Unit[93] had been informed about them by the displaced persons.

Regarding property confiscation, many displaced persons reported that their homes, farms, and other assets were seized by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. These properties were marked with the phrase "Confiscated by the State" in bold writing, according to some displaced persons in Ibb and Dhamar. Additionally, the homes and properties of displaced persons were either destroyed by airstrikes or confiscated by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

For example, one displaced woman expressed her shock after visiting her home in Wadi Hanish, an area under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. She discovered that her house had no windows or qamariyas (traditional Yemeni decorative glasswork), and its furniture and belongings had been stolen. Similarly, a displaced man reported that a car repair workshop owned by a worker was confiscated, along with the farms and livestock of most displaced persons fleeing areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. The group justified these actions by claiming that the property owners were affiliated with the Islamic State organization (ISIS).

In one of the "Hisn Shaddad" camps in Zinjibar, under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, the landowner arrived and threatened to demolish the camp, claiming his intention to sell the land. This forced the displaced persons to search for another location. Despite notifying local authorities and relevant entities, there was no response from those responsible for creating conditions to enable displaced persons to voluntarily return or resettle in another part of the country, in accordance with Principle

93 The body responsible for displaced persons affairs and affiliated with the internationally recognized government forces.

28 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Instead of providing protection to the displaced, security personnel arrived to protect the landowner, resulting in the displacement of many without shelter, as reported by one displaced woman.

One example of violations against civilians who were forced to flee their villages and homes in areas controlled by the STC occurred in Al-Buqairah village, located in the Lawdar district of Abyan governorate. The village's residents suffered abuses by local authorities, including killings and arrests, under the pretext of combating Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. A displaced person stated:

In our village, we were subjected to arrests by the Southern Transitional Council, and some young men from the area were killed. Lands were confiscated, grazing livestock was prohibited, and the village's only school and clinic were converted into military barracks. All the doors of the village homes were removed, the houses were searched, and their contents were tampered with.

He also mentioned receiving multiple death threats from STC soldiers, saying: "They threatened to kill me if they found me grazing sheep on my farm, and I was interrogated multiple times."

The women of the village were not spared from harassment. Female shepherds faced repeated harassment, forcing families to prevent women from going out to graze or farm, according to testimonies from in-depth interviews.

These practices indicate that the local authority represented by the STC, under the pretext of searching for Al-Qaeda (and other terrorist organizations), caused the villagers to flee to the mountains, leaving everything behind in hopes of escaping the brutality of the local forces. The area where the villagers sought refuge lacked basic services, depriving their children of education and access to essential resources.

These violations contravene all local and international norms and laws that guarantee the right to a dignified life and the freedom of individuals to live in their homeland, on their land, and among their community. The Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates the responsibility of relevant authorities to provide general protection for the population, as outlined in Articles 13, 14, and 51 of the First Additional Protocol, which formally affirms civilians' right to protection and prohibits attacks against them.

The reasons forcing civilians to flee in search of safety are varied, but they often face

numerous violations and assaults, whether by parties to the conflict or by members of the host community. These violations breach international laws that emphasize the sanctity of homes and the authorities' duty to protect civilians. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention mandates the humane treatment of individuals under all circumstances and their protection from acts of violence and threats.

Displaced persons from areas under the control of the STC reported mistreatment by security forces. One of them stated:

When a crime such as theft or murder occurs, displaced persons are automatically accused, and random raids are conducted without respecting the sanctity of homes as guaranteed by the Yemeni Constitution and international laws.

He added:

I have been interrogated multiple times and am not the only one. All the camp residents have suffered from unjustified searches, constant threats, interrogations, and even torture in some cases.

Displaced persons also highlighted that many among them, under these baseless justifications, were imprisoned for extended periods without clear charges, subjected to torture, and had their personal belongings, such as mobile phones, confiscated without return.

Regarding sexual violence violations, some displaced individuals interviewed reported incidents of rape in certain camps. When these incidents were reported, police officers also harassed girls during transport in police vehicles, detention, or interrogations. Sources mentioned that some girls were forced to expose sensitive parts of their bodies under the pretext of investigations, while others were subjected to rape or coerced into non-penetrative sexual acts.

These violations constitute clear breaches of international humanitarian law, which prohibits all forms of sexual violence, as outlined in the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Additional Protocols of 1977. The law demands accountability for the perpetrators of such crimes and full protection for displaced persons and civilians.

In areas under the control of the Joint Forces, displaced persons on the western coast, as indicated by the study sample, unanimously reported no incidents of rape or any forms of sexual violence.

Displaced individuals originating from areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group reiterated previously mentioned violations. They explained that in their original areas, their mobile phones were searched, and if it was discovered that they had been in contact with someone in areas controlled by the Joint Forces—even if the contact was a close relative such as a brother or family member—they were detained and interrogated for a period.

As for displaced persons in areas under the control of the internationally recognized government, those in Marib spoke positively about their lives in displacement camps, which were essentially free of violations. They highlighted the abuses they had previously endured in their original areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and during confrontations between the group and the forces of the internationally recognized government. As a result of these violations, some individuals were killed, others injured, and some remain detained to this day.

Regarding violations in the city of Taiz, a displaced individual residing in one of the camps recounted a shooting incident he experienced in January 2021. He stated:

In January 2021, I was involved in a shooting incident by members affiliated with the 170th Brigade's security forces. They fired at the truck I was working on, which my older brother had purchased from Al-Howban. The gunmen fired forty rounds at the truck before fleeing. I reported the incident to the police, who investigated and identified the perpetrators as an armed group affiliated with the 170th Brigade, wanted by the security forces of the internationally recognized government. They informed me that they were unable to apprehend or arrest them. Additionally, they claimed that the truck belonged to a member of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. I then informed my brother of the situation, and he decided to sell the truck in Aden at a low price to avoid it being confiscated without justification.

2. Host Community Perpetrated Assaults Against Displaced Persons

Displaced individuals faced various challenges upon relocating to areas under the control of the STC, originating from host community members. These challenges included bullying and verbal threats, such as comments like: "Go back to your area." Similarly, displaced persons from Taiz city in the Al-Howban area of Taiz governorate, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, endured mocking and derisive comments, such as being referred to as: "Those are the people of Taiz" in a sarcastic tone.

One displaced woman detailed her experiences with such assaults, stating:

To them, it's as if we are the ones fueling the war. The way they speak to us conveys this sentiment, making us feel like we don't belong, as if we're not even from the same governorate.

Host community members often engage in behaviors that cause distress for the displaced. The same woman remarked:

They constantly remind us that we're on land that isn't ours and that we could be displaced again and left on the streets at any moment.

Other displaced individuals complained of the disdainful attitudes held by host community members toward them, mainly due to their residence in camps or their engagement in jobs that are stigmatized or disrespected in Yemeni society, such as assembling toys, stitching shoes, or undertaking strenuous labor as porters. These grievances highlight the widespread discrimination against displaced persons, aligning with the quantitative results of the study's first phase, where 33% of respondents reported encountering such behavior.

Additionally, the quantitative findings revealed that 14% of respondents faced discrimination based on skin color. Others reported incidents of harassment targeting displaced girls by host community members in areas under the control of the Southern Transitional Council.

Displaced persons from Al Hudaydah, particularly those with darker skin, reported experiencing racial discrimination, where they were referred to as "al-Akhdam" (a derogatory term). They recounted incidents at checkpoints in Sheikh Othman, Aden, where they faced inappropriate treatment, such as being told: "You're displaced," reflecting a condescending attitude toward displaced individuals from northern areas. One displaced person noted that they frequently heard the phrase: "Northerners are not allowed entry." Another mentioned that the restaurant owner he worked for in Aden received repeated threats demanding the dismissal of northern workers, prompting many displaced individuals to seek other areas free from such regional discrimination.

As for displaced children, some cases in the study sample indicated that they were subjected to assault by members of the host community. One displaced person shared that his son was beaten with sticks by local young men near the camp. He stated:

A verbal altercation broke out between my son and one of the youths, who later

returned with a large group and attacked my son and his friend with sticks.

In areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, displaced individuals faced armed threats for purposes such as robbery. One displaced person from the "Al-Rameed" area in Ibb city recounted being severely beaten in an attempt to steal the motorcycle he used for work. He described the incident:

I work on a motorcycle. Someone requested a ride from Al-Salbah, Al-Rameed, to Bani Suleiman for an agreed fare. Before reaching the destination, the passenger pointed a gun at my head, demanding my bike and my obedience. Simultaneously, two others appeared on another motorcycle, blocked my path, and began attacking me, trying to take the bike and the gun. I fought back with all my strength, but they beat me severely and stabbed me 12 times in the abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms. Fortunately, the wounds were not fatal. I managed to grab a small dagger from the passenger and inflicted a significant wound on one of them in the abdomen, seemingly near the kidney. I then retreated and fled towards the mountains, abandoning my motorcycle but escaping certain death.

Incidents of armed threats against displaced persons by members of the host community were also reported. Some displaced persons mentioned accidental or unintended incidents. For example, one mother shared that her young son, who worked to earn a living, was threatened by host community members in an attempt to steal his belongings.

In another context, displaced persons reported frequent verbal altercations and armed assaults to quell chaos during the distribution of humanitarian aid or disputes over water and other resources. One example occurred during the distribution of food aid at the Al-Ribat camp in Lahj Governorate, within areas under the control of the Southern Transitional Council. Security forces from the Al-Sabiha area arrived and opened fire, causing panic among the displaced, who fled without receiving their aid.

In areas under the control of the internationally recognized government, the study's quantitative results showed that theft incidents accounted for 22% of security-related issues. A displaced person in Sayun noted the prevalence of thefts and general insecurity. One woman recounted an incident involving her son, saying:

My son worked as a cleaner at a restaurant. When he returned home, his face was bruised. The restaurant owner accused him of stealing money when the accounts were short, so he beat him and withheld his salary as compensation for the stolen money.

Another displaced person described a theft incident in Sayun, stating:

We suffered from thefts. My large tuk-tuk was stolen from inside the camp a year ago. We reported it to the authorities, but we received no response. We went to the security department and spent money filing an official report, but it was futile. To issue complaints, you have to pay 2,000 riyals here and several thousand there" (referring to bribes), "all of which happens under the table.

Displaced persons expressed frustration over the lack of cooperation from official authorities in Seiyun regarding such incidents.

Third: Freedom of Movement in Displacement Locations

1. Movement and Mobility of Displaced Persons in Areas Controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) Group

Regarding freedom of movement and the ability to carry out daily activities safely and conveniently, most displaced persons in their displacement locations reported being able to move freely to and from the camps without being stopped. They also noted the possibility of traveling to any governorate within Yemen. This finding aligns with quantitative results indicating that 83% of the total sample did not face issues or difficulties concerning freedom of movement and mobility.

Discriminatory factors—such as race, region, family affiliation, or other criteria—were the most significant reasons for movement restrictions and difficulties, affecting 31% of the sample. Some displaced persons mentioned that while movement within the districts[94] they were displaced to was relatively easy, traveling outside the governorate remained challenging. One respondent stated:

We face difficulties traveling due to fear of the risk of arrest because individuals are classified based on their family surname, which can lead to detention.

The lack or loss of personal identification documents and other official paperwork also contributed to movement restrictions, affecting 20% of the sample and ranking as the third most significant reason for restricted mobility. This issue further compounded the suffering of displaced persons. Additionally, 17% of the total sample reported facing difficulties related to

94 This includes most of the districts to which residents were displaced across various areas controlled by different parties to the conflict, where it is relatively easy for displaced persons to move within the district they have settled in but difficult for them to leave for other locations.

freedom of movement, while quantitative results revealed that 15% experienced challenges due to financial hardship, lack of employment opportunities, and limited sources of income.

Moreover, in-depth interviews revealed that during the escalation of armed conflict, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group imposed restrictions on the movement of residents in border districts of Hajjah Governorate. These restrictions included heightened security measures to limit the movement of individuals from these areas within Yemeni territory, driven by concerns about their potential recruitment or alignment with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition.

As previously noted, the quantitative findings indicated that the financial hardships faced by displaced persons, along with the recentness of their displacement, contributed to restricting their freedom of movement and mobility by 15%. Qualitative interviews revealed that displaced persons in certain locations, including areas in Sana'a Governorate, the districts of Kharif and Raydah in Amran Governorate, and the capital secretariat of Sana'a, experienced financial difficulties and the challenges of recent displacement as obstacles to movement and mobility.

A similar situation was observed among displaced persons residing in Taiz and Al Hudaydah Governorates. Displaced persons from Taiz, who had relocated to camps in Ibb, reported that mobility was particularly challenging in the early stages of displacement. As newcomers to the region, they were unfamiliar with the valleys and markets necessary for seeking employment. Initially, they relied on women and children begging for sustenance. However, over time, they could secure work opportunities, move freely within the district and governorate, and even travel to other governorates, such as Aden, in search of livelihoods or for visits without facing harassment or restrictions. Some even managed to return to their home areas in Taiz without any interference.

Some displaced individuals described the difficult living conditions they faced, particularly those who had personal sources of income before displacement, such as landowners and farmers. One displaced person detailed his situation, stating:

> *My wife and I are not employed in the public sector. Our livelihood in our village came from a large family-owned farm and a number of livestock. Our life was more than wonderful, and we never experienced any hardship. But after we were displaced, we suffered greatly. Life became difficult, especially as the head of a household, feeling helpless to feed your family. There are no farms or livestock in Aden for me to work with, so I moved to Abyan to find work.*

Regarding the restrictions on the freedom of movement for displaced persons in the

camps in Al Hudaydah, the situation appears to differ slightly from other displacement sites. Displaced persons indicated that they can move freely within the camp; however, when leaving the camp, they must obtain permission from the camp supervisor and management and follow a series of procedures, described by one displaced person as "security precautions." He added:

> *To move, we must seek the permission of the camp elder and the approval of the camp supervisor, in addition to answering the questions directed to the individual requesting to leave (Where? When? How? For how long? How many people?). Moreover, if women leave alone without a male guardian (a close male relative of the woman), they are subject to interrogation and questioning.*

It is evident that displaced persons residing in the camps in Al Hudaydah face certain restrictions and do not enjoy complete freedom of movement and travel compared to their counterparts in camps in other governorates. Additionally, the requirement for women and girls to have a Mahram (male relative guardian) presents an additional challenge, especially for those without an accompanying male relative or guardian.

This points to limitations on the freedom of movement, travel, and living a normal life for the displaced, as well as their inability to move freely without restrictions. Such practices constitute a violation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. General Principles (1, 3, 4) and Principles (8, 12, 14, 22) affirm the right of internally displaced persons to freedom of movement and to live their lives as others do, wherever they wish. These principles also ensure their right to choose their place of residence and exercise fundamental rights, such as freedom of thought, voting, and participation in public affairs.

2. Movement and Mobility in Areas Controlled by the Southern Transitional Council (STC)

In some areas under the control of the STC, displaced persons reported being able to move freely, conduct daily activities, and work without any restrictions in their displacement locations. Many stated that they could travel within the district[95] to which they were displaced without facing any limitations.

However, restrictions are strongly imposed on their areas of origin, making it impossible for them to travel back to their original locations. Several displaced individuals mentioned

95 This includes most of the districts to which residents were displaced across various areas controlled by different parties to the conflict, where it is relatively easy for displaced persons to move within the district they have settled in but difficult for them to leave for other locations.

that some people who attempted to visit their original areas to check on their homes and properties were unfortunately arrested by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Additionally, some others have not returned due to the presence of landmines, as these areas are mine-contaminated.

3. Movement and Mobility in Areas Controlled by the Joint Forces

Regarding freedom of movement and the ability to engage in daily activities in the western coastal areas and other regions under the control of the Joint Forces, displaced individuals unanimously reported having freedom of movement within their displacement sites and nearby areas. However, they could not move freely in their original places, which are controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

Heads of displaced households expressed that their mobility to seek work and livelihood was restricted, particularly when attempting to move at night in their original areas, for fear of being directly accused of collaborating with the other party (the Joint Forces).

As for visiting their original areas, some displaced individuals in the western coastal regions mentioned being prohibited by the Joint Forces, either due to the presence of landmines or for other reasons.

In this context, quantitative findings indicated that landmines and armed confrontations contributed to restricting freedom of movement by 25%. Some individuals suffered severe injuries during their return to their villages, while others lost their lives due to the widespread presence of landmines around and near their villages.

4. Movement and Mobility in Areas Controlled by the Internationally Recognized Government

Displaced individuals arriving from certain areas in Taiz governorate under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group to areas controlled by the internationally recognized government reported having the freedom to move wherever they wished. Similarly, displaced persons in Marib indicated having extensive freedom of movement, allowing them to travel without restrictions. Their children attend nearby schools, which often operate on a split schedule—boys attending in the morning and girls in the evening.

One displaced girl from a family interviewed by Mwatana for this study is studying medicine at university, illustrating a semblance of normalcy and a lack of conflict-related challenges, such as fear and family dislocation. Furthermore, the proximity of the camps to the city of Marib, as in the cases of Adhban and Al-Suwaida camps, has facilitated mobility and access

to daily necessities for displaced persons.

One individual explained:

> *Yes, we carry out all our daily activities, such as weddings, celebrations, and mourning ceremonies. Those with jobs or professions work freely within the camp, such as selling in shops, teaching, tailoring, or making handmade women's clothing. We go to the city to get our needs and return freely. Some travel to Sana'a, Mukalla, or Seiyun and return to the camp without any restrictions.*

In Seiyun, displaced persons said they enjoy unrestricted mobility within their displacement area. The only limitations are the financial cost of transportation and the high cost of student commutes. They mentioned challenges for students traveling to schools far from the camp. Consistent with the study's quantitative findings, high transportation costs contribute to 10% of mobility restrictions.

A displaced woman spoke about her freedom to move and the expense of transportation in her area of displacement:

> *If I want to go to the market, I go with other women because going alone is difficult. There are no public transportation options at all, and taxis are expensive. However, we share the cost when we go as a group.*

Fourth: Conditions of Displacement Camps and Availability of Essential Services

The results of the analysis of data from the observation forms collected during the first phase of field visits to the 67 IDP camps targeted in the study—including 8 shelter centers—indicated the following: Among these camps, 42 (63%) were consolidated camps, while 21 (31%) were scattered and dispersed camps. Of these, 48 (71%) were characterized by ease of access, and 53 (79%) were equipped with protective fencing. Conversely, 14 (21%) camps were open-air sites lacking protective fencing.

Regarding the general characteristics of the camps, the number of displaced persons by governorate varied. Aden, under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, hosted the lowest number of displaced persons, with 1,258 individuals. In contrast, Marib, under the control of the internationally recognized government forces, accommodated the highest number, with 11,480 displaced persons. This was followed by the western coastal districts of Al Hudaydah, under the control of the Joint Forces, which hosted 9,560 displaced persons.

The following presents the results gathered using the observation tool regarding the conditions of displacement camps:

1. Features of Camp Locations

As previously mentioned, the study included 67 displacement camps and shelter centers spread across 12 Yemeni governorates.96

Regarding the accessibility of these camps, 54 (79.4%) of respondents affirmed that the camps were safely accessible, while 14 (20.6%) disagreed, indicating that access to the camps was challenging. Among those who responded affirmatively, 55 (81%) noted the presence of multiple entrances to the camps, facilitating movement to and from the sites—a vital feature for the camp's infrastructure to support displaced persons' mobility.

Regarding proximity to essential services, 41 (60%) of respondents reported that the camps were near such services, an advantageous feature that simplifies daily activities and allows displaced persons to meet their needs with ease. However, 39 (40%) indicated that the camps were distant from essential services. Furthermore, 38 (56%) of respondents agreed that displaced persons could access their basic needs easily, reflecting the quality and consistency of the data.

Regarding the camps' safety, 43 (64.2%) of respondents affirmed the absence of nearby hazards, while 24 (35%) highlighted the presence of risks threatening displaced persons' lives.

Qualitative data collected via observation forms revealed specific risks in several camps:

Bamba Sinan and Al-Fakhama Camps in Ibb Governorate, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, are intersected by main roads and traffic circles, posing dangers to children and the displaced community.

Bashahara Camp in Abyan Governorate, under the Southern Transitional Council's control, reported numerous accidents involving displaced youth due to the camp's scattered nature, lack of protective fencing, and proximity to a military camp.

Some camps are located near conflict zones and frontlines, such as Al-Siddiq Camp in Al-

96 The targeted governorates are Amanat Al-Asimah (the capital municipality), Sana'a, Al-Jawf, Al Hudaydah (H), Ibb, Amran, Taiz (Al-Hawban) (H), Taiz (the city) (C), Al Hudaydah (M), Hadhramaut, Marib, Aden, Lahj, and Abyan. It is worth noting that the governorates of Al Hudaydah and Taiz are under the control of different authorities, which is why they were repeated in the sample.

Tuhayat, Al Hudaydah Governorate, or near floodplains, such as Al-Jawadah Camp in Al-Jawf Governorate. Risks in these areas include proximity to gas tanks and household gas stations, which can endanger the displaced population.

Camps close to military installations, such as Maryama Camp in Seiyun, were also identified as hazardous.

The qualitative results from the observation form revealed that some camps are owned by members of the host community. In in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, IDPs themselves highlighted that they are continuously threatened with eviction by the landowners, who, in some cases, demand monthly rent or force them to leave. This issue is particularly evident in camps such as Maryama in Seiyun, Al-Malika camp in Al-Ma'afer district in Taiz, Hisn Shaddad camp in Abyan, and Al-Ja'diyah camp in Ib governorate.

2. Services Available in Displacement Camps

Regarding water availability in displacement camps, the results indicate that 45 respondents (66%) confirmed the availability of water, while 23 (34%) reported its absence. As for drinking water, it is unavailable in many displacement camps. However, water for other uses is available either within or near the camps, as highlighted by the findings from interviews and focus group discussions. Notably, the issue of clean water shortages persists in the IDP camps of Taiz city. Despite weekly water tank refills in some camps, this remains insufficient to meet the needs of the displaced, forcing them to fetch water from distant locations, as is the case in Al-Dhabou'ah Al-Qibaliyah, Zaid Al-Moushki, and Ali Bin Abi Talib camps in Taiz governorate under the control of the internationally recognized government.

Regarding adequate lighting across the camps, 53 respondents (78%) from the observation sample noted the lack of sufficient lighting, while 15 (22%) reported its presence. This indicates that most displacement camps suffer from severe darkness. Similarly, there is a significant lack of sufficient fuel sources to meet the needs of the displaced, with 56 respondents (82.4%) reporting inadequate fuel supplies compared to 12 (18%) who said otherwise. Qualitative data from in-depth interviews revealed that many camps lack adequate lighting, with some resorting to commercial electricity connections and paying monthly bills, such as in Dar Sa'd camp in Al-Damnah, Ibb governorate, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

As for the availability of public spaces for gatherings or prayers, the sample was evenly split, with 33 respondents (49%) confirming the presence of such spaces, while the same number reported their absence.

Concerning the availability of health services in the camps, 54 respondents (79.4%) agreed that health services were available in their camps, while 13 (19%) indicated otherwise. Qualitative data from the observation forms clarified that health centers in most displacement camps primarily provide routine immunizations and nutrition services, though these services are sometimes discontinued, aligning with the findings of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

The situation regarding bathrooms and sewage systems varies by governorate. For instance, qualitative data attached to the observation forms highlighted that some displacement camps in Amran, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, and Lahj and Aden, under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, have benefited from sanitation-related projects implemented by international organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam, and the UNHCR. In Al-Mashaqa camp in Lahj, there is one bathroom per family; however, overcrowding in camps in Al Hudaydah, under the control of joint forces, necessitates swift and regular sewage extraction due to the high number of displaced persons. Meanwhile, some displacement camps in Marib, under the control of the internationally recognized government, have not benefited from water projects, as is the case in Camp Ridwan in Al-Wadi district, Marib governorate.

3. Cleanliness of Camps and Environmental Health

The overall cleanliness in displacement camps is evidently very poor, with 44 respondents (79.4%) indicating a lack of general cleanliness in these camps. Public areas are unclean, there are no garbage bins, and sanitation services are insufficient and inadequate—making this one of the most pressing needs in displacement camps. One possible reason is that most camp lands are privately owned by civilians from the host community, making it challenging to establish proper sewage systems. Additionally, the camps were designed for temporary use, consisting of tents and tarpaulins hastily or urgently set up, as noted by 46 respondents (68%), highlighting the temporary nature of these structures.

Some camps experience significant waste accumulation in their surroundings, such as Al-Mazloumah camp in Houth, Amran governorate, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

Regarding the prevalence of pests, insects, and mosquitoes in the camps, most respondents—60 (89%)—reported a lack of cleanliness and the spread of infestations. This is attributed to the poorly designed bathrooms and sanitation facilities, which fail to adhere to public health principles. A total of 44 respondents (64.7%) confirmed that the environment

and infrastructure of displacement camps do not meet public health standards. This lack of adherence has led to the spread of diseases, diarrhea, and skin conditions among displaced individuals in most of the camps surveyed, as indicated by qualitative data attached to the observation forms.

4. Privacy Considerations in Displacement Camps

The structure of displacement camps generally fails to uphold the principle of family privacy, as indicated by the results of the observation forms. A total of 43 respondents (63.2%) did not agree that the camp infrastructure provides adequate privacy for each family. Moreover, qualitative data from the observation forms revealed that the tents in camps located in Aden and Lahj, under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, are placed too closely together, depriving families of privacy. Only 25 respondents (37%) from the target sample agreed that privacy is ensured, likely due to poor camp design.

Regarding the availability of locks for doors and windows, 42 respondents (62%) reported their absence, while 26 respondents (38.2%) noted their presence in the camps studied.

As for separate spaces allocated for male and female family members, 59 respondents (87%) stated that such spaces are unavailable. This highlights that most camp settings lack the principle of privacy for all family members, forcing entire families to live in a single shared space. These findings align with the results of qualitative data, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions.

5. Security and Protection

A defining feature of displacement camps is the provision of safety, allowing young girls, boys, and women to move and walk without the need for accompaniment. This was confirmed by the majority of the study sample, with 61 respondents (90%) agreeing that safety is provided, a result that aligns with the general characteristics of the camps, as mentioned earlier.

Regarding the movement of women and children and their safe and easy access to water sources, 43 respondents (63.2%) agreed that water sources are available, while 22 respondents (32.4%) stated that they do not find easy and safe access to these sources, indicating difficulties in access and potentially a lack of perceived safety.

In some camps in Taiz, under the control of the internationally recognized government, conflicts and problems have been observed between the displaced people and the host community due to the grazing of displaced people's sheep and the host community's lack of

acceptance of them. For instance, displaced people in Al-Rahba camp in Jabal Habashi were prohibited from grazing their sheep in the pasture of the host community, which led to the sheep not meeting their food needs.

Regarding the availability of energy and fuel sources and their relationship to protection and safety for girls and women, the results indicated that 38 respondents (5.9%) reported the availability of energy sources, while 30 respondents (44.1%) stated they are unavailable.

Concerning the provision of safe spaces for children and people with disabilities, it was noted that the structure of displacement camps lacks services for people with disabilities in many camps, with 52 respondents (77%) agreeing. In comparison, 16 respondents (23.5%) reported that such services are available in some camps in cities and provincial capitals, such as Aden, under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, and the city of Amran, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, as indicated by the qualitative data from the observation form and the results of individual interviews and focus group discussions. The results showed the availability of safe spaces and human development activities for women in displacement camps in large cities like Aden, while a significant number of displaced people called for the provision of safe spaces in their camps to alleviate the issues faced by children.

Fifth: Impact of Displacement and Relationship with the Host Community

Relationship with the Host Community:

Displaced people from areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group described their relationship with the host community at the beginning of their displacement as one marked by rejection, social isolation, and conflicts over food aid. However, over time, with the duration of displacement exceeding ten years since the events of 2014, as well as their continued stay in the camps and shared living conditions, they became more accepting of each other and more supportive.

When displaced households were asked about their relationship with the host community, 37% of households reported that it was excellent, 48% described it as moderate, and 15% of households stated that the relationship was poor.

Living conditions in the camps are marked by numerous challenges and difficulties, particularly concerning livelihoods and access to essential services needed for daily life. When displaced people demand such basic entitlements, tensions often arise with the

host community for several reasons, including the host community's lack of acceptance of the displaced and the sharing of aid provided to the displaced with the host community, especially when the aid is intended solely for the displaced population. Additionally, the displaced share essential services such as clean water and firewood. This situation was expressed by displaced people in Al Hudaydah governorate, which is under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, who said:

> *When there is a shortage of resources such as water and humanitarian aid, we hear complaints from some, but not everyone, and this saddens us and leaves us in pain.*

However, this typical image of the relationship between the displaced and the host community differed in some rural areas of Yemen, where tribal customs remain firmly ingrained in the minds and hearts of the tribal people in certain areas. Displaced individuals spoke about the treatment they received from the host community in these areas, noting the kindness and harmony they experienced. For example, a displaced person in Al Jouf camp in Al-Jawf governorate, which is under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, described the host community as follows:

> *We found them to be kind and proactive people. They allowed us to set up tents and build shelters on their agricultural land, and they helped us gather firewood and water. We never faced any form of harassment or aggression because the host community is tribal and has the tribal culture of protection in treating and respecting the displaced.*

This indicates the good relationship between the displaced people and the host community in Al-Jawf governorate. The relationship did not stop there but extended further when another displaced person added:

> *The host community took the initiative to give us land to build the camp, and we share basic resources such as water, firewood, and even public electricity, which comes from the governorate center. We have a wonderful relationship with them, one of brotherhood and respect, with no tension.*

On the contrary, according to a displaced woman in Al-Howban, which is under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the relationship with the host community can become tense in some cases,

> *The tense relationship arose because of the small aid we received as displaced people, such as hygiene kits and cleaning supplies, which the host community did not receive. If the aid limited to the displaced had been of greater value, the situation could have*

worsened, possibly leading to conflict or even our expulsion from the displacement site.

Another contributing factor to the poor relationship between the displaced and the host community in some displacement sites is that the camps were set up on private land, and the duration of the displacement has extended beyond expectations, which has caused concern for some of the displaced. Displaced people from Al-Arbaeen camp in Al-Howban, Taiz, expressed:

The relationship between us as displaced people and the host community is very bad. We sleep fearing that we will wake up and find the landowners demanding their land back.

Displaced people from Al Hudaydah, which is under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, described their relationship with the host community as acceptable, but they live in almost complete isolation from the host community and suffer from racial discrimination, as the host community refers to them as "al-Akhdam" (a derogatory term). They also noted that they face some harassment when they go to the markets or interact with the host community, with questions such as: "Who are you? There is no war in your country, why did you come?" as expressed by the displaced people.

Displaced persons in Amanat Al-Asimah and Sana'a[97] (referred to as Sana'a in this study), under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, feel isolated and do not interact with members of the host community except when they leave the camp for essential needs, with these encounters being fleeting, as described by the displaced themselves.

Conversely, displaced persons in Dhi Sufal in Ibb Governorate, also controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, reported experiencing verbal harassment, such as being told, "Welcome, corpse, among the dead." This reflects a lack of acceptance from the host community. Even so, some host community members initially showed compassion, offering various forms of assistance, including clothing, tents, mattresses, and blankets. They also helped provide water at their own expense during supply interruptions, whether through local benefactors or by transporting water from pumps and public tanks, without any objections from others.

In contrast, the relationship between displaced persons and the host community in areas under the control of the STC—such as Aden, Lahij, and Abyan—tends to have a regional

97 Amanat Al-Asimah and Sana'a are two distinct governorates. However, the term 'Sana'a' has been used in this study to encompass both governorates, treating them as a single research area due to their homogeneous characteristics and traits.

dimension, as most displaced individuals come from northern governorates, including Taiz and Al Hudaydah.

One displaced person from Taiz described their relationship with the host community as "generally stable" but noted a regional bias in even the simplest situations. They provided an example: during a conflict between children, if the aggressor is from the host community and the victim is a displaced child, it is justified by saying, "They are innocent, young children who do not understand." However, if the aggressor is a displaced child, they are labeled as "evil, aware, and criminal-minded, posing a threat to the community."

The displaced person added, "Imagine what happens in more significant issues that we try to resolve daily to maintain a cordial relationship with the host community."

In contrast, the relationship between displaced persons and the residents of Abyan is described as exceptionally good. One displaced person residing there stated, "The relationship is so positive that I felt like I was in my own village." Nevertheless, daily life for the displaced is not without challenges. The same individual clarified that tensions arise due to some arrivals from other governorates, not from Abyan's residents themselves, and commented:

> *The relationship with the locals is excellent, with no conflict or friction whatsoever, to the point where I felt as though I were in my own village, or even better. The only tension came from interactions with people who had previously migrated here or those who came to Abyan from other cities seeking work or trade, rather than fleeing war. These individuals harbor jealousy because we receive aid while they do not, even though many of them have falsely registered as displaced persons despite being long-time residents who run significant businesses, including large shops. Nevertheless, they envy us and engage in various practices to harass us.*

In Aden and Lahj, under the control of the STC, displaced persons indicated that their relationship with the host community is generally positive, though not without minor tensions related to aid distribution. Some host community members believe displaced persons have monopolized aid and that support from organizations is directed exclusively toward them. Regarding services, displaced persons and the host community share access to water, which is supplied to the camps through a water project with taps for each tent. Electricity is provided via solar panels. Displaced persons in Lahj noted that their relationship with the host community improved over time, evolving into a partnership for water, electricity, and healthcare services. This contrasts with the early stages of displacement, which were marked by disputes, as neighboring residents demanded that aid organizations provide them

with food and other services initially allocated solely to displaced persons.

In the camps in Marib, controlled by the internationally recognized government, most displaced persons praised the hospitable treatment by the host community and their integration, which has even led to intermarriage between displaced persons and host community members. The displaced persons reported no grievances from the host community, even though the camp lands belong to local Marib residents. They explained that women collect water from host community reservoirs and gather firewood from their farms. However, displaced persons in Al-Suwaida Camp reported a lack of integration due to the camp's remote location. Some mentioned that a few host community members, particularly those with limited income, harass displaced persons over the lack of aid provided to them.

In Seiyun, displaced persons reported problems with certain members of the military forces as the source of the issues. One displaced woman explained: "The militaries are the root of the problem. Vegetable vendors and barbers all complain about them." Another displaced person noted that official entities, such as the police and hospitals, treat displaced persons with discrimination and hostility. He cited an incident involving a displaced woman giving birth at a public hospital, where she faced inhumane treatment.

In Taiz, controlled by the internationally recognized government, some displaced persons described their relationship with the host community as positive, while others reported tension and lack of acceptance in certain camps. They explained that the targeting of displaced persons for food and cash assistance, to the exclusion of the host community, causes friction. Some displaced persons remarked:

> *Yes, there are problems between us and the host community because we are targeted for food and cash aid while they are not. There are also issues with sanitation due to leaking and inadequate sewage systems... They speak to us with hurtful words, such as, 'You've taken over our neighborhood, you're getting aid, and we get nothing.*

They also highlighted that host community members prevent displaced children from grazing livestock in the valleys and mountains, claiming these areas are reserved for their use. Similarly, women are prohibited from collecting firewood. Furthermore, the host community has demanded that displaced persons leave the camps, even though the displaced pay a monthly rent of 2,000 Yemeni Riyals per person, as agreed upon with the Executive Unit affiliated with the internationally recognized government. According to the displaced persons, this arrangement was intended to ensure the landowner retains their property and prevent it from being mistaken as endowment or state land.

On the western coast, under the control of joint forces, displaced persons reported that "the relationship with the host community is good, with no tensions. Each individual receives their share of food aid. Electricity comes from personal solar panels we purchase ourselves, and we obtain clean and sufficient water from nearby wells." They added that clean water is fetched from nearby wells on foot or using donkeys, while personal solar panels provide electricity.

Consequences of Displacement:

Among the key consequences of displacement are the loss of homes and places of residence, as well as sources of income. Displaced persons highlighted the following key issues:

1. **Sources of Income for Displaced Persons and the Active Role of Women**

   The findings indicated that the living conditions for displaced persons are extremely difficult. Most residents of displacement camps resort to begging at shops and exchange offices, with the elderly and children being the most frequent beggars.

   According to focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, many displaced families rely on collecting empty plastic bottles for resale, begging, or child labor as their primary sources of income. Many displaced children leave school to support their families. Male displaced persons work in daily-wage jobs, such as porters or carriers, or engage in qat sales.

   The role of displaced women in supporting their families has become prominent. Focus group discussions revealed that women work on vegetable farms in agricultural areas, as in Abyan, controlled by the STC. Their tasks include harvesting crops ("cutting grass," or fruit collection), herding sheep, as in Seiyun, or collecting plastic and firewood.

   These jobs are performed for minimal wages that fail to meet daily needs. Women bear the responsibility of providing for their families when there is no male breadwinner or when the male is unable to work or has passed away. In displacement camps, women sell snacks like potatoes, falafel, and fried potato sticks. Some women also excel in making and selling incense and perfumes. Others work in henna artistry, as in Hadramout, or as domestic workers to provide for their families.

2. **Child Labor and Begging Among Displaced Children**

   Child labor is widespread, with most displaced children working at an early age, often before the age of ten. Some children drop out of school to support their families, while a few manage to study in the morning and work until late at night, sometimes as late as 10 or 11 p.m.

Focus group discussions revealed that some parents, both fathers and mothers, compel their children to leave school to work or beg to contribute to the family's daily income. Interestingly, some parents are capable of working but choose not to.

Findings also highlighted that working children, whether in farms or as beggars, are vulnerable to sexual harassment. Perpetrators include community members, farm owners, military personnel, or others. Many displaced families heavily rely on the income or begging of their children as their primary source of livelihood.

3. **Recruitment of Children**

According to focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, child recruitment is uncommon in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government. In contrast, frequent complaints about child recruitment were reported in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group.

In Marib, young children are sometimes registered in the military to obtain weapons and salaries. However, participants in the discussions confirmed that these cases do not involve military training, active military roles, or combat participation.

On the other hand, the mobilization of children to the frontlines and their recruitment were reported as widespread in areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Some displaced families noted that fear of child recruitment was among the reasons for their displacement. Families with three or four teenage sons were asked to send one of them for training and to join the group's fighters, as indicated by findings from the second phase of the study.

4. **Fragmentation of Family Units**

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions highlighted family division cases among displaced households. Some family members belong to one party in the conflict, while others are aligned with opposing factions, making it challenging for families to reunite. In such cases, communication is often limited to phone calls.

In some instances, families are unaware of their relatives' whereabouts due to their affiliation with one of the warring parties. Displaced persons lamented the separation from relatives during the early days of displacement, with some unable to visit their loved ones or original homes for years. The presence of family members in conflict zones exacerbated their fears.

For example, a displaced mother reported that her 15-year-old son was recruited by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and has been untraceable for seven years, now aged 22. The family has no contact with him, and he is unable to visit due to his involvement with the

group.

Another example involves a displaced woman in Al-Khoukha, Al Hudaydah Governorate, under the control of joint forces. She mentioned that her brother, residing in Aden, visited her in Al-Khoukha but was detained for a period before being released.

Family members often face difficulties in reuniting due to their affiliation with opposing factions in the conflict. Such suffering, caused by the warring parties, contravenes international humanitarian law, which mandates the protection and unity of family life, as stipulated by the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 27) and Rule 105 of customary international humanitarian law.[98] These violations also conflict with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Principles 16 and 17).[99]

Sixth: Response Mechanisms and Humanitarian Aid Provided to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

In the context of armed conflict, international laws mandate the warring parties to take all possible measures to ensure that IDPs have access to adequate housing, hygiene, health, safety, and nutrition. These obligations are outlined in Article 49(3) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 17(1) of Additional Protocol II, and Rule 131 of customary international humanitarian law. Moreover, numerous legal provisions emphasize the necessity of meeting the needs of IDPs caused by armed conflict.[100]

Below is an overview of the response mechanisms and humanitarian aid provided to IDPs, which have contributed to delivering basic services in health, education, clean water, shelter, and other sectors in the governorates covered by the study:

1. Health Services

- **In areas under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthi) group:** The study's findings indicate that health services in the displacement camps of Hajjah Governorate are inadequate. IDPs have demanded special care for children under five, while a displaced person in Al-Tour Camp highlighted a lack of vaccines for children due to a halt in support from aid organizations.

  In Ibb Governorate, a displaced person reported the presence of a health center within

98 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). International Humanitarian Law Databases, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en

99 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/IDP-guiding.html.

100 See footnote 98.

the camp that provides vaccinations, basic health services, and nutrition. However, these services are insufficient, and vaccines are occasionally unavailable. For severe or chronic conditions, IDPs are forced to seek treatment at government hospitals, where examination fees are waived, but the patients pay for diagnostic tests and medications.

- **In areas under the control of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) (Aden, Lahj, and Abyan):** Displaced persons reported the availability of mobile medical units offering basic emergency services and vaccinations for children until the evening hours. Volunteers also visit tents to administer vaccines for polio and other diseases. Critical cases are referred to hospitals and clinics outside the camps, but financial support is insufficient.

  In Abyan, IDPs praised the availability of childhood vaccines, contraceptive pills, and other basic health services, along with some medical facilities. For instance, one IDP mentioned that his wife gave birth at a nominal cost. Free medical services for eye problems (e.g., cataract surgeries) and diabetes treatments, including insulin distribution, were also noted. IDPs confirmed the availability of vaccines, stating: "The only service that doesn't require searching or traveling is the medical service, which is brought to us by health office volunteers."

  Despite these services, IDPs expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of medical care for chronic diseases and critical emergencies in public hospitals, which are sometimes characterized by neglect or referrals to other cities, exacerbating the suffering of IDPs. This situation endangers the lives of IDPs during emergencies and increases their financial burden, especially when seeking treatment in private hospitals in major cities like Aden, where some medical staff reportedly exhibit greed and a lack of professional ethics, according to IDPs.

- **In areas under the internationally recognized government (Marib and Seiyun):** In Marib, most IDPs confirmed the availability of free vaccinations for children in camps, health centers, and public hospitals. However, other medical services are not available within the camps, forcing IDPs to seek treatment outside the camps at their own expense, as healthcare services are not free.

  In Seiyun, IDPs face similar challenges. They reported difficulties dealing with official institutions to access paid health services, often encountering rude and uncooperative staff.

- **In areas under the internationally recognized government and Joint Forces control (Taiz and the western coast):** In Taiz, which the internationally recognized government

controls, health services are not free, except for childhood vaccinations and nutrition programs. In displacement camps on the western coast, camp-affiliated health facilities provide some free treatments, such as fever medications and child vaccinations, via mobile units coordinated with the health offices of the western coast districts in Al Hudaydah Governorate.

In Hays District, Al Hudaydah, under the control of the joint forces, IDPs reported receiving free healthcare services at the district health center, supported by the district health office and humanitarian organizations such as Médecins du Monde (MdM), Field Medical Foundation (FMF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, displaced persons in Mazhar Camp noted that although Action Against Hunger (ACF) provides vaccinations and primary health services, these are insufficient, forcing them to pay for healthcare at facilities in other districts.

2. Psychological Effects and Consequences of Displacement

Regarding the psychological state of IDPs in areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, all IDPs suffer from economic hardship, rising prices, and a lack of job opportunities. Additionally, salaries for a large segment of the population in these areas have been suspended. One displaced individual summarized their daily suffering by saying:

The conditions of displacement have greatly affected our family relationships with one another. The stress and daily pressures resulting from our displacement leave no room for stability. We face severe financial difficulties, family fragmentation, and the anguish of losing our homes and possessions consumed by war. This has taken a toll on our mental state. Sometimes, we feel despair and anger because of the hardships we face. There are times when my younger brother and I get into fights because we cannot afford to get him married. Life here is almost like hell.

Another displaced person from the Al-Tour camp in Hajjah shared their distress over their current situation caused by the armed conflict, stating:

Yes, my family and I suffer from a type of psychological despair. We feel anguish, oppression, and pain when we remember how and where we used to live and the stability we once enjoyed. I was self-sufficient, but the curse of war brought me to this. It leaves a lump in my throat and affects my mental health, especially when I recall the days in our home, which has now been leveled to the ground.

A displaced woman described the impacts of displacement on her family as follows:

The hardships of living, the conditions of displacement, and the continuous setbacks

we've faced cause numerous family disputes, especially after we were evicted from the 'Al-Shadadi' camp. A major argument erupted between my husband and my eldest son. The son wanted to return to our hometown to prepare our house for a return, but the father insisted on going himself. My husband has become irritable and looks at me and our children as if we are undermining him because we manage the household expenses. Often, he goes out in search of work, performing strenuous labor, and returns exhausted, which worsens his health condition. He now threatens me with divorce and the children with eviction. My daughter has become withdrawn and refuses to socialize with any of her friends.

One displaced man recounted the consequences of armed conflict on his life and that of his family, saying:

I was once respected in my community. I was educated, married, and had a home, a job, a farm, and multiple sources of income. Due to the war, I lost all of that. I became helpless. I searched for work to the extent of becoming a porter in the market and a construction laborer, engaging in various grueling jobs that left me humiliated and weak in the eyes of others. All of this undoubtedly affects one's mental health.

A displaced man from Lawdar in Abyan, who fled his village following alleged abuses by the STC under the pretext of combating Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other terrorist groups, shared his perspective:

As for mental strain and fatigue, that's something we live with every day, even every hour. But our family relationships are strong and deeply rooted. Despite all our suffering, we remain resilient as individuals, families, groups, or tribes. Minor disputes may arise but are quickly resolved. These disagreements are natural and happen to anyone, even during the happiest times. We do not suffer from any psychological illnesses, praise be to God. Despite the simplicity of our lives, it is a natural one. Did you know that we rarely get sick?

Meanwhile, a displaced individual from Taiz, now living in Abyan, which is under the control of the internationally recognized government, spoke of the impact of displacement on his family, saying:

Displacement has caused my family to scatter and led to the loss of all our land and resources.

Comparing their current state with their life before the war, he said:

In the past, whenever a problem arose, we would come together and solve it easily.

When asked about the psychological impacts on displaced persons, he responded:

> *Yes, yes... the state of my family before displacement is not the same as now. Every night, I lie down to sleep filled with sorrow. I keep thinking: how long will this displacement last? How long will we remain displaced? The difference between the past and the present is immense. I lost my daughter right in front of my eyes,101 and I couldn't afford to save her. My wife is in such a terrible mental state that she refuses to have more children. None of my children are in school anymore; they've all left to work. One of my sons was bitten by a dog and now suffers from a severe phobia. I, too, live in constant fear that something catastrophic could happen to my children or me, leaving us completely incapacitated.*

Displaced persons from Aden, under the control of the STC, reported that they occasionally face typical household issues, along with signs of distress due to their living conditions in the camp. These challenges include extreme heat, overcrowding, and scarce resources. However, they emphasized the absence of domestic violence.

In Lahj, also under the control of the STC, a displaced woman from Al Hudaydah noted her struggles with distress and the psychological aftermath of her husband's abduction and the hardships she endured. She explained:

> *I suffer from signs of psychological distress. Before displacement, there was shelling and bombardment while I was alone with my children. I was terrified and couldn't afford to flee. I couldn't leave my children at home while I went to work. We lived through days of fear, hunger, and poverty. I was pregnant at the time, my family was far away, and I couldn't provide food for my children. My mental state was exhausted, and every time I left the house and saw the bombardment, I was terrified. To this day, I fear walking alone. If I hear loud noises, I become anxious. My husband's abduction terrified me, and I constantly feared my children would be taken too. This fear still exhausts me.*

Regarding signs of psychological distress in areas under the control of the internationally recognized government, such as Marib, some individuals in the camps reported a need for psychological care. This includes children whose lives and safety were threatened or those who lost their fathers and have not seen them for years. These children exhibit signs of frustration and sadness due to the absence of their fathers. They also experience distress caused by the rising cost of living and the financial demands of education,

101 This displaced person lost his daughter to a stray bullet from a wedding near the camp and was unable to access medical care due to the high cost of services and the poor conditions in public hospitals (see the story in the annex).

whether in schools or universities.

In Taiz, displaced individuals highlighted feelings of frustration and depression stemming from poverty and a lack of job opportunities. The harsh living conditions have adversely affected their mental health and relationships, leading to physical ailments such as shortness of breath, diabetes, and hypertension, especially among the elderly. One displaced person explained:

> *Because I've been unemployed and staying at home without any income or food or cash assistance—lately, all aid has been cut off, with only minimal support reaching us—conflicts and arguments arise between my wife and me because of her demands and my inability to fulfill them, causing me frustration and depression.*

Another displaced woman, who had lost her family's primary breadwinner, described how the circumstances deteriorated her relationship with her brother. Despite previously supporting each other, he ultimately evicted her.

Most respondents in the sample indicated that their current situations are stable and better compared to their conditions before displacement. In areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, they lived in constant fear due to war, shelling, and the risk of arrest for contacting relatives in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government. They also faced restrictions on movement and were confined to their homes without income or work. Now, however, they are living normal lives, working, and experiencing no conflicts or tensions within their families.

Another displaced woman recounted the anxiety she experienced before displacement and her fear for her children. Her husband's unemployment led her into a state of depression, which she continues to treat with a psychiatrist in a nearby city at her own expense.

3. Formal and Non-formal education

Regarding the education of displaced children in areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, displaced persons in the Hajjah camps reported that education remains significantly weak and faces numerous challenges despite efforts and projects by organizations such as the Sustainable Development Foundation, Save the Children, and UNICEF.

These organizations have worked to provide programs that deliver high-quality educational services to school-aged boys and girls and children who had dropped out of school in displacement sites in the district. However, these facilities are now almost deserted, and education for displaced children is often limited to one or two classes per

day.

As for enrolling displaced children in schools near the camps, these schools generally accept them. However, some children face discrimination and bullying from their peers. One displaced person noted that his daughter is subjected to discriminatory behavior, with some teachers showing bias against displaced students during classroom interactions. For example, priority is given to children from the host community in participation and seating arrangements. Such discriminatory practices have adverse psychological effects on displaced students.

In areas under the control of the internationally recognized government, displaced persons in the city of Marib reported that public education in government schools is available to everyone without discrimination. Displaced families can enroll their children in schools alongside host community children as long as they have the required documentation, such as school and birth certificates. Solutions have also been implemented to address the loss of certificates and documents for displaced families and their children.

Additionally, other educational services are provided to displaced children in the camps, such as "accelerated learning" programs. These programs enable displaced children to study in specialized facilities to compensate for lost time during displacement. Under this system, children can earn two certificates within one academic year, allowing them to transition to nearby public schools and continue regular education.

In some cases, as noted by some respondents, displaced students may be deprived of participating in recreational activities because these require financial contributions from parents to help pay teachers' salaries and purchase books. Some displaced women also pointed out that frequent teacher absenteeism due to low salaries negatively impacts the quality of education.

In Seiyun, displaced students are allowed to register and study in public schools. However, those without essential documents or birth certificates face difficulties enrolling in schools near the camps. This remains one of the most significant educational challenges for displaced parents in the area. Some parents expressed frustration with the treatment of displaced students by certain teachers, citing unfair practices such as grade reductions and lack of encouragement, which negatively affect students' mental health and weaken their motivation to continue studying.

In displacement camps in Taiz, which are under the control of the internationally recognized government, families experience financial and psychological pressures due to daily life demands. This situation forces them to focus on educating younger children

in the early primary grades while older children, such as those in fifth or sixth grade, are compelled to leave school to work and support the family. One displaced woman explained that her children refused to attend school to focus on helping her with daily expenses. One of them works selling qat, while another drives a motorcycle instead of sitting in a classroom.

Regarding the issue of obtaining documents and educational certificates for registering displaced students in schools and facilitating educational services, parents' experiences varied. In Al-Dabou'a camp, displaced children are enrolled in public schools without facing discrimination. However, the situation differs in Al-Malika camp. One displaced mother described the challenges faced by parents when enrolling their children in schools:

> *The school principal refused to enroll all my children, claiming that the school was overcrowded. After much effort, I managed to enroll two of them—a son in first grade and a daughter in second grade. The others, who are in fifth and sixth grades, went to work in the market and fetch water because the principal wouldn't allow their enrollment, and the school fees are expensive (10,000 Yemeni riyals per student).*

In Al-Shaheed Hammoud camp, parents reported receiving support and coordination with the education office from organizations such as War Child and Danish Refugee Council (DRC). These efforts enabled all children in the camp to enroll in school and receive school and recreational kits. Registration fees are just 1,000 Yemeni riyals, while other educational services are provided free of charge. Last year, displaced students received school bags supported by UNICEF. Protection services are also available, with displaced children without birth certificates being registered with support from DRC.

Regarding the educational situation of displaced children in areas under the control of the Joint Forces on the western coast, displaced persons indicated that their children attend nearby schools and receive the same services as host community children without discrimination. However, they complained about the generally poor quality of education due to unpaid teacher salaries, teacher absenteeism, a reduced number of classes, and shortened school days.

Regarding the non-formal education provided to displaced persons, a small number of respondents from the provinces and cities under the control of various parties to the conflict, as previously mentioned, shared examples of such education. For instance, in 2023, the Soul organization offered non-formal education near Al-Malika camp in Taiz; however, the support was discontinued. Additionally, the local education office in the governorate does not recognize non-formal education certificates due to a lack of

coordination with them.

In contrast, the organization War Child plays a significant and commendable role, as highlighted by displaced persons. It coordinates with local authorities to accredit non-formal education certificates and cover school fees for displaced children. This support has encouraged families to enroll their children in education.

However, when the organization ceased its efforts toward displaced children, many dropped out of school to work and assist their families due to the high cost of school fees and the refusal to accept children without prior certificates and documentation.

4. Availability of Potable Water

Displaced persons reported the availability of clean water in areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, particularly in camps in Al Hudaydah. They noted that each camp cluster or family next to their tent had access to a faucet connected to a district-level groundwater project, providing clean water. In some cases, water sources were nearby wells. In camps in Hajjah, under the same local authority, large water tanks were provided by organizations. Previously, wells would dry up, forcing children to fetch water from distant locations, leaving their schools. Currently, when water in the tanks is quickly depleted due to the high number of displaced persons, they fetch it from sources about two kilometers away.

In the capital secretariat of Sana'a, water is available in tanks within the camps, and refilling delays are rare. However, displaced persons in Sana'a Governorate continue to fetch water outside the camp, which does not meet their needs or guarantee cleanliness. Displaced persons in Al-Hawban, Taiz, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, reported buying drinking water, though water is generally available in the camps. In cases of disruption, displaced persons obtain water from nearby neighborhoods.

In camps in Ibb, some displaced persons reported receiving clean water from Tamdeen Youth Organization, which installed a solar system near a well close to the camp. Meanwhile, the IOM equipped the internal network, ensuring a clean water supply within the camp. However, displaced persons in another camp noted that the tanks often remain empty, forcing them to fetch water from wells, mosques, and charity tanks, which are insufficient for their needs. Drinking water must be purchased, whereas UNICEF previously supported water availability through the Rural Water Authority, meeting and exceeding needs.

In camps in Al-Jawf, under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, displaced persons receive non-potable water from the Al-Rawd public project through pipes connected to

the camp for a monthly fee of 500 Yemeni rials. However, the water is sometimes salty, and some displaced persons cannot afford clean water, forcing them to search for potable water and bear the high transportation costs to the camp.

In Amran camps, water is available in nearby tanks established by organizations or donors and used by displaced persons for all purposes, including drinking. When the tanks run dry, they resort to fetching water from wells (artesian wells), other charity tanks, or mosques. When water is scarce, young girls fetch it using containers from these sources.

Displaced persons in Marib, under the control of the internationally recognized government, collectively reported access to water through networks established by organizations that deliver water to every household. However, the water is salty, necessitating the purchase of drinking water tanks at personal expense.

In Seiyun, conditions differ slightly, with some displaced persons obtaining water from neighbors or donors. In the Madoudah camp, a donor provided clean and sufficient water for the camp.

In Taiz, displaced persons purchase drinking water from nearby shops. Bathing water is available within the camps or sourced from charity water tanks when unavailable, with shared access for all.

In camps on the western coast controlled by the Joint Forces, clean water sources are available due to the proximity of wells to the camps. Previously, nonfunctional wells were repaired, and water distribution points were established within the camps to ensure no water-related issues in these areas.

In Hays camps, displaced persons access clean drinking water from a nearby well, reachable on foot or with transport, with sufficient availability. Similarly, in Abu Zahr camps, the DRC installed water pipelines to displaced persons' shelters, ensuring access to clean water.

In Al-Qalma camp, displaced persons fetch water on foot or using donkeys from nearby clean wells, facing no water-related issues.

In areas under the Southern Transitional Council's control, displaced persons unanimously confirmed the availability of water in camps in Aden, sourced from tanks and networks established by organizations in cooperation with the government water network.

In Lahj camps, water is also available, with shared tanks for groups of families (arranged into blocks representing multiple tents). The water is clean and sterilized, suitable for cooking and bathing, and sufficient for all family members. Drinking water is purchased

from shops, according to displaced persons.

In Abyan, water is abundantly and continuously provided to displaced persons free of charge. Previously, displaced persons fetched water from a nearby well transported by dedicated water trucks at no cost. Around 2022, some organizations extended a water network powered by solar energy from nearby wells, bringing clean water to most tents. Abyan's agricultural nature, located on a large aquifer, contributed to the proliferation of wells in the area. Later, local and international entities established water tanks distributed across the camp.

In Loder camp, Abyan, displaced persons collect water from the "Water Containment Barrier" source, which is approximately 200 meters from the camp, transporting it using donkeys or other means. Later, an organization provided communal tanks filled with clean drinking water for the village, while barrier water was used for other purposes. However, the project ceased, and displaced persons reverted to using barrier water for all purposes.

5. Sources of Income and Humanitarian Aid:

According to displaced individuals interviewed in focus groups, heads of households during displacement are often compelled to take up various daily labor jobs, such as working as porters, construction workers, firewood collectors, security guards at commercial warehouses or vegetable markets, motorcycle taxi drivers, or fishermen. However, these jobs are insufficient to meet the daily needs and living expenses, which often forces parents to seek their children's assistance and involve them in work, leading many children to drop out of school.

Due to dire displacement conditions, large family sizes, and halted aid, all able-bodied family members are compelled to contribute to income generation. In some families, both parents and children engage in work, such as construction or driving motorcycles for hire. The sources of income vary significantly depending on the areas controlled by the different parties to the conflict.

In areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in Al-Jawf Governorate, most displaced people rely on informal jobs, for instance, driving motorcycles, collecting plastic bottles, or working as porters. Family income often depends on the contribution of children, particularly the eldest son. However, these sources are insufficient to support their families. Some receive monthly aid for basic food items such as sugar and rice.

In Amran Governorate, displaced people previously relied heavily on aid but now complain about its cessation. Consequently, children, both boys and girls, engage in simple work such as selling water at traffic intersections, selling toothpicks, selling roasted maize,

harvesting qat, or washing cars. Humanitarian aid has become exceedingly rare, though they initially received shelter and financial support, in addition to limited assistance from benefactors.

Regarding sources of income for displaced individuals in Hajjah Governorate, most rely on humanitarian aid, while some are forced to work as carpenters or qat sellers. Out of necessity, some heads of households travel to Al Hudaydah to work in construction or agriculture. Previously, displaced people received food baskets and shelter assistance, but they now report the cessation of aid, leaving them solely responsible for securing their livelihoods.

In displacement camps in Al Hudaydah Governorate under Ansar Allah (Houthi) group control, income sources are diverse. Children work in grocery stores or sell qat, and families receive financial aid from benefactors or the Zakat Office, as well as support from charitable organizations or the Humanitarian Affairs Office. Some also receive social security assistance every four months. Additionally, displaced individuals receive food, financial aid, and emergency medicine from healthcare facilities in the camps.

In Ibb Governorate, heads of households primarily rely on motorcycle taxi driving or collecting plastic bottles, while some resort to begging, though this practice is frowned upon by tribal members. In the beginning, displaced people received shelter and food aid, which later ceased. In Al-Howban District, displaced individuals depend on daily wages, with children often contributing to the family income. Shelter and food aid were provided early on but have since stopped.

In the capital, Sana'a, displaced families rely on daily wage labor by children, motorcycle taxi driving, collecting and selling plastic bottles, working as porters, or mending shoes. According to their statements, aid from organizations has completely ceased, and support from benefactors is rare.

Regarding income sources in areas controlled by the Internationally Recognized Government, Displaced individuals in Marib city reported receiving monthly salaries from the local authorities, such as military or retirement pensions. Children of displaced families often contribute to daily expenses by helping meet basic needs. Regarding humanitarian aid, they stated that upon their arrival at the camps, they received shelter assistance from the IOM, which included tents, wooden or aluminum rooms (caravans), along with bathrooms and mattresses. They also received food assistance from the World Food Program (WFP), including flour, oil, rice, and lentils. However, some displaced individuals noted that the food quality was unsuitable for the hot climate. They emphasized that aid

has been halted for periods ranging from three to six months, with no medical assistance currently available.

In Taiz city, also controlled by the internationally recognized government, most displaced individuals rely on daily-wage labor for income, though it is irregular. As a result, household heads send their children to work on farms harvesting qat and other crops. Women contribute by working as domestic helpers or selling simple goods such as henna and turmeric. Families that have lost their breadwinners often send their children to work after school, engaging in activities like begging or collecting empty cans and scrap materials for resale. Regarding humanitarian aid, displaced individuals reported receiving shelter and clothing assistance during displacement, as well as food aid, including flour, rice, lentils, and oil. They also received financial assistance from local organizations amounting to 130,000 Yemeni riyals. However, financial aid and food assistance have been discontinued for an extended period. Some reported receiving aid from WFP in September 2024, while others stated that aid stopped during Ramadan, with some claiming it ceased as far back as 2022. They highlighted the absence of medical assistance, forcing them to bear healthcare and medicine costs.

In displacement camps in Seiyun, displaced individuals indicated that they do not receive aid from any source and depend on strenuous labor to earn a livelihood. They noted that the Executive Unit of the internationally recognized government has not responded to their needs.

As for the areas controlled by the Joint Forces on the Western Coast, sources of income include daily-wage labor, fishing, and work in vehicle and motorcycle repairs or as motorcycle taxi drivers. Some fathers enlist their children to help generate income. Regarding humanitarian aid, displaced individuals in the western coastal areas reported receiving shelter, food, and financial assistance at the onset of displacement, coordinated with the Executive Unit of the internationally recognized government, which was controlling the area at the time. However, this aid has ceased for over two years. Residents of Al-Jasha camp mentioned receiving healthcare services at the district's health center and seasonal assistance during Ramadan from benefactors.

Regarding the areas controlled by the Southern Transitional Council, most displaced individuals in Aden engage in informal work, such as collecting plastic and metal cans or fishing for daily wages. In Lahj, displaced individuals work as daily laborers in informal jobs, including carrying goods in shops for wages ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 Yemeni riyals per day—an amount insufficient to meet basic needs. Displaced women, especially those who have lost their breadwinners, rely on selling simple food items like fried

potatoes to children or sending their children to wash cars or collect plastic bottles. One displaced woman explained, "The daily income is not enough to cover all life's needs, but it ensures a dignified life—better than begging or borrowing from neighbors. We only buy basic necessities such as rice, flour, bread, and sugar on a day-to-day basis."

In Abyan, displaced individuals primarily rely on raising sheep and working on farms as their main sources of income despite their meager financial returns. According to one displaced person, families are compelled to involve all members, including children, in work to secure the bare minimum for survival.

Regarding humanitarian aid in areas controlled by the STC, displaced individuals in Lahj reported receiving food, shelter, and financial assistance from international organizations at the beginning of their displacement, including the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and the World Food Program (WFP). However, these aid forms have ceased, except for food assistance provided by WFP and occasional contributions from local benefactors. The displaced have requested new blankets and covers to replace the worn-out ones they currently have.

In Aden, displaced individuals confirmed receiving similar assistance at the onset of their displacement. However, the scale of aid has significantly diminished and is no longer sufficient to meet their basic needs. Some displaced families in Aden continue to receive aid intermittently, but it no longer matches their previous levels or adequately supports family needs.

In Abyan, some displaced individuals pointed to clashes between Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces and residents of Al-Baqeera village in Lawdar, which falls under STC control, as the reason for their displacement. Those affected by this recent displacement, particularly residents of Abyan (Al-Baqeera village), noted that their aid was minimal compared to that given to displaced individuals from outside the governorate. They received timber and tarpaulins during the displacement, but only as a one-time provision.

One displaced individual affected by the events in Al-Baqeera remarked:

We received several rounds of shelter and food assistance, but such aid is rarely repeated. Our situation is dire; a storm struck us last night, destroying all the tents. Fear grips us every time we see clouds gathering. We don't know how we will endure the rain and cold this season. But we have no options—we cannot afford to rent or rebuild housing. It's true that one organization built bathrooms for us and provided water tanks, as I mentioned before, but there is no coordination among the aid providers. Everyone feels the aid is distributed randomly and often does not align with the needs of the displaced.

A. Evaluation of Humanitarian Aid

In areas controlled by STC, displaced individuals reported that aid distribution is random and often does not align with their needs. For instance, some did not receive financial aid despite their urgent need, as in the case of displaced persons in Abyan's districts. These individuals expressed deep fear of the rainy and cold seasons due to their inability to financially protect themselves and their families from harsh weather conditions. Furthermore, food assistance was impacted by the heat, with some food items being inedible or spoiled.

Psychosocial support services are available in displacement camps in major cities like Aden. Displaced individuals praised these services, which include educational awareness programs aimed at raising children away from violence and providing support for motherhood and pregnant women.

In areas under the control of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, most displaced individuals agreed that aid had ceased for some time. While previous aid partially met their needs, it was insufficient. However, displaced persons in Ibb confirmed the adequate availability of healthcare, nutrition, and environmental sanitation services. The suspended aid primarily includes food assistance and protection services.

In camps in Al Hudaydah, displaced individuals reported receiving emergency medical services through coordination with charitable organizations and health units in the districts. Additionally, displaced persons in Houthi-controlled areas noted the presence of so-called "security aid," which involves resolving disputes and providing protection. They appreciated its role despite its location being somewhat distant from the camp.

Regarding aid evaluation in areas under the control of the Joint Forces, displaced individuals unanimously reported the absence of protection services in Joint Forces-controlled areas of Taiz. Educational services are mostly free, with minor exceptions, such as a registration fee of 1,000 Yemeni riyals. Some displaced families received school bags for their children with UNICEF's support. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) also provides protection services, such as assisting displaced individuals in obtaining replacement documents for lost identification and birth certificates.

In areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, some displaced persons reported the poor quality of tents, which deteriorate quickly due to sun and rain exposure and are not replaced. Only a few reported receiving replacement tents. Psychosocial support services are very scarce, and the health facilities in the camps are severely underperforming, with a lack of medications and treatments. Overall, aid is weak

compared to the scale of displacement in Marib governorate.

In the Madoudah camp in Seiyun, displaced individuals stated that they had received no aid except from the Happy Family Foundation, which provided mats and plastic bathrooms. After a fire incident destroyed much of their furniture, they received compensation from the Red Crescent of 200 Saudi riyals per family. Displaced individuals complained about the irregularity of aid, especially in providing transportation for their children to schools located far from the camp. They highlighted numerous promises to register their families without any results, attributing this to corruption in the institutions responsible for displaced persons' affairs.

2. Return to the Original Homeland

In areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, most displaced individuals reported that their homes had been destroyed and expressed reluctance to return, particularly if they could secure job opportunities elsewhere. Others indicated that their return was contingent on the resolution of the armed conflict. Farmers and homeowners called for the restoration of their properties, either by the parties responsible for the destruction or with the support of humanitarian organizations. Displaced individuals from areas contaminated with landmines—such as parts of Al Hudaydah, Sirwah in Marib, and certain areas of Hajjah governorate—stated that their return depended on the removal of these threats.

Many displaced individuals do not plan to return due to their areas being on the frontlines, continued risks, and lack of essential services. They also cited the destruction of their homes and the absence of compensation for their material or psychological losses. Others, who have found stable income opportunities in displacement areas, prefer to stay. Some displaced persons from Al Hudaydah preferred to reside in Ibb due to its milder climate compared to the intense heat of Al Hudaydah.

In areas controlled by the STC, displaced individuals in Abyan expressed a desire to return to their homes and farms but are waiting for mine clearance and assurances against arbitrary arrests. One displaced individual voiced his longing to return, saying:

> *Yes, yes, yes, without any discussion, I want to return to my homeland; my house and farm are there. I just want the war to stop, the mines to be cleared, and safety from arbitrary arrests. I'll be among the first to return. I don't know how other displaced people think, but I haven't adapted to displacement, and I see no chance for my situation to improve here in the future. That's why returning is the decision I'll make with the unanimous agreement of my entire family.*

Meanwhile, displaced persons in Aden stated that they cannot return due to the loss of their sources of income in their original areas. They indicated that their situation in Aden is stable, while they lost everything in their hometowns and lack the capital to rebuild their lives. Others linked their return to the end of the conflict. A displaced individual from Al Hudaydah remarked:

> *Yes, I intend to return to my original homeland; who wouldn't want to go back to their birthplace? True, I am still in my country, but the longing for my original home remains—it's where the memories are. I used to have a decent living; I owned a house and farmland and worked as a volunteer teacher with a good salary. There were health, social, and security services available. While safety is here, there is no suitable housing or quality health services. We can't afford to buy or build a home like some who have enough money. We work just to get by, and life in the camp is harsh.*

When asked about their plans to return to their original homes in areas under the control of the internationally recognized government, most displaced individuals responded with anguish: "We do not plan to return. The fears that forced us to flee remain unchanged. These fears include the lack of safety, the abduction of men, destroyed homes, and the loss of trees and farms that have withered." Displaced persons from Sirwah expressed concerns about buried landmines across most areas, which have caused the loss of many lives, livestock, and vehicles.

Displaced individuals in Marib prefer to settle there permanently due to the warm welcome they received from the host community and the availability of essential services they lack in their original homes, where water, electricity, and healthcare facilities are completely absent.

Similarly, displaced individuals from Al Hudaydah in Seiyun voiced fears over the presence of landmines that have resulted in numerous casualties among their relatives and neighboring villagers near the Kilo 16 area in Al-Durayhimi, Al Hudaydah governorate. At the same time, some displaced persons from Taiz expressed a desire to return, provided the war ends and their destroyed homes are rebuilt. However, other heads of households preferred to remain in displacement locations, where they have found job opportunities and stability. Others tied their decision to the complete cessation of the war, the reconstruction of their war-damaged homes, and the availability of suitable job opportunities in their original homes. Meanwhile, some preferred to remain in displacement areas due to better job opportunities compared to those available in their original areas.

Regarding the decision to return in areas under the control of the Joint Forces, the majority

of participants reiterated: "We will return when the armed conflict ends." They attributed this to the presence of landmines planted near homes and villages and the lack of safety in their original communities. In contrast, their situations in displacement areas have become relatively stable; they receive aid, their children attend schools, and reasonable free healthcare services are available. Although aid has decreased recently, they rely on their work and their children's contributions to meet their daily needs.

It is worth noting that some displaced individuals in the western coast camps have begun constructing homes. Some workers in these camps have purchased land and built on it, indicating they have no plans to return.

From the above, it is clear that the decision to return is a personal one, dependent on each displaced individual's specific circumstances. However, there are common factors across all governorates and displacement sites that influence the decision to return. These include the elimination of risks and threats to displaced persons' lives, such as landmines. Additionally, some displaced individuals fear specific conflict parties who might infringe upon their freedoms or detain them. Many displaced individuals also condition their return on compensation for their destroyed properties, particularly homes damaged during the fighting.

For those who do not possess valuable assets in their original homes, there is a tendency to remain in the host community. However, some remain deeply attached to their land and properties in their original homes and express a strong desire to return.

List of Abbreviations

Houthi ..... Ansar Allah Group

UAE ..... The United Arab Emirates

IDPs/ Displaced persons ..... Internally Displaced Persons

ICC ..... International Criminal Cour

FGDs ..... Focus Group Discussions

IHL ..... International Humanitarian Law

Principle ..... Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

OCHA ..... United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

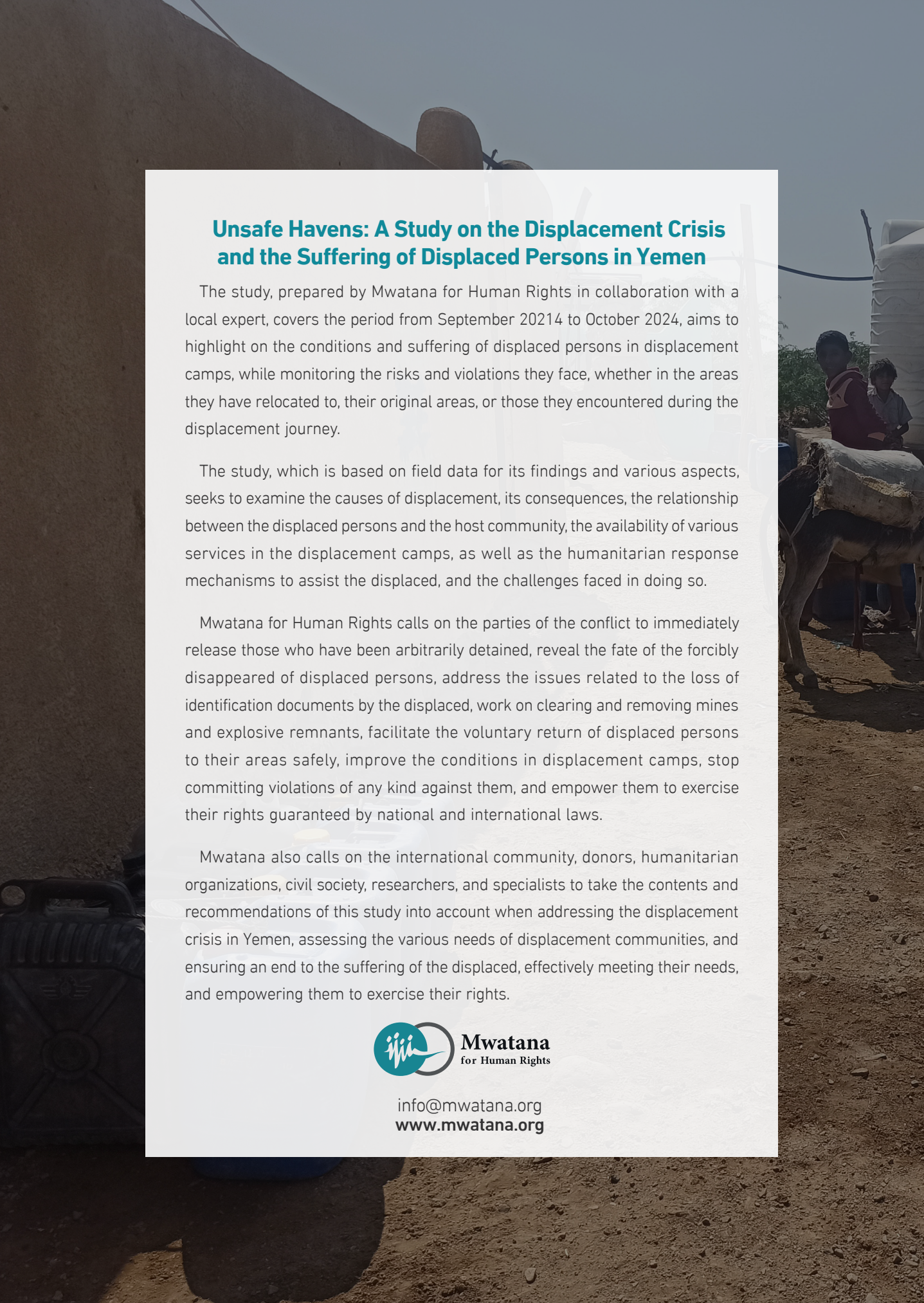
IOM ..... International Organization for Migration

STC ..... Southern Transitional Council

DRC ..... Danish Refugee Council

WFP ..... World Food Program

Sana'a ..... Amanat Al- Asimah and Sana'a Governorates



Unsafe Havens: A Study on the Displacement Crisis and the Suffering of Displaced Persons in Yemen

The study, prepared by Mwatana for Human Rights in collaboration with a local expert, covers the period from September 20214 to October 2024, aims to highlight on the conditions and suffering of displaced persons in displacement camps, while monitoring the risks and violations they face, whether in the areas they have relocated to, their original areas, or those they encountered during the displacement journey.

The study, which is based on field data for its findings and various aspects, seeks to examine the causes of displacement, its consequences, the relationship between the displaced persons and the host community, the availability of various services in the displacement camps, as well as the humanitarian response mechanisms to assist the displaced, and the challenges faced in doing so.

Mwatana for Human Rights calls on the parties of the conflict to immediately release those who have been arbitrarily detained, reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared of displaced persons, address the issues related to the loss of identification documents by the displaced, work on clearing and removing mines and explosive remnants, facilitate the voluntary return of displaced persons to their areas safely, improve the conditions in displacement camps, stop committing violations of any kind against them, and empower them to exercise their rights guaranteed by national and international laws.

Mwatana also calls on the international community, donors, humanitarian organizations, civil society, researchers, and specialists to take the contents and recommendations of this study into account when addressing the displacement crisis in Yemen, assessing the various needs of displacement communities, and ensuring an end to the suffering of the displaced, effectively meeting their needs, and empowering them to exercise their rights.

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