



WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN YEMEN 2019



Mwatana for Human Rights

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www.mwatana.org



Mwatana for Human Rights

Mwatana is an independent Yemeni organization involved in defending human rights. Mwatana started in 2007, but the former regime of president Ali Abdullah Saleh declined to provide the organization with the permit even after re-submitting the request for several years. With the 2011 uprising that ended Saleh's regime, Mwatana was able to obtain the necessary permit on April 23, 2013. In 2018, the Baldwin Award recognized our work. Human Rights First announced awarding the 2018 Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty to Mwatana. In the same year, the 10th International Hrant Dink Award was granted to Mwatana for informing the world about the status of human rights in Yemen and for struggling against rights violations in the country

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▶ A man refilling water from a charity tank at al-Shamasy neighborhood, Salah district, Taiz governorate (November 2019)

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Background

The fifth year of the war in Yemen, 2019, saw transformations at various levels—economic, military, and political. Together, these changes did not positively impact the human rights and humanitarian situation. Rather, they contributed to the continuous deterioration of the situation in the country, including the persistence of widespread and horrific human rights violations.

The Yemeni territories have come under the control of multiple parties. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group currently controls Sanaa, Saa'dah, Amran, Dhamar, Ibb, Al Mahwit, Raymah and parts of Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Al Bayda, Taiz and Dhale governorates. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council* controls Aden and Lahij governorates, and large parts of the governorates of Abyan and Al Dhalea. Government forces affiliated with the Islah (Reform) party and loyal to President Hadi control the cities of Taiz, Ma'rib, Shabwah and parts of Al Jawf governorate. The Republican Guard forces, backed by the UAE and led by Tarek Saleh, control the city of Mocha and parts of the western districts of Taiz. The Hadhramaut and Al Mahrah governorates, witnessing semi-stability, are under the control of forces loyal to President Hadi, along with the continued presence of coalition forces.

Economic Situation

During 2019, the value of the local currency fluctuated which was reflected in the price of basic food commodities. This difficult economic situation was exacerbated by fuel scarcity and the high cost of freight insurance, most starkly impacting areas of active conflict already suffering from food insecurity.

In its annual report, the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts accused government officials in the regions of Ma'rib, Al Mahrah and Hadhramaut of failing

* It includes several armed groups in the southern governorates such as: security belts, Hadrami and Shabwani Elites, etc.

to deposit their revenues in the Central Bank in Aden. The expert team also investigated corruption allegations related to manipulating foreign exchange by those affiliated with the internationally recognized government, and accused the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group of seizing private property and institutions, as well as laundering money, for their war effort. The Panel found that war profiteering had become common amongst the warring parties.^[1]

By the end of 2019, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group had resorted to prohibiting and confiscating new editions of the Yemeni riyal, depriving thousands in the areas under their control of using and receiving the salaries from the Hadi government. The move created a discrepancy in exchange rates between the areas controlled by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and those managed by other warring parties.

Military Situation

With the protracted war, Yemen has increasingly cantonized, particularly in the case of areas under the control of the various forces supported by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition.

Hadi government forces control separate areas in Al Jawf, Ma'rib, Taiz, and Al Bayda governorates. Many of these forces pledge allegiance to Vice President Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar and al-Islah Party (Yemeni Congregation for Reform). In early July 2019, the UAE withdrew its military forces and a Patriot missile defense system from Ma'rib city, which left the area vulnerable to subsequent Ansar Allah missile strikes.

While the primary battlefronts in Yemen saw intermittent clashes between opposing forces, including local forces supported by Saudi/UAE-led coalition warplanes and the fighters of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, there was no significant progress in the course of the war during 2019. However, the warring parties used the stalling of the peace process as an opportunity to mobilize, recruit and arrange their military priorities, including recruiting many children, in order to consolidate, outside the negotiating table, what they consider gains in the midst of this conflict.

In Taiz, al-Islah Party groups, which are part of the internationally recognized government's forces under President Hadi, tightened their control over one of the most populated cities in Yemen. Al-Islah took advantage of the US Treasury Department decision at the end of October 2018 which designated as a terrorist group the Abu Abbas brigades, a Salafi group previously supported by the UAE which was formally merged with government forces but remains armed and operating relatively independently. After the outbreak of fierce battles at the beginning of 2019 between al-Islah and Abu Abbas forces, which included brutal tactics and left a number of civilians killed, wounded and stuck inside their residences in the old city, Abu Abbas forces withdrew to a rural area in the western suburb of Taiz at the end of April 2019.

[1] Report of the Panel of International Experts on Yemen in a letter addressed to the Security Council on January 27, 2020

In the southern governorates, at least three military forces clashed with one another:

In Al-Dhalea governorate, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group controls some northern districts adjacent to Ibb governorate. Occasionally, Ansar Allah clashed with the Security Belt forces, supported by the UAE and now operating under the management of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. Civilians are often subjected to violations at this military front. In May 2019, fierce battles erupted in the district of Damt. In addition to the deaths and injuries of civilians, these battles led to the closure of the vital road between Aden and Sanaa governorates for travelers and goods, with Ansar Allah and UAE-backed STC forces imposing new restrictions on the movement civilians, essential items and humanitarian aid.

In the governorates of Lahj, Abyan, Shabwah, Hadhramaut and Al Mahrah, power was shared between the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces (the Security Belts in Aden, and Abyan, the Hadrami, Shabwani Elite Forces, and the Southern Resistance forces) and military forces of the Hadi government.

In the city of Aden, declared the country's temporary capital by the internationally recognized Hadi government, an explosion on August 1, 2019 in Al-Jala military camp (west of Aden) during a Security Belt military parade resulted in the death of dozens of military personnel, including the prominent Southern Transitional Council leader Brigadier General Munir Al-Yafei, known as Abu Al-Yamama, and the wounding of many others.^[2] The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group claimed responsibility for the attack, but in a press conference held in Aden three days after the attack, Hani ben Brik, Vice-President of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council accused Hadi government forces, which controlled parts of Aden, for the attack. Ben Brik's statements coincided with another round of incitement against people from northern parts of Yemen working in the southern governorates. As a result, Security Belt forces pursued civilians in the markets of Aden, and based on their identification cards, drove them out of the city on the back of tankers to neighboring areas in Taiz governorate. Leaked videotapes showed leaders of these campaigns directing insults at dozens of workers,^[3] accusing them of being sleeper cells and subversive elements. On August 7, 2019, the escalating tensions resulted in widespread and fierce battles between Security Belt forces and Hadi-affiliated Presidential Protection Brigades.

Four days later, on August 10, 2019, the battles ended. The city of Aden had fallen entirely under the control of Security Belt forces, and those who had been present in the city from the Hadi government departed to the Saudi capital, Riyadh. The Hadi government described what happened as a "coup," blaming its ally the UAE of supporting the new rebellion.

Mwatana documented the use of medium and heavy weapons in populated neighborhoods by both sides, which resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries among civilians, while thousands were stranded in their small neighborhoods, or forced to flee.

[2] Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed (The New Arab) website, "The Houthis advance in Hajwar: A new setback for "internationally recognized government" and Coalition," March, 12, 2019, available at: <https://cutt.us/oXFvd>

[3] Recordings available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBicfrX3PEI>

After the fight in Aden, forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council attempted to control the governorates of Abyan and Shabwah. While they succeeded in controlling the former, the fighting took a sudden and unexpected turn in Shabwah governorate.

On August 21, 2019, the city of Ataq, the capital of Shabwah, witnessed fierce confrontations between the Security Belt forces and Hadi government forces. Hadi government forces inflicted losses on Security Belt forces, forcing Security Belt forces to retreat and end their control of strategic camps in the oil-rich governorate.

Hadi government forces used their military victory to expand their influence again in Abyan governorate, with Southern Transitional Council forces control in the area collapsing. Then, the situation again exploded in the city of Aden. Hadi government forces amassed their soldiers at Aden's eastern gate in preparation for entering the city, but on August 29, Emirati aircraft attacked these forces, inflicting heavy losses on them, and turned the tide of the fighting.

Western Coast - New Epicenter

On the Western Coast, military tension is high, extending south to the city of Mocha and north to the entrance to the city of Al-Hudaydah between “Joint Forces,” consisting of southern military brigades and northern forces led by Tarek Saleh (the former president's nephew), all of which receive Emirati support, and the forces of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. The cost of this fighting has been high for civilians, who have been subjected to indiscriminate missile attacks and mine use, as well as arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture by these parties.

The War of Hajwr – Hajjah

In 2019, fierce battles erupted between the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and tribal opposition forces in Hajwar area of Kushar District, Hajjah governorate. After two months of imposing siege and clashes, Ansar Allah gained control of the area. There were many reports of abuses during these confrontations, from field executions to arbitrary arrests.

Al Mahrah - Socotra archipelago

The eastern governorate of Al Mahrah, close to the Sultanate of Oman, entered the conflict, after the former deputy governor led opposition against the local authority and Saudi presence in the governorate.

Different intertwined factors are at play in the Al Mahrah conflict, including the Gulf crisis that began after the blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain against Qatar on June 5, 2017. Qatar took advantage, enhancing its outreach with the Sultanate of Oman, which has the strongest influence in Al Mahrah governorate. The Sultanate of Oman generally applies a foreign policy of non-interference, but in recent years, it has shown flexibility in dealing with regional powers to ward off what it sees as an existential threat to it on its southern borders with Yemen. This applies to the Socotra governorate and archipelago. For the past two years, the governorate witnessed rising tensions, with protests and escalating media campaigns, and at times witnessing violence, in which interests of allied powers sometimes overlapped and sometimes clashed. The struggle in the governorate marred Saudi Arabia's relationship with the UAE, and may lead to new forms of conflict, including involving other regional actors, if not addressed.

The Stockholm Agreement

The Stockholm Agreement is the most prominent development related to peace efforts in 2019.^[4] The agreement, following UN-led talks between Ansar Allah (the Houthis) and the Hadi government, was announced in the Swedish capital on December 13, 2018.

The agreement included three specific files: A ceasefire in the city of Al-Hudaydah, securing its ports (Al-Hudaydah, As-Salif, and Ras Issa), depositing resources in the Central Bank in Al-Hudaydah as a first step to disbursing the salaries of civil servant employees, and

[4] Office of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yemen, "A year after the Stockholm Agreement: where are we now?", available at: <https://cutt.us/MSI48>.



the joint re-deployment of warring party forces. Beyond Al Hudaydah, the other files included an agreement to implement an executive mechanism for detainee exchange and an understanding related to the situation in Taiz governorate.

The United Nations has noted, a year after the signing of the agreement, the re-deployment of warring party forces has not been completed. The UN has also said the agreement directly contributed to reducing hostilities and improving the humanitarian situation, while serving as a confidence-building measure towards an end to the conflict. However, at the time of writing this report, none of the sums included in the agreement have been deposited in the Central Bank, government employees remain without salaries for the fifth year in a row, the promised large-scale detainee exchange has not been completed and the situation in Taiz remains the same.

Riyadh Agreement

On December 5, 2019, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sponsored an agreement in the capital Riyadh, in the presence of UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, which stipulated the sharing of power between the Hadi government and the Southern Transitional Council, along with other military and logistical arrangements.^[5]

The UN Panel of Experts said that the agreement diminished the authority of the Hadi government, but the agreement did facilitate the return of some members of the government to Aden. The implementation of the rest of the agreement's terms were delayed due to the exchange of accusations between the parties, with each side blaming the other for obstruction. The presence of forces under the Hadi government in southern governorates has decreased since the fighting in 2019, while southern forces opposing them and falling under the Southern Transitional Council are also facing difficulties imposing their control in the southern governorates.

[5] United Nations News, available at: <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2019/11/1043321>.



► Airstrike, The residential neighborhood of Rabat, Sana'a (May 16, 2019)

Human Rights Violations 2019

Documented by Mwatana Organization for Human Rights



1213

Incidents
Annual Report

2376

Interviews
Annual Report



Statistics of patterns of violations of international humanitarian law committed by parties to the conflict in Yemen



112

Starvation



64

Air Strikes



124

Ground Attacks



46

Landmines



602

Recruitment and Use
of Children



210

Arbitrary Detention



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Enforced Disappearance



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Torture



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Sexual Violence



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Attacks on Schools



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Attacks on Health Care



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The Press



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Freedom of Movement



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Peaceful Assembly



1

Religious Minorities

Executive Summary

The war in Yemen is entering its sixth year, with the humanitarian disaster the country is experiencing the most severe it has ever been. Over the conflict, more devastation, destruction, division, horrific violations and deepening social rifts have created an almost complete separation between Yemeni men and women and their inherent right to life, dignity and freedom.^[6]

In this annual report, Mwatana for Human Rights provides an extensive review of particular violations that occurred and the overall human rights situation in Yemen during 2019. Mwatana, whose work covers all Yemeni governorates except Socotra, has documented—through fact-finding, evidence examination, and detailed research—hundreds of incidents in 2019 alone that appear to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, some of which may amount to war crimes. The report presents some incidents as case studies, highlighting different types of abuse committed by the warring parties.

The parties to the conflict in Yemen continued to commit grave violations, undermining Yemenis ability to live, in flagrant disregard of the basic rules of international law and humanitarian standards. The warring parties, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and armed groups on the ground, such as the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, have increasingly resorted to bureaucratic measures and other restrictions that have prevented basic items necessary for survival reaching vulnerable groups. Saudi/UAE-led coalition air strikes caused heavy loss of life and damage to vital infrastructure in the country. As documented in this report, ground attacks with indiscriminate and highly inaccurate weapons, like mortars, on populated areas by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, government forces, and armed groups loyal to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition have caused significant material damage and loss of life. The landmines and booby traps left by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group have claimed the lives of dozens of civilians, including women and children.

[6] United Nations News, Yemen, available at: <https://news.un.org/ar/focus/yemen>

The report includes cases highlighting the harsh conditions of detention, including the atrocious practices of torture and other forms of inhumane treatment, by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, as well as forces affiliated with the Hadi government. Unofficial detention sites and detention centers remain overcrowded, holding both civilian detainees and combatants. As part of efforts aimed at helping reduce the effects of the armed conflict on civilians in Yemen, Mwatana is providing legal follow-up through the Legal Support Unit, staffed by lawyers in the various governorates, which works against the arbitrary approaches adopted by warring parties towards detainees and the disappeared. Legal Support Unit efforts contributed to the release of dozens of detainees.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, government forces and armed entities loyal to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition have been recruiting and using children in combat, security and logistical operations. Significantly, this year there was a clear increase in the rate of recruitment and use of girls under the age of 18. In addition, Mwatana found an increase, compared to 2018, in the number of documented sexual violence cases.

The report includes incidents of attacks on hospitals and medical staff. The warring parties bear responsibility for the incessant damage to the already dilapidated medical sector during a time of extremely dangerous humanitarian conditions due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The report also includes documented attacks on schools and educational facilities, including various forms of attack and abuse, such as air and ground strikes, and military occupation and use.

In its annual report, Mwatana has also devoted space to illustrate attacks that affected the rights and civil liberties of Yemenis during 2019. The warring parties continued committing violations against journalists and media professionals. The parties also restricted freedom of movement and subjected civilians to additional arbitrary restrictions that deepened their suffering. The forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council resorted to using force to break up peaceful gatherings. Finally, the report sheds light on the human rights situation of the Bahá'í minority in Yemen.

The report consists of three main sections:

• **Section One: The Yemen Conflict and International Law**

International humanitarian law applies to the armed conflict in Yemen. Applicable law includes Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Additional Protocol II of 1977, as well as customary international humanitarian law. International human rights law also continues to apply.

• Section Two: Attacks and Abuses in 2019

This section consists of eleven chapters dealing with the most prominent patterns of international humanitarian law violations committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen. Additionally, each chapter includes statistics about the number of incidents Mwatana documented during 2019, in addition to a brief legal framework for each pattern of violations and some case studies.

Chapter One: Starvation

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 112 incidents that again raised concerns regarding the use of starvation as a method of warfare, including attacks impacting objects essential for the survival of the civilian population and warring parties' repeatedly impeding humanitarian relief. In seventeen Yemeni governorates: Saadah, Al-Bayda, Al-Mahwit, Amanat Al-Asimah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb, Raymah, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Jawf, Amran, Lahj, Marib, Taiz, Shabwah, Aden, and Al-Dhalea. The types of attacks and abuse documented by Mwatana in this chapter included the following: preventing humanitarian aid access, air and ground attacks on means of food production and food distribution such as public markets, farms, livestock, fishing boats, food warehouses and water wells. Additionally, landmines were planted in agricultural fields and valleys, and relief workers were attacked. In these categories, Mwatana documented approximately 74 incidents of denial of humanitarian aid, 15 air strikes, 7 cases of landmines, 4 arbitrary arrest of 5 relief workers and 12 cases of indiscriminate ground shelling. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 81 of these incidents. Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces committed 15 incidents. Saudi ground forces were responsible for 7 incidents and government forces for 4 incidents. The UEA-loyal Joint Forces brigades bore responsibility for two incidents. The Southern Transitional Council bore responsibility for one incident. The Ansar Allah «Houthis» and the forces of the UAE-backed Transitional Council bear joint responsibility in one incident, and Mwatana was unable to determine the perpetrator in one incident.

Chapter Two: Air Strikes

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 64 air strikes launched by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition impacting civilians and civilian objects in ten Yemeni governorates: Amanat Al-Asemah, Hajjah, Sa'dah, 'Amran, Al-Hudaydah, Dhamar, Taiz, Al Dhalea, Al Bayda, and Abyan. At least 293 civilians were killed, including 95 children and 54 women, and at least 380 civilians were injured, including 111 children and 57 women, in these attacks. These attacks damaged and destroyed protected civilian objects, and hit residential homes and neighborhoods, detention centers, markets, bridges, schools, and service and commercial facilities.

Chapter Three: Ground Attacks

In 2019, Mwatana documented approximately 124 ground attacks that killed 132 civilians, including 27 women and 73 children, and wounded at least 329 civilians, including 57 women and 202 children. These incidents were distributed in the governorates of Ma'rib, Lahj, Aden, Sa'dah, Hajjah, Taiz, Al Dhalea, Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Abyan and Ibb. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 67 attacks. Saudi ground forces were responsible for 11 incidents. government forces 15 attacks, UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council Security Belt forces 14 attacks, UAE-backed Joint Forces in the West Coast committed two ground attacks. Meanwhile, the Ansar Allah (Houthis) group and government forces bear the joint responsibility for 11 incidents. And the joint responsibility in one incident falls on Saudi ground forces and government forces. Mwatana was not able to determine the party responsible in 3 other attacks.

Chapter Four: Landmines

In 2019, Mwatana documented nearly 46 incidents of landmine explosions, killing 23 civilians, including 12 children and 4 women, and wounding 60 civilians, including 31 children and 8 women. These incidents were concentrated in the governorates of Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Lahj, Shabwah, Hajjah, Taiz, Sa'dah, Al Dhalea and Al Bayda. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group planted these mines.

Chapter Five: Recruitment and Use of Children

During 2019, Mwatana verified the recruitment and use of at least 602 children, including at least 43 girls. Through 317 testimonies and interviews conducted by the organization, Mwatana found that the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group recruited 75% of these children, concentrated in the governorates of Sa'dah, Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf and Sana'a. The percentage of children recruited by the forces loyal to President Hadi was approximately 18% of the total, in the governorates of Ma'rib, Taiz, Shabwah and Al Jawf. The percentage of children recruited by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces was 6% of the sample, concentrated in the governorates of Abyan, Lahj, Aden and Hadhramaut. The joint forces in the West Coast, backed by the UAE, are responsible for recruiting 1%.

Chapter Six: Arbitrary Detention

In 2019, Mwatana documented 210 cases of arbitrary detention of 265 victims, including 18 children. Parties to the conflict arbitrarily detained civilians in 21 Yemeni governorates, all of which are covered by Mwatana. In the governorates it controls, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group committed 125 arbitrary detentions. Mwatana documented 56 arbitrary detentions carried out by government forces, and 24 cases of arbitrary detention by UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces in the governorates under its control. The Joint Forces backed by UAE were responsible for one case, while Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces carried

out two of the documented arbitrary detentions. Mwatana also documented two cases of arbitrary detention and torture carried out by gangs engaged in human trafficking in Ras al-Ara region in Lahj governorate. The documented cases of arbitrary detention in 2019 also included the detention of 8 women.

Chapter Seven: Enforced Disappearance

In 2019, Mwatana documented 39 incidents of enforced disappearance of 44 victims, including one child in the Yemeni governorates of Hadramout, Saadah, Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Amanat Al-Asimah, Ma'rib, Aden, Dhamar, Taiz, Al-Mahra, Al-Mahwit, Al-Dhalea, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Bayda, and Ibb. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 28 of these enforced disappearances. Government forces bear responsibility for 5, while UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces were responsible for 6 cases of enforced disappearance of civilians.

Chapter Eight: Torture

In 2019, Mwatana documented 8 incidents of torture. Four of these cases were committed by the UAE-backed Security Belt forces in Abyan governorate, including two deaths in detention. Four cases were carried out by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in the governorates of Taiz, Amanat Al-Asemah and Hajjah, including three deaths in detention.

Chapter Nine: Sexual Violence

In 2019, Mwatana documented 12 cases of sexual violence. Those subjected to sexual violence included 11 children and a woman. Documented cases of rape included seven girls aged 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13 years old, two girls aged 16 years old, and two boys aged 8 and 13 years old. Mwatana documented a 14 and 16-year-old boy and a 30-year-old woman subjected to other forms of sexual assault. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group are responsible for ten of these incidents. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces are responsible for two of the documented incidents of sexual violence. Most of those subjected to sexual violence lived in dangerous environments where they were exposed to a variety of violations, and were already vulnerable, as members of a marginalized group, working children, displaced people, or those with special needs.

Chapter Ten: Attacks on Schools

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 56 incidents of attacks on or military use of schools. These cases included three Saudi/UAE-led coalition air strikes in Al Dhalea and Sa'dah governorates and three indiscriminate ground attacks in Sa'dah and Taiz governorates with government forces responsible for one of the ground attacks, on a school where the Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces were stationed, and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group responsible for

two of the ground attacks, impacting schools in Taiz governorate. Mwatana documented 36 incidents of the use of schools for military purposes, with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group responsible for 35 incidents in the governorates of Al Mahwit, Raymah, Sa'dah, Dhamar, and Ibb, and government forces responsible for one in the governorate of Taiz. Mwatana also documented 11 incidents of school occupation, 7 by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in Sa'dah Governorate, 2 by the Security Belt forces in Abyan governorate, and 2 by government forces. In an investigation conducted in partnership with Human Rights Watch, Mwatana also documented three other attacks impacting schools, including an explosion in a warehouse containing a large amount of volatile substances stored by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group near three schools in the residential neighborhood of Sa'wan in Amanat Al-Asemah. The explosion killed 15 children and injured dozens.

Chapter Eleven: Attacks on Health Care

Throughout 2019, Mwatana documented 19 cases of various types attacks on hospitals, health centers and medical staff. Medical objects were subjected to armed intrusion, medical teams were attacked with live ammunition, and humanitarian and medical aid was obstructed. During these attacks, 4 people were killed, including a health worker and a doctor's assistant, and 4 were wounded, including a health worker. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group committed 6 of the violations documented by Mwatana in the governorates of Taiz, Sa'dah, Raymah, Ibb and Al Dhalea. Government forces were responsible for 12 of the cases, in Taiz and Ma'rib. And one incident was committed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition.

• Section Three: Undermining Rights and Freedoms

This section contains four chapters dealing with violations of international human rights law committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen

Chapter One: The Press

In 2019, Mwatana documented 10 cases of abuse against the press, involving 13 journalists and media professionals. Seven cases were committed by security and military forces affiliated with President Hadi, while the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group arbitrarily arrested a journalist and forcibly disappeared another. A Saudi/UAE-led coalition air strike hit the home of journalist Abdallah Sabri.

Chapter Two: Freedom of Movement

In 2019, Mwatana documented 29 cases impeding freedom of movement in different Yemeni regions. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 17 cases, government forces and affiliated groups for 8, and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council for three. The joint responsibility falls on Ansar Allah (Houthis) group and government forces in one incident.

Chapter Three: Peaceful Assembly

Mwatana documented two incidents of UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces cracking down on peaceful gatherings and demonstrations by Yemeni citizens in Abyan and Hadhramaut.

Chapter Four: Religious Minorities

This chapter highlights the human rights situation of the Bahá'í minority community in Yemen.

Key Recommendations

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

- Adhere to international humanitarian law, including the fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions.
- Immediately cease unlawful attacks on civilian objects, including on hospitals, schools, and densely populated areas.
- Cooperate with and provide unimpeded access to the Human Rights Council Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen and other United Nations experts.
- Immediately end use of explosive weapons that cannot be directed at a specific military objective.
- Facilitate safe and urgent access for humanitarian supplies and relief personnel in all affected Yemeni governorates.
- Wherever possible, work on promptly paying salaries of civil servants, including medical and educational personnel.
- Commit to ending use of antipersonnel and antivehicle mines and submit maps of mine-affected areas to facilitate the demining process.
- Close unofficial detention centers, release the arbitrarily detained, resolve disappearances, and investigate cases of torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane and abusive treatment in detention centers.
- Stop the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in hostilities and dismiss those in military service immediately.
- Withdraw from schools militarily occupied and cease the use of schools for military and mobilization purposes.
- Take all necessary steps to end and prevent gender and sexual violence.
- Respect international human rights law, including economic and social rights.
- Conduct independent, comprehensive and impartial investigations into unlawful attacks and other forms of abuse to ensure accountability, and provide redress to victims.



► Airstrike, The residential neighborhood of Rabat, Sana'a (May 16, 2019)

Methodology

In order to draft this report, Mwatana for Human Rights conducted investigative field research, including in-depth investigations and direct inspections of the sites where attacks and incidents occurred. Mwatana interviewed witnesses, relatives of victims, survivors, and doctors, and examined documents, photos, videos, and other forms of physical evidence between January and December 2019. Throughout 2019, Mwatana documented hundreds of incidents.

This is Mwatana's third annual report, including an in-depth review of the most prominent patterns of violations of international humanitarian law committed by the warring parties in Yemen. It also contains examples of attacks on a variety of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Mwatana has field researchers in 21 Yemeni governorates collected data by conducting more than (2376) interviews in Arabic with victims, relatives, witnesses and medical and humanitarian workers. Mwatana's researchers received informed consent from survivors and witnesses. Researchers obtained testimonies independently and securely from primary and reliable sources.

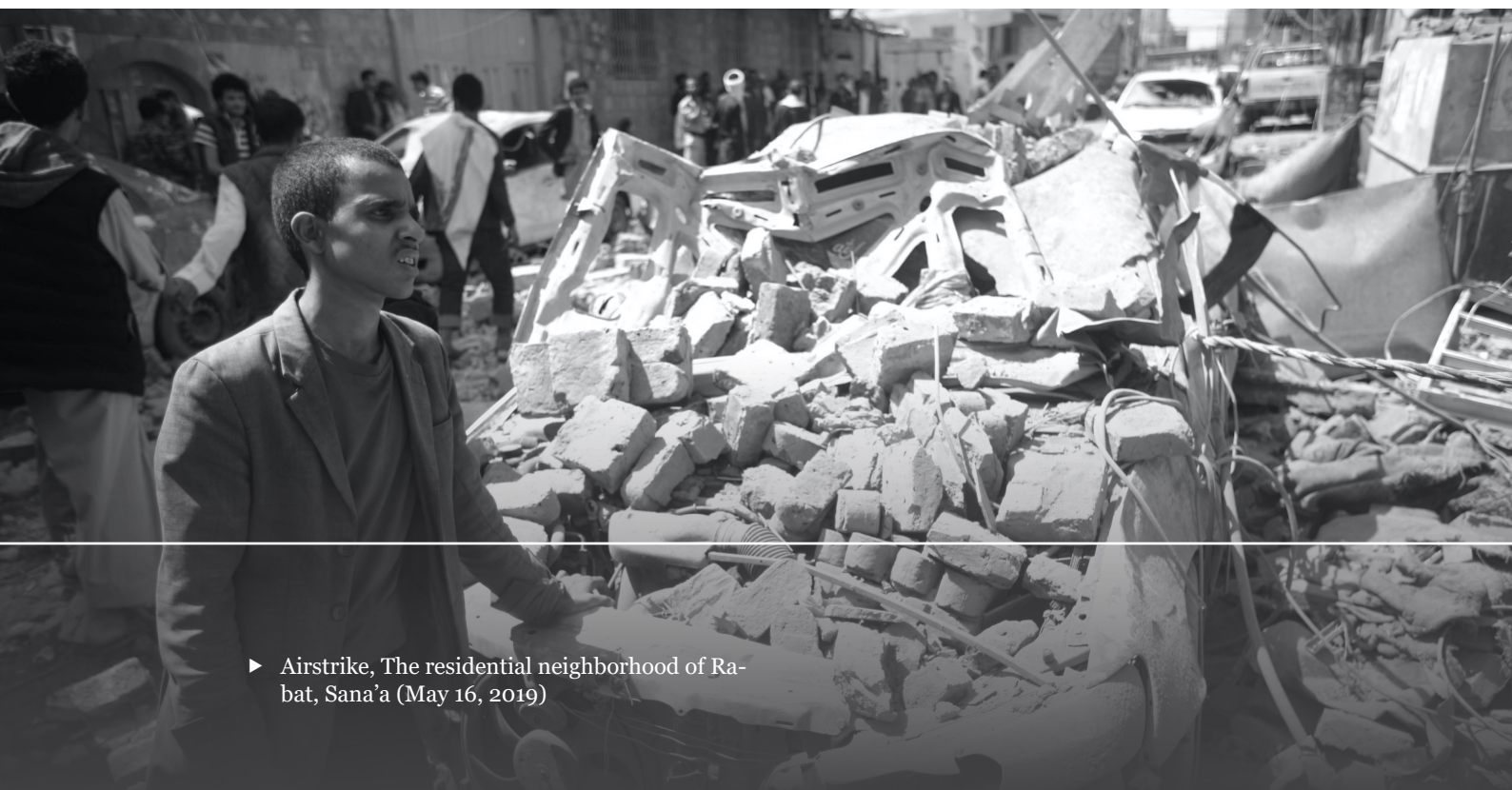
The field researchers also documented, whenever possible, other forms of physical evidence, including photographs, documents and supporting documents that helped corroborate the occurrence and corresponding details of incidents. In some cases, international experts specializing in weapons analysis analyzed photos or videos to help identify weapons remnants found after an attack. The researchers strove to document each incident with a minimum of three independent witnesses. They relied on fewer testimonies when conditions in the field prevented them from collecting more information. Mwatana did not provide any material or in-kind assistance, or any form of payment to those who provided their testimonies. The Mwatana team has withheld the identity of some witnesses and survivors in the interests of their safety and confidentiality.

The information was analyzed, verified and the reliability of sources confirmed by the Research and Studies Unit at the head office in Sanaa. Additionally, the Legal Support Unit conducted field visits to several governorates in separate fact-finding missions, documenting some specific incidents. The team began writing this report in early 2020, and international humanitarian law specialists reviewed it from March to April 2020.

Mwatana presented the cases detailed in this report in chronological order, from oldest to most recent. The cases mentioned in this report are not the only ones that occurred; they serve as examples to highlight the reality of the attacks and abuses impacting civilians and civilian objects. The patterns of human rights violations covered in this report are examples of the most prominent documented by Mwatana during 2019. In no way do they represent all the cases and patterns of abuse that occurred in Yemen in 2019. Mwatana continues to document violations and abuses, including those that have occurred since the beginning of 2020.

SECTION ONE:

THE YEMEN CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL LAW



► Airstrike, The residential neighborhood of Rabat, Sana'a (May 16, 2019)

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

The non-international armed conflict in Yemen, which began between the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group and Yemeni government, now involves multiple warring states and non-state armed groups. Parties directly involved in hostilities include state members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the regular armed forces of the internationally recognized Yemeni government under President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and non-state armed groups like Ansar Allah and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, as well as armed units affiliated to the coalition, like the Joint Forces on Yemen's west coast. All parties to the conflict, including states and non-state armed groups, are obligated to comply with international humanitarian law applicable to the intensifying conflict in Yemen.

In 2019, Mwatana frequently found that military actions documented did not comply with basic international humanitarian law principles like distinction and civilian immunity. Military actions killed, wounded and otherwise harmed hundreds of civilians.

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

Warring parties are prohibited from launching attacks using indiscriminate weapons, attacks that do not distinguish between civilian and military objectives, and disproportionate attacks (those that may be expected to cause incidental harm to civilians or civilian objects that would be excessive to the concrete and direct military advantage expected).

International humanitarian law provides a number of protections to persons not taking part in hostilities, and requires civilians be treated humanely without any adverse distinction. Common Article 3 provides for a number of protections for civilians, as well as for others, such as sick or captured fighters, who have ceased participating in hostilities. Common Article 3 prohibits violence to them, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, as well as prohibiting the taking of hostages, outrages upon personal dignity, and unfair trial.

Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions prohibits, among other acts, collective punishment, acts of terrorism, rape, and any other form of indecent assault, looting, and pillaging.

State parties to a conflict are obligated to investigate war crimes allegedly committed by members of their armed forces and other persons under their jurisdiction. Civilian leaders and commanders may be prosecuted for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility when they knew or should have known about the commission of war crimes and took insufficient measures to prevent them or punish those responsible. According to international humanitarian law, states should make full reparations for losses caused by violations.

International human rights law applies during armed conflict. Certain basic rights, including the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the right not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment, nor the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, must be respected at all times. Non-state actors that exercise government-like functions and control a territory must respect human rights norms when their conduct affects the human rights of individuals under their control.

SECTION TWO: **ATTACKS AND ABUSES IN 2019**



- A child standing before a residential building, which was damaged as a result of the clashes in the area (July 1, 2019)

Chapter One:

Starvation

In 2019, as with each year during this war, the civilian population in Yemen faced further burdens when trying to meet their basic survival needs. Practices adopted by the warring parties exacerbated the difficult humanitarian conditions in Yemen, which is experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.^[7]

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 112 incidents that again raised concerns regarding the use of starvation as a method of warfare, including attacks impacting objects essential for the survival of the civilian population and warring parties' repeatedly impeding humanitarian relief. In seventeen Yemeni governorates: Saadah, Al-Bayda, Al-Mahwit, Amanat Al-Asimah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb, Raymah, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Jawf, Amran, Lahj, Marib, Taiz, Shabwah, Aden, and Al-Dhalea..

The types of attacks and abuse documented by Mwatana in this chapter include the following: preventing humanitarian aid access, air and ground attacks on means of food production and distribution, such as public markets, farms, livestock, fishing boats, food warehouses, and water wells. Additionally, landmines were planted in agricultural fields and valleys, and relief workers were attacked. In these categories in 2019, Mwatana documented approximately 74 incidents of denial or obstruction of humanitarian aid, 15 incidents of air strikes, 7 incidents of landmines, 4 incidents of arbitrary arrest of 5 relief workers and 12 incidents of indiscriminate ground shelling. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 81 of these incidents, while Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces committed 15 incidents. Saudi ground forces were responsible for 7 incidents and government forces 4 incidents. The Joint Forces backed by UAE in the west coast bore the responsibility for two incidents. The Southern Transitional Council bore responsibility for one incident. The Ansar Allah «Houthis» and the forces of the UAE-backed Transitional Council bear joint responsibility in one incident,

[7] The United Nations Website, "Yemen", is available at the following link: <https://news.un.org/ar/focus/yemen>

and Mwatana was unable to determine the part in one incident. Documented attacks harmed a wide range of civilians already threatened by severe food insecurity.

The warring parties have contributed to Yemen's humanitarian disaster in other ways, as well. Some of the worst manifestations of the Yemen conflict have been reflected in the collapse of civilian infrastructure and the sharp deterioration of economic and financial indicators. The failure of the Central Bank of Yemen to pay pensioners and civil servants' salaries has caused significant hardship,^[8] while Saudi/UAE-led coalition restrictions on the entry of imported food and fuel into Yemeni ports have aggravated the suffering of civilians.^[9] The air blockade and continued closure of Sanaa International Airport for commercial and humanitarian flights for Yemenis in need of medical treatment abroad has also exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Warring parties on the ground, such as the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group and forces loyal to the internationally recognized government, have imposed fees and complicated bureaucratic procedures that hinder commercial flows and humanitarian aid, and have contributed to price increases and lack of availability of critical goods, like fuel.^[10] They have also imposed complex restrictions on humanitarian personnel that prevent unhindered movement in different parts of the country.

By the end of April 2019, two-thirds of the Yemeni population suffered from food insecurity, with approximately 358,000 children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition.^[11]

[8] The number of public sector employees is approximately 1,250,00 employees. For more information, see, "Inflation that outpaces financial capabilities: the need to reform public sector salary expenditures," The Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies, available at the following link: <https://sanaacenter.org/en/publications-all/main-publications-ar/8114>

[9] The report of the Group of Regional and International Eminent Experts on Yemen, September 3, 2019, p. 266, is available at the following link: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A_HRC_42_CRP_1_EN.PDF#page=7&zoom=auto,-118,662

[10] Ibid., P. 270.

[11] Visit Reliefweb, following link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/humanitarian-action-children-2019->



▶ A family displaced from their village in al-Kadha to the al-Bi-rein area between the cities of Taiz and al-Turbah (September 11)

Legal Framework

Warring parties are required to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid to civilians in need. They may not arbitrarily interfere with humanitarian relief, and must allow freedom of movement of humanitarian workers, which can only be temporarily restricted for reasons of urgent military necessity.

Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. Starvation of civilians as a method of combat includes, for that purpose, attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.

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

yemen-revised-april-2019



► A family displaced from their village in al-Kadha to the al-Birein area between the cities of Taiz and al-Turbah (September 11)

Case Studies^[12]

- **On Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at around 3:30 a.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition launched an air strike on a fishing boat at sea, north of Al-Badhia Island, Alluheyah district, Al-Hudaydah governorate, killing 8 civilians, including two children, and wounding 5 others. Those on the boat were in the fishing profession.**

Al-Badhia Island is located about 2 nautical miles from where the air strike occurred. It is an uninhabited island and there is no military presence close to it, according to the testimonies collected by Mwatana.

One of the survivors, Yasser Abkar, a fisherman (22 years old), said: “We spent two nights aboard two boats to light lamps for the fish in order to lure them into the fishing net, and throughout the two-day period we heard heavy flight of coalition aircraft. At dawn, while we were trying to move to the second boat, which was about 40 meters away, the plane bombed the boat I was on.”^[13]

Arafat Abkar, a fisherman (28 years old), said: “When the bombing occurred, my cousin Youssef (16 years old) and I were on a boat and my father, my brothers and others were on another boat, and we were separated by a distance of about 500 meters. When the other boat started approaching and was located at a distance of about 50 meters away from us, suddenly a plane bombed it, injuring my brothers and father and killing others.”^[14]

He added: “I immediately moved towards them to save them. Their bodies were floating on the surface of the water like corpses - some of them were dead. Youssef and I carried my father, Abkar Ahmad Abkar (60 years old), my brothers Mohammad and Ahmed (26 and 27 years old) and a worker with us named Ahmed Salman (22 years old) on board the boat. My father and my brothers were seriously wounded while the worker was slightly injured. I took them to the dispensary in Al Khubah^[15] because of their serious wounds and then we were asked to transfer them to Al Salkhana Hospital in Al-Hudaydah city, where they were treated.”

He added: “After the incident and for four months, we were unable to fish, which is our only source of livelihood and we almost died from want. Until now, and even though the flight of aircraft lessened, we are afraid to go fishing in the same area. After we lost the boat and with the injuries of my father and brothers, we started working with other fishermen on a wage employment basis and our financial situation considerably worsened. Sometimes, we can’t find anything to quell our hunger with.”

[12] The incidents and case studies included in this section raised concerns regarding the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Further research is required on warring party purposes and objectives.

[13] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Yasser Abkar on February 20, 2019.

[14] Mwatana for Human Rights Interview with Arafat Abkar on January 25, 2020.

[15] Al Khubah is a small coastal city located in the west coast north of Al-Hudaydah, about 20 nautical miles from the site.

- **On Saturday, January 5, 2019, at around 9:15 a.m. during the launch of the World Food Program's humanitarian aid distribution campaign in Monabih district, done in partnership with the Education Office to distribute school feeding in Sa'dah governorate, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group removed 550 beneficiaries from the residents of Wald 'Ayyash from the lists under the pretext that they did not need humanitarian aid.**

Hussein Ahmad (pseudonym) (35 years old) said: "We arrived at the district center to disburse relief aid to the displaced in the Wald 'Ayyash region, but we were surprised that the National Authority^[16] prevented the people of the area to receive their rations under the pretext that they did not need it. It disbursed the aid to the families of the martyrs belonging to the Houthi group only."^[17]

Daoud Muthanna (pseudonym) (24 years old) said: "Most of the displaced people from Monabih District come to Wald 'Ayyash, which is somewhat safe. Additionally, the people of the region are the most affected by the cholera epidemic. This is not the first time this incident occurs. The Houthi group was the only side to deprive people of relief aid during the distributions of October and November in 2018."^[18]

- **On Thursday, December 26, 2019, at about 10:30 a.m., in Rab' al Mahall region, Hays district, Al-Hudaydah governorate, gunmen affiliated with the Seventh Giants Brigade, loyal to President Hadi, arrived in a white Toyota pickup truck and raided a warehouse of a local relief organization. They forced those responsible for the distribution of World Food Program-provided relief aid to stop the delivery process to beneficiaries.**

[16] The National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response (Al-Namsha) is an organization responsible for the distribution of relief aid belonging to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. Its name has been changed to "The Supreme Council for the Administration and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and International Cooperation".

[17] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a relief worker, eyewitness, on February 13, 2019.

[18] Mwatana for Human Rights interview on February 13, 2019.



► Sanaa Airport, November 2018

To justify the demand, the armed men used as a pretext the presence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's flag and the sentence "There is no deity but God" printed on the aid. Approximately 3,123 beneficiaries were denied access to humanitarian aid in their time of need. A week later, a soldier from the Seventh Giants Brigade erased the words, then ordered the distribution of aid.

Sameh Saeed (37 years old) (pseudonym) said: "One of the leaders of the Seventh Giants Brigade prevented the distribution of relief aid to very poor families in the region. We feared that the ban period would be longer, because the distribution of the aid would have been delayed until next month according to the World Food Program policy. As such, people would have been deprived of aid that they desperately need."^[19]

Saleh Mahmoud (40 years old) (pseudonym) stated: "The warehouse remained closed for a whole week while there were needy families, until a soldier made sure that the sentence "There is no deity but God" printed on the Saudi flag was crossed out. He ordered the delivery of a hundred bags of wheat, and the crossing of the sentence, then he ordered the distribution of the aid. So I delivered one hundred more bags, the sentence was crossed and they were delivered."^[20]

[19] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a relief worker, on December 30, 2019.

[20] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a relief worker, January 4, 2020.

Starvation as a means of warfare



112

An incident that Mwatana documented during the year 2019



74

Preventing humanitarian aid access



15

Air attacks



12

Ground attacks



7

Landmines planted



4

Arbitrary detention of 5 aid workers

Responsibility for the facts of violations

81

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group

22

Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces

4

Government forces

2

The Joint Forces backed by UAE

1

The STC backed by UAE

1

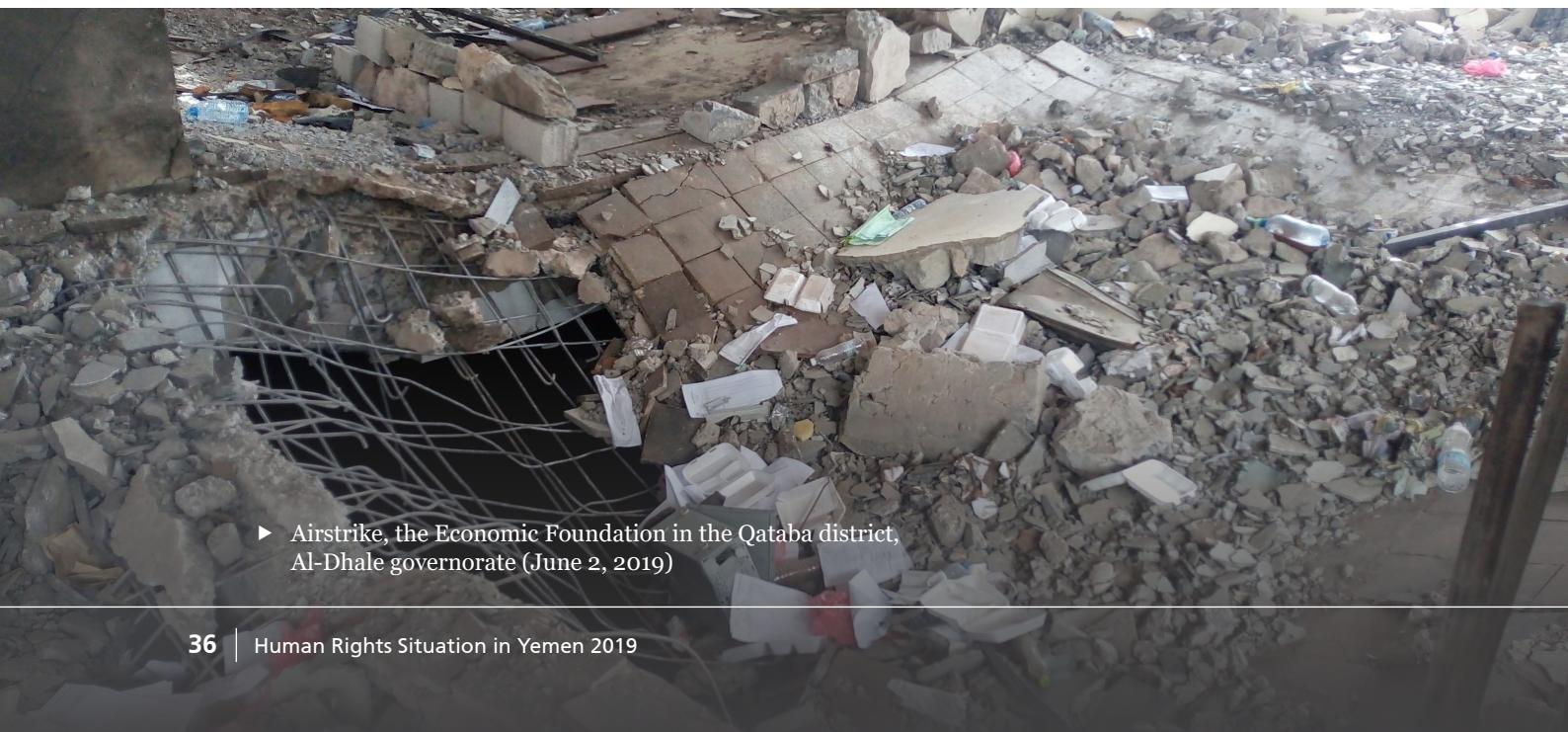
corporate responsibility (Ansar Allah, STC)

Chapter Two:

Air Strikes

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 64 Saudi/UAE-led coalition air strikes impacting civilians and civilian objects in ten Yemeni governorates: Amanat Al-Asemah, Hajjah, Sa'dah, Amran, Al-Hudiedah, Dhamar, Taiz, Al Dhalea, Al Bayda, and Abyan. At least 293 civilians were killed, including 95 children and 49 women, and at least 380 civilians injured, including 111 children and 57 women, in these strikes. The attacks damaged and destroyed civilian targets, including residential homes in densely populated neighborhoods, detention centers, markets, bridges, schools, and service and commercial facilities.

Through investigations, including interviews with witnesses, victims, and medical personnel, Mwatana did not identify a military objective at, near or in the vicinity of the site in the majority of these attacks. In the few cases where Mwatana did identify a military target near the site of the attack, the civilian harm resulting from the attack was significant, and appeared disproportionate to the apparent military advantage. In no attacks did Mwatana find an indication that coalition forces warned civilians ahead of the attacks.



► Airstrike, the Economic Foundation in the Qataba district, Al-Dhalea governorate (June 2, 2019)

Legal Framework

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

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

Case Studies

- **On the morning of Eid al-Adha, Sunday August 11, 2019 at about 08:00 a.m., coalition aircraft dropped four bombs on the village of al-Samwil, Mustaba District, Hajjah governorate. The first bomb hit a civilian car in the yard of a house. After about 7 minutes, two other bombs fell about 50 meters from the house, striking those who had survived, who had gathered under a tree after the first bomb hit. The fourth bomb hit a car for paramedics near the house. The attack killed 11 civilians, including seven children and two women, and wounded 17 others, including six children and five women.**

One of the victims (22 years old) said: “The children’s bodies were torn apart as they were getting ready to wear clothes for the Eid.”^[21]

- **On Thursday, May 16, 2019 at about 08:00 a.m., Saudi/UAE-led coalition aircraft dropped one bomb on a four-story apartment building in Al-Raqqas neighborhood, one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the Ma’ain District, Amanat Al-Asemah. The attack almost completely destroyed five apartment buildings,^[22] killed eight civilians, including five children and a woman, and wounded at least 77 others, including at least 30 children and 19 women.**

[21] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a victim, on August 12, 2019.

[22] The bomb fell directly on one of the apartments where journalist Abdallah Al-Sabri used to live. His condition will be discussed in the Freedom of the Press chapter - Chapter Three.

Baligh Abdallah Sabri (20 years old) said: “I woke up from sleep and the room was filled with dirt and glass. My father was screaming while he was holding his broken leg, with my brother Lou’ay beside him who could not breathe. However, my brother Hassan had died.”^[23]

One of the victims (50 years old) said: “While we were fasting and not drinking water, there were those who were drinking the blood of the innocent.”^[24]

- **On Tuesday, September 24, 2019, at approximately 08:30 a.m., Saudi/UAE-led coalition aircraft dropped two bombs on two adjacent houses in Hammam al-Nabija village, Bilad al-Youbi area, Qa’atabah District, Al Dhalea Governorate. The attack killed ten civilians, including four children and three women, wounded six others, including two children, destroyed one house and almost destroyed the other. A quarter of an hour later, aircraft dropped a third bomb on a Toyota pickup owned by one of the victim’s neighbors while he was helping the wounded.**

Ahmed Hammoud (62 years old), the owner of one of the two houses, said: “I heard the sound of the plane while I was on the roof of my house next to my brother Ali’s house. I did not pay much attention to the sound of the plane. I thought that hardship and an agricultural life would keep us away from the fire of war.”^[25]

A relative of the victims (50 years old) said: “No one could have expected what happened to the whole family. They were killed, and those who survived became homeless.”

[23] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Baligh al-Sabri, May 16, 2019.

[24] Mwatana for Human Rights interviews with victims and eyewitnesses, May 18, 2019.

[25] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness, on September 25, 2019.

► Airstrike, the Community College, Dhamar (September 1, 2019)

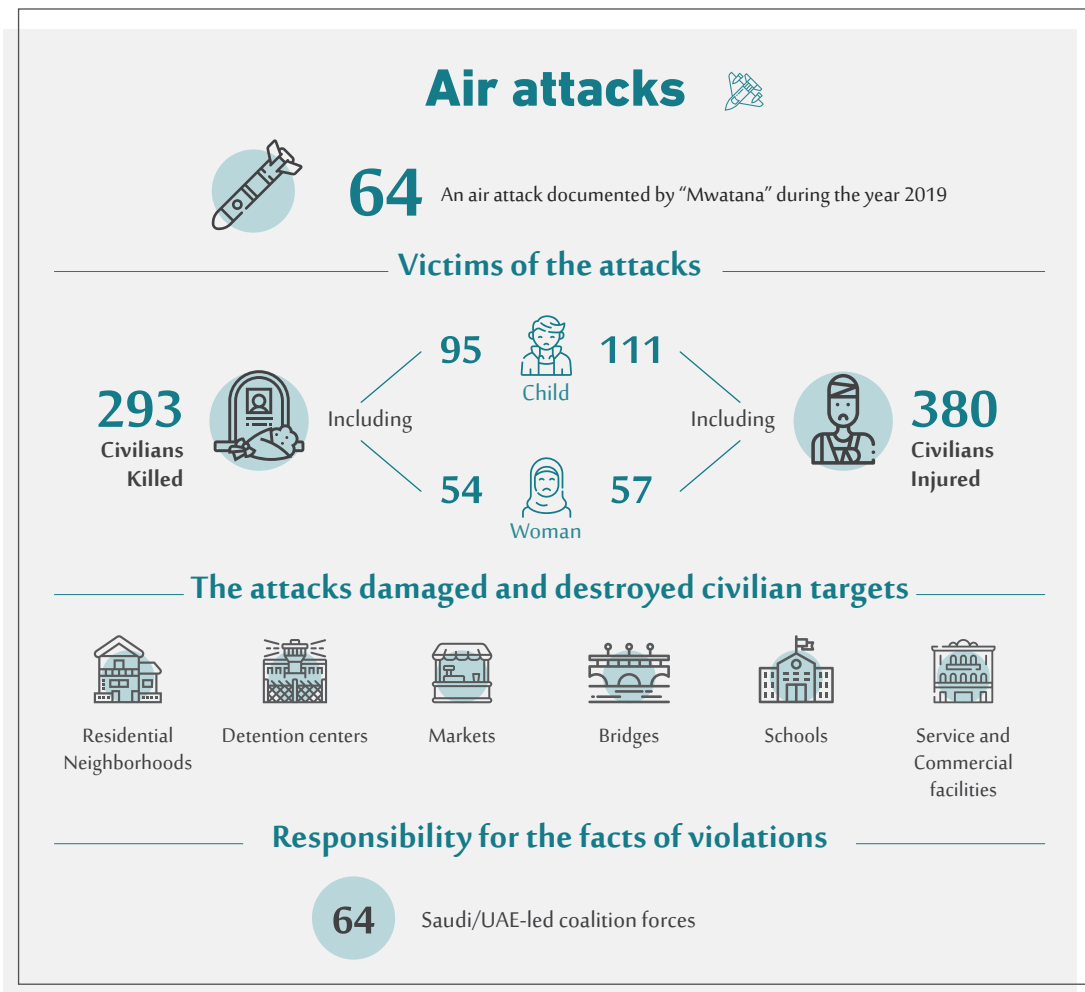


- On Saturday, August 31, 2019, at around 11:45 pm, Saudi/UAE-led coalition aircraft dropped six bombs within approximately 15 minutes on buildings in the Community College in the north of Dhamar governorate. The strike hit four buildings, at least one of which the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group had been using as a detention center since the beginning of 2015. The estimated number of detainees in the Community College was about 170 civilians and fighters, including at least 7 children. In a statement after the attack, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Yemen explained that it was aware of the place and had visited it periodically. Rescue teams were able to recover 40 wounded detainees, while the rest of them died under the rubble.

One survivor (38 years old) said: “When I was getting ready for bed, I heard a big explosion. I held my head with both hands and all of a sudden my left hand became completely red and I lost a finger.”

The survivor added: “I heard people on my left groaning as if they were trying to push away death, while the bodies of the people on my right were completely torn apart... God’s will turned me into a separator between life and death.”^[26]

[26] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a survivor, on September 1, 2019.



Chapter Three:

Ground Attacks

In 2019, Mwatana documented approximately 124 ground attacks that killed 132 civilians, including 27 women and 73 children, and wounded at least 329 civilians, including 57 women and 202 children. These incidents occurred in the governorates of Ma'rib, Lahj, Aden, Sa'da, Hajjah, Taiz, Al Dhalea, Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Abyan and Ibb. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 67 attacks. Saudi ground forces committed 11 attacks, government forces 15 attacks, the Security Belts forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council 14 attacks, UAE-backed Joint Forces in the West Coast committed two ground attacks. Meanwhile, the Ansar Allah (Houthis) group and government forces bear the joint responsibility for 11 incidents. And the joint responsibility in one incident falls on Saudi ground forces and government forces. Mwatana was not able to determine the party responsible in 3 other attacks.

The parties to the conflict in Yemen continue to launch indiscriminate ground attacks on civilians, using in the majority of their attacks imprecise weapons with wide-area effects. Many of these attacks struck residential neighborhoods and crowded markets, and forced hundreds of people to leave the areas in which they were living in search of safer places.

With the intensification of hostilities in populated areas, some fighters were stationed in residential neighborhoods and homes, for shelter and to prepare and carry out military operations. This endangered civilians and their properties. As a result, numerous civilians were killed and wounded, and their property and vital infrastructure, such as roads, water supplies and hospitals, damaged.

Legal Framework

International humanitarian law prohibits indiscriminate attacks. International humanitarian law prohibits the use of unguided weapons that cannot be directed at a specific military objective. The parties to the conflict must choose a means of attack and weapons that can be directed at military targets and will minimize as much as possible the harm to civilians and their property. At all times during fighting, warring parties must distinguish between military targets and civilian objects.

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

Case Studies

- **On Friday, September 13, 2019, at about 11:30 a.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group launched a ground attack on Ras Al-Hassi area in the village of Al-Mutayna, in the district of AtTuhayta, Al-Hudaydah Governorate, using 15 projectiles, five of which landed on the homes of citizens, leaving 9 dead, including 5 children and 3 women, and 7 wounded, including 4 children and 3 women. The rest of the projectiles fell around the village.**

The area that was hit is under the control of government forces, with the Fourth Giants Brigade occupying Ali Bin Al-Fakhr School, and turning it into a military station. The school is located 60 to 70 meters east of the village. Ansar Allah (Houthis) were stationed in the mountainous region five kilometers east.

A witness (45 years old) - who asked for his identity to be concealed - described the scene by saying: “We entered the houses and the walls were stained with blood and the view of dead people is indescribable. Their necks were cut because of the shrapnel and the guts of some of them came out. We collected pieces of scattered flesh from everywhere.”^[27]

Saoud Faraj (35 years old), said to Mwatana: “I heard the sound of an explosion and screaming. I went quickly to my brother’s house and found them on the ground and their bodies were torn apart. I was screaming at the top of my lungs for someone to come and save us but no one came. Nine of us died, and my heart burns for them. We left the village empty and were displaced, looking for a place to protect us from our fears.”^[28]

[27] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness on September 16, 2019.

[28] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Saoud Faraj on September 30, 2019.

- **On Sunday April 28, 2019, around 6:00 a.m., a projectile landed on an apartment house in the village of Mishrifah, in Jabal Habashi District, Taiz Governorate. The projectile killed 5 women, including 3 children, and wounded 2 girls and another man.**

According to witnesses Mwatana interviewed, the projectile was fired by Ansar Allah (Houthis), who were stationed in Al-Kedha area, seven kilometers southwest of the location.^[29] The attacked area is under the control of the Abu Abbas Brigades of the 35th Armored Brigade affiliated with government forces. Mwatana identified the nearest presence of the Abu Abbas Brigades at the time, a military point 800 meters south of the attacked area.

Abdallah Abdulghani Murad (55 years old), the owner of the attacked house, said: “I was asleep on the roof of the concrete water tank next to my house and I woke up to a loud explosion. I heard screaming and crying. When I rushed to the house, I froze as I saw them bringing out of my son’s wife with a torn body, as well as my daughters and granddaughter.”^[30]

- **On Monday, July 29, 2019, at approximately 12:30 p.m., a projectile landed on Al-Thabet market in Qatabir District, Sa’dah governorate, killing 14 people, including 3 children, and wounding 25 others, including 14 children and an Ethiopian Man.**


Witnesses said that the projectile came from Yisnam area in Baqim district, which is controlled by Ansar Allah (Houthis). The area is located 30 kilometers away from the southeastern side of the site. Al-Thabet market is considered one of the popular border markets that was under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthis), but is now a conflict area between the Saudi border guards and Ansar Allah (Houthis).

A witness (31 years old) said: “All of those who were killed have nothing to do with any party. They came to search for their livelihoods from different governorates. How will their families react when they hear about the killing of their children? Allah is sufficient for us, for He is the best disposer of affairs.”^[31]

[29] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with eyewitnesses, on May 2, 2019.

[30] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the owner of the house, on May 2, 2019.

[31] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness on July 30, 2019.

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- Students studying in a school that was bombed by coalition airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE after it was taken over by the Houthis (March 2019)

- On Tuesday, June 1, 2019, at around 5:45 p.m., a child was killed and three others, including two children, injured as a result of a projectile falling near them on the main line linking the city of Ibb and Qa'atabah District in Al Dhalea governorate.

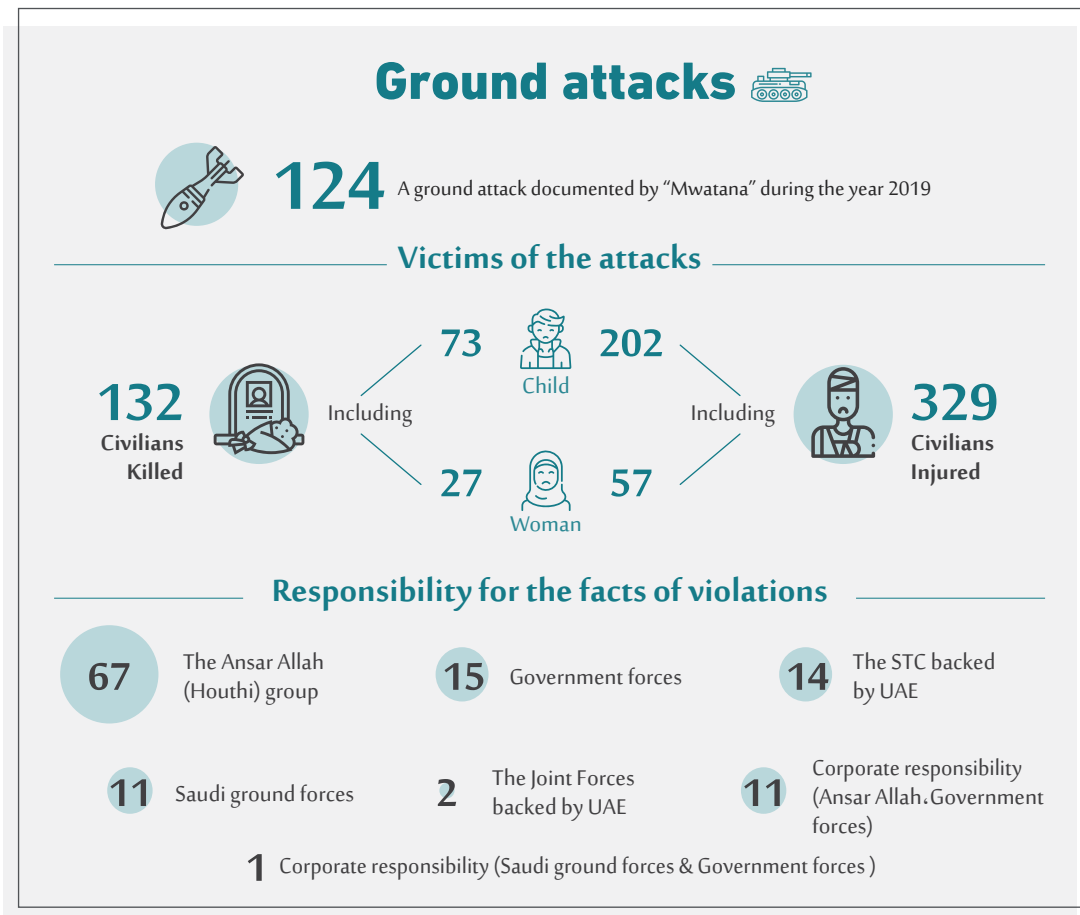
According to witnesses, the projectile came from the areas controlled by forces loyal to Hadi, which were stationed in the village of Shakhb, in Qa'atabah District, located two kilometers east of the location of the incident.^[32] Mwatana did not detect any military presence near the targeted site.

Mohammad Muthanna (40 years old) said: "A friend called me a few minutes before breakfast and told me that my son Abdallah was injured. In the hospital, I found his body covered in a sheet as he had died."

He added: "We did not show his mother his body because we didn't want to upset her. We told her that a shrapnel hit him in the neck, while in fact the shrapnel amputated his right hand and tore apart his stomach and legs. We welcomed the holiday with great sadness over Abdallah's passing, especially his mother and sisters."^[33]

[32] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with eyewitnesses, on December 2, 2019.

[33] Mwatana for Human Rights Interview with Mohammad Muthanna on December 2, 2019.



Chapter Four:

Landmines

In 2019, Mwatana documented nearly 46 incidents of landmine explosions, killing 23 civilians, including 12 children and 4 women, and wounding 60 civilians, including 31 children and 8 women. These incidents were concentrated in the governorates of Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Lahj, Shabwah, Hajjah, Taiz, Sa'dah, Al Dhalea and Al Bayda. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group planted these mines.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, landmines have continued to claim the lives and limbs of Yemenis. Landmines have become a source of daily fear and terror for civilians in rural areas. Women and children are the primary victims of landmines laid on public roads, as they go to bring water, firewood and livestock. Landmines have forced hundreds of Yemenis to take rough roads in order to avoid the usual, now mined, roads.



► Woman injured by landmines while shepherding, Taiz (March 7, 2020)

Legal Framework

The Mine Ban Treaty prohibits the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines. The convention obliges state parties to destroy any stockpiles, and clear anti-personnel mines, in addition to providing assistance to mine victims. Yemen ratified the Mine Ban Treaty on September 1, 1998.

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

Case Studies

- **On Monday, April 15, 2019, at around 12:00 p.m., a landmine exploded and blew up a car carrying five children from one family in Shehat neighborhood, north of Al Hazm district, Al Jawf governorate.**

The explosion of the mine—planted by Ansar Allah (Houthis) before their withdrawal from the area on December 18, 2016—killed four children and wounded a fifth. According to witnesses, the road where the mine exploded is a main road, away from battlefronts.

Abdallah (48 years old) (pseudonym), said: “My three children went with two of their cousins to collect firewood and when they finished they took the road next to Mount Shehat heading to Al Hazm market to sell the firewood. However, a mine exploded, killing my three sons and one of my nephews while the second one was wounded.”^[34]

- **On Sunday, June 16, 2019, at around 4:30 p.m., a landmine exploded on Jizan Street in Al Hali district, Al-Hudaydah governorate, after a child threw a stone at the mine. The explosion killed a child and injured two others.**

Al Hali District has been under the control of Ansar Allah (Houthis) since late 2014. According to witnesses interviewed by Mwatana, the Jizan Street area, inhabited by many residents, was completely mined by Ansar Allah out of fear it would be taken over by government forces.

[34] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with eyewitnesses on April 24, 2019

Mohammad (35 years old) (pseudonym) the father of one of the victims said: “My family and I moved from Al-Halqa area, which became a contact line, and an acquaintance of mine allowed us to use his house on Jizan Street near the sewage basins to live in. I knew the area was full of mines but I had no other choice. I am only able to live in this house, as I will find no one else to give me shelter.”

The witness added that the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group tried to lay mines in the yard of his house by force and, when he refused, planted them a meter away from his window.^[35]

- **On Wednesday, March 16, 2019, at around 10:00 a.m., a landmine planted by Ansar Allah (Houthis) exploded in Al-Shuaib village in Al Qabbaytah district, Lahj governorate. The mine exploded when two girls, who were riding donkeys to fetch water from the area well, passed over it. One of the girls was killed instantly, while the second died after four days in the hospital due to her wounds.**

Zamzam Mohammad (50 years old) said: “My daughter Oumayma (15 years old) and her friend Ghayda’ (16 years old) went to fetch water. While I was in the valley, I heard the sound of the explosion, and my heart sank as I thought of my daughter. I walked towards the well, and I saw my daughter thrown on the ground with Ghayda’ dead beside her and only the upper part of her body remained.”

Oumayma’s mother continued: “I was screaming at the top of my lungs and seeking help from a group of Houthis who were stationed at the top of the mountain to come and help us, but no one accepted, until the people of the village came and transported us to Aden governorate.”^[36]

Mahboub Saleh (50 years old), Ghayda’s father, told Mwatana his daughter’s flesh was mixed with that of the donkeys; they could not differentiate between Ghayda’s body and the donkeys’. He then burst into tears.^[37]

- **On Monday, November 4, 2019, at around 1:00 p.m., a landmine exploded in the village of al-Qofla, Qa’atabah district, Dhale governorate. Ansar Allah (Houthis) planted the mine when they controlled the area from May to October 8, 2019. The mine exploded and seriously injured four women and a girl.**

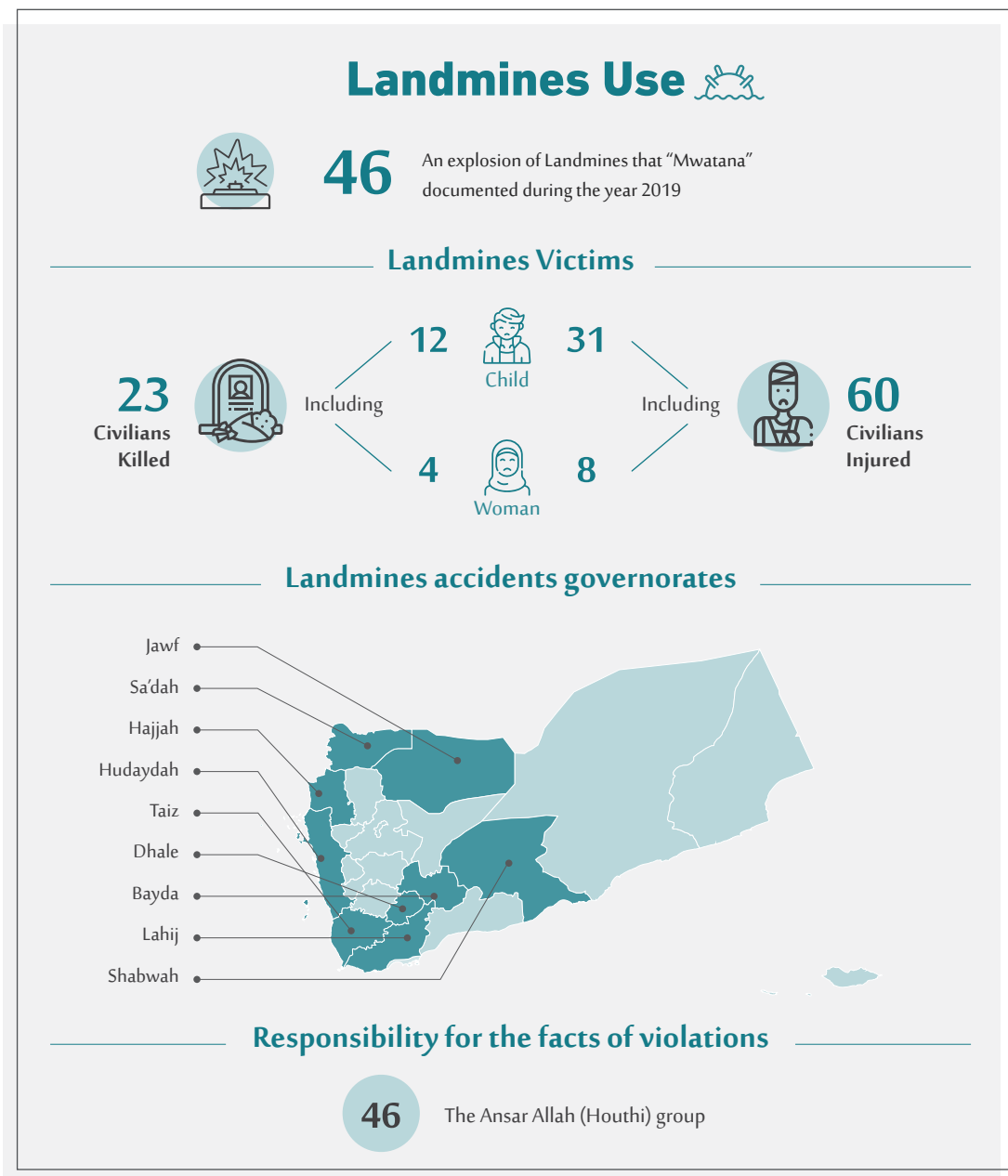
[35] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim’s father, on July 23, 2019.

[36] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Oumayma’s mother, on May 10, 2019.

[37] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Mahboub Saleh on October 20, 2019.

Najat Ali (35 years old) described the scene to Mwatana and said: “On that day, my husband’s sisters and I agreed to visit one of our sick friends. On the way, we met two of the village girls, Sana’ and Iman. We chatted with them and were about to leave when Sana’ stepped on a mine. The explosion was very sudden and frightening, and at that moment, we all fell to the ground due to the severity of the explosion. The shrapnel flew in large numbers and hit our bodies. Sana’s right leg was amputated from below the knee and her left leg was burned and fractured. She is unable to move.”^[38]

[38] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with Najat Ali on December 3, 2019.

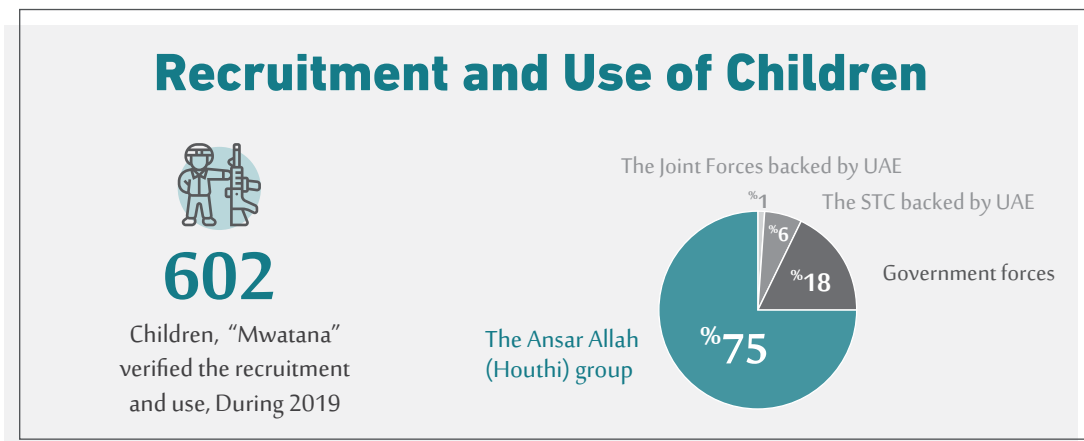


Chapter Five:

Recruitment and Use of Children

During 2019, Mwatana verified the recruitment and use of at least 602 children, including at least 43 girls. Through 317 testimonies and interviews conducted by the organization, Mwatana found that the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group recruited 75% of these children, concentrated in the governorates of Sa'dah, Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, Al Jawf and Sana'a. The percentage of children recruited by the forces loyal to President Hadi was approximately 18% of the total, in the governorates of Ma'rib, Taiz, Shabwah and Al Jawf. The percentage of children recruited by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces was 6% of the sample, concentrated in the governorates of Abyan, Lahj, Aden and Hadhramaut. The joint forces in the West Coast, backed by the UAE, are responsible for recruiting 1%.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group continues to recruit and use young girls in security checks and logistical services such as cooking and washing for fighters. Mwatana documented the recruitment and use of at least 43 young girls by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. In the interests of the child soldiers, Mwatana has withheld the identity of all children and their parents in this chapter.



Legal Framework

International humanitarian law prohibits the recruitment or use of children by armed groups or armed forces. The recruitment of children under the age of 15 years old, or using them in combat operations, is a war crime^[39]. Military commanders of armed forces or armed groups who knew or should have known can be held criminally liable unless they take effective action to end the practice, for example demobilizing children who have been recruited.

The Yemen Child's Rights Law^[40] stipulates that children cannot be directly involved in conflict, and that no person under the age of eighteen can be recruited.

Case Studies:

- **On the morning of Sunday, January 13, 2019, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group recruited two twin girls (both 16 years old) in Majzr district, Saadah governorate. The girls were sent to receive training on how to use light weapons in order to carry out security and protection tasks with women at Houthi activities in Saadah.**^[41]
- **On Saturday, June 29, 2019, at approximately 10:30 a.m., a landmine exploded when a motorbike driven by a child recruited by forces loyal to President Hadi passed over it in Al Maslub district, Al-Jawf governorate. A relative of the recruited child said that he had been delivering food supplies to soldiers on his motorbike.**^[42]
- **Mwatana obtained a copy of the birth certificate of a 14-year-old child recruited by the UAE-backed Security Belt forces in Khanfir District, Abyan Governorate. The mother of the recruited child said: "I wanted my son to arm himself with the weapon of science and with the pen, but he was armed with the weapon of war because of the bad economic situation."**^[43]
- **On Saturday, September 28, 2019, Mwatana interviewed a child soldier with the Giants Brigades, Al Makha District, Taiz Governorate. The recruited child said that the salaries paid to his recruited counterparts encouraged him to join the ranks of the fighters, and although the training he received was not good, he does not consider giving up recruitment unless he finds a job that provides him with a better income level.**^[44]

[39] The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in Rome, and drafted on July 17, 1998, Article 8, paragraph 26.

[40] Yemeni Child Rights Law 2000, Article 45.

[41] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the families of recruits on January 14, 2019.

[42] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the families of recruits on August 6, 2019.

[43] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the families of the recruits on August 26, 2019.

[44] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the families of recruits on February 11, 2020.

Chapter Six:

Arbitrary Detention

In 2019, Mwatana documented 210 cases of arbitrary detention of 265 victims, including 18 children. Parties to the conflict arbitrarily detained civilians in 21 Yemeni governorates, all of which are covered by Mwatana. The detainees were held in official, unofficial and secret prisons. The warring parties also used arrests as a method to harass their opponents and impose their will on people in areas under their of control.

During the period included in the report, In the governorates it controls, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group committed 125 arbitrary detentions. Mwatana documented 56 arbitrary detentions carried out by government forces, and 24 cases of arbitrary detention by UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces in the governorates under its control. The Joint Forces backed by UAE were responsible for one case, while Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces carried out two of the documented arbitrary detentions.

Mwatana also documented two cases of arbitrary detention and torture carried out by gangs engaged in human trafficking in Ras al-Ara region in Lahj governorate. The documented cases of arbitrary detention in 2019 also included the detention of 8 women.

Mwatana provides legal support to victims of arbitrary detention in 17 Yemeni governorates through 20 field lawyers who have provided legal aid and legal advice in (388) cases. The team's ongoing follow-up aims to help release those arbitrarily detained, improve conditions of detention (the environment of detention, medical care, etc.) and push for detention procedures that accord with international and national laws. In 2019, 122 people whose arbitrary detention Mwatana had documented throughout the conflict were released, including people to whom Mwatana's Legal Support Unit provided assistance. Many others remain detained.

Legal Framework

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

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

The Yemeni constitution includes basic criminal justice guarantees, including specifying that: “Anyone who is temporarily arrested, due to being suspected of committing a crime shall be presented to the Judiciary within 24 hours from the time of the arrest at most”^[45] and that “only judges are entitled to extend the arrest warrant beyond the first seven days period.” The Yemeni Penal Code also stipulates the imposition of a prison sentence of up to five years against officials who mistakenly deprive people of their liberties.

Case Studies:

- **On Saturday, January 5, 2019, at approximately 4:00 p.m., armed security personnel conducting a search at Al-Falaj checkpoint in Al Jubah district, Ma’rib governorate arrested Mohsen Salem (48 years old) (pseudonym). The on-duty security commander ordered his personnel to deposit him in a cell at the checkpoint.**

Mohsen was detained for two days in the checkpoint dungeon and then transferred to five other detention sites, none of which he could identify. He was released on February 10, 2019. One day before leaving, he was told he was being held in the Ma’rib governorate’s Security Administration prison.

His brother (50 years old) told Mwatana: “They left my brother for two days in a place subjected to the heat of the sun, and he was tortured, beaten and deprived of sleep for long hours in order to force him to confess to an affiliation with the Houthis group. Then, they isolated him for a period of fifteen days, and informed him that he is prohibited from

[45] Article No. (76), Law of Criminal Procedure, Republican Decree of Law No. (13) of 1994.

traveling via Ma'rib, even though he has a work visa in Saudi Arabia. Thus, he was deprived of his source of livelihood.”^[46]

- **On Saturday, March 9, 2019, at around 8:20 p.m., a number of Ansar Allah (Houthi) gunmen on board a Toyota pickup truck arrested Marwan Ismail (27 years old) (pseudonym) from one of the Abs city markets. At approximately 9:00 p.m., the same armed group raided his house to arrest his brother Nader (18 years old) (pseudonym). The next day, at around 2:35 a.m., twenty armed men in civilian clothes on board three cars surrounded Marwan's home and arrested his brother Nawaf (24 years old) who suffered a stroke.**

On Tuesday, March 19, 2019, Nawaf, who had a stroke, was released. Six days later, on March 24, 2019, Marwan and his brother Nader were transferred to the Political Security prison in Hajjah.

Their father (60 years old) said: “On April 1, 2019, I was allowed to visit my children. I saw signs of torture on their bodies and feet, and they could not tell me anything at the time.”^[47]

Nader was released on Thursday, May 2, 2019. After ongoing follow-up on Marwan's case by the Mwatana Legal Support Unit, Marwan was released on November 21, 2019.

- **Early on Thursday, August 29, 2019, in the Jabal Habashy District, Taiz Governorate, the district security director and ten soldiers on board two Toyota pick-ups stormed the home of Wassim Ahmed Abdel Hamid (21 years old) and arrested him along with his brother Fouad (30 years old). The two men were taken to the Amen At Turbah district before being detained in the Central Security Prison in At Turbah city in order to pressure their family to bring their brother, who was wanted.**

Fouad told Mwatana: “In the place of detention, all the phones were taken away, and we were stuck in a dirty place. I spent twenty thousand riyals every day for the purpose of eating and drinking. I was only released through mediation and because I am a newlywed who had been married for one week at the time of my detention. However, my brother Wassim remained imprisoned.”^[48]

Wassim was transferred to the Central Security Command headquarters in At Turbah area. Wassim remained arbitrarily detained until October 20, 2019.

[46] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim's brother on April 6, 2019.

[47] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the father of the victims on October 24, 2019.

[48] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim on September 24, 2019.

- On Monday, April 1, 2019, at around 9:00 a.m., in Al Mukalla district, Hadhramaut governorate, Hussein Emad (30 years old) was arbitrarily arrested in his workplace at a gas station by three people dressed in civilian clothes. They uttered racist terms and took him in a car without license plates to the police station, where he was interrogated and asked to sign a prepared statement, but he refused.

He was held for four days in a narrow cell. He was released on April 4, 2019.^[49]

[49] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim on May 1, 2019.



Chapter Seven:

Enforced Disappearance

In 2019, Mwatana documented 39 incidents of enforced disappearance of 44 victims, including one child in the Yemeni governorates of Hadramout, Saadah, Hajjah, Al-Jawf, Amanat Al-Asimah, Ma'rib, Aden, Dhamar, Taiz, Al-Mahra, Al-Mahwit, Al-Dhalea, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Bayda, and Ibb. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group bears responsibility for 28 of these enforced disappearances. Government forces bear responsibility for 5, while UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces were responsible for 6 cases of enforced disappearance of civilians.

Forcibly disappeared people in Yemen suffer grave abuse inside prison cells. Warring parties in Yemen often disappear civilians on suspicions of belonging to hostile organizations, for their political affiliation or for having opposing opinions. One of the primary reasons enforced disappearances—often including grave violations that may amount to war crimes—are so widespread is that warring parties feel safe from accountability and redress. The damage caused by disappearances extends to families, friends and wider society.

In an effort to reduce enforced disappearances by warring parties, Mwatana provides legal support on cases of enforced disappearance, trying to pressure the parties to the conflict to uncover the fate of the disappeared, to allow their families to visit them, and to refer them to the judiciary in accordance with legal procedures. Mwatana continues to follow up on the cases of some individuals still forcibly disappeared.

Legal Framework

Enforced disappearance is prohibited during armed conflict. Enforced disappearances violate or threaten to violate a range of rules of international humanitarian law applicable to both international and non-international armed conflicts, including the prohibition on arbitrary detention, torture, cruel and inhuman treatment and murder. The parties to the conflict must take steps to prevent disappearances during non-international armed conflicts, including registering the names of detainees, and must take all feasible measures to clarify the fate of persons missing as a result of the conflict and provide family members with information about their fate.

Under the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, the systematic practice of enforced disappearance is a crime against humanity. Hostage taking, seizing or detaining a person and threatening to kill, injure or continue to detain them to force a third party to do or refrain from doing something as a condition for release or safety, is also a war crime under the Rome Statute.

Yemeni law does not criminalize enforced disappearance as such, and Yemen has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. However, a comprehensive reading of the constitutional and legal principles set forth in the Yemeni constitution regarding fundamental rights and freedoms, including regarding arbitrary detention and torture, would appear to prohibit the practice. Yemen should ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and align local law with its protections.

Case Studies

- **One night in January 2019, in Al Mahfad district, Abyan governorate, an armed group affiliated with the UAE-backed Security Belt forces arrested Saleh Saad (28 years old) (pseudonym) and took him to the October 7 prison in Khanfir district, Abyan governorate, where he was subjected to enforced disappearance and torture. Then, he was transferred to Al-Buraika prison in the city of Aden.**

Mwatana was able to meet Saleh, who shared horrific details of his detention. He said: “At the dawn of the fourth day, I was put on a Toyota pickup, with my eyes blindfolded and my hands handcuffed. I was transferred from the prison in Khanfir district to Al Buraika prison in Aden with another group of people for five days. I was detained in a single cell, handcuffed. That day, an Emirati interrogator came to the cell and slapped me several times on my face.

During each interrogation, two to three different people would take turns to torture me. They used different torture methods; they would electrocute me more than twenty times in different places on my body, especially my back. They would beat me with military batons, and whip me with military belts, and despite my bloody wounds, I did not receive any health care.”^[50]

Saleh was disappeared for about two months, while those detaining him tried to make him confess to something. He and other detainees were released after being transported by military vehicles to an area far from the prison.

- **On Sunday evening, March 31, 2019, armed fighters affiliated with the First Military Region loyal to the Hadi government surrounded a marketplace in the city of Seiyun with four unlicensed military vehicles. More than 10 armed men arrested Omar Salem, (28 years old) (pseudonym), from his workplace. He was taken to the First Military Region headquarters in the city of Seiyun, and then transferred to a secret prison called Al-Tini.**

Approximately two months after his disappearance, Omar managed to make a phone call to his family in Aden and informed them of his health. The Omar family also suffered from the arrest of his two brothers, Imad (33 years old) on March 5, 2015, and Salim (31 years old) on July 28, both of whom were arrested in Seiyun and transferred to the Central Prison in Seiyun on accusations of “belonging to al Qaeda”.

Omar’s sister (31 years) said: “We are not sure of the truth behind my brother’s situation and we do not know anything about him except that he contacted us only twice to reassure us. We are a poor family that cannot afford to travel to visit him in Hadhramaut. We only want a fair trial for my brother as soon as possible and his release.”^[51]

- **On Saturday, May 11, 2019, at approximately 8:15 a.m., in the Zabiriyat area in Qa’atabah District, Al Dhalea governorate, armed men in civilian clothes affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group attempted to arrest Aref Hassan Ali (47 years old) while he was herding his sheep. He escaped, but the gunmen followed him, shot him in the left thigh and took him to an unknown location.**

[50] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim on April 14, 2019.

[51] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim’s sister on September 22, 2019.

On that same day, at approximately 4:00 p.m., Aref called one of his sons from an unknown phone number and informed him that he had a gunshot wound and was receiving treatment at Al-Thawra Hospital in Ibb.

His wife (41 years old) said: “The displacement was so tough for us and we were forced to tolerate it. However, the news of my husband’s arrest and shooting increased my pain and my exhaustion. I wish I could know whether he is alive or dead.”^[52]

Aref then disappeared. He remains forcibly disappeared.

[52] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim’s wife on November 20, 2019.

Enforced Disappearance



39

An incident of enforced disappearance
“Mwatana” documented during the year 2019

Enforced Disappearance Victims



44

Enforced
Disappearance



1
Child

Responsibility for the facts of violations

28

The Ansar Allah
(Houthi) group

5

Government forces

6

The STC backed
by UAE

Chapter Eight:

Torture

In 2019, Mwatana documented 8 incidents of torture. Four of the documented cases were committed by the UAE-backed Security Belt forces in Abyan governorate, and four by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in the governorates of Taiz, Amanat Al-Asemah and Hajjah. Three of the individuals whose torture by Ansar Allah was documented died in detention. Two of those tortured by the Security Belt in Abyan died in detention.

Mwatana documented different methods of torture and ill-treatment by the warring parties, such as severe beatings with batons and metal bars, electrocution, kicking, slapping, burning, waterboarding, confinement in tight rooms, and other forms of degrading and humiliating treatment. Mwatana also documented people being deprived of necessary medical care after being injured due to torture of and ill-treatment.

The continued prevalence of torture in places of detention by all warring sides results from the policy of impunity that perpetrators enjoy due to warring party obstruction of efforts for accountability and for due legal process, and the absence of remedies for victims and fora to hold perpetrators to account.

Legal Framework

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

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

Under the Rome Statute, torture, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity constitute war crimes in non-international armed conflicts. When torture is carried out as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population, torture is considered a crime against humanity.

Case Studies

- **On Sunday, December 30, 2018, at 11:30 a.m., two military groups belonging to the Taiz Governorate Security Department stormed a house in Bir Pasha area, Al-Mudhaffar district, Taiz governorate. Soldiers arrested Salem Mohammad (pseudonym) (30 years old), a worker. He was detained in the Security Department for two days. He was then transferred to the National Security headquarters, where he was held, tortured and mistreated.**

According to the security administration officials' statements, Salem's family was not informed that he was being held in the National Security headquarters and was prevented from visiting him for the duration of his ten-month disappearance, during which time he was tortured.

Salem's mother (50 years old) said: "It was the first time that I saw my son in ten months. His hands were shivering; I noticed traces of shackles on his wrists, bruises on his feet as well. He told me that he was beaten with sticks and handles of rifles on his knees, and that he was being interrogated. He would be blindfolded from dusk until dawn."^[53]

He was released on December 17, 2019.

- **On Monday, April 15, 2019, around 5:00 p.m., in As Sab'ain district, Amanat Al-Asemah, a car followed by several Toyota pickups affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group chased a child, Ahmed (pseudonym) (15 years old). Ahmed was traveling in a car. The soldiers caught the child, dragged him, beat him, threw him to the ground, kicked him and blindfolded him. Then, he was taken to a prison where he was tortured.**

[53] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the mother of the victim on October 16, 2019.

Ahmed's father (62 years) said: "My son used to work sometimes to help with the family expenses. That day, he was late in returning to the house, so I called the person he worked for, but he told me that he knew nothing and was looking for him." He added: "I asked about him in all the police stations in Amanat Al-Asemah and Sa'dah and pasted his photo on the streets of Amanat Al-Asemah. I published my son's data and his picture on social media, and I remained like this, worried about my son, and I could not find him for five months."^[54]

On Friday, August 10, 2019, before the day of Eid al-Adha at four in the morning the family received a phone call stating that Ahmed was being held in a prison in Amanat Al-Asemah.

His father said: "After the phone call, I went quickly to the place of detention. They refused to allow me to visit him on that day and after I begged them for more than two hours, I was allowed to come visit him on the morning of Eid. The visit lasted only five minutes and then they escorted me outside afterwards." The father described the place of detention by saying: "It looks like a giant underground grave, with no air and no sun, completely isolated from the world, in extreme desolation. Not only do the prisoners enter this grave, but they also stay in holes under it."

He described the condition of his son: "He looked thin and pale despite being known for his whiteness in the past. He had a look of horror in his eyes, was talking to himself and crying his eyes out. There were signs of torture apparent on his body."^[55]

Ahmed recounted the details of his torture, saying: "They tortured me in different ways. I was whipped with ropes and electrical wires. They put me in a 'pressure cooker' cell and tortured me with a grill^[56] and electricity. They crucified me and left me hanging for days. They would put pressure on my fingers so I would pass out. On more than one day in Ramadan, a person I knew was his name and two people I don't know poured hot tea on me and burned me with cigarettes. Thus, throughout my stay, I was tortured until I was unconscious every time. The person I knew his name would tell the other people to write down what he was saying but I couldn't understand what he was saying from my exhaustion. Then, I would stamp the records with my ten fingers while blindfolded."

In addition to the physical torture and enforced disappearance that Ahmed, a child, was subjected to, his family suffered from the intransigence and procrastination of officials after they found out where he was being held and began to follow-up on the case. The public prosecutor refused to start the investigation before confirming the age of the boy and refused the birth certificate or family card to do so. Instead, he asked for the records from the hospital where Ahmed was born. Ahmed's father said: "When I demanded that my child be removed from among the criminals and substance abusers, and start an investigation with him, the public prosecutor demanded that the hospital record be brought in to prove the age of my son. So, I took the trouble to travel to a far place only to find out from the hospital director

[54] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim's father on October 7, 2019.

[55] Ibid.

[56] The victim describes the "grill" as a method of torture in which the hands and feet are tied, and then a metal bar is placed between the hands and knees, and the victim is hung upside down, so the weight of the entire body is focused on the hands and knees and suspended for hours until they feel paresthesia and numbness.

that birth records are destroyed every ten years.” He added: “After I paid money, the Public Prosecutor’s Office accepted that the age of the child be determined by a doctor. After the “formal examination,” the doctor claimed that my son was 17 years old and did not mention any torture in his report. Then I realized that the person my son worked for had influence and money and everything that was happening to my son was because he was being used as a scapegoat so he could evade the charge of trading hashish.”

After a careful follow-up, the child was transferred to a reserve building and was held there until his release on February 8, 2020.

His father concluded his testimony: “I lost everything I have; my children and my health. I suffer from kidney failure, my daughter got married without a wedding reception and I spent her dowry on her brother’s case. I escaped death from the war in Taiz, to die here another way in Sanaa.”^[57]

Ahmed was released in February 2020 after close legal follow-up by the Legal Support Unit in Mwatana.

- **On Sunday, April 28, 2019, at around 1:00 p.m. in Khanfir district, Abyan governorate, 10 soldiers from the UAE-backed Security Belt forces attacked Youssef (pseudonym) (29 years old), and beat him, before taking him on their military vehicle to the October 7 prison, where he was tortured.**

His mother (52 years old) who was able to visit him on April 30, 2019, she said: “When I saw him, I was shocked by his appearance. He had traces of two days of torture, because his face was full of bruises.”

She added: “He told me he was placed in a solitary cell and subjected to torture more than ten times, in different ways: beating, kicking, electrocution and degrading treatment by masked soldiers. During these two days, he was drowned in a shallow pond filled with insects and worms. The food was insufficient and bad and the drinking water was not clean. The cell was filthy and he was not allowed to go to the bathroom, so he had to go in the same cell.”^[58]

Youssef was not investigated nor were charges brought against him. Without informing his family, he was transferred to the coalition’s prison in Al Buraika district, Aden governorate, and then to Bir Ahmed prison, Al-Sha’b City in Aden governorate. His family was able to visit him on May 19, 2019. His 37-year-old brother said: “When I saw him, his features had changed, from torture and oppression. Although he was better off than he was in October 7 prison, he hadn’t been investigated with yet and did not know the charge against him.”^[59]

The family pressed for his release, but to no avail. One of his neighbors said: “(Youssef) is a polite, educated young man who works as a farmer to support his family.”

[57] Ibid

[58] Mwatana for Human Rights Interview with one of the victim’s relatives on August 18, 2019.

[59] Ibid

Chapter Nine:

Sexual Violence

In 2019, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 12 incidents of sexual violence on 11 children and one woman subjected to sexual violence. Given the continuing risks faced by survivors and their families, Mwatana has provided an overview of the incidents documented rather than describing them in detail.

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for ten of the documented incidents of sexual violence. The Giants Brigades and the Security Belt forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council are responsible for two of the incidents of sexual violence.

In 2019, Mwatana documented the rape of 9 children, including seven girls—aged 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13, and two aged 16—and two boys aged 8 and 13. Mwatana documented a 14 and 16-year-old boy and a 30-year-old woman subjected to other forms of sexual assault. In all cases, individuals subjected to sexual violence were already vulnerable, either members of a marginalized group, working children, displaced people, or with special needs.

In one case, the man who raped a girl with special needs was in charge of a displaced persons camp. In another case, a girl was recruited and then raped by an adult within the same forces. Two of the children in the documented cases were killed after being subjected to sexual violence.

The true number of victims of sexual violence is likely to be much higher, as fear of stigma is a barrier to reporting these incidents. Victims face ostracism from families and the community after experiencing sexual violence. They are often blamed for what is considered a loss of honor. Survivors and their families also often do not report sexual violence due to their fear of the security services and the dominant forces to which abusers belonged. Mwatana is unaware of any steps taken to charge or prosecute the perpetrators in any of the cases documented.

Legal Framework

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

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

International human rights law also prohibits sexual violence and rape, which amounts to a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.



Chapter Ten:

Attacks on Schools

In 2019, Mwatana documented at least 56 incidents of attacks on or military use of schools. These incidents included 3 Saudi and UAE-led coalition air strikes in Al Dhalea and Sa'dah governorates, and 3 indiscriminate ground attacks in the governorates of Sa'dah and Taiz, with government forces responsible for one ground attack on a school where Ansar Allah (Houthis) forces were stationed, and Ansar Allah responsible for two of the ground attacks in Taiz Governorate. Mwatana documented 36 incidents of the use of schools for military purposes, with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group responsible for 35 of these incidents in the governorates of Al Mahwit, Raymah, Sa'dah, Dhamar, and Ibb, and government forces responsible for one incident in the governorate of Taiz. Mwatana also documented 11 incidents of school occupation, 7 by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in Sa'da Governorate, 2 by the UAE-backed Security Belt forces in Abyan governorate, and 2 by government forces. Mwatana also documented three other attacks impacting schools, including an explosion in a warehouse containing a large amount of volatile material stored by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in the residential neighborhood of Sa'wan in Amanat Al-Asemah near three schools (Al-Rahy Governmental School - Al-Ahqaf Private School - Najm Al-Yemen Private School) on April 7, 2019. The explosion killed 15 students, injured 100 people, most students, and caused significant damage to the mentioned schools.^[60]

Increased violations committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen have caused extensive damage to schools and educational facilities, leading to deaths and injuries among male and female students. Many schools have closed or have become dangerous places due to remnants of projectiles and explosive materials or the possibility of air raids and direct or indirect ground attacks. Battles broke out in several areas, with many schools located in the midst of clashes. Schools are also frequently occupied and used for military and combat purposes; such as military barracks, detention centers, harboring fighters and their supply stores, or as centers for mobilization and preparation.

[60] Mwatana issued a statement after investigating the incident. For more information, click on the following link: <https://mwatana.org/warehouse-blast-kills-schoolchildren/>

Legal Framework

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

United Nations Security Council Resolution (2225/2015) on children in armed conflict also calls on parties to a conflict to respect the civilian character of schools. The Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by Yemen in 2017, provides guidance to warring parties on how to protect educational facilities from military use during conflicts.

Using schools for military purposes during conflict endangers students, teachers, and administrators by turning schools into targets for attack, and disrupts education.



► Students studying in a school that was bombed by coalition airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE after it was taken over by the Houthis (March 2019)

Case Studies

- **On Monday, January 28, 2019, at around 12:00 p.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group launched a ground assault on Al-Sa'ada School in Al Shaqab area, Sabir Al Mawadim district, Taiz governorate. Two anti-aircraft missiles hit the school, with the first destroying a classroom and administration windows. Less than five minutes later, another shell landed in the school yard, causing damage to the fence and the rooms annexed to the school. The lives of dozens of students were endangered. The school, the only one in the village, provides education for about 500 boy and girl students.**

The school principal, Adel Mohammad (50 years old), who lives in a house overlooking the school, said: “The students left the school an hour before the shelling due to the intense bombing of the area. This is not the first time that the school has been targeted. Ansar Allah previously targeted it with mortars. Because of the repeated shelling, I no longer remember the dates of previous attacks.”^[61]

A 50-year-old witness said: “The source of the two shells was from Naqil al-Haddah - 500 meters east of Al-Shaqab. There are no military gatherings of the popular resistance in or near the school.”

The school principal ended his testimony by saying: “We do not have the ability to rehabilitate the school, the windows are still broken and students are exposed to cold.”^[62]

- **On Sunday May 12, 2019 at about 4:30 a.m., the Saudi/UAE-led coalition aircraft dropped one bomb on Al-Shahid Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zubayri School for Basic and Secondary Education located in the village of Shakhb, Qa'atabah district, Al Dhalea governorate.**

The bombing destroyed four of the school's six classrooms. Nearly 1000 boy and girl students attended the school this year, in morning and evening shifts. The previous year, the number of students was about 1500. Their number declined as a result of fighting returning to the region.

The school principal (47 years old) said: “Despite the almost total destruction of the school, the education process continued in the proper classrooms and annexes. A number of students dropped out due to the school bombing. Before the bombing, we were looking into expanding the school and adding new classrooms to reduce over crowdedness, but now we are looking into rebuilding what was demolished. The school was established in 2005 with

[61] Mwatana interview with the school principal on February 2, 2019.

[62] Ibid.

funding from the Social Fund for Development and was restored in 2016 with funding from the UNICEF.”^[63]

One of the teachers (48 years old) added: “The bombing has weakened and cracked the columns and the rest of the classrooms might collapse on us at any moment.”^[64]

- **On Wednesday, November 6, 2019, at approximately 9:00 a.m., armed forces affiliated with the UAE-backed Abu al-Abbas Brigades carried out an armed attack on June 13 Basic and Secondary School for Boys in Najd al-Nashma area, Al-Ma’afer district, Taiz governorate. The gunmen stormed the classrooms, forced the students out and fired live bullets into the air. Forces stationed at the nearby women’s training center supported them by firing light and medium bullets towards the school. The attack wounded two students, 16 and 18 years old, one of whom was seriously injured. The wall and the school gate were damaged. The school, which was occupied after the attack, remained closed for three days.**

A teacher (49 years old) said: “I was in my office when I heard screams and violent strikes. I rushed to see what was happening from the corridor overlooking the schoolyard. I saw gunmen from the Abu Abbas Brigades kick the doors of the high school students’ classes. They were yelling and asking the students to leave the school.” He added: “The gunmen stationed in the building of the women training center adjacent to the school from the southern side started firing anti-aircraft and light weapons in the air, as the gunmen opened fire from the school square, which resulted in the injury of two students. Fear and panic spread among the students and the educational staff. The shooting did not stop until all the students and teachers left the school.”^[65]

One of wounded students (18 years old) said: “A ricochet bullet hit me in my head and I was unable to take midterm exams. I became afraid to go to school. On that day, I felt like I was going to inevitably die.”^[66]

- **On the morning of Saturday, December 21, 2019, in At Al Tawilah district, Al Mahwit governorate, armed groups affiliated to the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group used the Al Noor Basic and Secondary School to organize an activity for what Ansar Allah calls “Annual Shahid Week.” They disrupted school for an entire school day and mobilized boy and girl students in the schoolyard alongside armed men.**

[63] Mwatana interview with the school principal on November 20, 2019.

[64] Mwatana interview with a teacher at the school on November 20, 2019.

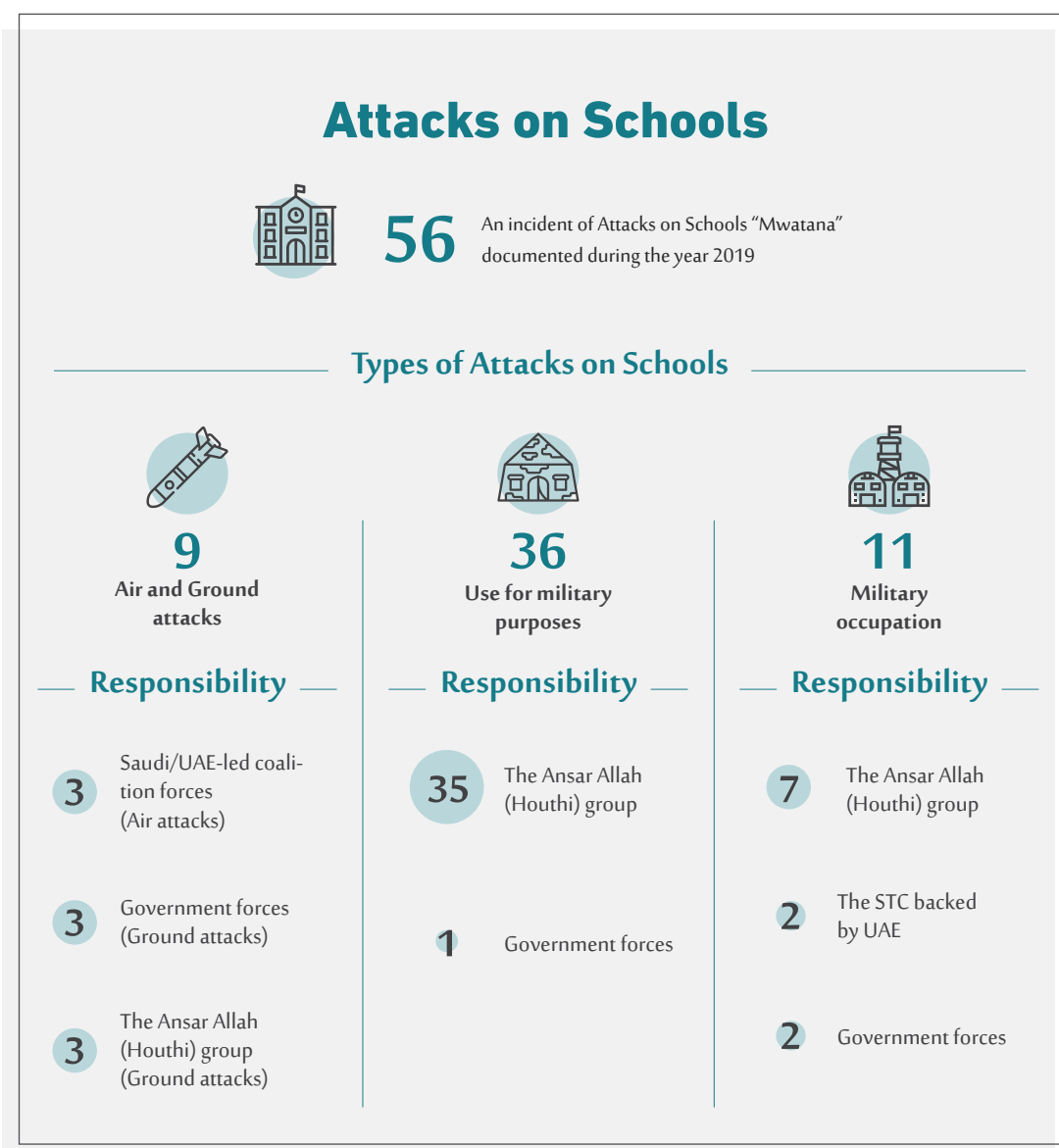
[65] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness on December 22, 2019.

[66] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness on December 22, 2019.

The event was devoted to mobilizing male and female students to join Ansar Allah's ranks and take up arms and engage in combat operations. The event also included incitement chants of violence and chanting Ansar Allah's slogan the Al Sarkha (the Scream).

A witness said: "What is happening in schools is horrifying. You can imagine how children are taught misconceptions, such as reducing the importance of education, encouraging them to carry guns, joining fronts, leaving schools, and suggesting to children that staying in school is a waste of time."^[67]

[67] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness on December 24, 2019.





► Students studying in a school that was bombed by coalition airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE after it was taken over by the Houthis (March 2019)

Chapter Eleven:

Attacks on Health Care

Throughout 2019, Mwatana for Human Rights documented 19 attacks on hospitals, health centers and medical staff. Medical facilities were subjected to armed intrusion, medical teams were attacked with live ammunition, and the arrival of humanitarian and medical aid was prevented. During the documented attacks, 4 people were killed, including a health worker and a doctor's assistant, and 4 were wounded, including a health worker. The warring parties in Yemen have repeatedly attacked an already collapsed medical sector in extremely dangerous humanitarian conditions, particularly as a result of the spread of the new coronavirus (Covid-19).

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group committed 6 of the violations documented by Mwatana in the governorates of Taiz, Sa'dah, Raymah, Ibb and Al Dhalea. Government forces were responsible for 12 of the cases, in Taiz and Ma'rib. And one incident was committed by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition

Mwatana and Physicians for Human Rights recently released a report entitled, "I ripped the IV out of my arm and started running." The report highlighted attacks on hospitals, health and other care centers between 2015 and 2018. It included 120 incidents involving medical facilities and consisted of 4 main chapters: aerial attacks, ground attacks, assaults against medical personnel and occupation of medical facilities. The report aimed to draw attention to the warring parties' role in the destruction of Yemen's health care system during the war.

Legal Framework

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

Under the Rome Statute, intentionally directing attacks against buildings, materials, medical units, transportation, and individuals using the distinctive emblems set out in the Geneva Conventions in accordance with international law, or intentionally directing attacks against hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided that they are not military targets, are war crimes.

Hospitals only lose their protection from attack if used to commit “acts harmful to the enemy,” outside its humanitarian functions. Even if a hospital is used by an opposing force to commit acts harmful to the enemy, for example to stockpile weapons, to harbor fighters who are able to fight, or to launch attacks, the attacking force must provide a warning to the opposing party to cease misuse of the medical facility and specify a reasonable time period to stop misusing the facility and to attack only if and after the warning has gone unheeded. Health workers also only lose their protection if they commit acts harmful to the enemy, outside the scope of their humanitarian duties. International humanitarian law prohibits the punishment of anyone for performing their medical duties in accordance with medical ethics, or forcing any person to engage in medical activities contrary to medical ethics. Medical transport, such as ambulances, must also be allowed to operate and be protected. They only lose their protection if they are used to commit acts harmful to the enemy.

Case Studies

- **On Sunday, January 13, 2019, at about 11:00 a.m., the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group prevented an international organization from providing the health center in Ibn Huwaidi area, Kitaf wa Al Boqe’e district, Saa’da governorate with the medical staff, the necessary medical materials, and electrical generators needed in order to reopen the center. The government health center that had provided services to nearly 350 families had been closed since 2015.**

Salim Abdallah (pseudonym) (44 years old) said: “An international organization arrived in the region and announced its readiness to restart the health center in our area and provide all the necessary needs to rehabilitate it. They spent three weeks persuading the Houthis to allow them to re-open the center, while highlighting the importance of providing treatment to those in need, but to no avail. The Houthis justified their rejection by saying that the organizations follow America and Israel and they are agents, and the region may be subjected to bombing because of the center.”^[68]

Sadek Tawfiq, (pseudonym), (37 years old), said: “There are displaced people in the region who came from conflict-stricken areas, and the people here suffer from poverty and hunger. They are ‘nomads,’ but they settled next to the health center. The international organization was ready to provide all the needs of the health center. We were not allowed to work despite our repeated attempts and meet the needs of the residents to open the health center again.”^[69]

- **On Friday, August 16, 2019, a ship loaded with oil derivatives (diesel material) was prevented from unloading its cargo in Al-Hudaydah port for more than a month and a half. The World Health Organization had allocated some of the diesel as humanitarian assistance to 10 hospitals in Ibb governorate. The companies transporting the diesel told relevant hospital administrators the fuel was delayed because the Saudi/UAE-led coalition had not allowed them to proceed to unload at port, despite the ship having obtained an entry permit after inspection. The prevention of the entry of diesel used to power generators led to a reduction by half of hours allocated to provide health care services to beneficiaries and required work with fewer operational cards than normal. Additionally, some vaccines and solutions for children that**

[68] Interview conducted by Mwatana on May 29, 2019.

[69] Interview conducted by Mwatana on May 29, 2019.



► A child at al-Suwaiti Hospital for Motherhood and Childhood during the outbreak of fevers, Taiz governorate (November 2019)

were in the health facilities refrigerators were damaged.

A health worker (32 years old) at Al-Nasser Hospital in Ibb governorate told Mwatana: “The Saudi and UAE-led coalition detained ships of oil derivatives at sea for more than a month and a half... The detention of the ship turned into a difficult challenge for us, which required us to provide diesel from the hospital’s modest revenues in order to continue providing our services to people.”

He added: “Preventing fuel from reaching the hospital impacted us by reducing working hours in obstetric emergencies - for midwifery and the specialty of obstetric surgery and caesarean section. Equipment and tools in operating and recovery rooms were being partly used. In normal conditions, they were used around the clock and the hours have been reduced to 12 hours, taking into account the critical cases. Furthermore, the periodic inspection devices, laboratories and scanners were only used in emergency cases such as fractures, and the operating hours of the morgue’s refrigerator were reduced from 24 hours to 12 hours.”^[70]

A medical staff member (35 years old) at the Maternity and Childhood Hospital in Ibb said: “The hospital was unable to provide all the medical services that it used to provide to the local population free of charge. For example, we reduced the number of child incubators from 10 to 6, and the reduction of the operating hours of refrigerators caused damage to some vaccines for children.”^[71]

- **On Friday, October 18, 2019, at around 7:00 p.m., in the Salh district, Taiz governorate, armed fighters with government forces from the 22nd Mechanized Brigade and the 170th Brigade stormed al-Thawra General Hospital.**

[70] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a health worker, on October 24, 2019.

[71] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with a health worker, on October 28, 2019.



► Incursion, Qataba Hospital in Qataba district, Al-Dhale governorate (June 2, 2019)

The gunmen stormed the hospital with the aim of killing one of the wounded people there. Health workers were trying to save his life. One of the gunmen fired over and over again at the wounded man on the bed in the emergency department, killing him and injuring a medical assistant.

After the attack, the Al-Thawra General Hospital management carried out a comprehensive strike for a week and stopped receiving people in all hospital departments except the burn, dialysis and intensive care departments.

An eyewitness (30 years old) said: “The passed out patient began waking up after we tried to resuscitate him. Suddenly, the gunman stormed the room and fired shots from his Kalashnikov seven times in a row at the wounded man. Then, he continued shooting him with eight other bullets.”^[72]

[72] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with an eyewitness, on October 23, 2019.



SECTION THREE:

UNDERMINING RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



► A protest festival against the establishment of a military barracks for the Saudi army in Mahra, September 17, 2018

Chapter One:

The Press

The situation for the press, and associated human rights, in Yemen deteriorated. After nearly six years of war, the warring parties continue to commit different types of violations against journalists and media professionals, including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and humiliating and degrading treatment, restriction on the freedom of the movement of press crews and confiscation of identification papers.

In addition to the precariousness of journalistic work as a result of these violations, the economic crisis caused by the war has contributed to stopping the work of most media institutions; especially those owned by the state. Nearly a thousand men and women journalists working in public media institutions (television, radio and newspapers) are suffering from a severe humanitarian and livelihood crisis that threatens their lives and the lives of their families, according to the International Federation of Journalists.^[73]

According to the annual classification by Reporters Without Borders, Yemen's ranking in the 2019 Freedom of the Press Index fell one place—to 168 out of 180 countries covered by the index. The indicators state that Yemen is still one of the most difficult countries for journalism and one of the most dangerous for journalists.^[74]

In 2019, Mwatana documented 10 violations involving 13 journalists and media professionals. Seven of these incidents were committed by security and military forces affiliated with President Hadi, while the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group arbitrarily arrested a journalist and forcibly disappeared another.

Furthermore, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition launched an air strike on the home of journalist Abdallah Sabri (40 years old) on the morning of Thursday, May 16, 2019, which killed his two sons (17 and 19 years old) and his mother (60 years old) and seriously injured him, his son (21 years old) and his father (65 years old).*

[73] The International Federation of Journalists holds the Yemeni government responsible for the crisis facing journalists working for state-owned media: <http://www.ifj-arabic.org/page-ifj-781.html>

[74] Reporters without Borders "2019 World Press Freedom Index – A cycle of fear": https://rsf.org/ar/ltsnyf-lmy-lsn-2019-al-lkhwf-tml-bqs-tqth?fbclid=IwAR0lLgw8ThzBjzh6Q6w-L6amniDSEAHFa_km1ZIYIOKdpUP0PHwrUq8mx6g

* For detailed information about this incident, refer to the chapter on Air Strikes.

In 2019, the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group also continued its arbitrary legal proceedings against 11 journalists.^[75] These journalists appeared before the Specialized Criminal Court of First Instance. These court sessions have been marred by a variety of due process and procedural abuses, ranging from the failure to inform the defense lawyers of the date of the trial sessions and preventing them from obtaining pictures from the case files, to the judge issuing a decision preventing the journalists' defense team to plead before him in the case. The journalists' trial comes after four years of the men being subjected to various violations and abuses, including enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment. Meanwhile, the fate of journalist Waheed Al-Soufi remains unknown since his disappearance in Sanaa in early June 2015.

Many news and information websites are still subject to blocking by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, as it controls the company that provides Internet service in Yemen, "Yemen Net."

Legal Framework

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

The Yemeni constitution reiterates the commitment of the state to work in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all relevant instruments and agreements and international principles. The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen recognizes freedom of expression as an inherent right, stipulating: "Every citizen has the right to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country. The state shall guarantee freedom of thought and expression of opinion in speech, writing and photography within the limits of the law."^[76]

[75] Mwatana for Human Rights, "Press in Yemen Faces Extinction": <https://mwatana.org/press-in-yemen/>

[76] Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, January 10, 1994, Chapter Two, Basic Rights and Duties of Citizens, Article No. (42).

Violations against journalists



10

An incident of Attacks
"Mwatana" documented
during the year 2019

A journalist and worker
in the field of journalism
and media activity

13



Responsibility for the facts of the violations

7

Government forces

2

The Ansar Allah
(Houthi) group

1

Saudi/UAE-led
coalition forces

Case Studies

- **On Monday, June 10, at about midnight, armed fighters affiliated with the Shabwani Elite forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council raided the house of media activist Salem Al-Zubayri (24 years old) in Ataq city, Shabwah governorate. He was detained in the Elite Forces camp prison in ‘Azzan district.**

Awad al-Zubayri (53 years old), Salem’s father, said: “There were 6 military vehicles that belonged to the Elite forces in front of my house, with dozens of armed men on board. Three of them took my son Salem, squeezed him into one of these vehicles and took him away. Em Salem and his brothers were on the stairs of the house asking with horror about what happened and where Salem is. I told them he had been taken by the Elite forces... so his sick mother fainted directly.”^[77]

- **On Saturday evening, July 27, 2019, at around 06:00 p.m., armed Ansar Allah (Houthi) men took the journalist Abdul Hafiz al-Samadi (38 years old) from in front of his house in Sanaa to an unknown location. He was disappeared for about three and a half months. Five months after his arrest, Al-Samadi appeared in front of the Public Prosecution.**

Amjad, pseudonym (30 years old), said: “The masked gunmen got out of three cars, grabbed Abdul Hafiz, pointed their guns at him and told him to go with them. Then, they beat him and pushed him into the vehicle by force. It was all happening in front of his young children.”^[78]

Abdul Majid Sabra, the lawyer of journalist al-Samadi, said: “When he was taken to the interrogation room, Abdul Hafiz looked very tired with a weak body and a pale and diseased face, due to ill-treatment and denial of medical care. This was confirmed by al-Samadi during the investigation session and he confirmed that he suffers from colon diseases, high blood pressure and shortness of breath. He was also kicked and slapped during previous investigation sessions.”

- **After midnight on Sunday, December 22, 2019 at about 01:30 p.m., the reporter, Wahib Al-Maqrani (45 years old) and his colleague, photographer Dhia’ al-Muqrani (24 years old) were arrested at a military checkpoint affiliated with Hadi government forces. Soldiers assaulted them and looted their personal belongings before detaining them in an abandoned room near the checkpoint for approximately an hour before they were released.**

[77] Mwatana for Human Rights interview with the victim’s father, on June 18, 2019.

[78] Mwatana for Human Rights Interview with an eyewitness on August 6, 2019.

Chapter Two:

Freedom of Movement

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

In 2019, Mwatana documented 29 cases impeding freedom of movement in different Yemeni regions. The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group is responsible for 17 cases, government forces and affiliated groups for 8, and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council for three. The joint responsibility falls on Ansar Allah (Houthis) group and government forces in one incident.

Legal Framework

International human rights law, which protects the freedom of civilians to move, remains applicable even in times of armed conflict. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.”^[79] The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Yemen has ratified, also stresses, “Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.”^[80] While the Covenant permits the imposition of some restrictions during conflict, any restrictions must be exceptional and of a limited and temporary nature.

Case Studies

- **On the morning of Wednesday, February 6, at around 07:45 a.m., members of the 17th Infantry Brigade, loyal to President Hadi, crossed the highway of al-Dhabab (“fog line”), the western entrance to the city of Taiz, and established a checkpoint. They prevented the passage of all cars, including cargo trucks, and only allowed cars transporting “khat” to enter Taiz city.**

The armed forces of the 17th Infantry Brigade decided to cut off the road in order to collect an entry fees for goods, impose “khat” taxes, and force people to pay them fees.

- **On the morning of Saturday, October 26, at around 09:30 a.m., at a checkpoint for the Security Belt of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in Al Halimyn district, Lahj governorate, soldiers stopped a passenger van for three hours under the pretext that they had higher instructions not to allow citizens from the northern regions to enter Aden.**

The soldiers at the checkpoint did not allow the passage of Ahmad, (pseudonym) (28 years) and his mother (60 years), saying they were from a northern governorate and that the soldiers had higher instructions not to allow any “northerner” to enter Aden.

The driver, Mohammad, (pseudonym) (36 years old), said, “After our request and pleading to allow Ahmed and his mother to pass, the leader of the checkpoint said that he would be allowed to pass if someone from the southern governorates came to the point as a sponsor for the northern people to allow them to cross.”

[79] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13.

[80] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article: 12, paragraph 1

Almost three hours after stopping at the point, one of Ahmed's friends came and sponsored Ahmed and his mother in front of the soldiers at the point. Then they let them pass.

- **On the afternoon of Wednesday, November 13, at around 04:00 p.m., at a checkpoint that Ansar Allah (Houthis) established on the road to Radaa in Mayfa'at 'Anss district, Dhamar governorate, the group's fighters stopped a passenger bus for three hours.**

The bus was transporting passengers to Ma'rib. One of the gunmen accused the driver of "smuggling fighters to Ma'rib," and forcibly took the driver's mobile phone and identification papers. The passenger bus was stopped for three hours, after which one of the gunmen came and asked everyone to pay 10,000 riyals to the leader of the checkpoint to allow the bus to pass. The passengers refused to pay the required amount and after much debate, the gunmen agreed to take an amount of 5,000 riyals and the bus was allowed to pass.

Violations of Freedom of Movement



10

An incident of Attacks "Mwatana" documented during the year 2019

Motives of the parties to impose restrictions



Discrimination according to geographic and political affiliation



Material extortion and illegal gain



Imposing illegal royalties

Responsibility for the facts of the violations

17

The Ansar Allah (Houthi) group

8

Government forces

3

The STC backed by UAE

1

Corporate responsibility (Ansar Allah & Government forces)



► Sanaa Airport, November 2018

Chapter Three:

Peaceful Assembly

During the war, Yemen has seen an outbreak of repressive tactics and violent practices against freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, clearly indicating the extent of the decline and restriction on civic space and political freedoms in the country due to the continuation of the conflict.

Mwatana documented two incidents of UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces cracking down on peaceful gatherings and demonstrations by Yemeni citizens in Abyan and Hadhramaut.

The right to peaceful assembly refers to the ability of a group of persons to meet and gather at any time in a public or private place, with peaceful intentions. The right to peaceful assembly includes the freedom to prepare, assemble, and participate in the assembly, and includes gatherings, festivals, demonstrations, strikes, marches, seminars and conferences.^[81] This right enables individuals to express their opinions collectively on issues affecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, or affecting the daily lives of these individuals.

[81] Publications of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "Handbook on Monitoring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly", Warsaw-Poland, pp. 17, 2013.

Legal Framework

International human rights law remains in force during armed conflict, and protects the right to peaceful assembly and association. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”^[82]

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

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

Case Study

Political and media activists in the governorate of Abyan called for a protest to demand the return of the governor and the local authority so they could restart their work. When the work stopped, it greatly affected the service sector in the governorate.

- **On the morning of Sunday, November 17, at around 08:00 a.m., in Zinjibar, Abyan governorate, gunmen affiliated with the UAE-Backed Southern Transitional Council proceeded to suppress and disperse civilians who were gathering in front of the governorate gate in order to demand the return of the local authority. The Southern Transitional Council forces dispersed the protesters using batons and shooting live bullets in the air, and detained a number of demonstrators before some social figures mediated their release.**

[82] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 20.

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

[84] Law No. (29) of 2003 regarding organizing demonstrations and marches, Chapter Two, Article No.(3).

Chapter Four:

Religious Minorities

From the very outset of the armed conflict, the Bahá'í minority in Yemen has been living in extreme fear as a result of the abuse and repression practiced by the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group. In 2018, Mwatana documented the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group arbitrarily arresting Abdullah Al-Olafi, a member of the Bahá'í community, apparently linked to his religious beliefs.

In a development that showed a clear disregard for the basic guarantees to a fair trial, on Sunday, January 2, 2018, the Specialized Criminal Court in the capital, Sanaa, issued a death sentence against Hamed Kamal Haidara, a member of the Bahá'í community. By 2019, four Bahá'í citizens were still arbitrarily detained in a prison supervised by the Preventive Security Service, while another has been forcibly disappeared since April 2017.

On September 15, 2018, the Specialized Criminal Court held the first court hearings against a list of 23 members of the Bahá'í minority, including a child and eight women, in secret, without informing their lawyers, their families, or even some of those included on the list. The same charges brought against Hamed Haidara were brought against them, with the addition of the charge of apostasy against the Yemenis among them.

On March 23, 2020, the Sanaa Court of Appeal upheld the death sentence against Hamed Haydara after a lengthy, unfair trial that lasted nearly five years. On March 25, 2020, Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Ansar Allah Supreme Political Council, announced Ansar Allah would be releasing all Bahá'í prisoners and pardoning Hamed Haydara, who had been sentenced to death. On July 30, 2020, the International Baha'i Community announced in a press release that six prominent Baha'is had been released from prison after being held for several years by Ansar Allah (Houthi) authorities in Sana'a, on condition they leave Yemen.^[85] Those released were transported by plane from Sana'a to outside Yemen.

[85] <https://www.bic.org/news/six-bahais-imprisoned-houthis-freed-yemen>

RECOMMENDATIONS



► Airstrike, The residential neighborhood of Rabat, Sana'a (May 16, 2019)

To United Nations Member States

- Support efforts to end hostilities, reach a sustainable and inclusive peace and ensure accountability and redress for serious violations and crimes.
- Support efforts to document violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Insist on justice and accountability for possible war crimes, and redress to civilian victims.

To the United Nations Human Rights Council

- Strengthen the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, including to investigate, collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of, and to prepare files and clarify responsibility for, the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Yemen since 2014, and to explore and report on approaches and practical mechanisms of accountability to secure truth, justice, and redress for victims in Yemen.

To the United Nations Security Council

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

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

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

To the Saudi/UAE-Led Coalition and Forces Loyal to It, such as the Southern Transitional Council and the Joint Forces on the West Coast

- Particularly in light of the millions of Yemenis currently at risk of starvation, and without access to adequate healthcare in Yemen, immediately end all measures exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, including opening all land, sea and air ports for humanitarian and other critical life-saving goods without delay or impediment, and open all air ports for humanitarian and commercial flights.
- End attacks on civilians and civilian objects, such as markets, farms, civilian infrastructure, and health and educational facilities.
- Conduct credible, impartial and transparent investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law, announce the results of these investigations.
- Provide prompt and adequate redress for civilian victims and their families for deaths, injuries and damage to property resulting from unlawful attacks, and adopt a unified, comprehensive and easily accessible mechanism for providing ex gratia (condolence) payments to civilians who suffer losses due to military operations, regardless of the attack's lawfulness.
- Close unofficial detention centers, release those detained arbitrarily, reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared, and conduct credible investigations into allegations of torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment in detention centers.

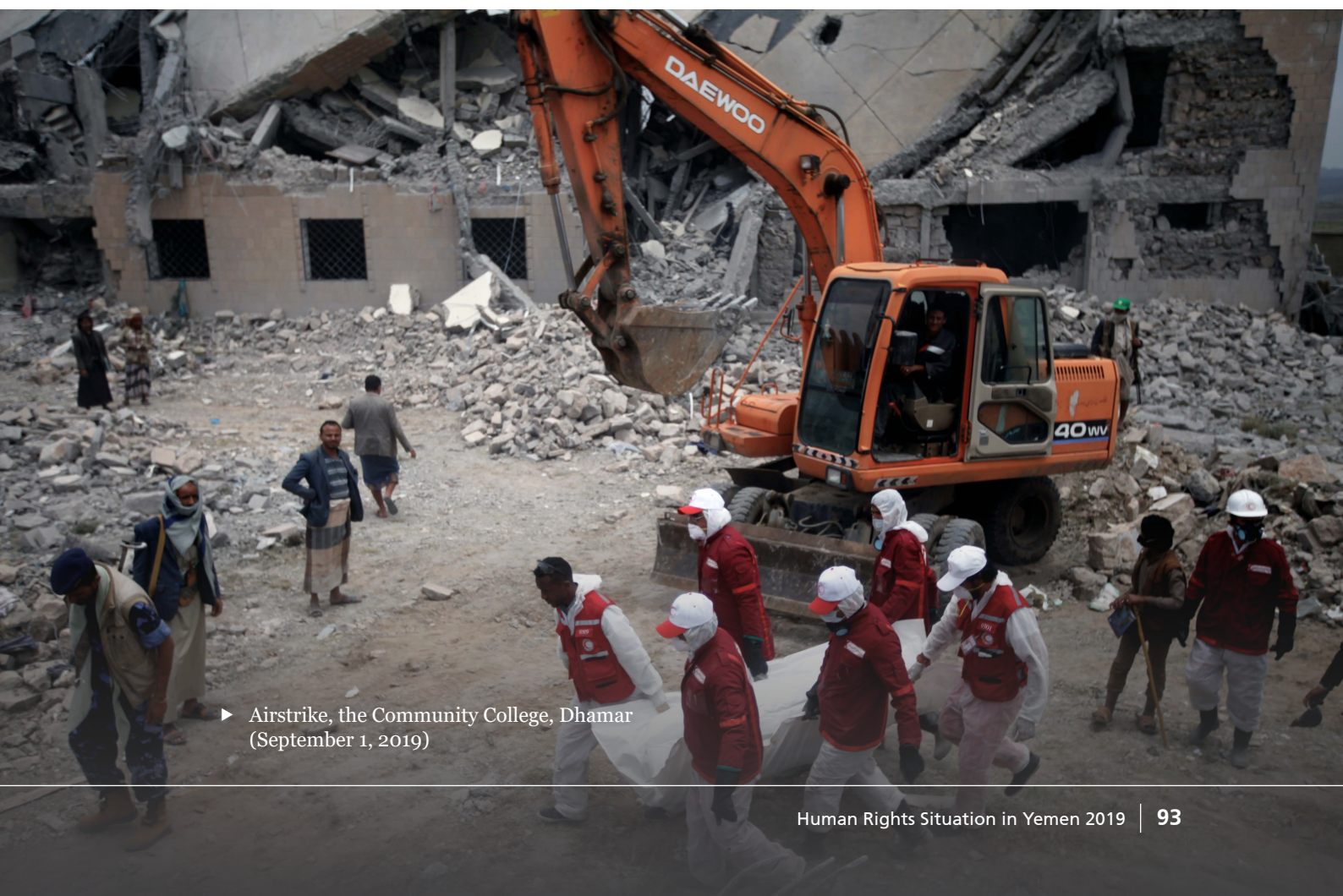
To the Ansar Allah (Houthi) Armed Group

- Immediately end use of indiscriminate weapons.
- Commit to end use of antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines and provide maps of mine-affected areas to facilitate de-mining.
- Respect the protected status of medical facilities and withdraw armed individuals from in and around medical centers.
- Particularly in light of the millions of Yemenis currently at risk of starvation, and without access to adequate healthcare in Yemen, immediately end all restrictions, denial and confiscations of humanitarian aid and access, investigate all incidents of restricting, denying or confiscating humanitarian aid, and hold those responsible to account.
- Prohibit locating military targets, including concentrations of forces, in populated areas and neighborhoods, or the storage of weapons in or near these areas.
- Stop the recruitment of children, including all those under the age of 18, and cease use of children in hostilities. Dismiss those who are in service immediately.
- Withdraw forces from occupied schools and cease use of schools for military purposes, including mobilization.
- Immediately release all those arbitrarily detained and reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared and release them.
- Immediately release all journalists currently detained and cease all restrictions on journalists' work.

To the Internationally Recognized Government of Yemen

- Condemn violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by Saudi/UAE-led coalition forces, and demand the cessation of attacks against civilians and civilian objects.
- Condition consent for the coalition's ongoing operations in Yemen on their implementation of the aforementioned actions and recommendations.
- Ensure all government and security forces and associated armed units are operating under a unified command structure, and respect international human rights and humanitarian law.

- Support efforts to ensure redress and condolence payments to civilians, including by members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and the United States, and by providing redress and condolence payments to those civilians impacted by government attacks, and ensure such processes are transparent, with sufficient information publicly released for independent monitoring.
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) without delay.



► Airstrike, the Community College, Dhamar (September 1, 2019)



► Airstrike, The residential neighborhood of Rabat, Sana'a (May 16, 2019)

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Without their help, this report would not have come to light.

WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN YEMEN 2019

The war in Yemen is entering its sixth year, with the humanitarian disaster the country is experiencing the most severe it has ever been. Over the conflict, more devastation, destruction, division, horrific violations and deepening social rifts have created an almost complete separation between Yemeni men and women and their inherent right to life, dignity and freedom. The country has experienced the worst man-made humanitarian crisis.

In 2019, the warring parties in Yemen continued to commit grave violations, undermining Yemenis' ability to live, in flagrant disregard of the basic rules of international law and humanitarian standards. They also continued to undermine rights and freedoms.

During 2019, Mwatana for Human Rights conducted 2376 interviews in Arabic with victims, relatives, witnesses and medical and humanitarian workers.

In this annual report, "Mwatana" whose work covers all Yemeni governorates except Socotra, provides an extensive review of particular violations that occurred and the overall human rights situation in Yemen during 2019. "Mwatana" has documented—through fact-finding, evidence examination, and detailed research—hundreds of incidents in 2019 alone that appear to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, some of which may amount to war crimes. The report presents some incidents as case studies, highlighting different types of abuse committed by the warring parties.



Mwatana for Human Rights