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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## Houthi violations in Yemen

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (Egypt) condemns the continuation of the grave violations committed by the Houthi militias against civilians in Yemen, some of which amount to war crimes. The military escalation continues, whereas houses are bombed, civilians are targeted by snipers and opponents are persecuted, detained in secret prisons and brought to trials fall short of internationally recognized fair trial standards. The Houthis execute and imprison large numbers of Yemenis in violation of international conventions and norms. They also recruit children to fight in their ranks, in violation of Article 38 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which prohibits the involvement of children in armed conflict. Detainees in Houthi prisons are subjected to various forms of torture, often leading to death. This is in addition to the ongoing suffering of Yemeni women who are detained and sexually assaulted.

### Targeting Civilians

Civilians are being targeted by the Houthis, which impose severe restrictions on their daily lives, including obstruction of access to basic supplies and humanitarian aid by land or sea. The indiscriminate shelling of the governorates and cities of Taiz, al-Bayda, al-Dali' and Hudaydah is persistent. On August 1, 2019, the house of a Yemeni citizen, Abdullah Naji al-Faqih, was bombed in a village of al-Dhali' governorate that injured his wife and four children.<sup>1</sup> In late June, a World Food Program (WFP) distribution point was bombed in the Shaab al-Dibba neighborhood of Basin supervision area, killing four civilians and wounding eight others, including children.<sup>2</sup>

The extensive use of mines in many areas by the Houthi militia leads to wounding, maiming and killing a large number of civilians. On July 31, 2019, a nine-year-old child was wounded in a mine explosion planted by the Houthis in the Qania area of Al-Bayda governorate.<sup>3</sup>

Between the beginning of the year and the end of July, Maat, in cooperation with field activists inside Yemen's province of al-Dhali, monitored that the Houthi militia had carried out destruction of 712 houses and facilities, 4 bridges, bombing of 31 houses and assault on 9 mosques that were converted into military barracks, as well as 1320 farms were looted and damaged and 17 water pumps were destroyed. They also targeted schools and educational institutions. 49 educational institutions were targeted, including 3 schools fully destroyed and 2 partially destroyed, as well as 2 colleges and technical institutes and 8 schools converted into military barracks and weapons stores.

### Arbitrary detention and torture

Many public institutions and facilities have become secret prisons where large numbers of citizens are held by the Houthis. Nearly 80 prisoners have been monitored in Dhamar General Hospital. Around 65 detainees have been monitored in government buildings and archaeological castles, which were turned into detention centers in the same governorate. Several residential houses have also been turned into prisons for thousands of detainees, estimated by local reports to be 3,000.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> إصابة امرأة وأربعة أطفال بقذيفة حوثية على منزل في الضالع، وكالة 2 ديسمبر، تاريخ النشر: 1 أغسطس 2019، تاريخ الدخول: <https://www.2dec.net/news17702.html> 4 أغسطس 2019.

<sup>2</sup> مجزرة للانقلابيين في تعز تسفر عن 4 قتلى و8 مصابين، تاريخ النشر: 2 يوليو، تاريخ الدخول: 14 يوليو 2019، <https://bit.ly/2LmJ7zD>.

<sup>3</sup> إصابة طفل بانفجار لغم زرعه الميليشيات الحوثية في البيضاء، 2 ديسمبر، تاريخ النشر: 31 يوليو 2019، تاريخ الدخول: 4 أغسطس 2019، <https://www.2dec.net/news17678.html>.

<sup>4</sup> مجزرة للانقلابيين في تعز تسفر عن 4 قتلى و8 مصابين، تاريخ النشر: 2 يوليو، تاريخ الدخول: 14 يوليو 2019، <https://bit.ly/2LmJ7zD>.

The Houthis' violations go beyond the arrest and detention of civilians to the brutal torture of detainees that leading to death. On May 9, 2019, two detainees were killed in Houthi prisons, Yahya al-Namsha and Zaid al-Namsha, in Amran and Sana'a governorates as signs of torture appeared on their bodies. Human rights reports indicate that there have been 377 abductees from Hajjah province since February.<sup>5</sup>

In May, three others were killed in custody after being tortured in Hudaydah governorate after a period of disappearance: Mohammed Yahya Fatini al-Masoudi, 35 years old, who was abducted by the Houthis and remained disappeared until his body was handed over to his family with signs of severe torture, who was forced to bury him without being examined by a forensic doctor; Adel Ayash Matari Mahboub, 27 years old, who was abducted by the Houthis from his home in the village of Knee in Zabid and died a few days later by electrocution, his body remained for two years in a Sana'a hospital until his family was informed of his death in May; and Ali bin Ali Skane, from Aslem district of Hajjah province, died after being abducted by the Houthis and remained disappeared for days.<sup>6</sup>

On January 10, 2019, Tawfiq Ahmed Muhammad al-Hajji, 22 years old, died after nearly three years in the Houthis' prisons. His death reportedly came under mysterious circumstances in which the Houthis alleged that he suffered kidney failure and was taken to hospital. They refused to hand over his body to his family and refused to reveal his body after spending nearly nine days in a morgue refrigerator.<sup>7</sup> On January 28, 2019, six abductees were killed by the Houthis following their torture.<sup>8</sup>

## Extrajudicial killing

The Houthi militia carried out a number of assassinations in areas that resist its military control. It also targeted military leaders through two attacks on a police station and a military parade of the Yemeni army in Aden on August 1, 2019, which resulted in the death and injury of dozens, including Brigadier General Munir al-Yafi (Abu Yamamah), commander of the first support and back-up brigade. On July 30, 2019, a 15-year-old child was killed by a Houthi sniper while grazing sheep in the village of al-Midam in al-Maqatra district, northwest of Lahj province.<sup>9</sup>

In another context, Yemenis appear before customary courts that lack jurisdiction and fall short of the most basic standards of fair trial. Disappeared, after a period, appear before these courts and they are charged with incitement to murder and espionage and sentenced to prison terms of dozens of years and to death. On July 9, 2019, the Houthi-aligned Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a, which lacks jurisdiction, convicted 30 abductees, including university professors, university students and imams. They were sentenced to death after they had been subjected to brutal and psychological methods of torture for several months.<sup>10</sup>

## Recruiting children

The deterioration of the humanitarian and economic conditions and high school dropout rates have led to recruiting and using children by the Houthis for military and combat

<sup>5</sup> "رابطة أمهات المختطفين" - Association of Abductee's Mothers". Facebook. Pulished on 9 May 2019. Accessed on 13 July 2019. Available on <http://tiny.cc/e97p9y>.

<sup>6</sup> "رابطة أمهات المختطفين" - Association of Abductee's Mothers". Facebook. Pulished on 23 May 2019. Accessed on 13 July 2019. Available on <http://tiny.cc/ck6p9y>.

<sup>7</sup> "رابطة أمهات المختطفين بتعز تحمل الحوثيين مسؤولية وفاة أحد أبنائها، تاريخ النشر: 10 يناير 2019، تاريخ الدخول: 13 يوليو 2019" <https://bit.ly/2ADgNSS>، متاح على

<sup>8</sup> "رابطة أمهات المختطفين" - Association of Abductee's Mothers". Facebook. Pulished on 28th January 2019. Accessed on 13th July 2019. Available on <https://bit.ly/2xLtHw3>.

<sup>9</sup> استشهاد راعي أغنام برصاص قناص حوثي في مقاطعة لحج، 2 ديسمبر، تاريخ النشر: 31 يوليو 2019، تاريخ الدخول: 4 أغسطس <https://www.2dec.net/news17659.html>.

<sup>10</sup> "رابطة أمهات المختطفين" - Association of Abductee's Mothers". Facebook. Pulished on 12 July 2019. Accessed on 13 July 2019. Available on <https://bit.ly/2xLtHw3>.

purposes. Tens of thousands of children are recruited, and families are forced to accept money, albeit a small, for accepting the recruitment of their children in the war. They are also forced to celebrate the death of their children as martyrs. The children recruited are aged between 11 and 17 years. In June, the Yemeni Information Minister confirmed that the Houthis had recruited about 50,000 children in the last three months, using schools and summer camps to train children to use arms and mobilize them for fighting and murder.<sup>11</sup> In Sana'a, girl students performed a military parade during an event within the activities of the Martyr Week approved by the Houthi-aligned Ministry of Education in the capital.<sup>12</sup>

## Violations against women

Yemeni women are subjected to numerous abuses, abductions, arrests and torture by the Houthis. During the first half of 2019, it was reported that 120 women from Sana'a were arrested, most of which were detained in the criminal investigation facilities in Sana'a.<sup>13</sup> On July 9, 2019, the Houthi-controlled Sana'a Court of Appeal sentenced Asma al-Omeissy to 15 years in prison, who was abducted from a checkpoint in Sana'a and disappeared for four years in Houthi prisons. She had been sentenced to death before it was commuted to a 15-year prison sentence.<sup>14</sup>

In the same context, Yemeni women are arrested on charges of prostitution and dishonorable behaviors and are brought to trials, most of which end in death or long prison terms sentences. 100 women, including minors in Sana'a and 70 in Amran, were detained in secret prisons and subjected to torture and sexual abuse. Families were prevented from visiting their daughters in Amran prison, and human rights sources documented the suicide of four women detainees in Sana'a.<sup>15</sup>

## Recommendation

- We call upon Member States to take immediate action to hold the Houthi militia accountable for violations of international law.
- We call upon the international community, including the United Nations, multilateral and regional institutions, to take immediate steps to hold Houthi militias accountable for gross and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in relation to extrajudicial killings and child recruitment.
- Investigate all cases of torture in Houthi prisons in accordance with international standards, take immediate measures to hold those responsible to accountable, and provide remedies to victims.
- We call upon the Human Rights Council to show strong support for pressure to protect Yemeni women from these violations.
- Use all possible means to address the violations of the Houthis, especially the imposition of sanctions referred to in the laws of war.

<sup>11</sup> "Houthis Recruit 50,000 Yemen Child Soldiers in 3 Months, Minister Says." The Defense Post. June 20, 2019. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://bit.ly/32szogs>.

<sup>12</sup> الحوثيون يحولون المدارس إلى منصات للتعبئة- أنشطة تركز على التحشيد الطائفي والقتالي... وأسر تضطر لنقل أبنائها، تاريخ <https://bit.ly/2Y5pZMw>. النشر: 12 يوليو 2019م، تاريخ الدخول: 13 يوليو 2019م،

<sup>13</sup> "Yemen: Houthis Commit 18,000 Human Rights Violations in 6 Months." Asharq AL-awsat. July 6, 2019. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://bit.ly/2SbJb5O>.

<sup>14</sup> أول يمنية يعاقبها الحوثيون بتهمة سياسية.. هذه قصتها، تاريخ النشر: 10 يوليو 2019، تاريخ الدخول: 13 يوليو 2019، <https://bit.ly/2GcKf4N>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://tiny.cc/rfcq9y> التضامن النسوي، فيسبوك، تاريخ النشر: 3 مايو 2019، تاريخ الدخول: 15 يوليو 2019،