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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Peace Track Initiative, 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.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Human Rights Violations in Yemen: The Case of Prodigy Systems and Medex Connect and the Arbitrary Detention of Director Eng. Adnan Ali Hussein Al-Harazi

Introduction:

Prodigy Systems and Medex Connect for Healthcare Services Ltd, two active companies in the humanitarian field, were stormed by the Security and Intelligence Service of the de facto authority of Ansar Allah (the Houthi group) in Sana'a in January 2023.

The Director and owner of Prodigy Systems and the shareholder of Medex Connect, Eng. Adnan Al-Harazi, was arbitrarily detained, along with eleven employee managers without any legal justification. The de facto authorities of Ansar Allah (the Houthi group) after seven months of reluctance to refer the case to the judiciary system, finally did so in June 2023 with the prosecution escalating by calling for a death penalty for Al-Harazi. The ill-treatment has led to depriving the arbitrarily detained of his right to a fair trial with Al-Harazi resorting to hunger strike. This case reflects a continuation of the Houthi group violations and abuses of human rights through arbitrary arrest and detention, forced dismissal of employees, forced closure of the two companies, and seizure of their assets and financial accounts without legal justification or judicial order in their suppression of the humanitarian work.

Introducing the Humanitarian Role of Prodigy Systems:

Prodigy Systems for Designing Accounting Systems and Consulting is an individual Yemeni company established in 2006, and operates with an official permit from the de facto authority No. 87082 issued in the Sana'a, and they have permits for projects issued by the affiliated authority of Ansar Allah, which is called the "Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA)", and the last of these permits was obtained just two days before the companies were raided.

Among the activities of Prodigy Systems is to provide third party monitoring and evaluation services for international relief and humanitarian work projects carried out by the United Nations, such as the World Food Program and UNICEF, in addition to the World Bank and other international organizations authorized to operate in Yemen. The work of Prodigy Systems in monitoring and evaluation greatly helped in improving the social and economic conditions in the areas in which it operates, as it carried out nearly one hundred thousand field monitoring work periodically, and its work helped in reducing the diversion of aid or the placement and redistribution of spoiled and improperly stored food and medicines.

The Main Violation and Abuse:

On Wednesday, 11th January 2023, the headquarters of Prodigy Systems and Medex Connect for Healthcare Services Ltd were stormed and raided by forces affiliated with the Security and Intelligence Service of the de facto authority of Ansar Allah (the Houthi group), and the director and owner of Prodigy Systems and contributor to Medex Connect Eng. Adnan Al-Harazi was arbitrarily arrested, along with eleven employee managers without any justification or legal order.

The armed forces closed the streets surrounding them using armored vehicles and more than 100 masked men, armed with light and medium weapons, along with female security forces, and hovering drones, according to witnesses who were present during the incident.

The forces seized the devices, equipment, and servers of the two companies, which contained private information of right holders and beneficiaries. Additionally, their assets and financial accounts were frozen and their headquarters closed without any legal justification or official order. The two aforementioned companies and their financial accounts have not yet been opened.

The male and female employees were taken with excessive violence and gathered in separate rooms in groups after weapons were pointed at them and they were prevented from using phones and mobile devices that were taken from them. After that, the Director, Eng. Adnan Al-Harazi, and the directors of departments and sections were taken to unidentified "windows-shaded" buses, then they were taken back, gathered in a room, and restricted in their movement for nine hours.

The forces proceeded to take the women managers of the two companies and transfer them to a bus in the same way, had it not been for the intervention of their families, some of whom were present, along with the objection of the employees and managers led by Director Al-Harazi.

After more than a month from the date of arrest and detention, the de facto authorities began to gradually release the detained employees with commercial guarantees without the knowledge of the Public Prosecution during a period of three months, with the exception of the company's director Adnan Al-Harazi, who is still being held at the time of writing this statement.

The family did not receive a call from Al-Harazi until seven days after his detention and enforced disappearance, when he informed them that he was being held in the Security and Intelligence Service in the Shamlan area - west of Sana'a. After twenty days of Al-Harazi's incommunicado detention, the family was able to visit him for the first time from behind a glass barrier, and to speak to him through the telephone. The company's lawyers have not been able to meet Al-Harazi yet.

The dealings of the Security and Intelligence Service in a repressive and violent manner through its raid, aimed at suppressing anyone who dared to speak or even sympathize with the case. A large number of employees were subjected to a state of great shock as a result of that repressive treatment, and the companies' female employees are still suffering from its psychological impact and resorting to psychological treatment.

The Aftermath of the Storming:

Adnan Al-Harazi's family knocked on the doors of the judiciary system, grievance committees and commissions, the Parliament, and the Political Council in Sana'a, by directing repeated memoranda and appeals, but they did not find a response. Al-Harazi continued to be arbitrarily detained, including in "solitary confinement" for 150 days. Al-Harazi's family reported that he has been on hunger strike for several intermittent periods, the last of which was on Sunday, 9th July 2023. The jailers installed an intravenous nutrient solution for Al-Harazi, and the family did not know the content of the solution, and they were not notified of that at the time.

Additionally, Al-Harazi's family was able to obtain directives from the Public Prosecutor and the Specialized Criminal Prosecutor to resume the operations of the two companies, however, these were not implemented.

As a result of the closure of the two companies, more than 1,000 male and female employees were deprived of their source of livelihood. The companies have incurred and continue to incur huge losses for every day that passes while it is closed, amounting to more than 10 million USD worth of projects.

Because no result was reached, peaceful protests were arranged to deliver these complaints to the concerned and relevant authorities in Sana'a in order to stop the injustice and resume the operation of the two companies. In solidarity with the engineer, his family, employees of Prodigy Systems, and a number of those in solidarity with them organized peaceful sit-ins and vigils in front of the companies' headquarters and in front of the criminal prosecution. The peaceful sit-in was broken up by force of coercion at night by dozens of armed men. Peaceful vigils against the abuse in the case continue until date by Adnan's family, the company's employees, and a number of those in solidarity with them.

In early June 2023, the Security and Intelligence Service, after intensive follow-up, referred the case from the Security and Intelligence Service to the Specialized Criminal Prosecution. The first official investigation sessions began on 11th June 2023, but the investigation sessions of Prodigy Systems were often held from three in the afternoon until one in the morning inside the Security and Intelligence Service building, which is in violation of the Yemeni Code of Criminal Procedure. Additionally, on 20th August 2023, the de facto Prosecution in Sana'a escalated by calling for a death penalty for Al-Harazi during the trial proceedings.

Recommendations:

We urgently appeal to the Human Rights Council Members to support the following demands:

1. Support the immediate and unconditional release of Eng. Adnan Al-Harazi, ensuring restitution for him, his family, and the employees of the two companies.
2. Support forming an independent investigation for this case with the view to hold perpetrators accountable and bring them to justice.
3. Call for the immediate resumption of operation of the two companies and carry out their work without restrictions or conditions, with the view to provide reparation and compensation for the damages and losses incurred as a result of closure.
4. Support strongly the role of Prodigy Systems to carry out oversight of relief and humanitarian work to ensure the necessary delivery of aid is reaching the poor in Yemen, and to reduce corruption in this vital humanitarian aspect.
