

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE  
KING'S BENCH DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE COURT

CLAIM NO: CO/3579/2020

BETWEEN:

THE KING on the application of  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE ("CAAT")

Claimant

- and -

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE ("SSIT")

Defendant

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EXHIBIT SPF17

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## YEMEN 2021

All parties to the conflict in Yemen continued to commit violations of international humanitarian and human rights law with impunity. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition, supporting the internationally recognized Yemeni government, and Huthi forces continued to carry out attacks that unlawfully killed and injured civilians and destroyed civilian objects, including food infrastructure. Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces carried out summary killings. Parties to the conflict carried out harassment, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials, against individuals on the basis of their political, religious or professional affiliations, their peaceful activism or their gender. All parties perpetrated gender-based violence and discrimination. The government and STC used lethal violence to repress largely peaceful protests demanding measures to address the deteriorating economic situation. Parties to the conflict impeded the flow of food, medicine, fuel and humanitarian aid. The Huthi de facto authorities prevented Covid-19 vaccinations. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain lobbied state members of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) against renewing the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (UN GEE), forcing the termination of the only international, impartial investigative mechanism for Yemen. All parties to the conflict contributed to environmental degradation. Death sentences were handed down and executions carried out.

## Background

The armed conflict continued throughout 2021, markedly escalating in February and September when Huthi forces launched offensives against government forces in Ma'arib, Dahle', al-Bayda and Shabwa governorates. This resulted in unprecedented territorial gains for Huthi forces, who by the end of 2021 were closing in on Ma'arib city. These and other fronts witnessed displacement of 573,362 people, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Fighting also continued in Aden, Abyan and Shabwa governorates, including in heavily populated areas, between the United Arab Emirates-backed STC and government forces, between STC factions, and between STC forces and local tribes. Although STC and government representatives restated their commitment to the Riyadh power-sharing agreement, it was still not fully implemented and STC forces remained outside of government control.

Despite promising signs of a breakthrough in political talks between the parties in 2020, by the end of 2021 the newly appointed UN Special Envoy for Yemen noted that discord between the parties was deepening.

## **Unlawful attacks**

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition and Huthi forces continued to conduct indiscriminate attacks, which killed and injured civilians and destroyed and damaged civilian objects, including food distribution facilities.

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition carried out air strikes that killed or injured civilians and damaged civilian objects. On 21 March, in Hodeidah governorate, two air strikes hit Salif grain port, damaging facilities and injuring five employees. On 14 June, in Khamir district, Amran governorate, two poultry farms were hit by missiles that the UN GEE concluded were likely fired by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. The UN GEE expressed concern that the coalition was failing to take all feasible measures to protect civilians.

Huthi forces continued to use imprecise heavy weaponry. Throughout March, they regularly fired such weaponry into the Meel, Tawasol and Kheir camps for internally displaced people, close to Ma'arib city, 1-3km from the front line. This killed six women and three children. On 3 April, in Rawda neighbourhood, Ma'arib city, a rocket launched from a Huthi-controlled area killed one boy and one man and injured three boys. The UN GEE concluded that these attacks amounted to war crimes.

In Hodeidah, government forces occupied the Thabit Brothers food production facility, using it for military purposes and therefore rendering it a military target. On 6 and 19 June, Huthi forces shelled the facility, causing civilian casualties and damaging food production and water supply.

## **Unlawful killings**

In Aden, a governorate controlled by STC forces, there were 38 assassinations or attempted assassinations of civilians in 2021, according to SAM for Rights and Liberties.

On 8 September, at al-Farsha checkpoint, Tur al-Bahah, Lahij governorate, STC forces stopped and killed a doctor. On 4 October, unidentified armed men at another checkpoint in Tur al-Bahah, in an area controlled by STC forces, stopped and killed a nurse working for Doctors Without Borders.

## **Arbitrary detention, torture and unfair trials**

All parties to the conflict continued to detain, forcibly disappear and torture individuals on the basis of their political, religious or professional affiliations, their peaceful activism or

their gender.

## **Huthi de facto authorities**

Huthi de facto authorities continued to arbitrarily detain hundreds of migrant men, women and children, mostly Ethiopian and Somali nationals, in poor conditions for indefinite periods in Sana'a city. On 7 March, detainees conducted a hunger strike in protest. Authorities responded by corralling 350 detainees in a locked hangar and firing projectiles into the building, igniting a fire that killed 46 detainees and injured 202 others. The Huthi Ministry of Interior stated that they had started an investigation, found the police were responsible and arrested 11 personnel.

Huthi de facto authorities continued to detain four journalists on death row. Amnesty International documented how journalists from the same group of detainees, but who were released in 2020 along with men from the Baha'i community, were subjected to enforced disappearance and torture during their detention, before being forced into exile as a condition of their release.<sup>1</sup>

Huthi de facto authorities continued legal proceedings targeted against Baha'i on the basis of their religion, and froze or confiscated assets belonging to 70 members of the community. They also continued to arbitrarily detain, since March 2016, a Jewish man on the basis of his religion, despite judicial rulings requiring his release.

## **STC forces**

In early 2021, in Aden, STC forces arbitrarily detained two men for criticizing the STC. In May, in Aden, STC counter-terrorism forces detained a man whose fate remained unclear at the end of the year. In September, they abducted four university students returning from a trip abroad, while they were transiting Aden airport. They were released at the end of September.

## **Gender-based violence and discrimination**

All parties to the conflict continued to impose and exploit patriarchal gender norms, used gender-based violence and discrimination to further their objectives, and maintained a wide range of discriminatory and oppressive customary and statutory legal provisions. Yemen was ranked second to worst in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index.

## **Huthi de facto authorities**

Huthi de facto authorities continued their campaign of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of women and girls, particularly women human rights defenders and those perceived to be challenging Huthi-enforced gender norms. In 2021 alone, they detained at least 233 women and girls in facilities in Sana'a, accusing them of supporting the coalition, "sex work" or crimes of "immoral acts". Women, girls and LGBTI people in these facilities have in the past been subjected to systematic torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence; cruel and inhuman treatment; and forced recruitment.

In February in Sana'a, Huthi de facto authorities arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared actress and model Intisar al-Hammadi.<sup>2</sup> During her detention, she was interrogated while blindfolded, and physically and verbally abused. On 5 May, Huthi de



facto authorities asked her to take a “virginity test”, which she refused. In November, she was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of committing an “indecent act”.

In January, the Huthis restricted permission to purchase contraceptives to “husbands”, congruent with the stated aim of increasing the birth rate to serve their military cause.

## **Government of Yemen**

In January, the government’s political security forces in Ma’arib arbitrarily arrested a woman because her brother had worked for the Huthis and she later died in custody, according to the Women’s Solidarity Network.

In July and August, government armed forces in Ta’iz harassed and assaulted two women human rights defenders, one of them living with disabilities, and accused them of “prostitution” as well as working for the Huthis. In September, according to Mwatana for Human Rights, political security forces in Ma’arib arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared another woman, a human rights activist and humanitarian worker, for a month.

## **Freedom of expression and assembly**

All parties continued to curtail free speech and assembly of human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents and perceived critics.

Throughout September, peaceful protests were staged against the government and STC in Aden, Ta’iz and southern governorates, demanding they address the economic crisis and deteriorating living conditions. According to Mwatana for Human Rights, the government and STC violently repressed these protests, including with gunfire and grenades. This resulted in STC forces in Aden killing one man and injuring three boys, and government forces killing a man and a boy and injuring another boy in Hadramout governorate, as well injuring a man in Ta’iz. The survivors all sustained life-changing injuries.

## **Right to food**

The economy continued to collapse. Devaluation of the Yemeni rial resulted in a 36-45% rise in the cost of living. Prior to this rise, around 47,000 Yemenis were already living in famine-like conditions, with 2021 being the first time such conditions emerged since the beginning of the conflict. More than 50% of the population – around 16.2 million people – were estimated to be food insecure, according to the World Food Programme.

All parties to the conflict continued to impose siege-like conditions, blockades, obstructions on imports and unnecessary bureaucracy or restrictions on movement, which inflated the cost of food, impeded humanitarian aid and fuelled food insecurity. The actions undermined famine prevention and contributed to famine-like conditions.

Between March and June, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition denied entry to 13 vessels carrying 350,000 tonnes of fuel derivatives. During 2021, two vessels carrying fuel derivatives were left waiting for clearance for approximately 200 days. In addition to contributing to fuel shortages, which impacted food production and distribution, the loss of revenue threatened authorities’ capacity to pay public sector salaries.

## Right to health

The health system continued to be severely impacted by the armed conflict, economic and institutional crises, and exacerbated by Covid-19. Only 50% of health facilities were fully functional and over 80% of the population faced difficulties in accessing healthcare services.

Restrictions by all parties to the conflict impeded access to medication and medical treatment, including Covid-19 vaccines and treatment. The continued closure of Sana'a airport by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition denied Yemenis life-saving medical treatment. Covid-19 health surveillance was limited throughout Yemen, compounded by Huthi authorities' refusal to collect or disseminate data on cases and deaths, despite healthcare providers identifying waves of infections and deaths. Huthi authorities publicly denied the existence of Covid-19 and spread disinformation about its seriousness. They refused to carry out vaccinations and rejected COVAX-initiative vaccines allocated to them by the government.

The spread of Covid-19, and inaction or mismanaged preventative measures by all parties, compounded structural inequalities, disproportionately impacting women, girls and those from marginalized communities.

Only 20% of maternal and child health services were functioning, according to the UN Population Fund, leaving 48,000 women and girls at risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth.

## Right to truth, justice and reparation

Intensive Saudi-led lobbying throughout 2021, as well as Bahraini-led opposition to the renewal of the UN GEE's mandate at the HRC in October, resulted in the termination of the only international, impartial investigative mechanism for international humanitarian law violations in Yemen. The final report of the UN GEE urged the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Yemen to the ICC, and called for the creation of an international criminal investigative body on the conflict in Yemen.<sup>3</sup>

In January, the Italian government permanently stopped issuing export licences for armaments to be used in Yemen, and cancelled shipments to Saudi Arabia. The Rome Public Prosecutor recommenced investigations into the complicity of the Italian National Authority for Export of Armaments and arms manufacturer RWM Italia SpA in a 2016 Saudi Arabia-led coalition air strike that killed six civilians.

In August, lawyers filed a submission on behalf of Yemeni complainants to the ICC, requesting an investigation into the criminal liability of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition leadership and mercenaries employed by a US military contractor, for unlawful air strikes that killed civilians, torture and murder. In October, they filed the same complaint to the UK's Metropolitan Police.

## Environmental degradation

Parties to the conflict were responsible for environmental degradation across Yemen through poor governance, cancelling programming, neglect of legally protected areas,

mismanagement of oil infrastructure, and placing economic pressure on civilians. Yemenis resorted to environmentally damaging coping mechanisms, including reliance on charcoal, unsustainable fishing and unsustainable development. This resulted in increased pollution, deforestation, soil erosion and loss of biodiversity, which adversely impacted enjoyment of the rights to health, food and water.

In June, at Bir Ali oil terminal, Shabwa governorate, mismanagement of oil infrastructure led to a pipeline discharging oil into the sea for four days, close to an environmentally sensitive coastline. Also in June, Huthi authorities refused to grant security assurances to the UN-led technical assistance team for the tanker FSO Safer. This left the tanker off the coast of Hodeidah at increasing risk of spilling its cargo of 1.14m barrels of oil, which would have devastating consequences for the biologically sensitive Red Sea coastline, as well as water scarcity, health, and the food security and livelihoods of millions of Yemenis and Eritreans reliant on Red Sea fishing.

## Death penalty

Death sentences were handed down and executions took place, including public executions.

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1. ***Yemen: Released and Exiled: Torture, Unfair Trials and Forcible Exile of Yemenis under Huthi Rule (Index: MDE 31/3907/2021), 27 May***
  2. **"Yemen: Actress arbitrarily detained at risk of forced 'virginity testing'", 7 May**
  3. **"Yemen: Saudi Arabia forces an end to mandate of only international mechanism to investigate HR abuses", 7 October**

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EXHIBIT SPF18

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# Yemen

## *Events of 2021*

Yemenis protest against the government after high depreciation of Yemeni Rial in Taez, Yemen on September 17, 2021.  
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As the conflict in Yemen enters its seventh year, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that it has caused the deaths of nearly a quarter of a million people. Millions of Yemenis continue to face the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than half the population facing acute levels of food insecurity. Yemen depends on imports of almost all its food and essential commodities, and the collapse of its currency has led to skyrocketing food and other commodity prices and [reduced](#) households' purchasing power. Millions of people cannot afford to meet their basic needs.

The conflict intensified in 2021 with 49 districts in Yemen directly affected by active front lines, up from 35 at the start of 2020. Marib governorate was the site of heavy fighting between Yemeni government forces and the Houthi armed group. Over 4 million people are internally displaced due to the conflict. The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the humanitarian crisis.

Civilians across the country suffered from worsening economic conditions and lack of basic services. Southern Yemen witnessed protests over deteriorating economic conditions and basic services. Torrential rains and flooding in May 2021 killed scores of people and damaged homes and infrastructure across the country. The UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts (GEE) on Yemen and other rights groups documented how parties to the conflict continue to commit serious violations of

international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including violations that likely amount to war crimes. Nevertheless, under heavy pressure from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UN Human Rights Council narrowly voted in October 2021 to end the mandate of the UN Group of Eminent Experts, shuttering the only international, independent body investigating abuses by all parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Houthi authorities in 2021 continued to block UN experts from securing the Safer oil tanker off the coast of Hodeida, leaving Yemen at risk of an environmental disaster if the ship's 1.1 million barrels of oil leak into the Red Sea.

## Covid-19

In late 2021 Yemen experienced a third wave of Covid-19 infections. As of August 2021, confirmed cases of Covid-19 had reached [8,265](#), with [3,252 associated deaths](#) according to the World Health Organization, but the true numbers are likely much higher. The Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Program (COVAX) promised 4.2 million vaccine doses to Yemen but by the middle of 2021 had only delivered 511,000 according to Oxfam. By late September 2021, authorities across the country had administered only 322,934 Covid-19 vaccine doses.

In June 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that Houthi authorities have suppressed information about the dangers and impact of Covid-19 and undermined international efforts to provide vaccines in areas under their control. Health workers in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen said that they faced significant barriers to obtaining vaccines imposed by Houthi authorities, subjecting them to unnecessary risk, and further damaging the country's healthcare system.

## Unlawful Attacks

In 2021, the Houthi armed group indiscriminately fired artillery and missiles into heavily populated areas in Marib governorate, killing and wounding civilians. Sirwah district in Marib was the main focus of the Saudi and UAE-led coalition's airstrikes in 2021 as coalition forces attempted to prevent Houthi forces from advancing into Marib city. Houthi forces fired mortars, rockets, and other missiles indiscriminately into other heavily populated areas including attacks into Taizz, Hodeidah, and Mocha, and continued launching ballistic missiles indiscriminately toward populated areas in Saudi Arabia.

The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, a monitoring mechanism under the United Nations Protection Cluster for Yemen, reported that 2,087 civilians were killed in armed violence in 2020. In September, the Yemeni human rights group Mwatana and Global Rights Compliance concluded that conduct by the coalition and Houthis severely

impeded civilians' access to food and water, effectively using starvation as a weapon of war, in violation of international humanitarian law.

Throughout the conflict, the Saudi and UAE-led coalition and the Houthis have committed unlawful attacks against civilian objects, such as residential homes, hospitals, and schools.

## **Children and Armed Conflict**

More than half the 20.7 million Yemenis in dire need of humanitarian assistance or protection are children. In 2021, Save the Children reported that between 2018 and 2020 a quarter of all civilian casualties were children. More than 1.5 million of Yemen's 4 million displaced people are children, and hundreds of thousands of children have become migrants or sought asylum abroad.

UNICEF and other groups warned in 2021 that children were facing the highest levels of severe acute malnutrition recorded in Yemen since the escalation of the conflict in 2015, with 2.3 million children acutely malnourished and nearly 400,000 children under five at imminent risk of death.

UNICEF stated in August that 2 million children were out of school and that one in six schools could no longer be used due to war damage. Parties to the conflict continued to utilize schools for military purposes. The UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen reported in 2021 that the Houthis, the Saudi and UAE-led coalition, and the Yemeni government had recruited children, used children in hostilities, and detained children.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for the second consecutive year failed to include the Saudi and UAE-led coalition from his "list of shame" of parties responsible for grave violations against children during conflict, despite attacks that killed and maimed children.

## **Landmines**

According to the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) have caused approximately 9,000 civilian casualties since the beginning of the conflict and 284 civilian casualties in 2020, including 55 children. Houthi forces have used antipersonnel landmines in violation of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, to which Yemen is a party.

The GEE in 2021 reported that Houthi forces have used anti-personnel landmines, which may amount to war crimes. Houthi forces' use of mines against objects critical for

survival has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and caused the starvation of civilians, an investigation by Mwatana showed.

## Arbitrary Detentions, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances

Investigations by Human Rights Watch and other rights groups produced [mounting evidence](#) of widespread arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, and ill-treatment and torture in detention by parties to the conflict.

On September 18, Houthi forces executed a group of 9 people, reportedly including a 17 year old, in Sana'a's Tahrir Square. They had been accused of facilitating an airstrike that killed a Houthi leader in 2018. The UN high commissioner for human rights said in September 2021 that "the defendants were sentenced to death in a judicial process that violated their constitutional rights and did not comply with fair trial standards under international law."

Houthi authorities in 2021 [continued](#) to persecute the Baha'i religious minority group. In 2021, *The Independent* reported that Houthi authorities detained at least 1,000 women between 2017 and 2020. Since 2015, Houthi authorities detained journalists and individuals exercising their right to expression, according to a [2021 report by Amnesty International](#).

A 2021 report by Mwatana stated that Houthi forces, Yemeni government-backed forces, and UAE-backed forces tortured to death detainees in secret prisons they have controlled since the start of the conflict.

Human Rights Watch [reported](#) in 2021 that the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces arbitrarily detained and tortured a journalist apparently for his critical reporting. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the Yemeni government, the STC, and the Houthi forces continued to commit egregious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, forced disappearances and torture, [according to a 2021 UN report](#).

## Blocking and Impeding Humanitarian Access

In areas they each control, Houthi authorities and the Yemeni government imposed restrictions against humanitarian organizations, humanitarian workers, and the flow of humanitarian aid. As a result, 87 humanitarian projects proposed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) went unimplemented due to lack of approvals by Houthi authorities and the Yemeni government. Abusive practices by the parties dispossessed civilians from objects that were essential to their survival and caused their starvation, in some cases their death.



In late 2020, Human Rights Watch [documented](#) severe restrictions by the Houthi authorities, the Yemeni government and affiliated forces, and the UAE-backed STC on the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid. While aid funds are also in [short supply](#), Human Rights Watch [found](#) that the obstruction of aid is exacerbating the country's dire humanitarian situation and weakening its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Saudi and UAE-led coalition has forced Sana'a International Airport to remain closed since August 2016, which has severely restricted the flow of food, fuel, and medicine to civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law. In March 2021, Saudi Arabia announced a peace initiative that included the potential reopening of the airport, but it remained shuttered as of October 2021.

## Women's Rights

In February, Houthi authorities arrested a Yemeni model and two other women and subjected them to an unfair trial for allegedly committing an indecent act and drug possession. In November, Houthi-controlled court in Sana'a [sentenced](#) the model to five years in prison. In September, the UN Group of Experts reported widespread gender-based violence and sexual violence by the Houthi forces and the UAE-backed forces.

In April, the UN OCHA reported that Yemeni women faced restrictions on movement in Al-Hudaydah and Hajjah, areas under Houthi control, where authorities required them to be accompanied by a *mahram* (male relative) in order to travel. In 2019, local media reported that Houthi authorities issued directives to local transportation bus companies requiring that women be escorted by a *mahram* when traveling between cities in Yemen. Women also reported to local media that bus drivers have refused to take them because they do not have a *mahram*, or that it cost them more money to travel since they must pay for the *mahram's* ticket. Women are also not allowed to stay in hotels except with a *mahram*, particularly cities like Aden and Taiz. In addition, authorities continued to require woman to show guardianship permission and have their guardian present—a father, brother, husband, or son—to obtain or renew personal identity cards or passports, despite the law not requiring such conditions. Women's lack of access to legal documentation restricted their ability to travel abroad.

Reproductive health services were limited or nonexistent for the five million Yemeni women and adolescent girls of child-bearing age. The UN Fund for Population (UNFPA) reported in September 2021 that in Yemen one woman dies every two hours during childbirth. UNFPA reported that child marriage is increasing as a coping mechanism by impoverished families as the conflict continues. There is no minimum age for marriage in Yemen.

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Yemen's penal code prohibits same-sex relations. Article 264 punishes anal sex with 100 lashes and one year in prison if participants are not married. If married, the same article prescribes death by stoning. Article 268 punishes sex between women with up to three years in prison.

Articles 273 and 274 punish any act "indicating a breach of modesty and contrary to etiquette" with up to six months in prison.

Human Rights Watch is aware of multiple cases where transgender men and women have faced threats and harassment in Yemen. In one case in 2020, Yemeni authorities arbitrarily detained a transgender woman for eight months on charges of sodomy and "indecent practices." Police and prison guards subjected her to severe abuse and torture, including a forced anal exam.

## **Abuses against Migrants**

Scores of African migrants died at a detention center in Sana'a in March 2021 after Houthi security forces launched unidentified projectiles into the center, causing a fire. The GEE reported in September that Houthi authorities had arrested 11 Houthi soldiers in connection with this incident.

The International Organization on Migration (IOM) reported in July 2021 that thousands of migrants were estimated to be stranded across the country, with many held in inhumane conditions without adequate access to basic services and food.

## **Key International Actors**

Despite years of documentation of unlawful attacks, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Spain, Germany, Australia, and other countries continued to license the sale of weapons and military equipment to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other coalition members. Iran continued to support Houthi forces militarily. Italy blocked arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in January 2021 over concerns that weapons could be used against civilians, but later eased restrictions amid diplomatic tensions.

The GEE, the UN panel of experts on Yemen, and other rights groups reiterated their call for countries to address the lack of accountability for serious crimes, including probable war crimes, committed in Yemen. Under pressure from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, members of the UN Human Rights Council narrowly voted to end the GEE's mandate in October. More than three dozen states at the UN General Assembly subsequently called for the international community to "actively explore further alternative mechanisms to monitor the human rights situation in Yemen and ensure accountability."

In 2021, the US appointed a new special envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking. The new UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, began his role in September 2021. The UN, the US, and Oman led negotiations between the Houthi armed group, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemeni government but made little progress. The UN Security Council continued to enforce the UN sanctions regime against just one party, the Houthis, despite numerous violations of the laws of war by the Saudi and UAE-led coalition.

In February, the European Parliament reiterated its longstanding concerns over the conflict in Yemen, deplored violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties involved, and urged arms exports bans against Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In March, the EU urged an investigation into the tragic death of migrants in a detention center in Sana'a. Over the year, the EU condemned abuses in Yemen and the continued attacks by all parties to the conflict, and intensified diplomatic efforts towards a ceasefire and a political solution.

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## Keynote



With Autocrats on the Defensive, Can Democrats Rise to the Occasion?



**Kenneth Roth**

Former Executive Director

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EXHIBIT SPF19

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April 18, 2022 12:00AM EDT

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## Yemen: Latest Round of Saudi-UAE-Led Attacks Targets Civilians

Killings Apparently Unlawful, Any Future Peace Talks Should Prioritize Justice



Rescue members remove rubble covering victims of aerial attacks carried out by the Saudi and UAE-led coalition that targeted a detention facility in the Houthi strong-hold Saada governorate, in Yemen, on January 22, 2022. © 2022 Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images

(Sanaa) – The [Saudi](#) and [UAE](#)-led coalition carried out three attacks in [Yemen](#) in late January 2022 in apparent violation of the laws of war that resulted in at least 80 apparently civilian deaths, including three children, and 156 injuries, including two children, Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch said today.

Following one of the strikes, where it appears to have used a Raytheon-made laser-guided missile kit on a detention facility in Saada, the Saudi and UAE-led coalition conducted an investigation that stated that the attack was on a military facility. However Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch found no evidence to support that claim. Houthi forces guarding the facility also shot at detainees trying to flee, witnesses said, killing and injuring dozens. The coalition attacks were in apparent retaliation for Houthi attacks on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on January 17.

“After eight years of conflict that has turned life for Yemen’s civilians into a disaster zone, the situation only seems to get worse,” said [Lama Fakih](#), executive Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “For UN-backed peace negotiations to be successful, the results need to be durable, which requires placing justice for past atrocities at the core of any peace agreement.”

On April 1, the UN [announced](#) that it had brokered an agreement between the Houthi armed group and the Saudi and UAE-led coalition that includes a two-month ceasefire coinciding with the start of Ramadan. On April 7, President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi [transferred](#) his presidential authority to a presidential leadership council with Rashad al-Alimi, a Yemeni politician as the president of the council and seven other council members. The two-month ceasefire announcement is leading to momentum for [peace](#) talks, with the coalition and the [Houthis](#) acknowledging it as a step toward a political agreement to end the conflict.

The recent attacks underscore the urgent need to pursue accountability for human rights violations and war crimes in Yemen through prosecutions, Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch said. A new international commission of inquiry is needed to replace the United Nations-mandated investigation shut down in October 2021.

Any upcoming negotiations and agreements should include the creation of a credible international mechanism to ensure accountability for abuses by all parties to the conflict and should avoid endorsing any amnesties for serious international crimes. Under [United Nations policies](#), it cannot endorse peace agreements that promise amnesty for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or gross violations of human rights. Its peace negotiators and field office staff are required not to encourage or condone amnesties that prevent prosecution of those responsible for serious crimes. The mechanism created should provide a path toward prosecuting those responsible for laws-of-war violations and provide appropriate compensation to victims.

On January 17, Houthi forces attacked the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) in the Musaffah area of Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi international airport. Local [media reported](#) that the attacks took place at approximately [10 a.m.](#) The attack on the oil company struck three petroleum tankers and killed [three people and injured six others](#). The attack on the airport resulted in a small fire.

The Houthi military spokesperson, Yahya Sare’e, [announced](#) the attacks and targets in a televised speech that day, noting that Houthi forces launched five “ballistic and winged missiles” as well as drones targeting “the airports of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the oil refinery in Mussafah in Abu Dhabi, and a number of important and sensitive Emirati sites and facilities.” Attacks targeting civilian objects and indiscriminate attacks that do not distinguish between civilian and military targets are prohibited under the law of armed conflict.

Following those attacks, on January 17, coalition airstrikes destroyed two residential buildings, including the home of Houthi [Brigadier General Abdullah al-Junid](#), director of the College of Aviation and Air Defense in Yemen’s capital, Sanaa, and damaged four adjacent residential buildings. A survivor and two other witnesses told Human Rights Watch that the airstrikes killed [al-Junid](#) and nine other people, including two women, who they said were civilians. The survivor said nine other civilians were also injured, including three women.

In the following days, the coalition launched other airstrikes across north Yemen that did not result in civilian casualties. On January 18, Houthi media reported that airstrikes targeted the [Military College and Parliament buildings](#) in Sanaa. On January 19, Houthi media reported that airstrikes targeted [Sana’a Airport](#) and its surroundings. On January 20, Houthi media [reported](#) that airstrikes targeted the area surrounding Sanaa Airport, a food storage hangar in Al-Tahreer area, and al-Safiah area, damaging homes.

On January 20, at 10:15 p.m., a coalition airstrike hit a telecommunications building in Hodeidah, destroying it, in an apparently disproportionate attack targeting critical infrastructure. Internet monitoring tools reported that from approximately 1 a.m. on January 21 until January 25 there was a near-total internet blackout in Yemen. The attack killed five civilians who were nearby, including three children, and injured 20 others, including two children, according to relatives of victims who spoke with Mwatana for Human Rights.

On January 21, coalition airstrikes targeted a Houthi-controlled detention facility in Saada governorate. A Yemeni journalist who visited the attack site showed Human Rights Watch a photograph of a remnant from one of the munitions used in the attack, which included markings indicating that it was manufactured by the US defense contractor Raytheon.

The Joint Incident Assessment Team (JIAT) established by the coalition to investigate violations [said](#) on February 8 that the strike in Saada targeted a “Special Security Camp ... which is a legitimate military target” but evidence gathered by Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights consistently reflected that the facility targeted was a detention center.

Following the airstrikes on the detention facility, according to witnesses, Houthi forces guarding it shot at detainees trying to flee from the site. Medical workers from the hospitals receiving casualties told Mwatana for Human Rights that they treated 162 injured people and received bodies of another 82 killed people. According to the medical workers, 16 of those killed and 35 of those injured had sustained gunshot wounds. A detainee who survived the attack and assisted in the rescue operation told Mwatana for Human Rights that three children were injured. The detainee stated that the detention facility had a section for child detainees.

Under international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, warring parties may target only military objectives. They must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, including by providing effective advance warnings of attacks. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are prohibited. The laws of war also prohibit indiscriminate attacks, which include attacks that do not distinguish between civilians and military targets or do not target a military objective. Attacks in which the expected harm to civilians and civilian property is disproportionate to the anticipated military gain are also prohibited. Individuals who commit serious violations of the laws of war with criminal intent – that is, deliberately or recklessly– are responsible for war crimes.

The US, the UK, France, and others should suspend all weapon sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE until they not only curtail their unlawful airstrikes in Yemen but also credibly investigate alleged violations. Warring parties should refrain from using explosive munitions with wide-area effects in populated areas because they cause both immediate and long-term harm to the civilian population. Governments should also support a strong political declaration that addresses the harm that explosive weapons cause to civilians and commits states to avoid using those with wide-area effects in populated areas.

There is no international investigative body currently documenting human rights violations and unlawful attacks by parties to the conflict in Yemen. In October 2021, under heavy pressure from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UN Human Rights Council narrowly voted to end the mandate of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, shuttering the only international, independent body investigating abuses by all parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Coalition airstrikes increased after that, [according to Yemen Data Project](#), a website publishing statistics on coalition airstrikes, with civilian casualties reaching their highest monthly rate in more than two years. Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch urged the United Nations, either via the General Assembly or the Human Rights Council, to quickly establish an



investigative mechanism to gather evidence of possible war crimes by all sides and prepare cases for future criminal prosecutions.

“Killing and wounding of civilians in such bloody attacks and the targeting the country’s vital infrastructure are a natural consequence of impunity for war crimes in Yemen,” said Radhya Al-Mutawakel, the chairperson of Mwatana for Human Rights. “UN member states can promote accountability by establishing a new international accountability investigative mechanism with a mandate to assess potential criminal responsibility.”

## **Houthi Attacks on the UAE, Saudi Arabia**

The attacks on the UAE on January 17 are the latest indiscriminate Houthi attacks on the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Houthi forces have repeatedly [launched missiles](#) toward civilian airports in Saudi Arabia in what constitute apparent war crimes. Most recently, on February 10, a [Houthi drone attack on Abha](#) International Airport in southern Saudi Arabia injured 12 people. Abha International Airport is a civilian airport 110 kilometers from the Saudi border with Yemen and 15 kilometers west of King Khalid Air Base, one of Saudi Arabia’s largest military airbases. Houthi authorities have [indicated](#) on numerous occasions that they consider civilian airports, incorrectly, to be valid targets.

## **January 17 Coalition Attack on Residential Area in Sanaa**

On January 17, the coalition conducted airstrikes on a crowded residential neighborhood in Sanaa. Witnesses said there were two airstrikes at about 9:30 p.m. Satellite imagery confirms that the attack took place between 9:41 a.m. on January 17 and 9:42 a.m. on January 18. A video filmed at night, posted to Telegram by Ansar Allah Media Center on January 18 at 12:48 a.m., shows rescue workers and residents sorting through debris and carrying a body through the site. Another [video](#), also filmed at night, posted to Telegram on January 18 by Al Masirah, Houthi-owned media, also shows human remains being gathered by a Yemen Red Crescent Society rescue worker. The Al Masirah reporter interviews a man at the site who says “two rockets hit the place,” consistent with witness accounts.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed one person whose home was struck and two neighbors who heard and felt the strikes and were at the attack site the next morning. Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site on January 18 and observed the damage and rescue operations. Human Rights Watch also analyzed satellite imagery, four photographs, and eight videos of the attack’s aftermath.

Two witnesses told Mwatana for Human Rights that the attack involved two strikes two to five minutes apart. The airstrikes hit the home of Brigadier General Abdullah al-Junid, director of the College of Aviation and Air Defense, killing him and nine others, including his wife, his adult son, and two neighbors who had come to the scene to assist survivors of the first strike.

One of al-Junid’s adult daughters, who was in the home during the attack, said that her brother was 25 and had just returned to Yemen from Malaysia, where he was studying International Relations. She said nine other civilians were injured, including three women:

When the first airstrike hit, I bent down to protect my little 2-month-old daughter. That lasted for 10 seconds. Then, when I lifted my head up to see what happened, I saw the ceiling and the wall all destroyed. I waited for anyone to come and help me. Then, two people – later I found out they were our neighbors – wearing lights on their heads appeared coming to help and screaming, asking if there were any survivors. Then the second airstrike hit. I couldn’t know where it hit but the house shook more and another part of the room fell off. I didn’t move when the second airstrike hit. Later, I found out that the two neighbors I saw survived but another two neighbors who came to help got killed by the second airstrike.



The people interviewed said the airstrikes flattened al-Junid's residence and caused significant damage to five neighboring buildings. None of the witnesses said they had received or heard about any warnings to evacuate before the strikes.

Human Rights Watch reviewed satellite imagery collected before and after the attack. At least two residential multi-story buildings appear to have been destroyed on a satellite image acquired on January 18. At least four additional residential neighboring buildings seem to have been damaged as a result of the attack. Drone footage filmed by Houthi media on January 18 also shows damage to at least six buildings.

In its satellite imagery analysis, Human Rights Watch also identified a military target 15 meters away, the 1st Armored Division base, across the street from the residences that were struck. The base, which has been under Houthi [control](#) since 2014, was not struck or damaged.

On March 14, Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition seeking information about the attack, any coalition investigation to assess resulting civilian harm, and any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition did not respond and has not otherwise shown that the anticipated military gain from the attacks exceeded the expected harm to civilians and civilian property.

An investigation into the attack should consider whether coalition forces targeted a military objective, and, if there was a legitimate military objective, whether all feasible precautions were taken to minimize civilian harm, and whether the expected military gain outweighed the anticipated loss of civilian life. An attack that was unlawful and was carried out with criminal intent – deliberately or recklessly – would be a war crime.

### **January 20 Coalition Attack on Telecommunications Facility in Hodeidah**

On January 20, at about 10:15 p.m., residents said, a coalition airstrike struck the Public Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) building, controlled by the Houthi authorities, in a densely populated area in Hodeidah city. Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site the morning of January 21 and observed the damage. Human Rights Watch also analyzed satellite imagery, photographs, and videos of the attack's aftermath.

Satellite imagery recorded on January 23 shows multiple impact sites on the telecommunications compound. The roof and northern facade are clearly damaged. A mosque 10 meters east shows damage to the roof, and a section of the wall located on the right side of the main gate also seems affected. Additional impact sites and debris are also visible in the telecommunications compound.

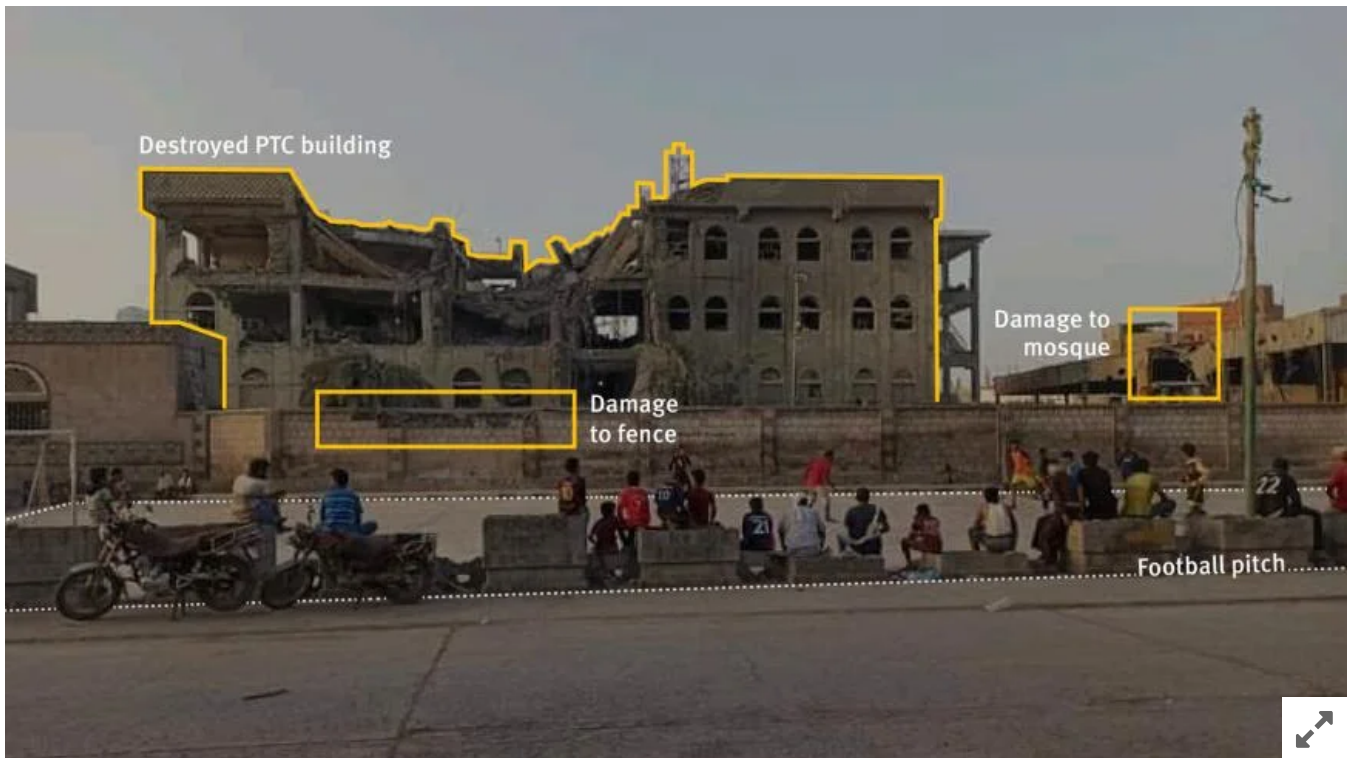
Following the attack, residents said, they had significant difficulties accessing telecommunications networks. The interruption of mobile networks and internet affected service across almost the entire country for four days, affecting virtually every aspect of life, including emergency rescue operations, [money transfers](#), and humanitarian work.

Human Rights Watch spoke on March 22 with two Yemeni aid workers from different organizations working in Taiz and Marib governorates who said that the mobile and internet interruptions affected their ability to communicate, including with other colleagues and donors. The disruptions delayed projects and disrupted urgent humanitarian activities, exacerbating the humanitarian needs of affected groups, they said. The importance of communications for the health and well-being of the civilian population may have made the attack disproportionate.

Internet Outage Detection and Analysis ([IODA](#)), a network traffic measurement tool, reported that between 1 a.m. local time on January 21 and early on January 25 there was an internet

blackout in Yemen. The internet monitor group [NetBlocks](#) also reported that at around 1 a.m. local time on January 21, internet users lost connectivity and Yemen experienced a “near total internet blackout” for four days. [Google Transparency Report](#), a service that tracks traffic from Google’s products and services, also reported a disruption in traffic at approximately 12:30 a.m. local time on January 21 until approximately 12:30 a.m. on January 25.

Two witnesses who spoke with Mwatana for Human Rights said that the attack killed 5 civilians, including 3 children, and injured 20 civilians, including 2 children, who had gathered in an open area in front of the complex to play football. This open area, approximately 20 meters from the building, is frequently used for football games, some attracting hundreds of spectators. A photograph posted to Twitter on January 30 shows children are again playing football in front of the destroyed building.



Photograph posted to Twitter on January 30, 2022, apparently showing part of the aftermath of Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrike, targeting a telecommunications building in Hodeidah governorate on January 20, and children playing football, along with spectators sitting. The attack killed five civilians, including three children, and injured 20 others, including two children, who had gathered in an open area in front of the complex to play football. Photograph courtesy of Nabil Abdullah, 2022.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed four relatives of three children who were killed, and two relatives of two children who were wounded, including two who witnessed the strikes and their aftermath. A man whose 8-year-old son was killed and who was himself injured, said:

That evening, my son asked me to take him to watch the football match happening in the yard next to the telecommunications building, and we went. After the match ended, and we were about to leave, suddenly, as I was speaking with the security guard at the yard’s exit, a massive explosion made me fall down and I couldn’t hear because the explosion was huge.... The whole building fell down on the children and on me and pieces of the building reached the pavement at the other side.

I got up unable to see because of the dust and it was completely dark. Then, I started to look for my son. I found several children injured under the rubble. I rescued them while my right leg was injured and two fingers of my left hand were cut.... After about one hour of searching for my son, I was told that my son was found on the other sidewalk. I ran with my broken right leg to the hospital to check on my son, but he was killed at the same moment of the attack.

Another witness, whose 10-year-old brother was killed in the attack, said:

My brother was playing football when the airstrike hit. I fell down from the huge pressure of the explosion, and I was unable to hear or see due to the intensity of the dust that covered the street. I didn't know what happened to my brother until my father went to the hospital. My father was told that my brother was transferred to the hospital and passed away due to injuries he suffered on his head and stomach. My mother collapsed when she heard the news.

Human Rights Watch verified nine photographs and five videos posted to Twitter, Facebook, or Telegram between 10:48 p.m. on January 20 and 3:03 a.m. on January 21 that showed the aftermath of the attack and videos filmed from inside a hospital. Two of these videos and two photographs show the body of an adult being pulled from the rubble, eight injured adults including at least two older people, the body of a boy, and five injured boys.

In a photograph posted to Twitter at 10:48 p.m. local time on January 20, a large smoke plume is visible near the PTC building which is consistent with the accounts from witnesses.

These photographs and videos analyzed by Human Rights Watch are consistent with the damage seen by satellite imagery. They show the destroyed three-story PTC building and damage to the roof of the nearby mosque.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strikes during their investigation. An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful. The coalition has not provided information that would justify the attack.

On March 11, Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition seeking information about the attack, any investigation the coalition has undertaken to assess resulting civilian harm, and any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition did not respond and has not issued any statements regarding the attack or shown that the anticipated military gain from the attacks exceeded the expected harm to civilians and civilian property.

The attack is one of [several](#) coalition airstrikes against telecommunication facilities across Yemen in January.

PTC, under Houthi control, provides cellular communications, including voice, text, and mobile internet services, to the population in nearly all areas in Yemen. Telecommunications networks used by armed forces and armed groups are military objectives subject to attack.

While dual-use objects such as communications facilities are generally legitimate targets in war, Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found that the attack on the Hodeidah telecommunications building may have been disproportionate – that is, the anticipated civilian harm appears to have been excessive in relation to the expected military advantage.

An investigation of the attack should consider whether all feasible precautions were taken to minimize civilian harm, and whether the expected military gain outweighed the anticipated loss of civilian life and other harm to civilians.





View of bulldozers and people inspecting a demolished Houthi-controlled pre-trial detention facility in Saada governorate. On January 21, Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrikes targeted the facility, killing 66 people and injuring 127. © 2022 Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images

## January 21 Coalition Attack on Detention Facility in Saada

On January 21, coalition forces conducted airstrikes on a Houthi-controlled pretrial detention center in Saada city in northern Yemen. Witnesses said the airstrikes were at about 2:40 a.m. Satellite imagery confirms that the attack was between 10:11 a.m. January 20 and 10:34 a.m. on January 21.

Satellite imagery recorded afterward shows at least two distinct destroyed buildings on the eastern side of the detention center. One of the buildings appears to have undergone a “pancake collapse,” in which the floors collapse vertically on top of one another. This is visible in drone footage posted to the Al Masirah Telegram channel on January 21.

On the western side, three additional impacts are visible on satellite image, one of them affecting the roof and the western facade of one of the buildings and an additional one, adjacent to it, damaging the roof and the eastern façade and the courtyard. The imagery suggests that the facility was struck at least five times. Imagery from January 18 reflects previous damage to the facility, from an attack in 2016.



Satellite imagery recorded on January 28, analyzed by Human Rights Watch showing a Houthi-controlled pre-trial detention facility in Saada governorate. On January 21, Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrikes targeted the facility. The annotated satellite image shows two destroyed buildings, damage to the yard of the detention center, and two impacted wards, illustrated by stills from videos and a photograph taken at the scene. Satellite imagery: © 2022 Maxar Technologies. Source: Google Earth. Image stills on the left of image: Courtesy of Al Masirah, 2022. Photograph on the right of image: Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images, 2022

Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site at 10 a.m. on January 21 and observed the damage. Mwatana for Human Rights also went to the site several times in the days following the strike to interview injured people, victims' family members, and witnesses. A Mwatana for Human Rights researcher took photographs of the destruction and observed rescue operations during which bodies and injured people were taken to local hospitals.

On January 24, Mwatana for Human Rights researchers interviewed a detainee who survived the attack, a nurse working at the emergency department in a hospital located near the attack site, and a former administrative employee at a hospital in Saada. On January 25, researchers interviewed a doctor who treated victims, and a father whose son was a detainee killed in the attack.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed a local journalist and humanitarian workers and analyzed satellite imagery, six photographs, and seven videos of the attack's aftermath. The journalist provided [a photo](#) he took at the strike site of a weapon remnant he said he found there.

Human Rights Watch verified a video posted to the Al Masirah Telegram channel at 10:07 a.m. local time on January 21. The video, filmed at night, shows rescue workers, a crane, and excavating equipment with large spotlights. The video corroborates the witnesses' statements that the attack took place at night. In the video at least two bodies are seen, and rescue workers dig at least one injured person out of the rubble.

Houthi media posted a [video](#) on January 22 to YouTube from the site following the attack, showing the destruction, men searching for dead bodies, men in rescue workers' uniforms pulling bodies from rubble of the collapsed building, an interview with one of the rescue workers explaining the rescue operation, and a man showing a weapon remnant and identifying it as US-made.



Following the airstrikes, Houthi forces guarding the detention center shot at detainees trying to flee, said a detainee who witnessed the shooting. Medical workers from the hospitals receiving casualties told Mwatana for Human Rights that they treated 162 injured and that another 82 people were killed. They identified 64 of those killed and 143 of those injured by name. According to the medical workers 16 of those killed and 35 of those injured had been shot.

Approximately 50 bodies were laid out and covered in white sheets on a street outside a Saada cemetery three kilometers from the detention facility, as seen in a video posted to Telegram on January 25.

The man who was detained at the center who survived the strikes also told Mwatana for Human Rights that three children were among the injured. The Houthi Ministry of Health [reported](#) that 91 detainees were killed and another 236 were injured.

The detainee who survived said:

[After the first strike] the sound of the explosion shook the place, opened the windows, and made the glass fly....We began to run and after two minutes and a half, another airstrike struck, and we all ran to the opposite side ... but I stopped for a bit and went to join the rescue operation – I couldn't just leave with that scene.

The detainee described hearing detainees screaming after a third strike that brought the ceiling down on top of them: "Around 50 bodies were cut into pieces and scattered around and you could smell bodies' burned skin."

He said that the actions of forces on the ground increased the casualties:

The tragedy was that after the third airstrike there was live fire by the prison's security guards targeting ones who were escaping for nearly two hours....They were shooting deliberately at them, targeting their heads or legs. More than 50 detainees were targeted, some of them were climbing the wall so [the gunfire] made them fall down and die because the wall is really tall ... many children were injured who were kept in the children's prison, which held 40 children.

The coalition [issued a statement](#) on January 28 claiming that the attacks on the facility were legitimate and noted that the UN and international nongovernmental organizations did not submit the coordinates of the facility to the coalition's list of sites not to attack. The coalition's spokesperson, Colonel Turki bin Saleh Al-Malki, said the nearest prison to the strike site was 1.8 kilometers away and that the strikes targeted the "Special Security Camp" in Saada, which he said was a legitimate military target and that it was used by the Houthis to support their military efforts.

Al-Malki also [said](#) that the coalition had initiated an investigation and that it would share their findings with the Joint Incident Assessment Team, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. According to [media reports](#) from January 28, the Joint Incident Assessment Team concluded that the strike in Saada targeted a "Special Security Camp ... which is a legitimate military target."

Several people Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed disputed the coalition's claim, asserting that the site was a detention facility. Humanitarian workers said that the detention center was formerly used as a military camp by the Houthi central security forces (Special Security Forces) but had been transformed into a detention center in 2020. The doctor interviewed by Mwatana for Human Rights also said the facility had been converted into a prison a year and a half ago.

The doctor, who has worked in Saada for 13 years, said, “I am shocked that this prison was targeted [given that] it’s well-known to international humanitarian organizations...” He also that the hospital where he works has implemented new security measures fearing that it could be targeted by a coalition airstrike. The ICRC also issued a [report on January 21 noting that](#) the facility was a detention center.

On January 28, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [said](#) that “During our recent visit, we saw no signs indicating that this site, formerly a barracks, continues to have a military function.” Human Rights watch also spoke with a local journalist who investigated the strikes and said that while he was at the strike site on January 22, a child showed him a weapon remnant, which he photographed. He said the child found the remnant near the prison’s bakery. The same munition remnant later appeared in [a video posted](#) by Houthi media.

Human Rights Watch identified the remnant as part of a guidance fin of a GBU-12 laser guided 500-pound bomb. The item was factory-marked with a unique numerical manufacturers code identifying it as a Paveway laser guidance kit produced by the US weapons manufacturer Raytheon. Human Rights Watch sent a letter to Raytheon on March 10, seeking information about findings. Raytheon has not responded. Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition on March 11 seeking information about the attack and whether it is assessing the resulting civilian harm, and asking about any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition has not responded.

The Joint Incident Assessment Team, established by the coalition in 2016, has [fallen short](#) of international standards regarding transparency, impartiality, and independence, underscoring the need for an international investigative body to document human rights violations and unlawful attacks by parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strikes. An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful. The coalition has not provided information that would justify the attack.

## CORRECTION

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**4/19/2022:** This version of the news release has been updated to more accurately reflect the parties who were allegedly aware that the former Houthi military camp had been converted to a prison.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE  
KING'S BENCH DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE COURT

CLAIM NO: CO/3579/2020

BETWEEN:

THE KING on the application of  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE ("CAAT")

Claimant

- and -

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE ("SSIT")

Defendant

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EXHIBIT SPF20

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## Yemen: Latest Round of Saudi-UAE-Led Attacks Targets Civilians

Killings Apparently Unlawful, Any Future Peace Talks Should Prioritize Justice



Rescue members remove rubble covering victims of aerial attacks carried out by the Saudi and UAE-led coalition that targeted a detention facility in the Houthi strong-hold Saada governorate, in Yemen, on January 22, 2022. © 2022 Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images

April 18, 2022

(Sanaa) – The [Saudi](#) and [UAE](#)-led coalition carried out three attacks in [Yemen](#) in late January 2022 in apparent violation of the laws of war that resulted in at least 80 apparently civilian deaths, including three children, and 156 injuries, including two children, Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch said today.

Following one of the strikes, where it appears to have used a Raytheon-made laser-guided missile kit on a detention facility in Saada, the Saudi and UAE-led coalition conducted an investigation that stated that the attack was on a military facility. However Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch found no evidence to support that claim. Houthi forces guarding the facility also shot at detainees trying to flee, witnesses said, killing and injuring dozens. The coalition attacks were in apparent retaliation for Houthi attacks on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on January 17.

“After eight years of conflict that has turned life for Yemen’s civilians into a disaster zone, the situation only seems to get worse,” said [Lama Fakih](#), executive Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “For UN-backed peace negotiations to be successful, the results need to be durable, which requires placing justice for past atrocities at the core of any peace agreement.”

On April 1, the UN [announced](#) that it had brokered an agreement between the Houthi armed group and the Saudi and UAE-led coalition that includes a two-month ceasefire coinciding with the start of Ramadan. On April 7, President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi [transferred](#) his presidential authority to a presidential leadership council with Rashad al-Alimi, a Yemeni politician as the president of the council and seven other council members. The two-month ceasefire announcement is leading to momentum for [peace](#) talks, with the coalition and the [Houthis](#) acknowledging it as a step toward a political agreement to end the conflict.

The recent attacks underscore the urgent need to pursue accountability for human rights violations and war crimes in Yemen through prosecutions, Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch said. A new international commission of inquiry is needed to replace the United Nations-mandated investigation shut down in October 2021.

Any upcoming negotiations and agreements should include the creation of a credible international mechanism to ensure accountability for abuses by all parties to the conflict and should avoid endorsing any amnesties for serious international crimes. Under [United Nations policies](#), it cannot endorse peace agreements that promise amnesty for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or gross violations of human rights. Its peace negotiators and field office staff are required not to encourage or condone amnesties that prevent prosecution of those responsible for serious crimes. The mechanism created should provide a path toward prosecuting those responsible for laws-of-war violations and provide appropriate compensation to victims.

On January 17, Houthi forces attacked the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) in the Musaffah area of Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi international airport. Local [media reported](#) that the attacks took place at approximately [10 a.m.](#) The attack on the oil company struck three petroleum tankers and killed [three people and injured six others](#). The attack on the airport resulted in a small fire.

The Houthi military spokesperson, Yahya Sare'e, [announced](#) the attacks and targets in a televised speech that day, noting that Houthi forces launched five “ballistic and winged missiles” as well as drones targeting “the airports of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the oil refinery in Mussafah in Abu Dhabi, and a number of important and sensitive Emirati sites and facilities.” Attacks targeting civilian objects and indiscriminate attacks that do not distinguish between civilian and military targets are prohibited under the law of armed conflict.

Following those attacks, on January 17, coalition airstrikes destroyed two residential buildings, including the home of Houthi [Brigadier General Abdullah al-Junid](#), director of the College of Aviation and Air Defense in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, and damaged four adjacent residential buildings. A survivor and two other witnesses told Human Rights Watch that the airstrikes killed [al-Junid](#) and nine other people, including two women, who they said were civilians. The survivor said nine other civilians were also injured, including three women.

In the following days, the coalition launched other airstrikes across north Yemen that did not result in civilian casualties. On January 18, Houthi media reported that airstrikes targeted the [Military College and Parliament buildings](#) in Sanaa. On January 19, Houthi media reported that airstrikes targeted [Sana'a Airport](#) and its surroundings. On January 20, Houthi media [reported](#) that airstrikes targeted the area surrounding Sanaa Airport, a food storage hangar in Al-Tahreer area, and al-Safiah area, damaging homes.

On January 20, at 10:15 p.m., a coalition airstrike hit a telecommunications building in Hodeidah, destroying it, in an apparently disproportionate attack targeting critical infrastructure. Internet monitoring tools reported that from approximately 1 a.m. on January 21 until January 25 there was a near-total internet blackout in Yemen. The attack killed five civilians who were nearby, including three children, and injured 20 others, including two children, according to relatives of victims who spoke with Mwatana for Human Rights.

On January 21, coalition airstrikes targeted a Houthi-controlled detention facility in Saada governorate. A Yemeni journalist who visited the attack site showed Human Rights Watch a photograph of a remnant from one of the munitions used in the attack, which included markings indicating that it was manufactured by the US defense contractor Raytheon.

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Following the airstrikes on the detention facility, according to witnesses, Houthi forces guarding it shot at detainees trying to flee from the site. Medical workers from the hospitals receiving casualties told Mwatana for Human Rights that they treated 162 injured people and received bodies of another 82 killed people. According to the medical workers, 16 of those killed and 35 of those injured had sustained gunshot wounds. A detainee who survived the attack and assisted in the rescue operation told Mwatana for Human Rights that three children were injured. The detainee stated that the detention facility had a section for child detainees.

Under international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, warring parties may target only military objectives. They must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, including by providing effective advance warnings of attacks. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are prohibited. The laws of war also prohibit indiscriminate attacks, which include attacks that do not distinguish between civilians and military targets or do not target a military objective. Attacks in which the expected harm to civilians and civilian property is disproportionate to the anticipated military gain are also prohibited. Individuals who commit serious violations of the laws of war with criminal intent – that is, deliberately or recklessly– are responsible for war crimes.

The US, the UK, France, and others should suspend all weapon sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE until they not only curtail their unlawful airstrikes in Yemen but also credibly investigate alleged violations. Warring parties should refrain from using explosive munitions with wide-area effects in populated areas because they cause both immediate and long-term harm to the civilian population. Governments should also support a strong political declaration that addresses the harm that explosive weapons cause to civilians and commits states to avoid using those with wide-area effects in populated areas.

There is no international investigative body currently documenting human rights violations and unlawful attacks by parties to the conflict in Yemen. In October 2021, under heavy pressure from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UN Human Rights Council narrowly voted to end the mandate of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, shuttering the only international, independent body investigating abuses by all parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Coalition airstrikes increased after that, [according to Yemen Data Project](#), a website publishing statistics on coalition airstrikes, with civilian casualties reaching their highest monthly rate in more than two years. Mwatana for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch urged the United Nations, either via the General Assembly or the Human Rights Council, to quickly establish an investigative mechanism to gather evidence of possible war crimes by all sides and prepare cases for future criminal prosecutions.

“Killing and wounding of civilians in such bloody attacks and the targeting the country’s vital infrastructure are a natural consequence of impunity for war crimes in Yemen,” said Radhya Al-Mutawakel, the chairperson of Mwatana for Human Rights. “UN member states can promote accountability by establishing a new international accountability investigative mechanism with a mandate to assess potential criminal responsibility.”

### **Houthi Attacks on the UAE, Saudi Arabia**

The attacks on the UAE on January 17 are the latest indiscriminate Houthi attacks on the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Houthi forces have repeatedly [launched missiles](#) toward civilian airports in Saudi Arabia in what constitute apparent war crimes. Most recently, on February 10, a [Houthi drone attack on Abha International Airport](#) in southern Saudi Arabia injured 12 people. Abha International Airport is a civilian airport 110 kilometers from the Saudi border with Yemen and 15 kilometers west of King Khalid Air Base, one of Saudi Arabia’s largest military airbases. Houthi authorities have [indicated](#) on numerous occasions that they consider civilian airports, incorrectly, to be valid targets.

### **January 17 Coalition Attack on Residential Area in Sanaa**

On January 17, the coalition conducted airstrikes on a crowded residential neighborhood in Sanaa. Witnesses said there were two airstrikes at about 9:30 p.m. Satellite imagery confirms that the attack took place between 9:41 a.m. on January 17 and 9:42 a.m. on January 18. A video filmed at night, posted to Telegram by Ansar Allah Media Center on January 18 at 12:48 a.m., shows rescue workers and residents sorting through debris and carrying a body through the site. Another [video](#), also filmed at night, posted to Telegram on January 18 by Al Masirah, Houthi-owned media, also shows human remains being gathered by a Yemen Red Crescent Society rescue worker. The Al Masirah reporter interviews a man at the site who says “two rockets hit the place,” consistent with witness accounts.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed one person whose home was struck and two neighbors who heard and felt the strikes and were at the attack site the next morning. Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site on January 18 and observed the damage and rescue operations. Human Rights Watch also analyzed satellite imagery, four photographs, and eight videos of the attack's aftermath.

Two witnesses told Mwatana for Human Rights that the attack involved two strikes two to five minutes apart. The airstrikes hit the home of Brigadier General Abdullah al-Junid, director of the College of Aviation and Air Defense, killing him and nine others, including his wife, his adult son, and two neighbors who had come to the scene to assist survivors of the first strike.

One of al-Junid's adult daughters, who was in the home during the attack, said that her brother was 25 and had just returned to Yemen from Malaysia, where he was studying International Relations. She said nine other civilians were injured, including three women:

When the first airstrike hit, I bent down to protect my little 2-month-old daughter. That lasted for 10 seconds. Then, when I lifted my head up to see what happened, I saw the ceiling and the wall all destroyed. I waited for anyone to come and help me. Then, two people – later I found out they were our neighbors – wearing lights on their heads appeared coming to help and screaming, asking if there were any survivors. Then the second airstrike hit. I couldn't know where it hit but the house shook more and another part of the room fell off. I didn't move when the second airstrike hit. Later, I found out that the two neighbors I saw survived but another two neighbors who came to help got killed by the second airstrike.

The people interviewed said the airstrikes flattened al-Junid's residence and caused significant damage to five neighboring buildings. None of the witnesses said they had received or heard about any warnings to evacuate before the strikes.

Human Rights Watch reviewed satellite imagery collected before and after the attack. At least two residential multi-story buildings appear to have been destroyed on a satellite image acquired on January 18. At least four additional residential neighboring buildings seem to have been damaged as a result of the attack. Drone footage filmed by Houthi media on January 18 also shows damage to at least six buildings.

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In its satellite imagery analysis, Human Rights Watch also identified a military target 15 meters away, the 1st Armored Division base, across the street from the residences that were struck. The base, which has been under Houthi [control](#) since 2014, was not struck or damaged.

On March 14, Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition seeking information about the attack, any coalition investigation to assess resulting civilian harm, and any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition did not respond and has not otherwise shown that the anticipated military gain from the attacks exceeded the expected harm to civilians and civilian property.

An investigation into the attack should consider whether coalition forces targeted a military objective, and, if there was a legitimate military objective, whether all feasible precautions were taken to minimize civilian harm, and whether the expected military gain outweighed the anticipated loss of civilian life. An attack that was unlawful and was carried out with criminal intent – deliberately or recklessly – would be a war crime.

### **January 20 Coalition Attack on Telecommunications Facility in Hodeidah**

On January 20, at about 10:15 p.m., residents said, a coalition airstrike struck the Public Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) building, controlled by the Houthi authorities, in a densely populated area in Hodeidah city. Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site the morning of January 21 and observed the damage. Human Rights Watch also analyzed satellite imagery, photographs, and videos of the attack's aftermath.

Satellite imagery recorded on January 23 shows multiple impact sites on the telecommunications compound. The roof and northern facade are clearly damaged, A mosque 10 meters east shows damage to the roof, and a section of the wall located on the right side of the main gate also seems affected. Additional impact sites and debris are also visible in the telecommunications compound.

Following the attack, residents said, they had significant difficulties accessing telecommunications networks. The interruption of mobile networks and internet affected service across almost the entire country for four days, affecting virtually every aspect of life, including emergency rescue operations, [money transfers](#), and humanitarian work.

Human Rights Watch spoke on March 22 with two Yemeni aid workers from different organizations working in Taiz and Marib governorates who said that the mobile and internet interruptions affected their ability to communicate, including with other colleagues and donors. The disruptions delayed projects and disrupted urgent humanitarian activities, exacerbating the humanitarian needs of affected groups, they said. The importance of communications for the health and well-being of the civilian population may have made the attack disproportionate.

Internet Outage Detection and Analysis ([IODA](#)), a network traffic measurement tool, reported that between 1 a.m. local time on January 21 and early on January 25 there was an internet blackout in

Yemen. The internet monitor group [NetBlocks](#) also reported that at around 1 a.m. local time on January 21, internet users lost connectivity and Yemen experienced a “near total internet blackout” for four days. [Google Transparency Report](#), a service that tracks traffic from Google’s products and services, also reported a disruption in traffic at approximately 12:30 a.m. local time on January 21 until approximately 12:30 a.m. on January 25.

Two witnesses who spoke with Mwatana for Human Rights said that the attack killed 5 civilians, including 3 children, and injured 20 civilians, including 2 children, who had gathered in an open area in front of the complex to play football. This open area, approximately 20 meters from the building, is frequently used for football games, some attracting hundreds of spectators. A photograph posted to Twitter on January 30 shows children are again playing football in front of the destroyed building.



Photograph posted to Twitter on January 30, 2022, apparently showing part of the aftermath of Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrike, targeting a telecommunications building in Hodeidah governorate on January 20, and children playing football, along with spectators sitting. The attack killed five civilians, including three children, and injured 20 others, including two children, who had gathered in an open area in front of the complex to play football. Photograph courtesy of Nabil Abdullah, 2022.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed four relatives of three children who were killed, and two relatives of two children who were wounded, including two who witnessed the strikes and their aftermath. A man whose 8-year-old son was killed and who was himself injured, said:

That evening, my son asked me to take him to watch the football match happening in the yard next to the telecommunications building, and we went. After the match ended, and we were about to leave, suddenly, as I was speaking with the security guard at the yard’s exit, a massive explosion made me fall down and I couldn’t hear because the explosion was huge.... The whole building fell down on the children and on me and pieces of the building reached the pavement at the other side.

I got up unable to see because of the dust and it was completely dark. Then, I started to look for my son. I found several children injured under the rubble. I rescued them while my right leg was injured and two fingers of my left hand were cut.... After about one hour of searching for my son, I was told

that my son was found on the other sidewalk. I ran with my broken right leg to the hospital to check on my son, but he was killed at the same moment of the attack.

Another witness, whose 10-year-old brother was killed in the attack, said:

My brother was playing football when the airstrike hit. I fell down from the huge pressure of the explosion, and I was unable to hear or see due to the intensity of the dust that covered the street. I didn't know what happened to my brother until my father went to the hospital. My father was told that my brother was transferred to the hospital and passed away due to injuries he suffered on his head and stomach. My mother collapsed when she heard the news.

Human Rights Watch verified nine photographs and five videos posted to Twitter, Facebook, or Telegram between 10:48 p.m. on January 20 and 3:03 a.m. on January 21 that showed the aftermath of the attack and videos filmed from inside a hospital. Two of these videos and two photographs show the body of an adult being pulled from the rubble, eight injured adults including at least two older people, the body of a boy, and five injured boys.

In a photograph posted to Twitter at 10:48 p.m. local time on January 20, a large smoke plume is visible near the PTC building which is consistent with the accounts from witnesses.

These photographs and videos analyzed by Human Rights Watch are consistent with the damage seen by satellite imagery. They show the destroyed three-story PTC building and damage to the roof of the nearby mosque.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strikes during their investigation. An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful. The coalition has not provided information that would justify the attack.

On March 11, Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition seeking information about the attack, any investigation the coalition has undertaken to assess resulting civilian harm, and any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition did not respond and has not issued any statements regarding the attack or shown that the anticipated military gain from the attacks exceeded the expected harm to civilians and civilian property.

The attack is one of [several](#) coalition airstrikes against telecommunication facilities across Yemen in January.

PTC, under Houthi control, provides cellular communications, including voice, text, and mobile internet services, to the population in nearly all areas in Yemen. Telecommunications networks used by armed forces and armed groups are military objectives subject to attack.

While dual-use objects such as communications facilities are generally legitimate targets in war, Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found that the attack on the Hodeidah telecommunications building may have been disproportionate – that is, the anticipated civilian harm appears to have been excessive in relation to the expected military advantage.



An investigation of the attack should consider whether all feasible precautions were taken to minimize civilian harm, and whether the expected military gain outweighed the anticipated loss of civilian life and other harm to civilians.



View of bulldozers and people inspecting a demolished Houthi-controlled pre-trial detention facility in Saada governorate. On January 21, Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrikes targeted the facility, killing 66 people and injuring 127. © 2022 Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images

### **January 21 Coalition Attack on Detention Facility in Saada**

On January 21, coalition forces conducted airstrikes on a Houthi-controlled pretrial detention center in Saada city in northern Yemen. Witnesses said the airstrikes were at about 2:40 a.m. Satellite imagery confirms that the attack was between 10:11 a.m. January 20 and 10:34 a.m. on January 21.

Satellite imagery recorded afterward shows at least two distinct destroyed buildings on the eastern side of the detention center. One of the buildings appears to have undergone a “pancake collapse,” in which the floors collapse vertically on top of one another. This is visible in drone footage posted to the Al Masirah Telegram channel on January 21.

On the western side, three additional impacts are visible on satellite image, one of them affecting the roof and the western facade of one of the buildings and an additional one, adjacent to it, damaging the roof and the eastern façade and the courtyard. The imagery suggests that the facility was struck at least five times. Imagery from January 18 reflects previous damage to the facility, from an attack in 2016.



Satellite imagery recorded on January 28, analyzed by Human Rights Watch showing a Houthi-controlled pre-trial detention facility in Saada governorate. On January 21, Saudi and UAE-led coalition airstrikes targeted the facility. The annotated satellite image shows two destroyed buildings, damage to the yard of the detention center, and two impacted wards, illustrated by stills from videos and a photograph taken at the scene. Satellite imagery: © 2022 Maxar Technologies. Source: Google Earth. Image stills on the left of image: Courtesy of Al Masirah, 2022. Photograph on the right of image: Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images, 2022

Mwatana for Human Rights researchers visited the site at 10 a.m. on January 21 and observed the damage. Mwatana for Human Rights also went to the site several times in the days following the strike to interview injured people, victims' family members, and witnesses. A Mwatana for Human Rights researcher took photographs of the destruction and observed rescue operations during which bodies and injured people were taken to local hospitals.

On January 24, Mwatana for Human Rights researchers interviewed a detainee who survived the attack, a nurse working at the emergency department in a hospital located near the attack site, and a former administrative employee at a hospital in Saada. On January 25, researchers interviewed a doctor who treated victims, and a father whose son was a detainee killed in the attack.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed a local journalist and humanitarian workers and analyzed satellite imagery, six photographs, and seven videos of the attack's aftermath. The journalist provided [a photo](#) he took at the strike site of a weapon remnant he said he found there.

Human Rights Watch verified a video posted to the Al Masirah Telegram channel at 10:07 a.m. local time on January 21. The video, filmed at night, shows rescue workers, a crane, and excavating equipment with large spotlights. The video corroborates the witnesses' statements that the attack took place at night. In the video at least two bodies are seen, and rescue workers dig at least one injured person out of the rubble.

Houthi media posted a [video](#) on January 22 to YouTube from the site following the attack, showing the destruction, men searching for dead bodies, men in rescue workers' uniforms pulling bodies from

rubble of the collapsed building, an interview with one of the rescue workers explaining the rescue operation, and a man showing a weapon remnant and identifying it as US-made.

Following the airstrikes, Houthi forces guarding the detention center shot at detainees trying to flee, said a detainee who witnessed the shooting. Medical workers from the hospitals receiving casualties told Mwatana for Human Rights that they treated 162 injured and that another 82 people were killed. They identified 64 of those killed and 143 of those injured by name. According to the medical workers 16 of those killed and 35 of those injured had been shot.

Approximately 50 bodies were laid out and covered in white sheets on a street outside a Saada cemetery three kilometers from the detention facility, as seen in a video posted to Telegram on January 25.

The man who was detained at the center who survived the strikes also told Mwatana for Human Rights that three children were among the injured. The Houthi Ministry of Health [reported](#) that 91 detainees were killed and another 236 were injured.

The detainee who survived said:

[After the first strike] the sound of the explosion shook the place, opened the windows, and made the glass fly....We began to run and after two minutes and a half, another airstrike struck, and we all ran to the opposite side ... but I stopped for a bit and went to join the rescue operation – I couldn't just leave with that scene.

The detainee described hearing detainees screaming after a third strike that brought the ceiling down on top of them: "Around 50 bodies were cut into pieces and scattered around and you could smell bodies' burned skin."

He said that the actions of forces on the ground increased the casualties:

The tragedy was that after the third airstrike there was live fire by the prison's security guards targeting ones who were escaping for nearly two hours....They were shooting deliberately at them, targeting their heads or legs. More than 50 detainees were targeted, some of them were climbing the wall so [the gunfire] made them fall down and die because the wall is really tall ... many children were injured who were kept in the children's prison, which held 40 children.

The coalition [issued a statement](#) on January 28 claiming that the attacks on the facility were legitimate and noted that the UN and international nongovernmental organizations did not submit the coordinates of the facility to the coalition's list of sites not to attack. The coalition's spokesperson, Colonel Turki bin Saleh Al-Malki, said the nearest prison to the strike site was 1.8 kilometers away and that the strikes targeted the "Special Security Camp" in Saada, which he said was a legitimate military target and that it was used by the Houthis to support their military efforts.

Al-Malki also [said](#) that the coalition had initiated an investigation and that it would share their findings with the Joint Incident Assessment Team, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. According to [media reports](#) from

January 28, the Joint Incident Assessment Team concluded that the strike in Saada targeted a “Special Security Camp ... which is a legitimate military target.”

Several people Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights interviewed disputed the coalition’s claim, asserting that the site was a detention facility. Humanitarian workers said that the detention center was formerly used as a military camp by the Houthi central security forces (Special Security Forces) but had been transformed into a detention center in 2020. The doctor interviewed by Mwatana for Human Rights also said the facility had been converted into a prison a year and a half ago.

The doctor, who has worked in Saada for 13 years, said, “I am shocked that this prison was targeted [given that] it’s well-known to international humanitarian organizations.... The IOM used to work at this prison and provide medical assistance [there] before it left Saada in 2021.” He said that the hospital where he works has implemented new security measures fearing that it could be targeted by a coalition airstrike. The ICRC also issued a [report on January 21 noting that](#) the facility was a detention center.

On January 28, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [said](#) that “During our recent visit, we saw no signs indicating that this site, formerly a barracks, continues to have a military function.” Human Rights watch also spoke with a local journalist who investigated the strikes and said that while he was at the strike site on January 22, a child showed him a weapon remnant, which he photographed. He said the child found the remnant near the prison’s bakery. The same munition remnant later appeared in [a video posted](#) by Houthi media.

Human Rights Watch identified the remnant as part of a guidance fin of a GBU-12 laser guided 500-pound bomb. The item was factory-marked with a unique numerical manufacturers code identifying it as a Paveway laser guidance kit produced by the US weapons manufacturer Raytheon. Human Rights Watch sent a letter to Raytheon on March 10, seeking information about findings. Raytheon has not responded. Human Rights Watch wrote to the coalition on March 11 seeking information about the attack and whether it is assessing the resulting civilian harm, and asking about any steps the coalition has taken to ensure accountability and provide redress. The coalition has not responded.

The Joint Incident Assessment Team, established by the coalition in 2016, has [fallen short](#) of international standards regarding transparency, impartiality, and independence, underscoring the need for an international investigative body to document human rights violations and unlawful attacks by parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Human Rights Watch and Mwatana for Human Rights found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strikes. An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful. The coalition has not provided information that would justify the attack.

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE  
KING'S BENCH DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE COURT

CLAIM NO: CO/3579/2020

BETWEEN:

THE KING on the application of  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE ("CAAT")

Claimant

- and -

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE ("SSIT")

Defendant

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EXHIBIT SPF21

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June 30, 2015

## Targeting Saada

Unlawful Coalition Airstrikes on Saada City in Yemen

Available In [English](#) [العربية](#)

■ Video

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### Summary

On March 26, 2015, a nine-member coalition of states led by Saudi Arabia began an air campaign in Yemen against the forces of Ansar Allah – commonly known as the Houthis. In the preceding months, the Houthis, a Zaidi Shia armed group from northern Yemen, had taken control of the capital, Sanaa, and swept south threatening to take the port city of Aden.

Coalition airstrikes have targeted a number of cities and towns under the control of the Houthis. One of the places hardest hit has been Saada City, a Houthi stronghold in northern Yemen that is normally home to about 50,000 people. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition has extensively bombed Saada City: satellite imagery shows over 210 distinct impact locations in built-up areas of the city consistent with aerial bombardment. These attacks damaged or destroyed hundreds of buildings.

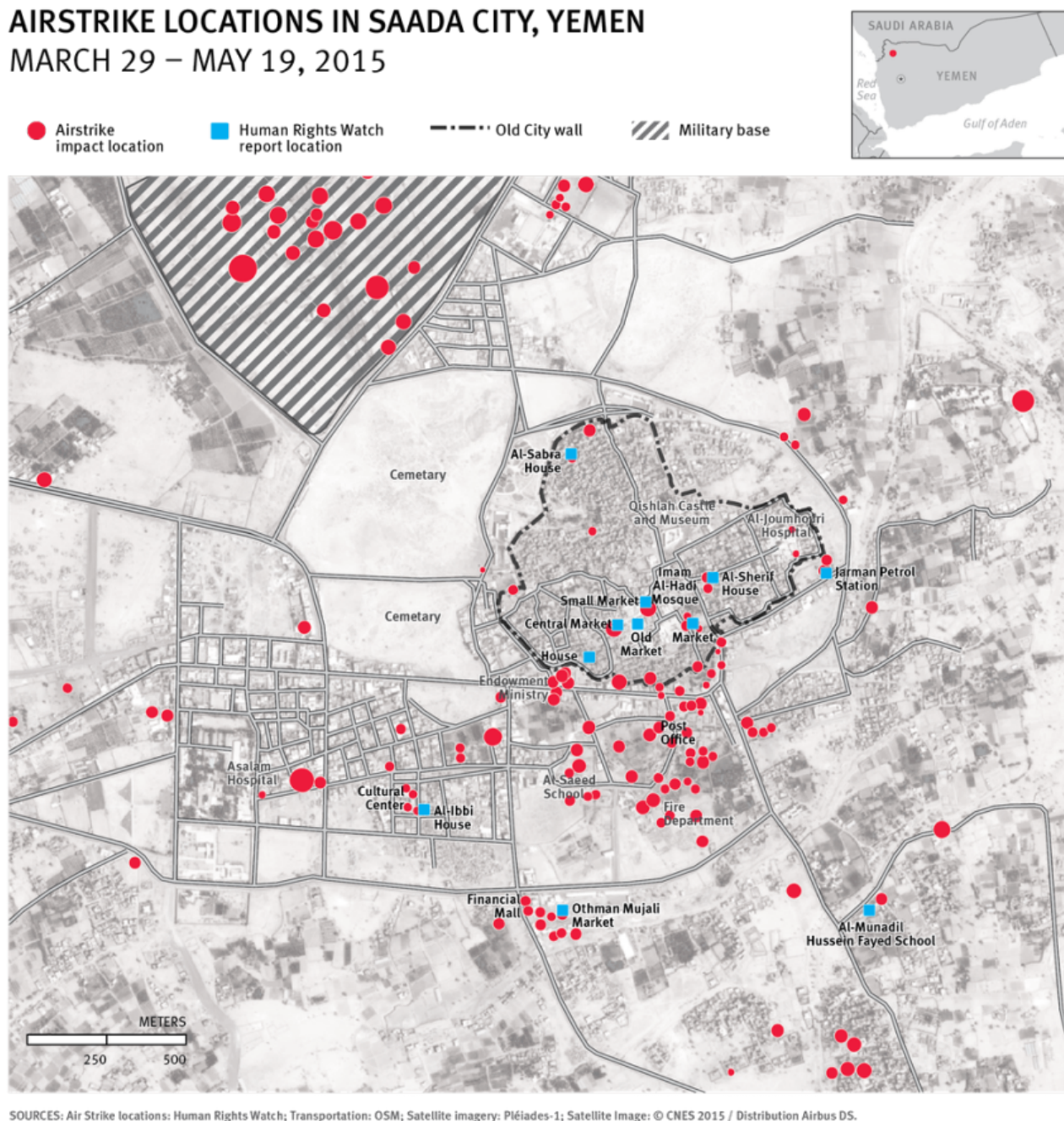
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Human Rights Watch conducted field investigations in Saada on May 15 and 16 during a five-day ceasefire, interviewing 28 local residents and examining impact craters and dozens of buildings damaged or destroyed by airstrikes. While many coalition airstrikes were directed at legitimate military targets in the city, Human Rights Watch identified several attacks that appeared to violate international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war, and resulted in numerous civilian deaths and injuries.



Coalition attacks struck at least six residential houses not being used for military purposes. One attack killed 27 members of a single family, including 17 children. The airstrikes also hit at least five markets for which there was no evidence of military activity. Aerial attacks on an empty school and a crowded petrol station appear also to have violated the laws of war.

## AIRSTRIKE LOCATIONS IN SAADA CITY, YEMEN MARCH 29 – MAY 19, 2015



Map indicating the locations of the cases described in the report and damages damage overview map

Human Rights Watch investigated each of these incidents by interviewing victims and witnesses to the attack, searching for possible military targets in the vicinity, and obtaining information about victims from medical sources and local authorities.

Human Rights Watch compiled the names and ages of 59 people killed in aerial attacks in Saada City between April 6 and May 11 on the basis of information from relatives, witnesses,

medical staff, and local Houthi authorities. These include 14 women and at least 35 children. Human Rights Watch was not able to determine how many of those killed were civilians, but multiple members of the same families were among those killed, including women and children, indicating that many were civilians.

Under the laws of war applicable to the armed conflict in Yemen, civilians and civilian objects may never be deliberate targets of attack. Attacks that fail to discriminate between civilians and combatants or that cause civilian harm disproportionate to the expected military gain of an attack are prohibited. Warring parties are required to take precautionary measures to minimize incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, and damage to civilian objects. This includes avoiding the deployment of forces in densely populated areas.

On May 8, a coalition spokesman announced that the entire city of Saada was a military target. This not only violated the laws-of-war prohibition against placing civilians at particular risk by treating a number of separate and distinct military objectives as a single military target, but possibly also the prohibition against making threats of violence whose purpose is to instill terror in the civilian population.

Human Rights Watch called on all parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law. The coalition should promptly investigate all alleged laws-of-war violations carried out by coalition forces, including those detailed in this report, and provide compensation and other redress to civilian victims as appropriate. Human Rights Watch urged the coalition not to use explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas because of the inevitable civilian harm caused. The United States and other coalition supporters should press the coalition to abide by its international legal obligations, and should also investigate alleged violations in any attack where they played a direct role.

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## Recommendations

### To Saudi Arabia and other Coalition Members

- Abide by the laws of war, including the prohibitions on attacks that target civilians, that do not discriminate between civilians and combatants, and that cause civilian loss disproportionate to the expected military benefit.
- Take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, including making advance effective warnings of attacks when possible.

- Revoke any declaration that particular cities or towns are entirely military targets, and take appropriate disciplinary action against individuals making such declarations.
- Consistent with the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks, end the use of explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas.
- Provide prompt and appropriate compensation to civilians and their families for deaths, injuries, and property damage resulting from wrongful strikes. Consider providing “condolence” payments to civilians suffering harm from airstrikes without regard to wrongdoing.
- Conduct transparent and impartial investigations into credible allegations of laws-of-war violations, including the incidents included in this report.
- Institute a policy of conducting investigations into airstrikes in which there were high numbers of civilian casualties even where no evidence suggests violations of the laws of war.
- Make public information on intended military targets in airstrikes that resulted in civilian casualties, and all military actors involved in such strikes.
- Make public the findings of investigations and include recommendations for disciplinary measures or criminal prosecutions where violations are found.

## To Houthi Forces

- Abide by the laws of war, including taking all feasible steps to minimize the risks to populations under their control.
- Avoid placing military objectives in densely populated areas and take steps to remove civilians from areas under attack.

## To the United States and other Coalition Supporters

- Urge coalition members to implement the recommendations listed above, especially pressing for impartial investigations into airstrikes that allegedly violate the laws of war.
- Conduct investigations into any airstrike alleged to have violated the laws of war and that the US may have directly participated in, either by refueling fighter jets on bombing missions or providing targeting information and other direct support.

## To the UN Security Council

- Remind all parties to the conflict in Yemen that anyone responsible for “planning, directing, or committing acts that violate applicable international human rights law or international humanitarian law, or acts that constitute human rights abuses” are potentially subject to travel bans and asset freezes under Resolution 2140.

## To President Hadi’s Government

- Urge that the coalition provide detailed information about intended military targets of airstrikes in which civilians died. Make that information publicly available and press for compensation where there is a finding of wrongdoing.
- 

## Methodology

This report is based on Human Rights Watch field research in the Yemeni cities of Saada and the capital, Sanaa, in May 2015. Two Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed 28 individuals who had witnessed airstrikes carried out by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Saada, including four who lost members of their families in the strikes. Human Rights Watch also interviewed three Ansar Allah officials who were based in Saada throughout the aerial bombardment of the city.

Most interviews took place at the sites of individual airstrikes that witnesses were describing, or in Saada’s two functioning hospitals, al-Salam Hospital and al-Jumhuri Hospital. Human Rights Watch conducted all interviews in Arabic or in English with Arabic translation.

All interviews were voluntary; participants were informed of the purpose of the interview and the way in which their information would be documented and reported, and that they could stop the interview at any time or decline to answer specific questions posed. All participants gave oral consent to be interviewed, and no one received any remuneration for giving an interview.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed official reports on the numbers of those killed and wounded due to airstrikes. These included statistics for the governorate of Saada issued by Yemen’s Houthi controlled Ministry of Health, and a list containing names and other details of 150 killed and 344 wounded in Saada governorate that the Ansar Allah Human Rights Implementation office had compiled. Human Rights Watch also reviewed the medical records of patients admitted to al-Salam Hospital and al-Jumhuri Hospital for injuries caused by alleged coalition airstrikes.

In addition to field research, Human Rights Watch conducted a detailed damage assessment for the town of Saada and surrounding villages using a time series of 11 very high-resolution commercial satellite images recorded between January 6 and May 19, 2015.<sup>[1]</sup> Satellite imagery was used to identify additional areas of destruction, verify witness statements, and assess the scale, distribution, and timing of airstrikes during a two-month period.

On May 20, 2015, Human Rights Watch wrote to the Saudi Arabian government to seek information on intended targets of 13 of the airstrikes in Saada City that we had investigated.<sup>[2]</sup> At the time of publication, Human Rights Watch had not received a response to the letter. Any future responses to this report from the Saudi Arabian government will be posted on the Yemen page of the Human Rights Watch website: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

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## I. Background

In September 2014, Ansar Allah, known as the Houthis, a Zaidi Shia group from northern Yemen, seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa.<sup>[3]</sup> They did so with the help of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and units of Yemen's army that remained loyal to him after he stepped down in 2011.<sup>[4]</sup> In January 2015, the Houthis effectively ousted Yemeni President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and his cabinet, who subsequently relocated to Saudi Arabia and re-established a government there.<sup>[5]</sup>

In March, after Houthi forces advanced southward, threatening to take the port city of Aden and other areas, a Saudi Arabia-led coalition began aerial military operations against them. On March 26, coalition warplanes began attacks against Houthi forces in several locations, including in Sanaa. The air operations have continued. Between March 26 and June 11, the coalition carried out at least 2,724 airstrikes, according to local human rights organizations who are keeping a tally.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition comprises five members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates – as well as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Sudan.<sup>[7]</sup> According to the GCC states, the coalition launched its military operations at the request of President Hadi, whom they continue to recognize as Yemen's head of state.<sup>[8]</sup> The US is not a member of the coalition, but according to the White House, provides "logistical and intelligence support."<sup>[9]</sup> On April 12, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that unnamed US officials had said the US was providing Saudi Arabia with direct targeting support for airstrikes.<sup>[10]</sup>

Airstrikes have struck alleged Houthi military targets in densely populated areas in the capital, Sanaa, and other cities, including Hodaida, Taiz, Ibb, Lahj, al-Dale'a, Shabwa, Marib, and Aden. Airstrikes were suspended except in Yemen's border regions during a declared five-day ceasefire on May 12-17, but then resumed on May 18. At the time of publication, airstrikes were continuing.<sup>[11]</sup>

Human Rights Watch has documented several airstrikes that appear to have been unlawfully indiscriminate, resulting in civilian casualties. These include an airstrike on a camp for internally displaced persons located 16 kilometers south of Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia that killed at least 29 civilians, and an airstrike on a dairy factory outside the port city of Hodaida, that killed at least 31 civilians.<sup>[12]</sup>

Human Rights Watch has also documented coalition use of banned cluster munitions in attacks in at least five areas of Saada governorate where civilians reside.<sup>[13]</sup> We have not seen any evidence to indicate that cluster munitions have been used in Saada City.

Before and since the airstrikes began, the Houthis have conducted ground operations primarily against pro-Hadi Yemeni forces, including a few units of the Yemeni army and the so-called Popular Resistance Committees in the southern cities of Taiz and Aden. Pro-Houthi forces have also carried out operations against Saudi Arabia, including by launching artillery rockets indiscriminately from Saada governorate into the southern Saudi Arabian border city of Najran and areas of Jizan province in May.<sup>[14]</sup>

Currently, Houthi forces control or are present in much of the western half of Yemen.<sup>[15]</sup>

According to the United Nation's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the fighting in Yemen had killed 1,412 civilians, many as a result of airstrikes, by June 16.<sup>[16]</sup>

## The Houthis in Saada

The current leader of the Houthi movement, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, and his leadership have historically been based in Yemen's northern Saada governorate. Since 2004, the Houthis engaged in six separate armed conflicts with the Yemeni government, in which both sides were responsible for serious violations of the laws of war.<sup>[17]</sup>

The 2011 uprising that led to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had held office for 33 years, stepping down resulted in weakened government control of parts of the country including the north. The Houthis became the *de facto* governing authority in Saada. They appointed a governor, collect taxes, oversee local government, and administer justice.<sup>[18]</sup>



Saada City, with an estimated pre-war population of 50,000, is a military as well as political Houthi stronghold.

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## II. Houthi Deployment and the Coalition Declaration of Towns as Military Targets

On May 8, 2015, coalition authorities declared the entire Houthi stronghold cities of Saada and Marran to be military targets. This followed Houthi incursions into and rocket attacks on Saudi Arabia from Saada governorate that killed at least 12 civilians in the Saudi Arabian city of Najran and areas of Jizan province, according to Saudi Arabian government sources.<sup>[19]</sup> Brig. Gen. al-Assiri, the military spokesman for the coalition, told the media:

Starting today and as you all remember we have declared through media platforms and through the leaflets that were dropped on [Marran and Saada], and prior warnings to Yemeni civilians in those two cities, to get away from those cities where operations will take place. This warning will end at 7 p.m. today and coalitions forces will immediately respond to the actions of these militias that targeted the security and safety of the Saudi citizens from now and until the objectives of this operation are reached.

We have also declared Saada and Marran as military targets loyal to the Houthi militias and as a result the operations will cover the whole area of those two cities and thus we repeat our call to the civilians to stay away from these groups, and leave the areas under Houthi control or where the Houthis are taking shelter.<sup>[20]</sup>

Several attacks on apparently civilian objects that Human Rights Watch investigated in Saada, including an attack that struck a residential house, two attacks that struck markets, and an attack on a school, took place after the May 8 announcement.

Issuing warning of impending attacks to the civilian population is in line with the obligation under the laws of war to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm, and in particular to provide “effective advance warning” of attacks that may affect the civilian population, so long as circumstances permit.<sup>[21]</sup> However, the general and vague nature of these warnings would be of little help to civilians in need of greater security.

Even more problematic, and a clear violation of the laws of war, is the coalition assertion that the entire cities of Saada and Marran are military targets. The laws of war prohibit attacks that treat as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects.<sup>[22]</sup>

Even if individual attacks carried out were in accordance with the laws of war, the coalition statement may be in violation of the prohibition against acts or threats of violence in which the primary purpose was to spread terror among the civilian population.<sup>[23]</sup>

In Saada City, Human Rights Watch observed Houthi vehicle-mounted anti-aircraft weapons deployed in areas still populated by many civilians. Parties to a conflict are obligated to take all feasible measures to avoid placing military objectives in densely populated areas. They should also move civilians from areas where their forces are deployed to minimize civilian harm. However, the extensive Houthi military deployment in Saada, and reportedly in Marran, did not allow the coalition to treat civilians or civilian objects as military objectives, nor did providing warnings to the population relieve the coalition forces of ensuring that all attacks were on military targets.

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### III. Use of Explosive Weapons with Wide Area Effect in Populated Areas

Human Rights Watch investigations on the ground and analysis of satellite imagery show that coalition forces dropped or launched aerial munitions extensively on Saada City. The munitions used were explosive weapons with wide area impact.

Human Rights Watch identified from a time series of satellite imagery 210 distinct impact locations in built-up areas of the city consistent with aerial bombardment as of May 19, 2015. The satellite imagery shows that these attacks damaged or destroyed hundreds of buildings.

Human Rights Watch's on-the-ground investigations confirmed that airstrikes have caused significant damage to buildings, streets and markets around the city. Impact craters and damage to buildings at some sites indicate that coalition forces on several occasions used aerial bombs of at least 1,000 pounds in attacks on the city. Bombs of this size can destroy structures and injure and kill people hundreds of meters from the impact point.

The May 9 attack on the market in front of the Imam al-Hadi mosque, for example, wounded one man who was in his home near the window when a munition struck, completely destroyed about a dozen small shops, and caused significant structural damage to residential houses on both sides of the market. The strike created a six-meter wide crater. Human Rights Watch researchers did not find any weapon remnants at the scene of the attack that would have allowed them to determine the specific weapon used.



Impact crater after a May 9, 2015 attack on the market in front of the Imam al-Hadi mosque. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

At a government building in Saada City, Human Rights Watch photographed the remnants of an MK-83 air-dropped 1,000-pound bomb made in the US.

At the site of other attacks Human Rights Watch saw several explosive remnants of war, but was unable to determine the specific type of weapons used or draw further conclusions based on the remnants alone. Saudi Arabia and other members of the coalition have not disclosed information on the types or quantities of weapons used in the airstrikes.

Human Rights Watch investigated specific attacks that appeared to violate the laws of war because they were indiscriminate or disproportionate. Indiscriminate attacks are those that do not differentiate between civilians and combatants; disproportionate attacks are those that cause civilian loss excessive in relation to the anticipated military gain from the attack. Moreover, as a matter of policy, warring parties should not use explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas because of the clear risk to civilians.<sup>[24]</sup>

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## IV. Unlawful Airstrikes

Human Rights Watch investigated several coalition aerial attacks in Saada City that appeared to be in violation of the laws of war. On the basis of information from relatives, witnesses, medical staff, and local Houthi authorities Human Rights Watch compiled the names and ages of 59 people killed in aerial attacks in Saada City between April 6 and May 11, including 14 women and at least 35 children.<sup>[25]</sup>

Coalition airstrikes hit at least six residential houses in Saada City. Human Rights Watch found no evidence that the houses were being used for military purposes. In at least two of these attacks, munitions dropped from coalition aircraft struck the houses more than once, suggesting that they were the intended targets. The evidence from other coalition airstrikes, such as those on Houthi security and government buildings in the city, indicates that coalition warplanes were capable of hitting their intended targets with a certain degree of accuracy. VICE News has documented the use of one type of laser-guided air-dropped bomb in an airstrike on Sanaa on May 1 that killed at least 20 people.<sup>[26]</sup>

Human Rights Watch cannot exclude the possibility that coalition forces intended to hit other targets when they struck the residential houses. For example, in the deadliest of the attacks on residential houses, which destroyed the al-Ibbi house and killed 27 members of the al-Ibbi family, the warplanes possibly targeted an adjacent cultural center, which was also struck.

The attacks on residential houses altogether killed at least 51 people, including 14 women and 32 children. Human Rights Watch conducted separate interviews with nine victims and witnesses of these attacks, all of whom reported that all of those killed and injured in the attacks on residential houses were civilians. Although Human Rights Watch has not been able to independently verify this, the high proportion of women and children from the same families among the victims indicates that the houses' residents were primarily civilians. The presence of Houthi combatants or other military objectives would not make the attacks lawful if they were carried out indiscriminately or were disproportionate.

Human Rights Watch also found that coalition aircraft attacked and seriously damaged at least five main markets in Saada City. As with the residential houses, multiple strikes on some of the markets suggest that they were the intended targets. Markets are normally civilian objects and should not be attacked. Human Rights Watch saw no evidence indicating that the markets had been used for military purposes, such as for the storage of significant munitions. The presence

of small numbers of fighters or weapons in the market would still likely make any bombing of the market a disproportionate attack.

Human Rights Watch also investigated an attack on a school. During a visit to the school, researchers found no evidence to indicate that the school had been used for military purposes, although they were not able to confirm this definitively.

Local Houthi authorities told Human Rights Watch that coalition aircraft had also struck key civilian infrastructure, including the electricity station, a public company that bottles cooking gas, the main public water works, a private wheat storage facility, a company that bottles mineral water, and a petrol station.

Many and perhaps all of these normally civilian objects may have been contributing to the Houthi military effort, making them legitimate military targets. However, the laws of war prohibit attacks that destroy or render useless “objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population”<sup>[27]</sup> or would otherwise have a disproportionate impact on civilians compared to the expected military gain from the attack. Not only are food, water, and medicine crucial to the population, but also electricity and petrol.

Even attacks that have a clear military objective and are otherwise lawful should be carried out in a manner that, as much as possible, minimizes civilian harm. The attack on the petrol station, a legitimate target, did not appear to have been carried out in this manner: it occurred in the middle of the day when a long line of people were present, waiting to fill their vehicles. Those killed included at least five civilians, witnesses said.

Human Rights Watch submitted a list of 13 attacks under investigation to Saudi Arabian authorities on May 20, asking what the intended target was for each attack, what weapon or weapons were used, and what precautions the coalition had taken to minimize civilian harm (See Appendix I).<sup>[28]</sup> At the time of writing, Human Rights Watch had not received any response to its letter.

Human Rights Watch also documented coalition airstrikes on security buildings and installations and government buildings, which were likely legitimate military targets.

## Residential Homes

### Al-Sherif House

On the morning of May 10, two bombs struck a residential house and the adjacent street in central Saada City, killing at least five people, including the owner of the house and four



neighbors from the Qabas family, the mother and three children. The attack also injured two children from the al-Sherif home.[\[29\]](#)

Ahmed al-Sherif, 38, a watch repairman and the owner of one of the houses that were hit, was still receiving treatment at nearby al-Jumhuri hospital when Human Rights Watch interviewed him five days after the attack. Al-Sherif said that he lost consciousness when the attack happened and that he woke up in the hospital the next day. A metal fragment had cut through his intestines, requiring surgery. The attack also wounded his 7-year-old son Mohammed in the left shoulder and his 12-year-old son Abed in the arm and leg, he said.[\[30\]](#) All three had wounds or bandages consistent with al-Sherif's description.

Sherif Ahmed, 20, one of al-Sherif's sons, told Human Rights Watch he was outside the house when the attack struck:

Thankfully my father and two brothers were outside when the first strike hit our house. Luckily my mother and sisters were downstairs, near the back of the house. Five minutes later, a second strike hit the other side of the road. That is how my dad, little sister and brother were wounded.[\[31\]](#)

Human Rights Watch examined the site. Two-thirds of the façade of al-Sherif's house had been destroyed, leaving the inner rooms exposed. Researchers did not find any munition remnants at the site to indicate the weapon used. A crater about one meter in diameter in the asphalt in front of the house was partially filled with bricks and other debris from the house. There was also significant blast damage to stores on the other side of the street.

Ahmed Al-Sherif died from his injuries on June 3, according to a local Ansar Allah official.[\[32\]](#)

Human Rights Watch did not identify any obvious military targets in the vicinity. Sherif Ahmed said that none of his family members were in the Houthi forces and he was not aware of any members in the Qabas family.

## Al-Ibbi House







**Before:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS **After:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS

Images of the Saada Cultural Center and the al-Ibbi house before and after at least five aerial bombs hit both compounds on May 5, 2015, killing 27 members of the al-Ibbi family, including 17 children.&#13;

At about 10:50 p.m. on May 6, at least three aerial bombs struck a cultural center and a residential house in southwest Saada City, killing 28 people (27 from one family), including seven women and at least 17 children, and wounding three men.[\[33\]](#)

Local residents told Human Rights Watch that the first bomb struck the Saada Cultural Center and a few minutes later, a second bomb struck the southwest corner of the al-Ibbi family house, which is located next to the center.[\[34\]](#)

Walid al-Ibbi, 35, the only al-Ibbi family member present to survive the attack without injuries, told Human Rights Watch that when the bomb fell on the southwest corner of the house, the family ran outside and towards the eastern entrance at the back of the house, thinking they would be safer in the back apartment. Minutes later, a third strike, possibly with two bombs, hit the part of the house where the family had taken shelter, al-Ibbi said.[\[35\]](#) He told Human Rights Watch:

Just earlier that evening, a family had come to our house to ask for my daughter's hand in marriage for their son. Now I have lost my wife and all four of my daughters. I cannot believe that everyone I love is gone.[\[36\]](#)

Al-Ibbi said that only three other members of his family survived the attack. His father, Abdullah, a barber, suffered a dislocated jaw and possible brain damage, his doctors in Sanaa told him. A metal fragment struck his brother Younes above one eye, damaging his optical nerve. Doctors told al-Ibbi that Younes may lose his sight if they operate and remove the fragment. Another

brother, Ayman, suffered minor injuries. Al-Ibbi said that he was uninjured because he was standing outside the house when the third strike occurred.[37]

Two neighbors gave Human Rights Watch similar accounts of what happened. Saleh Hussein Daglan, 54, who lives next to the al-Ibbi house, said: "I heard the family as they screamed, I ran outside and saw bodies under the rubble. One son, Murad, was screaming 'Save me! Save me!' A big stone was crushing his legs. He died." [38]

Ayed Ayed Kamil, 55, another neighbor three houses down the street from the al-Ibbi house, told Human Rights Watch:

As the last strikes hit, I ran outside and saw four members of the [al-Ibbi] family lying out on the road, under rubble. Three of Abdullah's sons were dead but one, Younes, was alive. I saw that his forehead was sliced open. The rest of the bodies were in the house including a one-month-old baby and a pregnant woman.[39]



Ayed Ayed Kamil, a neighbor, sits on the ruins of al-Ibbi house, which was struck in an aerial attack on May 6, 2015. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

Ayed Ayed Kamil, a neighbor, sits on the ruins of al-Ibbi house, which was struck in an aerial attack on May 6, 2015. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

Kamil told Human Rights Watch that the attack also wounded a man from Yemen's marginalized *muhamasheen* community, who later died in the hospital from a fragmentation wound to the back of his neck.[\[40\]](#)

Local residents provided Human Rights Watch with photos of at least 10 children who appeared to be under 10 years of age lying side by side on the floor, apparently lifeless. The residents said the photos were taken right after the strike.

At about 2 a.m. on May 7, another airstrike hit the cultural center next to the al-Ibbi home while local people were still pulling bodies out of the rubble from the earlier strikes, the two neighbors said. This caused the crowd of helpers to immediately disperse. Both men said that they knew of no military targets in the area; they said that the nearest security installation was about two kilometers away.[\[41\]](#)

Human Rights Watch examined satellite images of the airstrikes. Researchers inspected three impact craters on the compound of the cultural center. A crater about one meter in diameter was located at the northern side of the cultural center, right inside the entrance gates. Two bombs appeared to have hit the building itself. The al-Ibbi house had been almost completely reduced to rubble with only part of the back wall and rooms still standing. There was also significant damage to neighboring houses. Human Rights Watch researchers did not find any remnants that could help identify the weapons used in the attacks, but aerial bombs appear to have been used.

The fact that at least three bombs struck the cultural center and that a warplane returned several hours after the main strikes to drop another bomb on the cultural center suggest that the center was the intended target of the attack. Al-Ibbi said that neither his father nor any of his brothers held any role with the Houthis. All of the men in the family, he said, were barbers, working at their family's two salons in Saada City.

Nabil Ali Jameel, the head of the cultural center, told Human Rights Watch that the center is used for local festivals, theatre pieces, as a library, and to host the local Saada-based Ansar Allah radio station, Massira FM.[\[42\]](#) A radio station used to direct military forces – and not merely report news or make propaganda statements – would be a valid military target, subject to a proportionality analysis. Having listened to some of the radio's broadcasts, Human Rights Watch did not find evidence that the radio station was being used in that way.

One Saada resident said there were rumors that Houthi forces had used the cultural center as a meeting point, but all others with whom Human Rights Watch spoke did not believe this to be true.[\[43\]](#)

## Al-Sabra House

In the early hours of April 15, an airstrike hit a residential house in northwest Saada City, killing four people, a woman and her three children, and wounding three to five people, including two children.

Abd al-Razak Qamis, 34, told Human Rights Watch that he heard many airstrikes during the night of April 14/15. One of the strikes hit the home of his neighbor, Ahsen Mohsen al-Sabra, a shopkeeper, and his family of eight. Qamis told Human Rights Watch:

I heard a plane overhead, and then this loud explosion. I looked out of the window, which had shattered with the explosion, and saw Ahsen jumping out of the window of the second floor of the house, clutching his 10-year-old son. I wanted to run outside but was scared that the aircraft might strike us again if we gathered outside.[\[44\]](#)

After 20 minutes, Qamis felt that it was safe enough to run outside to help the family.

Qamis said that the attack killed al-Sabra's wife and three of his children.[\[45\]](#) A local resident gave Human Rights Watch photos that included one of the destroyed al-Sabra house and several showing three children who appear under the age of 10 lying, apparently lifeless, on the floor. One photo shows what appears to be a covered, larger body lying next to the children.

Al-Jumhuri hospital records show that three people from the al-Sabra family, including two boys, ages 10 and 12, received treatment at the hospital on April 18. Qamis said that the attack also wounded al-Sabra's pregnant daughter and a woman in a neighboring house. The Ansar Allah list does not contain information about any Houthi casualties from this attack.

Human Rights Watch visited the impact site on May 15. The strike appeared to have destroyed a significant part of the al-Sabra house and caused damage to two adjacent houses. Bricks and other debris from the house partially filled a large crater in front of the house, about three meters in diameter. Human Rights Watch was not able to identify any potential military targets in the vicinity and did not see any remnants to help identify the type of weapon used.





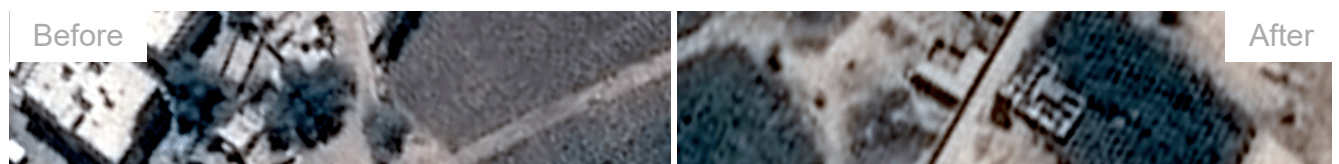
Remnants of al-Sabra's house, which was struck by an aerial attack on April 15, 2015, which killed a woman and her three children. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

## Other Residential Houses

Human Rights Watch investigated aerial attacks on two additional residential houses, but were not able to interview witnesses to these attacks.

On May 5, an aerial attack struck the house of Muhammed al-Hibbi, killing his wife and all seven children when the roof collapsed on top of them, according to his cousin, Nuh Ahmed al-Hibbi.<sup>[46]</sup> Human Rights Watch did not visit the impact site, but medical staff corroborated the number of casualties.

Around 12:30 a.m. on April 6, an aerial attack struck the home of Muhammad Daghfal, killing seven members of the family, including four women and two children, according to Muhammad Gahsha, a grave worker who buried the dead.<sup>[47]</sup> Human Rights Watch visited the ruins of the house, which was located in a rural area about five kilometers from the center of Saada City. An investigator at the Salam hospital confirmed the deaths.<sup>[48]</sup> Satellite imagery recorded on April 7 shows the complete destruction of the Daghfal house. Satellite imagery shows no other damage in the vicinity.





**Before:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS **After:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS

Satellite images of the Daghfal house before and after a coalition airstrike hit it on April 6, killing seven members of the family, including four women and two children.™;

Ruins of the Daghfal house, which was struck by an aerial attack on April 6, 2015, which killed seven members of the family. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch also investigated the ruins of a residential house near the old market. An Ansar Allah official told Human Rights Watch that warplanes had struck the house on May 7, killing one civilian and wounding two others, but Human Rights Watch was not able to corroborate the number of casualties. Satellite imagery shows that the house was destroyed in the period between May 4 and 10.

## Markets

Coalition warplanes attacked and destroyed at least five markets in Saada City, two of them after the coalition announcement that the entire city was a target.[\[49\]](#) Attacks on multiple markets and the absence of evident military objectives in close vicinity to the markets suggest that the markets were the intended targets of the strikes.







**Before:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS **After:** © 2015 CNES/Distribution Airbus DS

Othman Market in Saada, Yemen before (taken on March 29, 2015) and after (taken on May 18, 2015) it was destroyed in airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition.&#13;

## Market Opposite the Imam al-Hadi Mosque

Coalition airstrikes hit the fountain and market outside the Imam al-Hadi mosque's eastern gate in Saada City. The strike likely took place in the morning on May 9.<sup>[50]</sup> Local people told Human Rights Watch that the mosque had been closed and unavailable for prayer since March 26, the beginning of the coalition air campaign.

Ali Mahmoud al-Hamoud, 22, a laborer, told Human Rights Watch that he was at the gate of the mosque in the morning when he heard an airplane overhead. Then a bomb hit the fountain in the square in front of the mosque, which is surrounded by a small market with about a dozen shops. He fled but heard several more strikes hit the same area about 15 minutes later.<sup>[51]</sup>

Talal al-Aizug, 28, a security officer living next door to the mosque, said he was at home with his family when the first strike hit. He told Human Rights Watch that he had heard an airplane flying overhead since 7 a.m. He heard strikes in the far distance earlier, and then a massive explosion as a bomb hit the market in front of his house. Fragments and debris flew through the window of the second floor of his home, into the room he was sitting in, lacerating his head and the side of his chest, and broke through the walls at the corner of the house. He showed Human Rights Watch the injuries he had sustained.<sup>[52]</sup>

The attack destroyed the fountain and all of the shops, and left a crater about three meters deep and six meters in diameter.

When Human Rights Watch visited the site researchers observed that the Houthis had posted armed guards at the entrance to the mosque. However, the presence of armed guards would



not render the mosque a military target. Dropping multiple bombs on guards near a market appears unlawfully indiscriminate or disproportionate.

Human Rights Watch reviewed satellite imagery recorded on the morning of May 10 and identified four probable impact locations from separate air-dropped munitions on this market and immediately adjacent buildings on either side of the market. Human Rights Watch found no evidence of any military objective in the immediate area.



## Old Market

Ali al-Hashhoush, a shopkeeper in the Old Market located in the center of Saada City, told Human Rights Watch that he was at home, a short walk from his shop, when he heard two loud explosions around midnight. About 10 minutes later he heard a third explosion, and about 10 minutes after that, a fourth. After the fourth, he heard a plane overhead. He said:

I ran towards the noise, and saw the market in ruins. I saw one man with a piece of metal in his neck, his leg was almost cut off from the explosion and half of his left hand had been sliced off. I ran past him to the second man. He was an older man that I knew well, very poor, who used to sleep in the market. I picked him up so he could be driven to the hospital – blood was pouring out of his head, down his chest. He died hours later. I saw a third man, but I am not sure what happened to him. Others carried him out of the rubble and he was also wounded.<sup>[53]</sup>

The strike likely occurred on May 10.<sup>[54]</sup>

Human Rights Watch reviewed satellite imagery recorded in the morning of May 19 and identified a large zone of complete destruction, approximately 30 by 40 meters in size, within the Old Market resulting from impact of one and possibly more air-dropped munitions. Human Rights Watch found no evidence of any military objective in the immediate area.

Human Rights Watch also visited the ruins of a small outdoor market outside Jarman Commercial Market that coalition aircraft attacked on the night of April 15, according to local people, but was unable to interview witnesses to the strike. Satellite imagery shows that the strike took place between the mornings of April 14 and 15.

Human Rights Watch also visited the ruins of the central market located next to the Religious Endowments Ministry. Satellite imagery shows that two attacks struck the market in the period April 7-14, one attack struck on April 14-15, and at least one attack struck in the period May 4-10. According to two men who had shops there, one of the strikes, probably the one on April 14-15, killed a shopkeeper.<sup>[55]</sup>

The two shopkeepers said another strike hit the building of the Religious Endowments Ministry, which also housed a restaurant, juice shop, and small grocery store, on the night between May 9 and 10. No one was wounded in the strike because it happened at night, they said.<sup>[56]</sup>





Two owners dig through the rubble of their shops near the Religious Endowments Ministry that were destroyed by an aerial attack on May 9 or 10, 2015. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

Satellite imagery also shows the destruction of the Othman Mujali Market in the southern part of Saada City. The main market building was destroyed between April 15 and May 2. At least eight aerial bombs were dropped on the remaining market buildings and the adjacent financial building. According to Al-Jumhuri hospital records, the strikes killed two civilians and wounded nine.

Ansar Allah officials told Human Rights Watch that airstrikes had damaged three other markets on the outskirts of the city, the agricultural products market, al-Khafji Market, and Talh market.

## Al-Munadil Hussein Fayed School

A coalition airstrike hit al-Munadil Hussein Fayed School, a girls' secondary school in Saada City at 8:30 a.m. on May 11. Abdulhaliq al-Mutamayiz, 32, who lives 100 meters away, told Human Rights Watch that he was walking past the school when one corner of it sustained an aerial strike, leading him and another man to run for cover behind a nearby wall. From there, al-Mutamayiz said he heard another strike three minutes later that hit an open area about 200 meters away, followed by a third strike further away three minutes after that. He said he did not know whether there were any military installations or Houthi fighters at the school. Human Rights Watch's investigations did not find any evidence that fighters had been using the school.

All education in Yemen has been suspended since March 26, when the coalition air campaign began, and no one was present at the school at the time of the strike, local residents told Human Rights Watch.

A neighboring landowner, Muhammad Ali Saleh, showed Human Rights Watch a deep crater around one meter in diameter in the middle of his field, which he said was made by an aerial munition that burrowed deep into the ground when the school was hit in the strike. Saleh said that the munition was still buried in the ground.

## Jarman Petrol Station

On April 15, at least one aerial bomb struck the Jarman petrol station in western Saada City, killing at least five people and injuring 23 – though likely many more -- who were waiting in line to fill their cars with gasoline.

Abed Abd al-Rahman Ali, 23, a car mechanic, told Human Rights Watch that about 50 cars were lined up outside the petrol station, known as the Jarman Station, next to his workshop. [57] The combined effect of the war and the coalition blockade had created long lines at petrol stations all over Yemen.[58]

Ali said he heard an airplane overhead at about 1 p.m. and then a loud explosion. A bomb had hit the gas station's roof, causing it to collapse in a fireball that incinerated some of the vehicles. Ali, who said he ran out to help the wounded, described a chaotic scene at the station: "I saw four sets of limbs completely severed so we don't know who they belonged to." [59]

Ansar Allah's civil affairs office provided Human Rights Watch the names of five people who died in the attack and 23 wounded. Medical personnel told Human Rights Watch that they were not able to identify eight people after the attack because they were too badly burned, indicating a higher casualty figure.

Witnesses described seeing many victims after the attack. Ali said that he saw about 15 to 20 bodies on the ground and about 20 to 25 people with burns and fragmentation wounds. His brother, Osamah Abd al-Rahman Ali, told Human Rights Watch he arrived at the scene minutes after the strike and saw at least eight bodies, including some with severed limbs, and 16 wounded.

Human Rights Watch was also not able to establish how many of those killed were civilians. The Ansar Allah civil affairs office told Human Rights Watch that the people whose deaths they had documented were all civilians.[60] Ali told Human Rights Watch that he did not see anybody at the station carrying weapons. Another Saada resident, however, told Human Rights



Watch that the Houthis used the Jarman petrol station as the main one at which to refuel their vehicles.<sup>[61]</sup>



Satellite imagery recorded around 10:30 a.m. on April 15, about two and a half hours before the airstrike, shows a line of several dozen vehicles stretching approximately 175 meters from the petrol station.<sup>[62]</sup> The vehicles appear small in size consistent with passenger cars and pickup trucks. Satellite imagery recorded on May 2 shows extensive building destruction and fire-burned cars surrounding the petrol station consistent with the detonation of aerial munitions and secondary fuel tank fires.

During its investigation of the site, Human Rights Watch found that the concrete overhang above the petrol pumps had collapsed, consistent with witnesses' claims that a bomb struck the roof. There were seven burned-out vehicles in close proximity to the station. All of the vehicles appeared civilian. Five of the vehicles were small passenger mini-buses. Two cars were regular



personal cars. Photos from the immediate aftermath of the attack that Human Rights Watch reviewed do not show any additional vehicles that would appear to be military.



Burned-out cars lined up by the Jarman petrol station, which was struck in an aerial attack on April 15, 2015. © 2015 Ole Solvang/Human Rights Watch

Because of the importance of fuel for military operations, depriving belligerent forces of fuel supplies is a legitimate military objective. Even so, for the coalition to attack a petrol station in the middle of the day when it could reasonably be determined that many civilians were present, instead of at night and after providing a specific warning, is contrary to the obligations to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm and may amount to an unlawfully indiscriminate or disproportionate attack.

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## V. Applicable International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war, applies to the armed conflict between the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and Houthi forces.

The fundamental tenets of the laws of war are civilian immunity from attack and distinction. While humanitarian law recognizes that some civilian casualties are inevitable, it imposes a

duty on warring parties at all times to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and to target only combatants and other military objectives.

Civilian objects are those that are not considered military objectives.<sup>[63]</sup> Military objectives are combatants, including civilians directly participating in the hostilities, and those objects that “by their nature, location, purpose or use, make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”<sup>[64]</sup>

In general, the law prohibits direct attacks against what are by their nature civilian objects, such as homes and apartments, places of worship, hospitals, schools, or cultural monuments, unless they are being used for military purposes.<sup>[65]</sup>

Deliberate, indiscriminate, or disproportionate attacks against civilians and civilian objects are prohibited. Attacks are indiscriminate when they are not directed at a specific military objective, or employ a method or means of warfare that cannot be directed at a military objective or whose effects cannot be limited.<sup>[66]</sup> It is also prohibited as an indiscriminate attack to treat as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects.<sup>[67]</sup> Threatening such attacks may amount to acts in which the primary purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population.<sup>[68]</sup>

A disproportionate attack is one in which the expected incidental loss of civilian life and damage to civilian objects would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.<sup>[69]</sup> The expected danger to the civilian population and civilian objects depends on various factors, including their location (possibly within or near a military objective), the accuracy of the weapons used (depending on the trajectory, the range, environmental factors, the ammunition used, etc.), and the technical skill of the combatants (which can entail random launching of weapons when combatants lack the ability to aim effectively at the intended target).<sup>[70]</sup>

In the conduct of military operations, parties to a conflict must take constant care to spare the civilian population and civilian objects from the effects of hostilities.<sup>[71]</sup> Parties are required to take precautionary measures with a view to avoiding, and in any event minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, and damage to civilian objects.<sup>[72]</sup>

Before conducting an attack, a party to the conflict must do everything feasible to verify that the persons or objects to be attacked are military objectives and not civilians or civilian objects.<sup>[73]</sup> According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) the requirement to take all “feasible” precautions means, among other things, that those conducting an attack are required to take the steps needed to identify the target as a legitimate military objective “in good

time to spare the population as far as possible.”<sup>[74]</sup> They also must take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of warfare to minimize loss of civilian life and property.<sup>[75]</sup>

The laws of war do not prohibit fighting in urban areas, although the presence of civilians places greater obligations on warring parties to take steps to minimize harm to civilians. Forces must avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas, and endeavor to remove civilians from the vicinity of military objectives.<sup>[76]</sup> Belligerents are also prohibited from using civilians to shield military objectives or operations from attack. "Shielding" refers to purposefully using the presence of civilians to render military forces or areas immune from attack.<sup>[77]</sup> The unlawful deployment of forces within or near densely populated civilian areas does not relieve opposing forces from taking into account the risk to civilians when conducting attacks. The obligation to respect the laws of war does not depend on reciprocity by belligerent forces.<sup>[78]</sup>

Human Rights Watch opposes the use of aerial bombs and other explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas due to the inevitable civilian harm caused.

Individuals who commit serious violations of international humanitarian law with criminal intent are responsible for war crimes. Criminal intent has been defined as violations committed intentionally or recklessly.<sup>[79]</sup> Individuals may also be held criminally liable for attempting to commit a war crime, as well as assisting in, facilitating, aiding, or abetting a war crime. Responsibility may also fall on persons planning or instigating the commission of a war crime.<sup>[80]</sup> Military commanders and civilian leaders may also bear personal responsibility as a matter of command responsibility if they knew or should have known about the commission of war crimes and failed to prevent them or punish those responsible.

Those acts considered to be war crimes can be found in customary law as reflected in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other sources. They include a wide array of offenses, including deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks harming civilians, and mistreatment of persons in custody.<sup>[81]</sup>

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## VI. Acknowledgements

This report was researched and written by Belkis Wille, researcher for the Middle East and North Africa division, and Ole Solvang, senior researcher in the Emergencies division at Human Rights Watch.

Malcolm Smart, editor with the Middle East and North Africa division, and Tom Porteous, deputy program director, edited the report. James Ross, legal and policy director, provided legal review. Mark Hiznay, senior researcher in the Arms division, Josh Lyons, satellite imagery analyst, Bede Sheppard, deputy director of the Children's Rights division, and Adam Coogle, Middle East and North Africa researcher, provided specialist review.

Middle East and North Africa associate Sandy Elkhoury provided production assistance. Kathy Mills, publications specialist and Fitzroy Hepkins, administrative manager, prepared the report for publication.

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## Appendix I: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Minister of Defense His Royal Highness Mohammad bin Salman Al Sa`ud

May 20, 2015

His Royal Highness Mohammad bin Salman Al Sa`ud

Minister of Defense

Ministry of Defense

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Your Royal Highness,

Human Rights Watch has been conducting research into alleged violations of the laws of war by all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen, including Coalition forces, Ansar Allah (the Houthis), and other armed groups. Our recent research includes a number of airstrikes by Coalition forces that struck the city of Saada and killed and wounded civilians or damaged civilian property.

To help us understand whether these attacks were carried out in accordance with the laws of war, we would appreciate responses to the following questions with regard to each of the attacks listed in the attachment.

1. What was the intended target of the attack?

2. What weapon or weapons were used in the attack?

3. What precautions were taken to minimize civilian harm?

Any other information you can provide on any of these incidents, including whether you are conducting an investigation into possible laws-of-war violations, would be appreciated.

To meet our publication schedule, we would need to receive a response from you by May 27 so that your answers and comments can be reflected in our reporting.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response and stand ready to discuss with you our findings.

Sincerely,

Joe Stork

Deputy Director

Middle East and North Africa Division

Human Rights Watch

### **Aerial Attacks in Saada under Human Rights Watch Investigation**

1. Date: May 11; Time: 8:30 am; Latitude: 16°55'51.58"N; Longitude: 43°46'15.98"E.
2. Date: May 9; Time: 10:30-11 am; Latitude: 16°56'19.56"N; Longitude: 43°45'56.15"E.
3. Date: May 9 or 10; Time: night; Latitude: 16°56'13.71"N; Longitude: 43°45'41.61"E.
4. Date: May 10; Time: midnight; Latitude: 16°56'19.50"N; Longitude: 43°45'47.82"E.
5. Date: May 9; Time: Early morning; Latitude: 16°56'8.73"N; Longitude: 43°44'59.98"E.
6. Date: May 10; Time: 8 am; Latitude: 16°56'24.54"N; Longitude: 43°45'58.09"E.
7. Date: May 7; Time: 10 am; Latitude: 16°56'16.30"N; Longitude: 43°45'44.96"E.
8. Date: May 5; Time: Evening; Latitude: 16°56'0.58"N; Longitude: 43°45'27.43"E.
9. Date: April 15; Time: night; Latitude: 16°56'14.43"N; Longitude: 43°45'41.91"E.
10. Date: April 15; Time: 2 am; Latitude: 16°56'36.98"N; Longitude: 43°45'42.79"E.
11. Date: April 15; Time: night; Latitude: 16°56'21.71"N; Longitude: 43°45'51.15"E.
12. Date: April 15; Time: 1 pm; Latitude: 16°56'25.28"N; Longitude: 43°46'10.24"E.
13. Date: April 6; Time: 12:30 am; Latitude: 16°57'2.41"N; Longitude: 43°42'52.02"E.

Times are indicated in UTC +3:00. Impact coordinates are presented in the dd.mm.ss.sss format and were recorded with a civilian GPS unit (WGS84).



IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE  
KING'S BENCH DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE COURT

CLAIM NO: CO/3579/2020

BETWEEN:

THE KING on the application of  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE ("CAAT")

Claimant

- and -

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE ("SSIT")

Defendant

---

EXHIBIT SPF22

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# **‘NOWHERE SAFE FOR CIVILIANS’**

AIRSTRIKES AND GROUND ATTACKS IN  
YEMEN

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. We reach almost every country in the world and have more than 2 million members and supporters who drive forward our fight for rights, as well as more than 5 million activists who strengthen our calls for justice.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



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*Cover photo:* The Saleh family's home was destroyed when a grad rocket struck the apartment on the top floor of a four-story building at 1am on 24 June. A passer-by was killed and nine members of the Saleh family were injured.  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civilians in Yemen are bearing the brunt in the conflict raging between Huthi militias (and army units loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh), who seized control of the capital and large parts of the country since last September,<sup>1</sup> and anti-Huthi armed groups (and army units loyal to exiled President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi),<sup>2</sup> who are supported by a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition.<sup>3</sup>

The conflict has been raging in 20 out of the country's 22 governorates and has killed close to 4,000 people, half of them civilians including hundreds of children, and displaced over one million since 25 March 2015.<sup>4</sup> All the parties involved in the conflict have displayed a flagrant disregard for civilian lives and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. They have killed and injured hundreds of civilians not involved in the conflict, many of them children and women, in unlawful (disproportionate and indiscriminate) ground and air attacks.

In the southern<sup>5</sup> region of the country, Huthi and anti-Huthi armed groups battling for control of Yemen's second and third largest cities, Aden and Ta'iz, and surrounding areas have routinely launched attacks into densely populated residential neighbourhoods, using imprecise weapons which cannot be aimed at specific targets and which should never be used in residential areas, killing and maiming scores of civilians.

Fighters on both sides have been operating in the midst of residential neighbourhoods, launching attacks from or near homes, schools and hospitals, endangering civilians in those areas by exposing them to the risk of reprisal attacks (and at times putting them in the line of fire of their own malfunctioning weapons). In addition to large numbers of civilian casualties

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<sup>1</sup> Huthi armed groups are often referred to as "Popular Committees". They are supported by certain units of the armed forces and loyalists of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh

<sup>2</sup> Anti-Huthi armed groups are often referred to as *Muqawama* (resistance in Arabic) or "Popular Resistance Committees" (PRC), and are supported by certain units of the armed forces loyal to President Hadi, and a variety of diverse groups/factions (including members of the Islah party, of al-Qa'eda, allegedly elements of the so-called Islamic State [IS or ISIS], and in the Aden area by supporters of the southern separatist *Hirak* group, who had long been fighting against central government forces).

<sup>3</sup> Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are participating in the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition, which had carried out airstrikes as well as ground operations in Yemen. Somalia has made its airspace, territorial waters and military bases available to the coalition, Senegal promised troops, and the United States and United Kingdom have been providing intelligence and logistical support to the coalition.

<sup>4</sup> Millions need relief from 'terrifying' violence in Yemen – top UN humanitarian official, 15 July 2015: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51430> Yemen: UN releases emergency funding for relief efforts in crisis-torn country, 25 July 2015: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51249> Press briefing notes on Burundi and Yemen, 4 August 2015 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16286&LangID=E>

<sup>5</sup> In this report, the term "southern Yemen" will be used to refer to where the cities of Ta'iz and Aden are located geographically.

resulting from indiscriminate attacks, dozens of civilians returning home after the end of the fighting in the Aden region have been killed and injured from landmines laid by the warring parties.

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces have killed and wounded civilians, in unlawful airstrikes which failed to distinguish between military targets and civilian objects in Huthi-controlled areas.

Amnesty International has documented hundreds of cases of civilians, many of them children and women, killed or injured while asleep in their homes or going about their daily activities – fetching water, buying food, visiting relatives. Scores were struck in the very places where they had sought refuge after having been displaced from their homes by the conflict. Some were killed or injured by mortars and crude Grad-type rockets fired by armed groups, and others by MK-type bombs, some weighing up to 900kg (2,000 lbs), launched by coalition forces.

Entire neighbourhoods have virtually emptied as residents fled their homes in fear of attacks or because strikes on civilian infrastructure left the areas without water, electricity and other essential services. In some neighbourhoods, as residents fled the conflict other civilians displaced by the fighting elsewhere moved in for lack of better options. Many have been unable to relocate to safer areas due to lack of resources. With frequently shifting frontlines, residents have struggled to keep out of harm's way, often finding themselves in the line of fire where they thought they would be safe.

The sick and wounded have faced restrictions in accessing medical care due to the shortages and high prices of fuel and medicines and to difficulties in securing safe passage through checkpoints manned by the different armed groups. The parties to the conflict have hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid to areas controlled by their opponents, causing a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

## METHODOLOGY

Amnesty International carried out field research in Yemen in May, June and July 2015, during which time the organization's delegates visited the sites of scores of air strikes and ground attacks in Ta'iz, Sana'a, Aden and Sa'da. Amnesty International visited multiple air strike locations and investigated the circumstances and impact of the attacks. Fragments from munitions used in the attacks were documented by Amnesty International delegates and analysed by weapons experts. The organizations' delegates interviewed survivors, families of victims, witnesses, medical and NGO personnel and activists on the ground. All interviews were conducted in Arabic and the interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interviews, which they consented to.

Some names of the victims and others have been omitted from or changed in the report to safeguard them against possible reprisals.

Amnesty International has written to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense requesting information about the choice of targets and decision-making process, reasons and rationale behind the airstrikes and about the findings of any investigations that may have been carried out so far.

# INTERNATIONAL LAW APPLICABLE TO THE CONFLICT

## INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Yemen is a state party to principal instruments of international humanitarian law - the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocol relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II).<sup>6</sup>

International humanitarian law contains the rules and principles that seek to protect primarily those who are not participating in hostilities, notably civilians. It applies only in situations of armed conflict and its rules are binding on all parties to a conflict, whether state forces or non-state armed groups. A fundamental rule of international humanitarian law is that parties to any conflict must at all times “distinguish between civilians and combatants”, especially in that “attacks may only be directed against combatants” and “must not be directed against civilians”.<sup>7</sup> A similar rule requires parties to distinguish between “civilian objects” and “military objectives”. These rules are part of the fundamental principle of distinction.

Intentionally directing attacks against civilians not taking direct part in hostilities or against civilian objects is a war crime.<sup>8</sup> The corollary of the rule of distinction is that “indiscriminate attacks are prohibited”.<sup>9</sup> Indiscriminate attacks are those that are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction, either because the attack is not directed at a specific military objective, or because it employs a method or means of combat that cannot be directed at a specific military objective or has effects that cannot be limited as required by international humanitarian law.<sup>10</sup>

The protection of the civilian population and civilian objects is further underpinned by the requirement that all parties to a conflict take precautions in attack. In the conduct of military operations, then, “constant care must be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and

---

<sup>6</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977  
<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/d67c3971bcff1c10c125641e0052b545>

The involvement of forces from other states in the conflict in Yemen does not make the conflict an international conflict, as it is taking place at the request/with the agreement of the Yemeni government.

<sup>7</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 1. See also Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 48, and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 12(2).

<sup>8</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 156, pp. 591,593,595-598. See also Rome Statute of the ICC, articles 8(2)(b)(i) and (ii) and 8(2)(e)(i)(ii)(iv) and (xii). See also discussion in ICRC Customary IHL Study, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 11; Protocol I, Article 51(4).

<sup>10</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 12; Protocol I, Article 51(4)(a).



civilian objects”; “all feasible precautions” must be taken to avoid and minimize incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.<sup>11</sup> The parties must choose means and methods of warfare with a view to avoiding, and in any event to minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.<sup>12</sup> Everything feasible must be done to verify that targets are military objectives, to assess the proportionality of attacks, and to halt attacks if it becomes apparent they are wrongly directed or disproportionate.<sup>13</sup> Where circumstances permit, parties must give effective advance warning of attacks which may affect the civilian population.<sup>14</sup>

Parties must choose appropriate means and methods of attack when military targets are located within residential areas. This requirement rules out the use of certain types of weapons and tactics. The use of means of combat that cannot be directed at a specific military objective – such as using imprecise explosive weapons on targets located in densely populated civilian areas – may result in indiscriminate attacks and is prohibited. Choosing methods of attack that do not minimize the risk to civilians – for example, attacking objectives at times when many civilians are most likely to be present – also violates international humanitarian law.

Attacks by both government forces and armed groups that are carried out in the knowledge that they will cause massive civilian casualties and destruction of civilian objects flagrantly violate the prohibition of indiscriminate attack and constitute war crimes. Shelling and air strikes on residential areas in which there are no fighters, soldiers or military objectives constitute direct attacks on civilians and are war crimes.

Warring parties have obligations to take precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks by the adversary. As with precautions in attack, these rules are particularly important when fighting is taking place in areas with large numbers of civilians. Each party to the conflict must, to the extent feasible, avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

International human rights law - including civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights – applies during times of peace and during periods of armed conflict, and is legally binding on all states, their armed forces and other agents. It establishes the right of victims of serious human rights violations to remedy, including justice, truth and reparations. Yemen is a party to several key international treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Yemen is legally bound by its obligations under these international treaties, as well as by relevant customary international law. The International Court of Justice as well as the UN Human Rights

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<sup>11</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 15. See also Protocol II, Article 13(1).

<sup>12</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 17.

<sup>13</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rules 16-19.

<sup>14</sup> ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rule 20.

Committee (the body established to oversee application of and to interpret the provisions of the ICCPR) have affirmed that international human rights law applies in times of armed conflict as well as in peacetime.

## INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

International criminal law establishes individual criminal responsibility for certain violations of international humanitarian law and serious violations and abuses of human rights law, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as well as torture, extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearance.

Individuals, including civilians and military personnel, can be held criminally responsible for certain violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. International law imposes the obligation to investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of crimes under international law and serious violations and abuses of human rights.<sup>15</sup>

Under the principle of universal jurisdiction, all states have an obligation to investigate and, where enough admissible evidence is gathered, prosecute crimes under international law, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture, extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances.<sup>16</sup> War crimes are serious violations of international humanitarian law and engage individual criminal responsibility on the part of the perpetrators.

# VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW: HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS KILLED IN COALITION AIRSTRIKES

Since 25 March 2015, thousands of airstrikes by Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces have killed hundreds of civilians all over Yemen. The eight strikes investigated by Amnesty International for this briefing killed at least 141 civilians and injured 101, most of them children and women, in southern region of Yemen.

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<sup>15</sup> International humanitarian law contains a duty to prosecute war crimes (ICRC Customary IHL Study, Rules 157 and 158). See also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and Amnesty International, *United Kingdom: The Pinochet case - universal jurisdiction and absence of immunity for crimes against humanity* (Index: EUR 45/01/99), January 1999.

<sup>16</sup> See for example ICJ, *Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Belgium)*, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2002, p. 3, where the majority of the court confirmed the right of all states to exercise universal jurisdiction. Amnesty International, *Universal jurisdiction: The duty of states to enact and implement legislation*, (Index: IOR 53/003/2001), September 2001.

While the scope of this briefing is limited to the specific geographic area of southern Yemen, Amnesty International has investigated civilian casualties resulting from unlawful coalition airstrikes in other parts of the country, notably in and around the capital, Sana'a, and the northern city of Sa'da, the most frequent target of such strikes.<sup>17</sup>

Coalition strikes which killed and injured civilians and destroyed civilian property and infrastructure investigated by Amnesty International have been found to be frequently disproportionate or indiscriminate. In some instances Amnesty International found that strikes appeared to have apparently directly targeted civilians or civilian objects. International humanitarian law prohibits deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and attacks which do not discriminate between civilians/civilian objects and combatants/military objectives, or which cause disproportionate harm to civilians/civilian objects in relation to the anticipated military advantage which may be gained by such attack. Such attacks constitute war crimes.

The pattern of attacks, which since the beginning of the coalition air bombardment campaign on 25 March 2015 have continued to cause civilian casualties, and the lack of investigations to date into such incidents raise serious concerns about an apparent disregard for civilian life and for fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, not only by those planning and executing the strikes but also by the exiled Yemeni government, at whose behest Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces are acting.

## CASES OF AIRSTRIKES RESULTING IN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

### STEAM POWER PLANT RESIDENTIAL COMPOUND, MOKHA, 24 JULY

Coalition forces bombed a residential compound housing workers of the Steam Power Plant and their families in the south-western port city of Mokha on 24 July at approximately 10pm, killing at least 63 civilians and injuring 50 others.<sup>18</sup>

Amnesty International visited the site three days after the airstrike and interviewed 21 residents and plant workers at the site and in five hospitals in Mokha and Hodeida (on the north-western coast). One resident, Amal Sabri, described the incident as *"something out of judgement day. Corpses and heads scattered, engulfed by fire and ashes"*. According to residents and plant workers, at least six consecutive strikes pounded the housing compound, several targeting the compound cafeteria and maintenance equipment store. Eyewitnesses said that prior to the multiple strikes on the main residential compound an airstrike had

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<sup>17</sup> See for example, Yemen: airstrike and weapon analysis shows Saudi Arabia-led forces killed scores of civilian <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/07/yemen-airstrike-analysis-shows-saudi-arabia-killed-scores-of-civilians/>

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International received a list of 63 fatalities from the health authorities. The director of the Steam Power Plant told Amnesty International that 65 people had been killed in the attack. He [provided](#) Human Rights Watch with a list containing 65 names, including those of two people who were missing whom he believed were dead and still buried in the rubble. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHR) [put the number of fatalities at 73](#).

targeted a small residential compound 700m to the north of the steam power plant also used to house plant workers.

Amnesty International delegates at the site found no evidence that the residential compounds were being used for any military purposes. According to scores of residents interviewed by Amnesty International, no Huthi fighters were present in the compound, which also housed several families displaced by the conflicts in Ta'iz, Aden and surrounding areas. The nearest military objective, an air force base, is located approximately 800m south east of the residential compounds. It is unclear whether it was also targeted.

55-year-old Qaed Mohamed Abdelqader al-Sabri, a technician at the plant who lost most of his family in the airstrike, told Amnesty International that they were celebrating the birth of his 10-day-old granddaughter when their home was bombed:

*"We were all at home celebrating the birth of my granddaughter Alaa', with neighbours and family. I was about to enter the house when suddenly the door came off as the whole house shook. It was like an earthquake. The first bomb hit the maintenance equipment store, the second bomb hit the cafeteria. There was a moment of silence, which I took advantage of to rescue my family. That is when the third bomb landed. The electricity had gone off, I tried to go inside the house to look for a torch and for my family. I was screaming for my daughters, I could hear others screaming in search of their families. But all I saw was my wife and daughters drowning in their blood. Only my daughters Lina (16) and Samar (26) survived as they had run away to the coast when the strikes happened. Three of my daughters, my wife, my daughter's husband and my granddaughter Alaa' were killed."*

Another resident, 24-year-old Alaa Abdeljaber Thabet, recounted the ordeal to Amnesty International:

*"The residence streets were bustling, men and children were standing in front of the cafeteria playing billiards. Suddenly I saw a light in the sky, and then an explosion in the residential camp [700m north of the main residential camp] that shook our whole compound. Fear and alarm permeated the whole city... suddenly after two minutes, the first bomb hit our residency targeting the maintenance equipment store. I could hear the plane circling above. I fell down due to the pressure of the explosion. After two minutes I got up to go help move the women and children to the coast where it was safer. After four minutes, the second bomb fell on the cafeteria, around 20 meters away from the first strike on the store. That second strike killed the most... I walked amongst pools of blood and severed limbs, there were over 20 bodies. There were four more explosions after that, people trying to escape. I have still not come to terms with what happened that day until now. I can still see the bodies and the injured and I can hear the screaming all the time."*

Among those displaced by the conflict who were sheltering at the plant housing complex was Redha Mohamed Qaed, a father of six. His relative Abdu Naji al-Bu'dani, an engineer at the plant and a local resident told Amnesty International:

*"Redha has come here with his family from Aden, to escape the fighting there. He had planned to go back to Aden the next day (as the Huthis had just been forced out of Aden). When the explosion happened he was sitting next to a window at his sister's house. He hugged his wife and children to protect them and his back was ripped by shrapnel and he passed away on the spot."*

TAHRUR, LAHJ, 9 JULY

On 9 July coalition forces killed 10 members of the Faraa family, including four children and five women, and injured 10 others when they bombed the Mus'ab ben Omar school where a dozen families displaced by the conflict were sheltering in Tahrur village, north of Aden in Lahj governorate on 9 July at about 1pm. The displaced people who were sheltering in the school are members of the "*muhammashin*" (marginalised) community – Yemeni citizens of African origins, one of the country's poorest and most vulnerable communities in the country.

Salama, who lost three daughters, Yusra, 21, Shadia, 19, and Naama, 20 months, in the bombing, told Amnesty International:

*"We came here to escape the war in Huta (a 1km west of Tahrur). We had nowhere else to go. We have nothing. How could I imagine that we were going to be killed here? My girls were killed and I wish I had died with them. I have nothing else in life".*

Mehdi Salah Mohammed, a bus driver in the army, was based in Hodeida but has not worked since the beginning of the conflict after his commanding officer stopped reporting to work. To supplement his salary he would make deliveries with his motorcycle. Mehdi told Amnesty International that on 9 July he was out on an errand when an airstrike hit his home, killing his wife, Naama, a mother of seven, and whose 5-year-old daughter Rahma was seriously wounded, said:

*"We are just poor people and don't have anything to do with anything. We have no relations with the Huthis. We fled our homes with nothing and when we tried to go back home to collect some of our clothes the Huthis didn't even allow us to go. I lost my wife and now our seven children have no mother. What do I tell them? My wife's sister and niece were killed and their children too are now orphans. May God help us."*

Neighbours told Amnesty International that the last time they saw any Huthis was four days before the strike, when two Huthis passed by the school but did not stop. They said that before the airstrike Huthis used to stay in a school and nearby building in another part of the village, less than a kilometre away. However, that location was never targeted by coalition forces and neighbours said that Huthi/Saleh loyalists armed groups stopped gathering there after the strike on the Mus'ab Ben Omar school, which killed members of the Faraa family. Amnesty International found no evidence indicating that the Mus'ab Ben Omar school was being used for military purposes. All that was visible in the ruins of the school were remains of the meagre possessions of the displaced families who had been sheltering there – blankets, cooking pots, children's clothes - as well as a fin of a bomb from the Mark 80



series US-designed general purpose bombs, similar to those found at many other locations of coalition strikes.

#### WAHT, LAHJ, 7 JULY

Two days earlier, on 7 July, just after mid-afternoon (asr) prayers, a coalition strike killed 11 worshippers and injured several others in a mosque in Waht, a village north of Aden in Lahj governorate. Wi'am Ahmad Salah, a 29-year-old labourer, who sustained a broken leg and shrapnel injuries all over his body, told Amnesty International:

*"That morning at about 2 or 3am a bomb hit the mosque but did not explode; it went through the roof and the outer wall and landed in the courtyard. All the residents of the neighbourhood went to look at it. It is still there, everyone is too scared to touch it. Maybe the bomb was meant to hit a house nearby where the Huthis used to stay? They [Huthis] never went to the mosque; only local people went to the mosque. There were no other strikes against the mosque or anything else nearby so people thought that the Saudis realized their mistake (in striking the mosque) and that there was no danger any more, and in the morning people went back to the mosque as usual. I went to the mosque in the afternoon planning to stay there until before Iftar.<sup>19</sup> After a while there was another airstrike and this time it exploded the mosque. It was just after asr prayers, about 4pm; some people had left after the prayers and me and others had stayed. There was thick dust; I couldn't see anything and I was terrified and in pain. A wall collapsed on me and broke my leg and I was bleeding from cuts and wounds everywhere. I lay there until residents who came to our rescue cleared the debris around me and carried me outside."*

Among those killed in the strike were brothers Mohammed and Fadhel Yahia Sayed and their cousin Yassin Abdallah Sayed; an elderly man of about 80, Abu Bakr Ali, a Somali refugee who according to residents spent most of his time at the mosque. Gita Aidarus (F), who lives very near the mosque and whose brother Kamal, was among those killed in the strike, told Amnesty International:

*"My brother went to the mosque every morning at about 10am and stayed there all day reading Qur'an until late afternoon, as is customary during Ramadhan. Also now because of the war we can't even go to work. The plane bombed the mosque just after asr prayers, just at the time when my brother would usually come home. People say that the plane meant to strike the house near the mosque where the Huthis were staying but made a mistake".*

Abdullah Amer Ahmed, a resident who was injured in the strike, told Amnesty International:

*"It was 3.30pm when I was about to enter the mosque door. I saw everybody praying before me. Then I heard the whistling sound of the bomb. I shouted to warn everybody "BOMB!" Within seconds, the mosque door fell on my right hand side, breaking three of ribs, injuring my right ear and breaking my right hand."*

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<sup>19</sup> The breaking of the fast at sunset, during the holy month of Ramadhan

Near the ruins of the mosque Amnesty International found the unexploded bomb which had struck the mosque earlier that morning. The bomb, US-manufactured Mark 83 (MK 83), fitted with a US-manufactured delay fusing system, appeared to have malfunctioned, as it failed to explode. It is not clear whether the bombs used in this attack and in the attack against the school described above were fitted with precision guiding devices or not. Weapons that are by nature indiscriminate are prohibited under international humanitarian law and cannot be used in populated areas.

Both attacks appear to have missed their intended targets – nearby sites where members of the Huthi/Saleh loyalist armed groups gathered - or to have wrongly targeted civilian objects, a school and a mosque full of civilians not involved in the conflict for unknown reasons; possibly they were supplied the wrong coordinates by their operatives/informants on the ground. Whatever the case may be, coalition forces clearly failed to take the necessary precautions “to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects” as required by Article 57(2) of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, which stipulates that those who plan or decide upon an attack shall:

*“(i) do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilians nor civilian objects...” and “(ii) take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of attack with a view to avoiding, and in any event to minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects”.*<sup>20</sup>

#### FAYUSH, LAHJ, 6 JULY

On 6 July, a day prior to the airstrikes on the mosque in Waht, coalition forces bombed the livestock market in Fayush, north of Aden in Lahj governorate. The strike, the deadliest hitherto reported, killed some 40 people and injured scores. Adam Hassan Omar, a 52-year-old father of 11 who was injured in the strike told Amnesty International:

*“I went to the market to see if I could sell three goats for a better price than I bought them. I used to work as a daily labourer mostly in construction in Crater (Aden), but since the war I have not gone there. It’s difficult to get there now and there is no work there anyway. I try to earn a little money buying and selling goats and sheep. I heard a plane above but did not worry; I did not think they would bomb a market. The plane was going around above for quite a while. Then the explosion happened. I remember feeling as if a strong wind pushed me, transported me and a strong pain as if I had been cut in half. Then I fainted and woke up here [in the hospital]. I don’t know who brought me here”.*

Shrapnel slashed through Adam’s abdomen, causing damage to his internal organs. Doctors who treated him said they had to remove some 15cm of intestine and his spleen.

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<sup>20</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977  
<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/d67c3971bcff1c10c125641e0052b545>

Local residents and sellers in the adjacent food market told Amnesty International that at the time of the airstrike there were no unusual gatherings or activities in the market. *"People were buying and selling goats and sheep and a few cows. They were normal people, some desperate people who had reluctantly come to sell their animals because they have no other income to feed their children,"* a market seller said. *"There was no fighting around here and there were no Huthis, just some unlucky people. If the bomb had fallen few meters away I could have been killed, just like they were killed. This is what God decided,"* a local resident said. Another resident described the bloodshed after the explosion: *"It was a massacre, body parts and blood of humans and animals were mixed together. It was a very painful sight and it was difficult to make sense of what was happening and to deal with it".*

Yet another resident said that his cousin was missing since the market bombing and he feared that he had been killed there. *"After suhur<sup>21</sup> he stayed up for an hour or so and then went to the market and never came back. Maybe he was injured and is in a hospital somewhere and cannot contact us [his family] or maybe he was killed and buried with the unidentified bodies."* Relatives and witnesses told Amnesty International some of the victims had been blown apart in the blast but there were no adequate systems available to allow for post-burial ID of unclaimed bodies or remains. Hospital workers told Amnesty International that they had received a large number of civilian injured from the strike.

The sandy soil at the site of the strike absorbed the impact and likely lessened the spread of shrapnel in the area. No remains were found from the bomb dropped by the coalition plane, but the crater – some three meters deep and four meters in diameter – indicates a likely 500-1,000 lbs (200 – 450 +Kg) bomb (similar to the ones used in many other attacks). Remains of animal carcasses were still strewn around when Amnesty International visited the site several days later.

Amnesty International could not trace most of the victims and families of victims of the attack, as most were not local residents but people who were visiting the market from surrounding areas. Amnesty International could not establish with certainty whether any members of the Huthi armed group were present at the livestock market at the time of the airstrike. However, information obtained from multiple sources, including witnesses and residents, indicate there was no combat or other military activity at the time of the attack and that most if not all the victims were civilian bystanders not involved in the conflict.

The attack violated the principle of distinction, a cornerstone of international humanitarian law, which requires all parties to a conflict to: *"...at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives..."*,<sup>22</sup> and which defines military objective as *"those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction,*

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<sup>21</sup> The last meal of the night, just before sunrise during the month of Ramadan

<sup>22</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 48 <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/470-750067>

*capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage."* Military advantage may not be interpreted so broadly as to render the rule ineffective.<sup>23</sup>

Even if some combatants had been present at the site this would not have justified launching an attack on a market, which was sure to cause large scale civilian casualties and fatalities and which was not only disproportionate but also indiscriminate.

#### AL-MUJALIYYA NEIGHBOURHOOD, TA'IZ, 16 JUNE

48-year old Jamila and four of her children were killed when an airstrike destroyed their home in al-Mujaliyya neighbourhood at 3.45am on 16 June. Jamila's daughter Leila Hayel, who lives 600 metres away from her parents' house, lost her mother and siblings Suha (10), Amal (14), Samah (23), and Hani (25). She told Amnesty International:

*"The whole family had been staying in the Hawban neighbourhood [east side of Ta'iz city] for the last two months because of the continuous fighting [between armed groups] in al-Mujaliyya [south side of Ta'iz city]. In fact, the majority of the residents have left the neighbourhood. They had only returned home one week before the strike, in time for Ramadan. On that night, a bomb struck al-Arwa school, located 30 metres away from our house. Fearing for their lives, my family rushed to leave the house after the explosion. While my sisters and mother were putting on their abayas and my brother Hani was locking up the house, a bomb struck the house. The force of the explosion sent my sisters and mother flying five metres, killing them instantly. Hani's body was not dug out until 12 hours later. My father Faisal (60) was the only survivor."*

On that night, three airstrikes targeted al-Mujaliyya neighbourhood for the first time, minutes apart. The first targeted al-Arwa School, which was reportedly being used as a detention centre by the Huthi/Saleh loyalists. The second struck the Hayel home and the third landed in the courtyard of the al-Ahdal family, where 13 relatives (10 women, three men) were sheltering in the basement of the house after hearing the first two strikes. The bomb at al-Ahdal house, only a couple of doors down from the Hayel family, failed to detonate, limiting what could have been even greater destruction and likely more civilian casualties.

#### TA'IZ CITY, 30 JUNE

In the city of Ta'iz, on 30 June, coalition forces launched two airstrikes against the home of Fahmi Qa'id al-Najdan, a 39-year property dealer, killing him, his wife Khulud, 35, and their two daughters Rinad and Malak, aged two and five. The couple's two young boys survived because they had gone to play at a relatives' house nearby.

Fahmi's brother told Amnesty International;

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, Articles 50 to 52

*"The house was bombed twice, about 20 minutes apart, at about 1 -1.15pm. The house was destroyed, leaving no chance of survival for anyone in the house. Some people say that the Saudis said in the media that there was an arms cache in the house and others say that 30 Huthis were killed in the house. None of this is true. They killed a father, a mother and their two little girls. Anyone who wants can dig in the ruins of the house to check if there are weapons or Huthis. Only God knows why they bombed this home. May God do justice".*

The house, a large and solid structure, collapsed onto itself. It is not possible to fully assess what lies under the debris, but no evidence is visible that the house contained a weapon store or that combatants had been at the house. There were also no remains of weapons in the rubble, no signs of secondary explosions, no information that bodies were recovered other than the four family members, putting into question the justification and legality of the strike.

#### DAR SABER VILLAGE, TA'IZ, 26 MAY

Eight members of the Sayed family, six of them children, were killed and seven others, including two children, were injured when coalition forces bombed their home in Dar Saber village, outside Ta'iz city on 26 May at 5am.

One of the remaining residents and neighbours from the village, Ali Qaed al-Hakm, told Amnesty International:

*"On that day, we were surprised to hear the plane loudly at 5am. There was an explosion and we felt an immense pressure, so we opened the windows. After that, my daughter and I headed to the kitchen and said 'alhamdulillah' [thanks be to God] and then we saw a second explosion that you could not imagine. The village was collapsing over our heads and all we tried to do was to find out the source of the explosion. But suddenly we heard a man screaming 'Save us! Save us!' and we found out that it was Khaled Sayed's house that was struck. Everyone thought this village was safe before this incident, it was full of displaced people who had come here to escape the conflict in the city. But everyone left after this airstrike."*

It is unclear whether Khaled Sayed's home was the intended target of the airstrike. According to neighbours he is not associated with the Huthis and he was in fact not at home at the time of the strike, but several members of his family, including his children were. Dar Saber village has a common trait with other airstrikes: it is close to a Huthi/Saleh-loyalist-controlled military camp which has been repeatedly targeted by coalition airstrikes. This was the first and only airstrike on the village of Dar Sabr, which encompasses a cluster of 80 houses. Khaled Sayed's house is 150-200 meters south of Muntazah Zayed, a park which has been repeatedly targeted by airstrikes and which had been used by the anti-Huthi Popular Resistance Committees (PRCs) and then by the Huthis for a short time after. It appears possible that the intended target of this strike was the nearby military camp (further up the mountain, hundreds of meters away) but that coalition forces failed to take the necessary precautions to minimize potential harm to civilians in the area.



AL-AKMA, TA'IZ, 14 APRIL

On 14 April at approximately 12.30am, a coalition airstrike killed ten civilians, including seven children and two women, and injured 14 others in al-Akma village. The airstrike struck a residential area of the village where members of the “*muhammashin*” (marginalized) community live in dwellings made of corrugated iron and cardboard. Al-Akma Village, 20km north-east of the city of Ta'iz, falls between two Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled military installations, both belonging to 22 May Brigade, around 500m to 1km from the east and west of the village. Wadhha, a resident of the village, described to Amnesty International the airstrike and its aftermath:

*“I was inside the house and the plane was flying at 12:30 at night. My neighbour came to me and told me that the plane is flying and that I should get up and wear my abaya.<sup>24</sup> I told her that I wear the abaya all the time and I also sleep wearing it [to be ready to flee at a moment's notice]. Then I heard the explosion. I thought that the house was going to collapse on my head. I was at home on my own. I kept reciting the shahada,<sup>25</sup> and waited for death. We had been warned not to go out if a rocket lands in order to avoid shrapnel... Then after it was quiet again I went out to see. It was as if tires were burning. I no longer understood what was going on. I fainted and fell to the ground... We are now all displaced. We only come back here for quick visits but we do not sleep in our homes for fear of the airstrikes.”*

According to the information obtained by Amnesty International, no combatants or military objectives were in the vicinity of the house, and the nearest military objective was the 22 May Military Camp, which is several hundreds of meters away.

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<sup>24</sup> Long black dress worn by women outside the house

<sup>25</sup> Qur'anic profession of faith which Muslims should recite before dying

# GROUND FIGHTING CHARACTERISED BY INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS, RECKLESS CONDUCT

Huthi/Saleh-loyalists and anti-Huthi PRC armed groups involved in ground fighting in Aden and Ta'iz have killed, harmed and endangered civilian residents as they battled each other for control of the two cities.

Huthi/Saleh-loyalists armed groups attacked and gained control of parts of Ta'iz and Aden in late March and early April 2015, prompting fierce resistance from local anti-Huthi PRC armed groups. In the second half of July 2015 anti-Huthi PRC fighters, backed by ground forces from the United Arab Emirates,<sup>26</sup> pushed Huthi/Saleh loyalists armed groups out of Aden. At the time of writing (early August) fighting continued between the two sides in areas north of Aden, Lahj, Al-Dhale' and in the city of Ta'iz, where fighters from both sides controlled different neighbourhoods.

At least 68 civilians were killed and 99 others injured (most of whom were women and children) in 30 attacks investigated by Amnesty International in Aden and Ta'iz.

Attacks by both sides routinely failed to distinguish between fighters and civilian residents and appeared to be frequently directed at neighbourhoods because they are under the de-facto control of one side or the other and/or because fighters are based or operate from there, rather than at specific military objects. Fighters from both sides have used battlefield weapons and munitions - such as imprecise Grad-type rocket artillery and mortars, which cannot be accurately aimed at specific targets and which can kill and maim people tens of meters from their points of impact. These weapons are used on a daily basis in residential areas, causing civilian casualties and showing disregard for civilian lives. Such indiscriminate attacks violate fundamental provisions of international humanitarian law, as they fail to distinguish between military targets and civilian objects.<sup>27</sup>

Amnesty International delegates witnessed fighters from both sides operating in the midst of densely populated residential neighbourhoods in Aden and Ta'iz, including in and around schools and hospitals. Residents told the organization of instances when fighters launched attacks from their neighbourhoods despite civilians being present nearby, exposing residents to the risk of retaliatory attacks from the opposite side.

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<sup>26</sup> The participation of forces from coalition member states in ground combat in Yemen has never been officially announced but it was confirmed in July 2015, when UAE media reported the death in combat in Yemen of three members of the UEA armed forces.

<sup>27</sup> Notably the Principle of Distinction. For example see: [https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2\\_rul\\_rule1](https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule1)

In the conduct of military operations all parties to a conflict must take “all feasible precautions” to avoid and minimize incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects. This must be reflected in the choice of means and methods of warfare, and includes verifying that targets are military objectives, that attacks are not disproportionate or indiscriminate, and where possible effective advance warning is given of attacks which may affect the civilian population.<sup>28</sup>

In the context of urban warfare, the presence of fighters/military positions in civilian residential areas from one side does not relieve the opposing side of its obligation under international humanitarian law to take the necessary precautions to minimize harm to civilians and damage to civilian objects. Civilians present do not lose their immunity from attack and their presence in large numbers must be taken into account before any attack or counter-attack is launched by the warring parties.

Attacks launched by fighters from both sides from and into densely populated civilian residential areas in Aden and Ta'iz using imprecise munitions which cannot be accurately aimed at specific targets, are in violation of international law and may amount to war crimes.

The incidents examined below are illustrative of patterns which have become increasingly entrenched over the past months of fighting, with many of the areas repeatedly subjected to such attacks over a period of weeks or months.

In most cases it is difficult or impossible to establish with absolute certainty the exact source of the attacks because the weapons used are “indirect fire” weapons, which do not rely on a direct line of sight between the point of launch and the target. The weapons' trajectory is affected by multiple factors, including velocity, angle, difference in altitude between launch site and point of impact, and atmospheric conditions. The weapons' range can provide an indication of the likely source, especially in cases of multiple/repeat strikes. However weapons can malfunction and land/explode far short of their intended target, even very close to the point of launch. For example a mortar/rocket with a range of 4/40 km may malfunction and land/explode a few hundred meters or a few meters from where it was launched, making it more difficult to assess the precise point of launch of a weapon, especially in cases of single strikes.

## VIOLATIONS IN ADEN

Neighbourhoods controlled by anti-Huthi PRC armed groups in central Aden have repeatedly come under attack from Huthi/Saleh-loyalists position to the north and south of the area, using both mortars and 122m Grad-type rockets. Anti-Huthi PRC fighters for their part have

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<sup>28</sup> See [ICRC Customary IHL Study](#), Rules 15, 16, 17, 19 and 20. See also [Protocol II, Article 13\(1\)](#).

been frequently launching mortars from the neighbourhoods they control, presumably towards areas controlled by Huthi/Saleh-loyalists.

The impact of ground fighting on civilians has been the greatest in neighbourhoods controlled by anti-Huthi PRC armed groups as these areas are the most densely populated, hosting tens of thousands of civilians who fled the areas controlled by Huthi/Saleh-loyalists for fear of coalition airstrikes and because of the lack of water, electricity and health and other essential services in those areas. In Aden ground fighting continued until the end of July, when Huthi/Saleh-loyalist armed groups were forced out of Aden, whereas in Ta'iz ground fighting between the two sides continues at the time of writing.

## ROCKET ATTACKS

### BLOCK 4 AND 5, AL-MANSOURA, ADEN, 1 JULY

A barrage of rockets fired into the heavily populated areas of Block 4 and 5 on 1 July between midnight and 6am killed 13 people, most of them civilians, and injured 56 others (including five children). Residents told Amnesty International that the first and second rockets struck shortly after midnight near Mansoura central prison on the stretch of Prison Street between two anti-Huthi PRCs checkpoints located some 150 meters apart. At least one PRC fighter, 40-year-old Abdu Ahmad Abdali Subaihi, was killed at the PRC checkpoint, and several other fighters were injured.

Some of the victims were killed or injured as they tried to help rescue the victims, among them 17-year-old Ayman Abdallah, a third-year high school student who lived in the neighbourhood. His mother, Siham, told Amnesty International:

*"We were at home watching TV when the first strike happened, just after midnight. Ayman went to help and another rocket struck the main road and Ayman was badly injured by shrapnel all over. He was in hospital for three days and died on 4 July. He was the eldest of my children, he always wanted to help others".*

A third rocket struck the roof of the nearby Infinity Hotel and a fourth rocket struck the fourth floor of the Royal Concorde Hotel, injuring six members of the Ali family, including two children and three women. Both hotels were being used to accommodate hundreds of people displaced by the conflict.

The Ali family had fled their home in the Huthi-controlled area of Ma'llah because of the fighting and airstrikes there. Hafedh Nasser Abdallah Ali, 18-months-old, and his mother Amal, 25, sustained the most serious injuries. Amal, who suffered multiple shrapnel injuries to her face, chest, arm and leg, told Amnesty International:

*"We heard two rockets strike nearby and we ran to the stairs, because the stairs are in the centre of the building, away from the outer walls. After a while we went back to the room as it was quiet. But then the rocket hit the building. Most of the shrapnel hit me and Hafedh, who was on my lap. Shrapnel penetrated his head and went through to his left eye, causing internal damage. He lost his eye and is in a*

*coma. My baby Bara', who is only three months old, my husband, my mother and her mother-in-law were also all injured by shrapnel but luckily less seriously".*

Anhar Najeeb, a 55-year-old mother of two, had moved two weeks prior to the attack from her house in the Huthi-controlled Crater neighbourhood, where basic services such as water and electricity were virtually non-existent, to Block 4 with her brother, son and daughter to escape the fighting. She spoke to Amnesty International about the attack which left her paralysed:

*"At around midnight on 1 July, I was standing in the kitchen when I heard an explosion. Suddenly all I felt was something in my neck... I am now quadriplegic, paralysed from the neck down. That night, shrapnel entered my neck and exited through my seventh vertebrae. We had just moved to our new house, we thought we were safe. Who will take care of my family now? I was already taking care of my 58-year-old brother Khaled, who is intellectually disabled and my 27-year-old son Ahmed who is dumb and mute. Meanwhile, my 28-year-old daughter Walla' is sixty percent deaf."*

Islam Ibrahim, 8, was playing outside his house in Block 4 at approximately midnight, when he was injured by the same barrage of rockets. As he lay in his hospital bed, his mother described his injuries to Amnesty International:

*"He was just outside in the neighbourhood with his friends when the explosion happened, they always play after iftar [meal breaking the fast]. A shrapnel entered his neck and remains lodged in there. He is wearing a neck brace as a short-term solution. Doctors are currently too afraid to remove the shrapnel for fear that he could be left paralysed."*

Friends Said Nassir Said, 15, and Badr Hilal Thabet, 22, are also local residents of Block 4. They were in the vicinity of the second anti-Huthi PRCs position, when another rocket struck the heavily populated area. Shrapnel entered Said's throat, causing him to lose his voice. He was also injured in his head, upper right chest and right leg. Meanwhile, Badr, also unable to speak, sustained more serious injuries, including multiple facial fractures, shrapnel wounds in the abdomen, broken nose and teeth and requires cartilage replacement in his cheekbones and left shoulder.

Between 05.30am and 06.00am, several rockets again targeted the Block 4/5 neighbourhood. One struck the home of the al-Junaidi family, killing 16-month-old Qasem Mohammed and injuring his father Mohammed as they slept, relatives told Amnesty International.

Nearby, a rocket struck an empty room on the third floor of a six-storey building. Shrapnel from the rocket smashed through the roof of Najat Abdullah Ahmed's home, right below, where she and her five children were fast asleep, with tragic consequences. Najat's seven-year-old daughter Samia, was badly injured; her right leg had to be amputated and her left leg was broken. Her brother Abdullah (10) and sister Nahla (14) sustained light injuries.



Najat told Amnesty International: *"There was an explosion and the roof came crushing down on us as we slept. I thought we were all going to die. The rocket destroyed Samia's legs. How will she live now? We don't have anywhere to go for safety, no one to help us."*

WADI HADDAD, AL-MANSOURA, ADEN, 7 JULY

Another salvo of rockets fired by Huthi/Saleh loyalist groups between 10pm on 7 July and the early hours of the following morning killed at least seven civilians, including two children and two women, and injured several others in an area of the neighbourhood known as "Army Buildings" (Buyut al-Jaysh) – because it used to house army officers in the past. Many civilians who have been displaced by the conflict were sheltering in the neighbourhood. Among the victims were a woman and four men who were distributing humanitarian aid to displaced and needy people in the area. Shrapnel from one of the rockets killed Khulud Mohammed Abdallah al-Tayes, a 45-year-old mother of three, and Amr Hakam, who was driving the vehicle they used to transport the food and other aid. Three fellow relief volunteers were injured, one of them, 26-year-old Mohammed Khaled Said Ali, sustained serious head injuries and remains in a coma. Khulud's sister, Kifa', told Amnesty International:

*"The strike happened at about 11 or 12 at night. Earlier we had been to Bureiqa to search for cooking gas for some families displaced by the conflict who had no gas to cook with. We were in two separate cars. After Bureiqa we came back to al-Mansoura and went to the Rayan Hotel, which is used to house displaced families, and Khulud went to get the stretcher back from people in the Buyut al-Jaysh area who had borrowed it to carry the bodies of those killed in a previous attack and after that she was going to distribute food nearby. But their car was hit and Khulud was killed. Her left arm was severed and she had many other injuries. Amr Hakam, the driver, was also killed. Hamza and two other young men who were in the car with her were injured. She always helped others and she died helping others, but she left three children. Her son is only 12 and her youngest daughter is only 15".*

At one of the city's hospitals Amnesty International found Mohammed Khaled Said Ali, who sustained serious head injuries and remains in the coma. Doctors do not yet know the extent of lasting damage he may have suffered. His uncle told Amnesty International that since the beginning of the conflict he had been very active in collecting and distributing food and humanitarian relief to people affected by the conflict.

At around the same time, other rockets struck the top floor of a nearby building where the al-Hilali family was staying. Fawzia Ahmad Zein, her 15-month-old son Sultan Khaled Saleh al-Hilali, and her six-year-old nephew Ibrahim Khalil were all killed and Fawzia's 10-year-old daughter was injured. Khaled Saleh al-Hilali told Amnesty International:

*"We left our home in Houta, in Lahj governorate more than two months ago because of the conflict. We first came to Block 22 for one month and then went to Wadi Haddad. I was not at home when the rocket hit the building. I got a call telling me to go to the hospital. It was terrible. My wife, my son and my grandson were killed.*

*My daughter Lina was injured in her eye but thank God she is better now. Some other people were also killed in the neighbourhood in another strike that night".*

Al-Hilali's neighbours told Amnesty International that two other men, 32-year-old Jumblat Saleh Fadhel and Najib al-Shu'aib, in his late 20s, were killed in another strike nearby.

The impact on the roof of the building and the apartment below, and the description of remains which neighbours told Amnesty International they had recovered indicate that the strike were consistent with 122mm Grad-type rockets, similar to those fragment of which have been found elsewhere.

Two weeks earlier, on 24 June, a rocket struck the apartment of the Saleh family on the top floor of a four-story building in the Madinat Inma neighbourhood at 1am, killing Shayaa Mohammed, a passer-by, and injuring nine members of the Saleh family. Video footage taken shortly after the strike shows remains of a 122 Grad-type rocket,<sup>29</sup> which struck the south side of the building and was likely launched from Huthi/Saleh-loyalists position in the Tawahi neighbourhood under their control, 5-6km to the south.

## MORTAR ATTACKS

### AL-SHARQIA AND AL-GHARBIA NEIGHBOURHOODS, DAR SAAD, ADEN, 5 AND 7 JULY

Dar Saad, under the control of anti-Huthi PRC armed groups, was frequently targeted by Huthi/Saleh-loyalist armed groups located to the north and west of the area. The last and deadliest attack took place on 19 July 2015, in what appears as a "last stand" as the two sides were involved in fierce fighting, which culminated with the Huthi/Saleh-loyalists losing control of the areas of Aden they had held since April 2015. According to Dr al-Khadhr al-Aswar, the director of the Health Ministry office in Aden, 45 people were killed and 123 were injured, most of them civilians and including dozens of children.<sup>30</sup>

A mortar struck Ahmed Salem Hasan's house at 2am on 7 July, killing 11-year-old Ayat Ahmad Hassan, her 18-year-old sister A'ayad and their aunt Amna Hassan Salem, and injuring seven relatives, most of them women and children. Inas Ahmad, 27, who lost her eye and suffered multiple other injuries, told Amnesty International:

*"We were sleeping when we heard shelling nearby. My brother told us to put on our abayas, that we would go to our relatives who live further (away from the frontline). We were by the front door, on our way out, when the shell landed. We get very scared by the fighting and the explosions, but we don't have another place to go. We are very poor".*

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<sup>29</sup> Remains of the rocket in the apartment immediately after the strike visible in this video: <http://www.skynewsarabia.com/web/article/755143/%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%89-%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%81-%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%94%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%86>

<sup>30</sup> Doctors Without Borders (MSF) told Amnesty International that they received 206 patients on 19 July following the attack on Dar Saad, 42 of which were dead.

One block away in al-Gharbia neighbourhood, 23 year old Saleh Anees Ayash Naseem was killed, and two of his neighbours Hasan Saleh (45) and Zaher Ezz el-Din Ahmed (27) were injured when a mortar landed in the middle of the alleyway where they were standing on 7 July.

Fragments of mortar shells were found at the location of both attacks. Residents of the two neighbourhoods told Amnesty International that strikes are very frequent in the area. Amnesty International observed anti-Huthi PRC fighters based in the Omar Ben Khattab School in the neighbourhood, and residents said that fighters frequently launch attacks from near the school and elsewhere in the neighbourhood towards Huthi/Saleh loyalist positions few kilometres away – thereby endangering local residents and exposing them to response and reprisal attacks. *"They fight and we are caught in the middle, but we don't have anywhere else to go,"* a resident told Amnesty International.

On 5 July 52-year-old Su'ud Amer was tragically wounded by a mortar as she fetched water from a faucet a few meters from the Omar Ben Khattab School (south side). She lost both her legs. She told Amnesty International:

*"I was filling the jerry can when I heard an explosion nearby. I instinctively went to stand by the school wall for protection, because it is a higher wall. There was another explosion which sent me flying up. My right leg flew off and my left leg was almost completely severed; it was holding by the skin only. I fainted and when I woke up I was at the hospital. I have nightmares all the time; I wake up shaking".*

Weeks earlier, on 12 June, 12-year-old Hamada Adnan Yahya lost his right leg after a mortar shell struck a wall near his house in the Sandaqa neighbourhood in Dar Saad. Hamada's father, Adnan, told Amnesty International:

*"At 8AM that morning he went to fetch some water from the neighbourhood tank. Suddenly a mortar struck a wall next to the tank and a shrapnel entered his upper right thigh. The doctors had to amputate his whole leg. His back was also covered with cuts. After that attack, we were forced to leave the neighbourhood and move to Insha'at [west of Dar Saad]. However, there are attacks here too."*

Residents of the area are mostly poor and live in small, flimsy one-storey houses which offer no protection against mortars and rockets attacks from Huthi/Saleh-loyalists fighters, which – even if intended to strike anti-Huthis PRC fighters' positions – are too imprecise to be aimed at specific targets, and which appear to be often launched indiscriminately. Moreover, residents in these areas are also at risk from the weapons used by the anti-Huthi PRC fighters, which are mostly very old and thus more likely to misfire.

#### BLOCK 6, AL-MANSOURA, 6 JULY

Several Somali refugees, who had been displaced from their homes by the conflict and were sheltering in a school in the south-east of Block 6 neighbourhood, were killed and injured in an attack on the school at about 2am on 6 July.

Eight-year-old Aasab Mokhtar Mohammed was killed in the attack and her 11-year-old brother Mehdi, sustained a head injury from shrapnel. The children's father told Amnesty International that three other children, Bahja and Samia Nouraldin, aged seven and 11, and 15-year-old Fares Mohammed, were killed and several others were injured: *"There were often attacks in the area but they never reached us, but that night the school was struck directly. It was panic, there was blood everywhere. My little girl sustained a massive head injury; she could not be saved."*

Fatima Gailani, 17, who lost her left eye in the attack, does not speak Arabic and recounted mostly through gestures the sudden strike on the school which left her badly injured; Doctors at the hospital told Amnesty International that the damage to her left eye was so extensive that the eye had to be completely removed.

Survivors of the attack told Amnesty International that at least six and possibly nine refugees, all of them women and children were killed in the attack. They did not know whether some of those they saw unconscious in a pool of blood immediately after the strike were alive or dead. Some of the survivors left Aden altogether. *"We work as daily labourers and now with the war there is no work and we receive no help. So people try to go to a safer place away from this war here in Aden,"* a friend of one of the survivors told Amnesty International. Though no remains of the projectile from the attack were found at the site, the damage suggest that it was likely a mortar. When Amnesty International visited the school fighting mortar fire could be heard nearby. Survivors of the attacks said that they could hear fighting quite near the school frequently, and that anti-Huthi PRC fighters operated from the area.

Other areas which became frontlines in the fighting between the two sides include al-Basateen (North Sheikh Othman), where three-year-old Hanadi Ahmed Mohamed Hareb was killed by a mortar while playing outside her house with her four-year-old sister Safaa in the afternoon of 10 June. Her mother, Jumaa Ali, told Amnesty International that had been the first of many mortar strikes in the neighbourhood and that it had caused many residents to leave the area. She recalled the strike: *"That day at approximately 5pm, a mortar landed next to al-Rahma mosque, for the first time ever in our neighbourhood. Hanadi and Safaa were holding hands. While Safaa did not suffer any injury, Hanadi's body was cut in half."*

## **VIOLATIONS IN TA'IZ**

The dynamics of the ground fighting in the city of Ta'iz are in many respects similar to those in Aden, with anti-Huthi PRC armed groups controlling neighbourhoods in the city centre and Huthi/Saleh-loyalists armed groups controlling the city's outskirts and the countryside around it. However, in Ta'iz Amnesty International documented greater use of tanks by both sides within the city, including the firing of tank rounds into residential neighbourhoods. In both the city and surrounding villages residents told Amnesty International of instances when fighters from both sides launched attacks from their neighbourhoods despite civilians being present in the area, exposing residents to the risk of attacks from the opposing side.

AL-KAWTHAR DISTRICT, BEHIND AL-RAWDHA MOSQUE, 10 MAY

Two consecutive mortar strikes killed six civilians, three of them children, Heba (17) and brothers Mohamed (17) and Hamza (11), and injured two women in Al-Kawthar district. Maryam, whose mother and sister died in the attack, recalled the incident to Amnesty International:

*"When we heard the sound of the mortars on late Sunday morning 10 May, we all ran to the ground floor of the building to hide-out with our neighbours. That is when the first shell hit the second floor of our building, killing my mother Sabah and sister Heba (17), while the second mortar landed in the courtyard. My other sister and I were injured."*

Maryam's neighbour, Ali, who also lost his mother and four of his siblings, confirmed the incident:

*"The mortars fell on our house, which is behind al-Rawdha Mosque, at approximately 11.30am. They came from the direction of the financial area [350m south of al-Kawthar district] where there are Huthi/Saleh soldiers with their military equipment. It killed my mother Najeeba, my brothers Mohamed (17) and Hamza (11), and my sisters Rihab (19) and Rana (16). Our neighbours Sabah and her daughter were also killed as they were seeking shelter in our home...the muqawama are stationed on the main road."*

Amnesty International researchers saw a PRC checkpoint stationed on the main road (at al-Sha'b School) some 150m south-east of al-Kawthar neighbourhood. Amnesty International could not establish that the attack originated from the specific locations mentioned by the above witness.

QAT MARKET, AL-OSIFRA NEIGHBOURHOOD, 19 MAY

A 14-year-old girl was killed and her 35-year-old sister was injured in al-Osifra neighbourhood (100m east of Qat Market) at a time of reported clashes between PRC and Huthi/Saleh-loyalists fighters in the area. The brother of the victims spoke to Amnesty International about the night leading up to the incident:

*"On the night of 18 May, armed men belonging to Hamoud Saeed Mikhlaifi [PRC leader] came to our neighbourhood and Forty Street neighbourhood [next door] with a tank, vehicles and gunmen who were firing from between our homes. I and a number of neighbours asked them to leave the area but they refused. They continued firing all night amidst our homes."*

He continued:

*"The following day [19 May] at 1pm, they [PRC] returned with tanks to al-Muqwat [Qat Market] and fired towards al-Hojala, which is another residential area [controlled by Huthis] meaning they were firing on other civilians. Clashes occurred at that time and vehicles came loaded with armed men [PRC] with RPGs and LAW*



*rockets. They were firing from between our homes towards Mount al-Wa'sh and elsewhere. The Huthis responded with anti-aircraft weapons that hit the third floor of our house, specifically the kitchen. My two sisters were in the kitchen, Sara was close to the window so she was struck by shrapnel all over her body and she died. My other sister was about to leave the kitchen, but she was also hit and is in a bad condition. She is now in hospital. She does not know that her sister died. Many residents of the neighbourhood have been displaced due to the presence of the [PRC] militants. More people left the area after the strike at my house. The militants should have fought in a remote place away from civilians. Instead, they chose to fight and hide between the residential neighbourhoods to use people as shields to protect themselves and expose civilians to danger."*

**AL-MUROOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, 13 MAY**

Twenty-five-year-old Ahmed lost his right foot when a shell struck his neighbour's house Mohamed, whilst he was visiting him. Mohamed, who witnessed the incident, told Amnesty International:

*"On 13 May 2015, while we were sitting in the house, the Huthis were firing bazookas on us because the muqawama [PRC] was present in the neighbourhood. The muqawama had a tank under my building, I live on the third floor. When I asked them to leave, they told me that they will destroy the house over my head and they had a tank, so I kept silent and I didn't argue with them. They were about 20 armed civilians and they were not from the neighbourhood. They made several barricades and occupied the building across from ours, which was already empty and locked. That night, my neighbour Ahmed and I were chewing qat at 11.30pm in the living room when we heard the sound of an explosion. I was fine but I heard Ahmed screaming 'my foot... My foot'. The next day, when I went home I saw that the shell had passed through three walls. It was from the direction of the Huthi tank that was parked in front of September 26 School [200m north west of house], in front of the Technical Institute."*

**HARIT AL-SAFFAR, AL-RAWDHA DISTRICT, 9, 11 AND 20 MAY**

The al-Rawdha district, north-east of the city centre, is under PRC control while surrounding neighbourhoods are under the control of Huthi/Saleh loyalists groups. Amnesty International delegates visiting the area in May 2015 witnessed PRC fighters firing from (alleyways) between houses full of civilians in the neighbourhood towards the area to the north where Huthi/Saleh loyalists armed groups were located.

Amnesty International documented three separate incidents in which civilians were killed and injured in al-Saffar neighbourhood<sup>31</sup> of al-Rawdha district. Fragments of RPGs and mortars

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<sup>31</sup> Al-Saffar neighbourhood is sandwiched between Huthi/Saleh armed group positions on and around 60 Street (Ring road) (1-3.5km away from 60 Street) to the north and PRC positions near the al-Rawdha Hospital 200-500m to the south of al-Rawdha Hospital.

were found at the sites of the attacks. Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that at the time of the incidents, there were no fighters or armed clashes in the areas where the attacks occurred.

Harit al-Saffar is controlled by PRC fighters and is surrounded by areas controlled by Huthi/Saleh loyalist armed groups (some 2-3km away). From the residents' description of events, the three attacks below seems likely to have been launched from Huthi/Saleh loyalist positions. Al-Saffar neighbourhood is sandwiched between Huthi/Saleh armed group positions on and around 60 Street (Ring road) (1-3.5km away from 60 Street) to the north and PRC positions near the al-Rawdha Hospital 200-500m to the south of al-Rawdha Hospital.

Sami Abdu Mohamed, described to Amnesty International the attack which killed and injured his relatives and neighbours on the afternoon of 9 May at 5pm:

*"My brother's wife and my wife were preparing to bake biscuits, when a mortar landed on the house and killed my brother's wife Samia Thabet Abdu Mohamed (30), and injured my wife Ramzia Rajeh Abdullah Said (29), my daughter Nora (6), and my niece Amira Ammar Abdu Mohamed (9), and our neighbours' daughter Lamis Ahmed Marish (4), and son Iqbal Qa'ed (28). All were injured by shrapnel."*

Lina al-Saqqaf, told Amnesty International how her seven-year-old daughter Reem and husband Ibrahim were killed in, a similar attack on 11 May. She said that after the incident the whole neighbourhood left, even the young men who usually stay behind to guard the families' homes:

*"On Monday 11 May, around 5.30pm, there were random mortars being fired and three landed here. We live behind al-Rawdha Hospital. When I opened the door for my husband, the first mortar came in our direction [killing her husband and daughter]. The neighbours rushed to help us when the second mortar landed, but thank god it did not hit anyone. The third mortar followed us all the way to al-Rawdha Hospital at the emergency room. It landed in front of the hospital. The neighbours first took us to al-Rawdha Hospital and then to Yemen International Hospital... the area is controlled by the armed men of Hamoud Said (PRC leader), and they are stationed at the al-Rawdha Main Street, two blocks away. When the mortars started hitting us, we didn't know from what direction they had come. People say from Jarra Mountain or Sabra or from al-Qahira Castle [3-5km to the south]. I feel like I live in a state of worry the whole time, even when I hear fighting and I am inside the hospital, I go out to the corridor to cry, my little girl and husband are dead."*

Fifteen-year-old Turki Fouad al-Kamil was killed while he was playing near his home on 20 May at 5pm. His uncle Abdelbaset Mohsin, 40, was injured in the same attack, which appears to have been launched by Huthi/Saleh loyalist groups possibly positioned at 60 Street. Um Yousef, Turki's aunt, described the incident to Amnesty International:

*"Turki was playing when the first shell landed far away from us, so he ran home, but a second one struck our home whilst he was standing by the door. The shell struck our house while we were inside. We suddenly saw smoke and dust in the house."*

*There were children hanging around on the stairs, so I went to look for my children. I opened the door and I saw Turki in front of me; he was bleeding. Shrapnel had entered his heart, he was shaking uncontrollably. His uncle Abdelbaset had fallen a few steps away from him but he was conscious. Turki was still alive when he was taken away, but I knew that death was near, he was bleeding from his head and chest. He never woke up."*

She added:

*"It is normal for us to hear shelling in the distance. The neighbourhood is now empty, no one is left except for us and a couple more houses because another shell fell in the neighbourhood two weeks ago which killed Samia Thabet our neighbour, a mother of three girls, one of whom was injured by shrapnel. After the first attack, there were three or four families left. Now we are going to leave too."*

According to eyewitnesses and local residents, the attack came from the direction of Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled 60 Street, approximately 1-2km to the north of the strike. Fragments of the weapon which struck the al-Kamil family home were identified by Amnesty International as part of a soviet-era projectile with a range of up to six kilometres, suggesting that it was likely fired from one of the Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled areas.

#### AQABAT AL-THAWRA NEIGHBOURHOOD, 26 APRIL

Two children, two-year-old Mohamed Sinan and his seven-year-old cousin Mohamed Murshid, were killed and three of their cousins - Suleiman Sinan (8), Abdelaziz Faisal (5) and Maria (4 months old) - were injured in the afternoon of 26 April at 4.30pm while playing on the third floor of their house by shrapnel from a mortar that landed in the narrow alleyway outside the house,<sup>32</sup> sending shrapnel flying all around. Khaled Sinan, the children's uncle, told Amnesty International:

*"I saw three children lying on the floor. They had been playing on the third floor of the building. Mohamed Murshid's had only a third of his head left attached to his body. We took them to the nearest hospital, al-Thawra. Then to al-Safwa Hospital, then to al-Rawdha Hospital and then to the Yemen International Hospital. It was an arduous journey because of the lack of petrol and because hospitals couldn't assist with first aid. Mohamed Sinan passed away in the Yemen International Hospital three hours after the strike... Until today, every time I close my eyes, I see the terrifying scene before my eyes. We never expected the shells to reach our houses and for that reason we never left. We just saw the armed men [PRC] located far from our house."*

#### 7 JULY NEIGHBOURHOOD, 12 MAY

On 12 May at approximately 10.30am, a mortar struck a shop in the middle of the 7 July neighbourhood killing five civilians, including 14-year-old Islam, and injuring

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<sup>32</sup> Remains of the mortar examined by Amnesty International.

four others, including 10-week-old baby girl. The shop is 300-400m away from a PRC position at al-Rawdha Hospital. A resident who witnessed the incident and helped to take the victims to Hospital told Amnesty International:

*"I live in the neighbourhood myself and I was in fact sitting in front of the place where the mortar landed in the communications computer shop opposite me. At the time, Khulood (25) and Islam (14), as I came to know their names later, were buying something from the kitchen utensils stall next to the shop. Suddenly, the mortar landed and all the people ran away, as did I. But I came back straight away and I saw how the utensils stall was destroyed and I saw the two girls bleeding between the mounds of utensils. I saw that the upper half of the body of the owner of the stall had burned while the bottom half had separated. I rushed along with another man who had a private Hilux car and the owner of the grocery store, Abdel'alim, to pick up the bodies and put them in the back of the car to take them to al-Rawdha Hospital. Islam's feet had been cut off completely but she was still alive and passed away that evening in the hospital. Meanwhile, her sister Khulood's body had been cut into two halves and she had died on the spot. The owner of the utensils stall, his internal organs and his severed body parts were amongst the utensils. I picked him up and he too had died on the spot. There were some other victims, the owner of the women's clothing shop next to the utensils stall had been sitting in front of his shop and was injured by shrapnel in his neck and died immediately. I also rescued the driver of a motorcycle who had been standing nearby and had been injured by shrapnel to the abdomen and had died immediately. I also witnessed a woman and some girls being helped and I also saw Dr. al-Kamali being helped from in front of the grocer's where he had been sitting. We took all these people in the same car to al-Rawdha Hospital. The mortar, based on the place where it fell, it either came from the direction of the Central Security Forces camp or Sabr Mountain [to the east and south, both locations under Huthi/Saleh loyalist control]."*

#### AGRICULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD, AL-SHAMASI, 15 MAY

A mortar killed two children, Ayham Anees (12) and Mohamed Mazen al-Maqtari (7), and injured two other children and a woman. Ten-year-old Amjad al-Wasabi lost an eye and Mohamed al-Kamali, 12, and Asmahan Abdulrahim, 25, both sustained shrapnel injuries. When a mortar landed in a narrow alleyway between houses where the children were playing in the afternoon of 15 May. The alleyway is 200m south-west of a PRC checkpoint by the National Institute for Administrative Sciences on Osifra Street. Munther Mohamed Abdulghani, uncle Ayham's and Mohamed Mazen described the incident to Amnesty International:

*"We heard an explosion in the neighbourhood at about 3.00pm (on Friday 15 May). I heard screams and I came to the scene and saw my brother Mazen, holding the body of his son Mohamed. His leg was cut off and he had died. I also saw my nephew Ayham, whose head had separated from his body. My brother's wife, Asmahan had been injured by shrapnel. She had been standing next to the door watching the children play. It was a horrible scene; I did not know what to do."*

*Before the strike I had told the children to play in the middle of the alley because it was the safest place, but it was not."*

A neighbour Antar Abdo Ali al-Sabri described the aftermath of the attack:

*"My friends and I were at that time somehow far from the neighbourhood when the explosion occurred after the afternoon prayers. A child, Mohammed al-Badawi, came running, looking horrified. Blood was running down his neck and there was a hole in his head, from the shrapnel. The children had been playing before the explosion. They especially play on Fridays. When we went to the alleyway to find out what happened, we saw Mohamed and Ayham on the ground. The blood was everywhere. Pieces of brains were smeared on the walls and windows of the house. Mohamed al-Maqtari died in the car while we were trying to rescue him. As for Ayham, he died on the spot in the alleyway. His body parts were blown all over the place. Mohamed's mother, Asmahan, was also injured. She was hit in her legs because she was standing in front of the door of her house where the shell fell. There was another child, Amjad al-Wosabi, who was playing with them. Amjad's left eye fell out of his head and he was later given an artificial eye at Yemen International Hospital where he was treated."*

He added:

*"I do not know why our neighbourhood was targeted. It was random shelling with mortars. Three shells fell in three adjacent neighbourhoods subsequently. After this incident, the majority of people later left the area to escape to villages, out of fear that another shelling might happen. No government or a private body investigated or asked about the incident."*

Other eyewitnesses and residents told Amnesty International that the mortars came from the direction of the Huthi-controlled Radio Station buildings, on the eastern side of the city. At the site of the attack Amnesty International delegates found fragments of a 1973/1974 U.S.-produced 81mm mortar round – an imprecise munition which cannot be accurately aimed at a specific target and should therefore not be used in civilian residential areas.

#### DHIRAT AL-QARDHAYN VILLAGE (10KM SOUTH OF TA'IZ), 16 MAY

Seven civilians were killed, including one five-year-old boy and one 13-year-old boy, and eleven civilians were injured (including four women and four children, one of whom was eight months old) when three tank rounds landed outside a house in Dhirat al-Qurdayn village minutes apart in the afternoon of 16 May.

*"The village is almost 10 kilometres south of Ta'iz, separated by Mount Sabr," said Abdulhamid, a local resident. "We heard an explosion at 5.45pm on Saturday. The first shell fell in front of Anwar Said's house, killing his wife Doa'a. The villagers rushed to the place and another shell fell about five minutes later, killing six more people. When I arrived at the scene, the bodies were scattered everywhere. Eight-month-old Asrar was underneath her [dead] mother and when we tried to pull her out, we noticed that her left leg had been severed... [my neighbour] Ramzi's body*



*was headless. The two shells fell in the same place with about three meters between them. The third shell landed on the outskirts of the villages, about 200 meters away, but it did not hit anyone. When the shells landed and we began to collect the body parts and help the wounded, I felt like I was going to die. It was a horrific scene."*

Wazira, a local resident, who was present at the scene during the attack, described how she tried to help the injured when the second shell landed:

*"I was sitting on the street with my neighbour [Fakhriya Abdullah], the mother of the two boys ['Azzam and 'Ahid] who died, and some women from the village. We heard a whistle and we saw something black and behind it something red like fire. [The women and] I jumped and started running and shouting 'Doa'a... Doa'a!' because she was the first one who was hit when a shell fell in front of her house. We arrived and saw her heaped onto herself. She had been at the door cutting potatoes... Then Ramzi [local resident] came with his brothers Wajdi and Amjad to help as well as Abdullah Abdul Ghani [local resident]. I was looking for my children when Abdullah shouted: "Lie down on the ground everybody!" Ramzi had a blanket in his arms with Doa'a inside it. The second shell fell and Ramzi shouted 'Allahu Akbar' and then it exploded on him. I ran to rescue people and I heard 'Ahid calling me: "Auntie help me I am injured". I approached Ramzi and I noticed that his head was not there. I went towards 'Azzam and he was calling for his mother and saying "Mother rescue me". I was still looking for my children while I was trying to save people... Sina Haza' [local resident] was on her face and injured in the neck... A piece of shrapnel had hit Ahlam's back and went out from her chest, while her baby girl Asrar had lost her leg."*

Yousef, a relative of those killed, spoke of his shock and reaction when he reached the scene after the second shell landed:

*"When I saw the bodies and body parts, I just started screaming and I didn't know what to do. The villagers had rushed to the scene to save who could be saved and collect the body parts and bodies. Two of my nephews were killed, 'Ahid (13) and 'Azzam (5). Their father, my brother Abdullah, was wounded and he is in the hospital. He only knows that his son 'Ahid was killed in the incident because he was killed while he was lying by his side, he doesn't know that 'Azzam was also killed, we have not told him yet out of fear for his health."*

At the site of the attack Amnesty delegates found fragments of a Soviet-era 125mm high explosive tank round, which could have a range of 5-8km. According to residents' testimonies, there were no armed men present or any kind of armed clashes in the village at the time of the attack. Amnesty International could not establish which side fired the shell or from where, as both sides have tanks.

#### AL-SAWANI, 24 MAY

Neighbours Anas, 40, and Hasan, 45, were killed outside their homes, and three of their neighbours – Mohamed (40), Rasheed (42) and Said (31) - were injured when a shell struck

the second floor of Hasan's two-storey house on 24 May on 6.40am. Said, who lost his brother Anas in the attack and was himself injured, told Amnesty International:

*"On the morning of 24 May, an explosion shook the house at around 6.30am. We went out with the neighbours to inspect the source of the explosion to see that a tank round had hit a neighbour's wall. Ten minutes later, as we were standing in the courtyard, a second round struck the [northward facing] window of the second floor of our neighbour's house, Hasan. The tank shell came from the direction of [anti-Huthi PRCs controlled] Jabal Jarra [Approximately 3km North West of al-Sawani neighbourhood]. My brother Anas and Hasan were killed and our neighbour Mohamed sustained a serious back injury and he is now in Jordan getting treatment. Our neighbour Rasheed and I were both injured in the legs. Hasan was a father to five children, and my brother Anas left behind a four-year-old little girl and his wife was seven months pregnant."*

He added:

*"It was the first time a shell landed in our neighbourhood and it led to local residents leaving the area in fear of further strikes. Indeed, four more shells landed in the area in the weeks that followed, two struck al-Iryani home, one hit Mohamed's home and one landed in the Jewish cemetery. Thankfully, no one was injured or killed in those incidents."*

Amnesty International could not confirm that the attack originated from the specific locations mentioned by the witness. The neighbourhood, which falls under Huthi/Saleh control, is sandwiched between anti-Huthi PRCs controlled Jabal Jarra 3km to North West and a Huthi/Saleh permanent position where a tank is based and frequently fired into al-Maghraba neighbourhood (300m south of al-Sawani neighbourhood). Fragments found at the site of the attack, the direction of the impact and the pattern of destruction suggest that a tank round was likely fired from Jabal Jarra, where an anti-Huthi PRCs tank position was located at the time.

#### AL-DAMGHA, 3 JUNE

Abdelrahman, 55, was killed and his son Fares, 20, was injured along with four other neighbours whilst attending a funeral in his neighbourhood. Fares, who sustained a broken leg, told Amnesty International:

*"We had been visiting our relative, Abdelwahid, to attend a funeral and offer our condolences. At around 5pm, five shells landed in the doorway of the house. My father Abdelrahman was killed and I was injured. Four other mourners who had been attending the funeral were also injured, but I do not know their names. The Huthis regularly fire at the muqawama [anti-Huthi PRCs] from our neighbourhood, which leads to the other side retaliating."*

Fares' cousin, Ali, was also present at the funeral and helped take the injured to the hospital told Amnesty International:

*"We had been at our relative's house in al-Damgha to offer our condolences, because his three year old son has previously been killed in an airstrike on Al-Qahira Castle. The Huthis have a permanent position by al-Ihsan Mosque 300 meters west of our relative's house. At around 5pm, we saw a Huthi tank passing by the house heading downhill towards the city. It was stationed approximately 15 meters away from the house when it began firing southwards in the direction of al-Jamhour Hospital, where the muqawama are stationed [2km north-west of al-Damgha, al-Damgha being slightly elevated]. When we saw the tank pass by, we were in a hurry to get home before the fighting intensified. We made the mistake of leaving the house right after the tank fired six shells. A couple of minutes later, the muqawama replied with five mortars in a row. We saw the first mortar land close to the tank, which then started to retreat and move back up the hill southwards towards its position. It was moving in our directions and the mortars were still falling. There were seven of us standing in the doorway of the house when the fourth mortar landed close to us, killing my uncle Abdelrahman, and injuring my cousin Fares and another 12-year old relative, who is currently in hospital, paralysed as a result of a head injury caused by shrapnel. After that incident, we were forced to move to Sana'a".*

# WORSENING HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The conflict has exacerbated an already acute humanitarian situation resulting from years of poverty, poor governance and instability. Prior to the conflict, 60% of Yemen's population required some kind of assistance to meet their basic needs, whether it was food, water, healthcare or shelters. As it stands now, 80% – or 4 in 5 Yemenis – need some form of humanitarian assistance, prompting UN agencies to declare a Level 3 (most severe) emergency response for Yemen.<sup>33</sup>

The crisis has severely disrupted the provision of essential service in cities and rural areas alike. Schools in conflict-affected areas have been closed since March, disrupting education. Many are being used as shelters for internally displaced people (IDPs), while armed groups use some as bases, training or detention centres and others have been targeted and destroyed by coalition airstrikes. Ministry of Education officials in Sana'a told Amnesty International that 600,000 students have been unable to sit their final high school exams because schools are being used to house IDPs.

Damage to power stations and electricity networks have left parts of Aden and Ta'iz without electricity for prolonged periods, disrupting vital services such as water supply and health care, and impacting every aspect of life for the civilian population. Without electricity or fuel, even bakeries had to close<sup>34</sup> and already scarce food was wasted because it could not be refrigerated.

Access to water, already limited before the conflict due to dwindling resources and poor infrastructure,<sup>35</sup> has been further hindered by the lack of electricity and fuel needed to operate the pumps and by damage caused to water and sanitation infrastructure.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> Yemen: highest emergency response level declared for six months, 1 July 2015

<http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/yemen-highest-emergency-response-level-declared-six-months>

Statement to the UN Security Council by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O'Brien, 28 July 2015 <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/UNSC-%20Yemen%20-%2028%20July%2015%20-%20USG%200%27Brien%20as%20delivered.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> UNDP, 5 May 2015

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10152985802827830&id=44015482829](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10152985802827830&id=44015482829) ;

Yemen Humanitarian Situation Overview: Aden & Sana'a, MSF (Doctors Without Borders), 30 June 2015 [http://www.msf.ie/sites/ireland/files/yemen\\_-\\_update\\_situation\\_and\\_msf\\_activities\\_30.06.15.pdf](http://www.msf.ie/sites/ireland/files/yemen_-_update_situation_and_msf_activities_30.06.15.pdf)<https://www.transterramedia.com/media/62304>

<sup>35</sup> See for example: Groundwater management and agricultural development in Yemen, 2009 [http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd\\_aofw\\_wat/wat\\_pdfs/meetings/ws0109/2\\_Yemen\\_Salem.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_wat/wat_pdfs/meetings/ws0109/2_Yemen_Salem.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Two-thirds of people in conflict-hit Yemen without clean water, 26 May 2015

scarcity and high cost of fuel needed to pump and transport water caused a multi-fold increase in the price of water, making it unaffordable for many. As a result a growing percentage of the population resorted to using unsafe water from contaminated sources.

Lack of water and electricity, as well as fear of coalition airstrikes, forced residents of then Huthi-controlled neighbourhoods of Crater, Khor Maksar, Ma'allah and other parts of Aden to leave their homes. During a visit to Crater in early July, the few beleaguered residents who remained there told Amnesty International that they had not had any electricity or running water for more than two months. *"We are being forced to live like rats, in the darkness and stifling heat, and all this while we are fasting in Ramadhan. Life is unbearable."* said a resident, Abu Ibrahim.

A paramedic working in a health centre said:

*"What is electricity? It's been so long that we have forgotten what it is. We had some water intermittently until 10 days ago but since then we have none, and there is no telephone network coverage here. It is very difficult to run a hospital in these conditions, the lack of electricity and water was making life unbearable, especially with the high temperatures and while fasting during Ramadan."*

While the impact of the damage to infrastructure is all too evident, establishing responsibility for the damage is often difficult due to competing narratives by the warring parties and their supporters. Damage in April, May and June to Aden's electricity power stations and to the Barzakh Water Reservoir in Jabal Hadid, which cut off electricity and water supplies to various areas, including Ma'llah, Crater, Khor Maksar and Tawahi, has been blamed on both coalition airstrikes and shelling by armed groups.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported the following damage in one single Week in Aden:

*"The water tanks in Al Jumhouria Hospital and Al Maala Health Complex in Aden were damaged by fighting last night, and both health facilities have no water today. Plans by partners to replace the tanks were unsuccessful today because of insecurity. Meanwhile, one employee from the local electricity company was reportedly shot dead by a sniper, and four other employees injured as they carried out repairs in Al Maala District. An employee of the water company was also injured".<sup>37</sup>*

Shortage-induced price increases have put available food beyond the reach of a growing number of people who have lost their job or are no longer receiving their salaries. Public sector workers have not received salaries since the beginning of the conflict and many private sector businesses have been paralysed by the conflict and the blockade imposed on the

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<https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-05-26/two-thirds-people-conflict-hit-yemen-without-clean-water>

<sup>37</sup> Yemen: Escalating Conflict Flash Update, OCHA, 17-23 April 2015

<http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-escalating-conflict-flash-update-17-23-april-2015-1000>

import of commercial goods by the coalition. Lack of electricity and gas to refrigerate and cook food causes food waste at a time of increasing needs.

Government services are paralysed and humanitarian assistance woefully inadequate even in the capital and other major cities, and are all but inexistent in rural areas, where most of the population lives, and in conflict-affected areas, where civilians are most vulnerable. Most of the displaced families sheltering in schools, hotels and empty buildings told Amnesty International that the only assistance they had received was from local charities and neighbours.

The targeting of key logistic infrastructure - such as airports, seaports, bridges and main roads – by all parties in the conflict has had far-reaching consequences. Some have been damaged or destroyed by coalition airstrikes and shelling by armed groups and other have been closed or their use restricted by the parties. The damage caused to two bridges between Ta'iz and Aden, and to the Qaloo'a tunnel in Aden have further hindered the movement of civilians, food and essential goods and medical supplies – while causing little disruption to the movement of fighters. Aden has been affected both by the blockade imposed by the coalition on the import of commercial goods, including fuel, and by the restrictions imposed by Huthi/Saleh-loyalist armed groups on the passage of goods into areas controlled by anti-Huthi/PRC armed groups, which became the most densely populated areas since the outbreak of the conflict (as residents of Huthi-controlled areas sought shelter there). Even though Aden seaport has been partially functional since the start of the conflict, humanitarian supplies were diverted to the Huthi-controlled seaport of Hodeida,<sup>38</sup> restricting the flow to Aden of the little humanitarian aid which reached the country. Different factions have hindered or prevented the passage of humanitarian aid and medical supplies on the roads under their control. Amnesty International delegates saw dozens of trucks prevented from entering Aden by Huthi/Saleh-loyalist armed groups.

Under international humanitarian law, civilian humanitarian relief personnel must be granted freedom of movement by all parties to the conflict, and be protected from attack, harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention. The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

## HEALTH FACILITIES

The conflict has caused a major health crisis, disrupting essential primary and secondary health care services. At least 160 health care facilities have been closed down across the country.<sup>39</sup> Those most in need of humanitarian assistance or medical care are often unable to access it due to a combination of lack of resources and fear. In June the medical charity MSF (Doctors without Borders) reported:

*“Difficulties in accessing the hospital are caused by blockages to roads, movement being very risky due to fighting and snipers, and ambulances having been attacked*

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/01/fighting-yemen-blocks-delivery-thousands-tonnes-food-aid>

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/yemen\\_hrp\\_revised\\_2015.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/yemen_hrp_revised_2015.pdf)



*and hijacked. 7 MoH ambulances have gone missing by the beginning of April. 2 Yemeni Red Crescent volunteers were killed on Friday 3rd April while in an ambulance. Our staff is still finding difficulties going to and from the hospital, and we have some staff who have been living at the hospital".<sup>40</sup>*

A man who lost a finger and sustained other injuries as a result of a coalition airstrike on a Mosque in Lahj governorate told Amnesty International that he was unable to obtain the necessary medical care locally and had not been able to go to hospital in Aden, due to lack of fuel and fear of insecurity on the road.

The continued ground fighting and coalition airstrikes have placed enormous pressures on the capacity of hospitals and their remaining supplies. In Aden, directors and doctors at several hospitals in areas controlled by anti-Huthi/PRC groups (there were no functioning hospitals Huthi-controlled areas by July) told Amnesty International that their facilities lacked surgeons and specialists like ophthalmologists and neurologists. Many experienced doctors and nurses have fled due to the conflict. They also complained that staff had not received their salaries since March because the Huthi-controlled Ministry for Health in Sana'a had stopped transferring salaries to Aden, leaving health personnel with no choice but to go to Sana'a to receive their salaries – impossible for most as the journey is long, dangerous and expensive – and that the Ministry of Health has ceased to transfer money for the everyday running of hospitals. Doctors and hospital directors said they lack certain essential supplies, such as surgical strings, chest tubes, central lines, external fixators, anaesthetic drugs and laboratory solutions.

Patients in and outside hospitals told Amnesty International that they were unable to find or to afford the medical supplies they needed.

At a field hospital caring for post-surgery patients in Aden, Su'ud Amer, who lost both her legs in a mortar attack near her home on 5 July told Amnesty International that she felt unable to eat because there was no toilet chair she could use and going to the bathroom was too difficult. *"Please, she needs a toilet chair; she does not eat because of the difficulties of going to the bathroom and she is wasting away"*, her relative said. Nurses at the hospital said that they did not have access to such basic medical equipment.

In the same facility, nurses told Amnesty International that the wound of 50-year-old Fatima Ali, who sustained a shrapnel injury to the abdomen from a mortar strike on her home on 12 June, was infected because the colostomy bags she was using were poor quality and inadequate, but neither her family nor the hospital could afford better ones.

In the Gharbia neighbourhood of Dar Saad a resident who had sustained an abdomen injury from a stray bullet in May showed Amnesty International his infected open wound which needed colostomy bags, which he could not afford to buy.

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<sup>40</sup> Yemen: Crisis update – 2 June 2015 <http://www.msf.org/article/yemen-crisis-update-%E2%80%93-2-june-2015>

Attacks on medical staff and property by fighters on both sides have been frequent. In Aden several doctors told Amnesty International that they had been victims of attacks and threat at gunpoint by anti-Huthi PRCs fighters as they were going to work. Amnesty International witnessed armed groups positions, including anti-aircraft machine guns, at several hospitals in Aden and Ta'iz. In Aden anti-Huthi PRCs fighters were observed firing assault rifles inside the al-Sadaqa hospital compound and launching mortars from next to the hospital, exposing patients and medics to the risk of retaliatory attacks from Huthi/Saleh-loyalist groups.<sup>41</sup>

Similar conduct by fighters and their utter disregard for the protection of civilians forced hospitals such as al-Joumhouria Hospital in Aden to suspend its operations in late April.<sup>42</sup>

In the city of Ta'iz, al-Rawdha, al-Jamhuri and al-Thawra Hospitals are under the control of anti-Huthi PRC armed groups, and the Yemen International Hospital, one of the better equipped hospitals in the city, is under the control of Huthi/Saleh-loyalist armed groups. Amnesty International observed checkpoints manned by fighters outside these hospitals. It was noted that outside al-Rawdha hospital for example, anti-Huthi PRCs' machine guns mounted vehicles were stationed in front of the hospital entrance. Several victims of attacks who had needed urgent medical care told Amnesty International that al-Rawdha Hospital only admits fighters and civilians aligned with anti-Huthi PRCs, and the Yemen International Hospital only admits fighters from the Huthi/Saleh-loyalists armed groups and civilians aligned with them. In an interview with Amnesty International, the Director of al-Rawdha Hospital denied the allegations. Meanwhile, during Amnesty International delegates' visits to Yemen International Hospital, it was noted that soldiers in official military uniforms were stationed in in their tens at the entrance of the hospital and cars mounted with anti-craft weaponry belonging to the Huthi armed group/Saleh loyalists were stationed in the car park of the hospital.

In Ta'iz many of the doctors interviewed by Amnesty International also complained about their already weak capacity for receiving cases, worsened by the lack of electricity, water, fuel, medication, surgical equipment and staff. Many private and public hospitals have been forced to close, consequently increasing pressure on the few hospitals that have remained open, especially as new cases continue to arrive daily as a result of the ongoing fighting in the city. Meanwhile, the mounting deaths from the on-going fighting is resulting in hospital fridges reaching capacity and has forced hospitals to use ice cream fridges to store bodies. Al-Jamhuri Hospital has been forced to suspend its operations due to insecurity, having found itself surrounded by fighters from both sides - who repeatedly launched attacks in the direction of each other, hitting the hospital several times. A doctor at the hospital told Amnesty International of the everyday challenges they're facing due to a lack of staff and how the ongoing fighting and lack of fuel often prevent patients from reaching the hospitals:

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<sup>41</sup> The incidents witnessed by Amnesty International took place on 12, 13 and 14 July. On 14 July heavy fighting was taking place between the two sides, which resulted in the capture of the city in the following days by the anti-Huthi/PRC armed groups and the United Arab Emirates ground forces.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/01/yemen-people-suffer-lack-food-power-medical-aid-battles-rage-on>

*"Half the staff is working, the other half is absent due to... lack of transport, while others live in conflict areas that are closed off, and so they cannot leave. During the last few days, we had a big capacity to receive victims of the fighting but the numbers that do arrive are few. Humanitarian organisations are quasi-absent, only UNICEF offered us some basic medication for basic first aid that do not suffice for the needs of al-Jamhouri, while the Red Cross provided the dialysis department with water. Meanwhile, the guarding of the hospital is under the muqawama [anti-Huthi PRCs], who have taken the only remaining hospital cars five days ago."*

Doctors working in the Dialysis Department said that while they have been able to maintain the running of the department, some patients have not been able to come for their weekly sessions due to lack of fuel, which resulted in the death of three patients in their own homes.

Staff in the emergency unit of al-Thawra hospital told Amnesty International that daily clashes have been taking place around the hospital between opposing armed groups, despite the staff's appeal to the armed groups that the hospital is a civilian facility seeking to provide assistance to the sick and wounded. Moreover, like many other hospitals, al-Thawra has suffered from fuel shortages. On 6 May, a medic said that the Renal Department had to stop functioning for four days due to lack of fuel, which led to the death of three patients due to renal failure.

On 20 April, paramedic Abdelhalim al-Asbahi was shot in the head outside the hospital, while the ambulance driver Jamal Qudsi was shot in the shoulder. On 10 (12.30 pm) and 14 May (4pm), relatives accompanying patients were shot and injured in the hospital compound.

Al-Thawra Hospital staff provided Amnesty International with information about dozens of incidents of mortar and shelling between 26 April and 1 June, which have led to the injury of staff, killing of patients and the destruction of the hospital. Fragments of 60mm mortars and RPGs, both commonly used by all armed groups were seen by Amnesty International at the hospital, and cartridges of 7.62 bullets were found in the hospital yard in early July. Staff said that days earlier a nurse from the hospital who was also a member of an armed group had forcibly taken the newest ambulance, shooting open the door of the garage where the ambulance was kept.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

TO STATES MEMBERS OF THE SAUDI ARABIA-LED COALITION, AND TO STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE COALITION OPERATION THROUGH INTELLIGENCE, LOGISTIC OR OTHER SUPPORT - INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES AND UNITED KINGDOM

- Fully comply with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law in the planning and execution of any strikes by ensuring that civilians and civilian objects are not targeted; and that no attacks are carried out which do not discriminate between civilians and combatants, or which may cause civilian loss disproportionate to the anticipated military advantage;
- Take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, including giving advance effective warnings of impending attacks when possible to the civilian population in the concerned areas;
- Immediately cease the use of weapons which are unguided or which have a wide radius and which risk harming civilians in surrounding areas. Consistent with the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks, end the use of explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas;
- Set up a concrete judicial mechanism to independently and impartially investigate the cases detailed in this report and any others where there is credible information that violations of international humanitarian law have been committed, make public the findings of the investigations, and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to trial;
- Provide prompt and adequate reparation to victims and families of victims of unlawful attacks which resulted in human and material damage, including compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition;
- Make public information on intended military targets of strikes which resulted in civilian casualties, and on the parties involved in the planning and execution of such strikes;
- Instruct all allied forces to respect and protect humanitarian workers and humanitarian aid facilities, supplies, and transportation. Allow full and unfettered access to humanitarian agencies to conduct humanitarian activities in all parts of the country and receive necessary aid supplies without interference;
- Refrain from targeting key logistic infrastructure even if used for military purposes, if the incidental short-term and long-term consequences for civilians would be disproportionate to the concrete and direct military advantage sought in the specific attack.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT ABD RABBU MANSOUR HADI

- Demand that the states members of the Coalition take the actions listed below and provide assistance to victims and families of victims of unlawful attacks to seek and obtain justice and reparation;
- Ensure that all groups under the command of the government abide by international humanitarian law and those fighters and groups found to be violating international humanitarian law and human rights law are brought to trial;
- Ensure that fighters under the control of the Government immediately cease attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks, as required by international humanitarian law and respect the principle of distinction as set out under international humanitarian law;
- Immediately order government forces and those allied to them to cease to launch attacks from areas populated by civilians, including from/near hospitals, schools and civilian homes, and remove and desist placing military objects and facilities from/in civilian areas, and where possible give warning and sufficient time to civilians to evacuate areas likely to come under attack;
- Allow full and unfettered access to organizations providing humanitarian aid, including ensuring the safety of their staff and safe passage of all humanitarian equipment and supplies;
- Provide prompt and adequate reparation to victims and families of victims of unlawful attacks which resulted in human and material damage, including through compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

TO HUTHI/SALEH-LOYALIST ARMED GROUPS AND ANTI-HUTHI/PRC ARMED GROUPS

- Immediately cease attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks as required by international humanitarian law and respect the principle of distinction as set out under international humanitarian law;
- Immediately cease to launch attacks from areas populated by civilians, including from/near hospitals, schools and civilian homes, and remove and desist placing military objects and facilities from/in civilian areas, and where possible give warning and sufficient time to civilians to evacuate areas likely to come under attack;
- End the use of imprecise explosive weapons with wide area effect such as artillery, mortars and unguided rockets in populated areas;
- Hold to account all those who - including commanders and other superiors - give orders or violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law;
- Allow full and unfettered access to organizations providing humanitarian aid, including ensuring the safety of their staff and safe passage of all humanitarian equipment and supplies;

- Allow free and unrestricted movement of civilians into and from Ta'iz, Aden and surrounding areas, and allows civilians who wish to leave the area freedom to do so without threat or constraint.

#### TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- Create an international commission of inquiry to investigate alleged serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by all parties to the conflict since the beginning of hostilities in September 2014;
- Urge the parties to the conflict to abide by their legal obligations and implement the recommendations set out in this report;
- Ensure that prompt and full reparation is provided to victims and families of victims of unlawful attacks which resulted in human and material damage.

#### TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Halt arms transfers to any parties to the conflict where there is a risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law;
- Recognize and condemn the violations and war crimes being committed in Aden and Ta'iz and in Yemen more broadly, as failure to act opens the way for intolerable human suffering and poses a challenge to the universality of international law;
- Support the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate alleged serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by all parties to the conflict since the beginning of hostilities in September 2014.