

**STATEMENT UPR Pre-session on Yemen**  
**Geneva, 13 December 2018**  
**Delivered by: Mwatana for Human Rights**

This statement is delivered on behalf of Mwatana for Human Rights, an independent Yemeni human rights organization. Mwatana for Human Rights, the Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) submitted a report to inform the examination of Yemen during its third Universal Periodic Review.

This statement addresses the violations of international human rights and humanitarian law which are committed by the Government of Yemen and in Government-controlled territory as well as by Ansar Allah armed group (Houthis).

Since Yemen's last UPR review in 2014, armed conflict has overtaken most of the country after Houthi forces seized the capital of Sana'a on 21 September 2014. Allied with former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, they gradually expanded their control since March 2014. Following a letter from President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi requesting intervention, Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of nine Arab countries, and with the support of the U.S. and other western nations, initiated military operations against the Houthi-Saleh forces on 26 March 2015.

- **Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture**

- A. In its 2014 UPR review, the Government of Yemen accepted recommendations to take measures to combat arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, prevent acts of torture and ill-treatment, and ensure that allegations of torture and other ill-treatment were investigated and prosecuted.
- B. In 2017, Mwatana verified 51 new incidents of arbitrary detention and 68 enforced disappearances in territory controlled by the Government of Yemen and contested governorates. Also, Mwatana verified 52 incidents of torture committed by, among others, Yemeni forces, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) backed Yemeni forces known as the Security Belt and Hadrami Elite forces. In 14 of these documented incidents, torture led to death.
- C. Moreover, Mwatana verified 69 incidents of arbitrary detention and 33 incidents of enforced disappearance by Houthi-Saleh forces in 2017, in addition to 53 incidents of arbitrary detention and 26 incidents of enforced disappearance in 2015-2016. Also, Mwatana documented 29 incidents of torture of Yemeni civilians by the Houthi-Saleh forces during their detention in 2017, three of which led to death, and four incidents of torture in 2015-2016

- D. Recommendations:

We call upon the Government of Yemen to:

- Ensure that Yemeni forces comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.
- Ensure the Saudi-led coalition military and security forces, and the armed groups it funds and supports, respect IHRL and IHL in their operations in Yemen.
- Immediately release all those subjected to arbitrary detention; reveal the fate of victims of enforced disappearance, including by publishing lists of individuals in detention in territory controlled by the Government.
- Investigate all reported incidents of torture in accordance with international standards; take immediate measures to hold those responsible accountable, and provide remedies to victims.

- **Denial of humanitarian access**

A. The closure of Sana'a International Airport for commercial flights by the Saudi-led coalition continued to prevent those with medical and protection needs from leaving Yemen. Pro-government resistance forces and parts of the army aligned with President Hadi were responsible for three incidents of denial of humanitarian access in 2017. In addition, in 2017, Mwatana documented 24 incidents of Houthi-Saleh forces denying humanitarian access. Houthi-Saleh forces blocked and confiscated trucks carrying humanitarian aid at checkpoints and imposed rigid restrictions on the work of humanitarian organizations in areas under their control.

B. Recommendations:

We call upon the Government of Yemen to:

- Immediately open all land, sea, and airports for humanitarian and commercial flights as these are matters that is exclusively within the sovereign rights of the Government of Yemen.

- **Attacks on hospitals and schools and ground attacks:**

A. During 2017, schools and hospitals were damaged in air and grounds attacks by the Saudi-led coalition and UAE-backed Yemeni forces. Some parties also endangered the sites by using them for military purposes. Moreover, Mwatana documented 70 indiscriminate ground attacks by the Houthi-Saleh forces in 2017, resulting in the deaths of 147 civilians and injuries of 142.

B. Recommendation:

We call upon the Government of Yemen to:

- Cease consent for Saudi-led coalition and UAE operations in Yemen until adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that the military operations are in compliance with Yemen's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

- **U.S. Drone Strikes and Ground Operations**

A. Mwatana documented five drone strikes in Al Bayda and Abyan governorates resulting in the death of nine civilians including two children and two women. Mwatana documented two U.S. ground operations in Marib and Al Bayda. 19 civilians were killed in the two operations including 12 children. 53 others were injured including 5 children and 43 women.

B. Recommendation:

We call upon the Government of Yemen to:

- Call upon the United States to provide detailed public information on its drone strikes and raids which resulted in civilian deaths, hold those responsible accountable, and provide remedies, including compensation, to the victims.
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In addition to all mentioned above, Mwatana documented Houthi-Saleh use of **landmines** prohibited by the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, to which Yemen has been a State Party since September 1998. Also, Mwatana documented **violations committed against journalists** by Houthi-Saleh forces including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and harassment. Mwatana also documented **violations against the the Bahai minority** in Yemen by Houthi-Saleh forces through raids, arrests, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance.

Many thanks for your attention.