

# Annual Report On Freedom of Expression in Yemen 2020



# Annual Report

On

## Freedom of Expression in Yemen

### 2020

Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory



MARSADAK

مرصدك

مرصد الحريات الإعلامية - اليمن  
Media Freedom Observatory - Yemen

# Table of Contents

flyer



Cover photo by: Rashad Al Samrai

<b>Infographic freedom of Expression .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary of the status of journalism in Yemen, 2020 .....</b>	<b>5 - 9</b>
<b>Repercussions and Impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the media in Yemen .....</b>	<b>10 - 15</b>
<b>Journalists facing death sentences for their journalistic writings .....</b>	<b>16 - 23</b>
<b>Violations of freedom of expression in 2020 .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Report Methodology .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Types of Violations .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Geographical distribution: Violations by Area .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Responsibility for Violations .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Details of Violations .....</b>	<b>27 - 34</b>
<b>Violations targeting Media Institutions .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>The Lawyers to Defend Journalists Coalition: A Collective Framework .....</b>	<b>36 - 37</b>
<b>Activities and Events Carried Out by the YMFO .....</b>	<b>38 - 39</b>
<b>Journalists Winning Awards at Local and International Forums .....</b>	<b>40 - 43</b>

# Violations Cases Against Media in Yemen

In 2020

Violations Cases

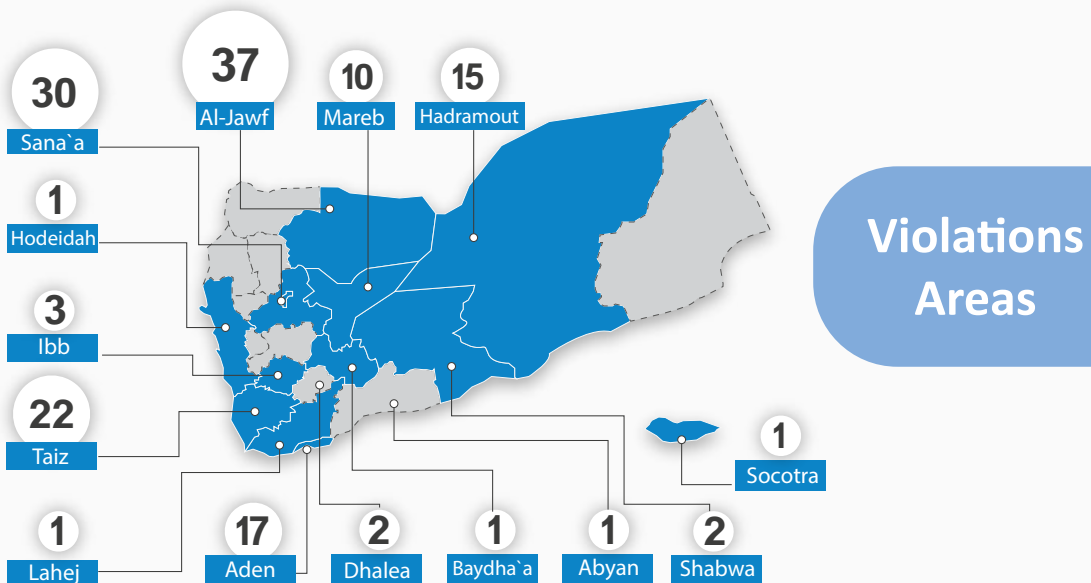
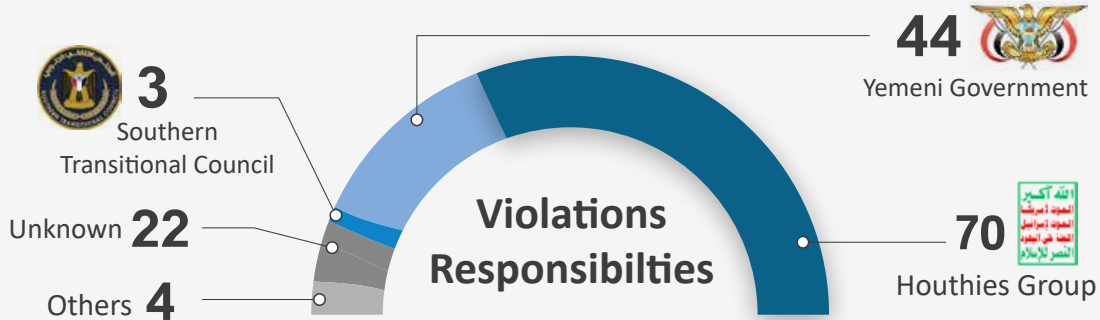
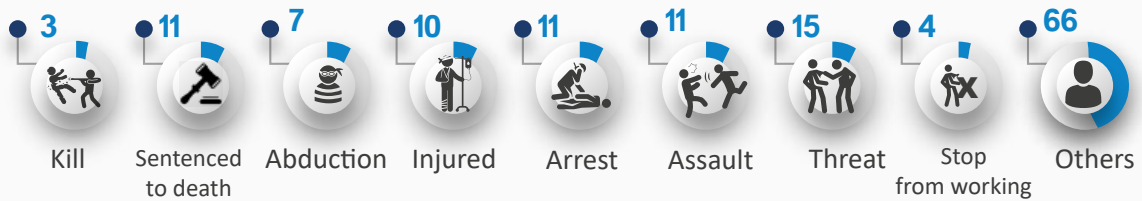
143

138

Against Individuals

5

Against media organizations



The Media Freedom Observatory Platform is a professional and independent monitoring and information platform that contains maps and information on press violations and freedom of expression throughout Yemen

[www.Marsadak.org](http://www.Marsadak.org)

# Media in Yemen, 2020



# Journalists Face Death Sentences and the Coronavirus Pandemic

The year 2020 did not fare better than the previous years in terms of media freedom in Yemen. Yemeni media witnessed multiple violations, the most prominent of which was the murder of 3 journalists, and the death sentences passed against 11 journalists in the context of politicized trials that lack the most basic legal rules and procedures. With this painful record, Yemen ranks as one of the most repressive countries of press freedom in the world, ranking 167 in the World Press Freedom Index 2020, out of 180 countries.

The ongoing war in Yemen has led the conflicting parties to treat the media and journalists with a heavy hand. The problem worsens even more with the outbreak of the new Coronavirus in 2020, which prompted all parties to place more restrictions on media freedom. In this annual report, we provide in-depth details on those challenges that Yemeni journalists faced during the Coronavirus crisis.

The facts documented by the Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory (MFO) confirm that all the controlling parties in Yemen have practiced various types of violations of press freedom and diminishing the right to freedom of expression which is guaranteed by the constitution, laws and international conventions.

The total number of documented cases in 2020 was 143 violations perpetrated against journalists and media professionals in Yemen. These violations varied between cases of murder, injury, kidnapping, assaults, threats and targeting media institutions. This state of affairs calls for redoubling the efforts to defend media freedom and the right of journalists to work in a safe and free environment. In this context, the YMFO has utilized and employed all available means to defend media freedom. It also attempts to ensure that violators of press freedom and aggressors against journalists do not go unpunished. This position is informed by the fact that journalists are the weakest link in conflicts, as they can be subjected to blackmail by the conflicting parties, and may end up being killed or behind the bars.

The Significance of this report stems from the fact that it provides a comprehensive description of the state of media freedom in Yemen in 2020, while at the same time focusing on the repercussions of the Coronavirus on journalism, the trials campaign and the murder of journalists during the year.

**In this part of the report, we will focus on the most important violations that have been committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen:**

## A) Violations in the Control Areas of Ansar Allah (the Houthis):

Ansar Allah group (the Houthis) topped the list of violators of press freedom. A total of 70 violations of media freedom practiced by the group were documented in various areas in Yemen. The worst forms of torture were practiced against journalists.

These violations are summarized in the following:

- On April 11, 2020, the Specialized Criminal Court (State Security court), which is under Houthi control, pronounced death sentences against 4 journalists; namely, Abdul Khaleq Imran, Akram al-Walidi, Haris Humaid and Tawfiq al-Mansouri, following 5 years of detention, enforced disappearance and torture in connection with their journalistic work.
- In November, the Specialized Criminal Court (State Security court), which is under Houthi control, pronounced death sentences against 7 journalists, whom it described as fugitives. The prosecuted journalists are Nadia al-Saqqaf, Jameel Ezz el-Din, Mohammed Qizan, Abdul Basit al-Qaidi, Ahmad al-Musaibili, Mukhtar al-Rahbi and Hussain Basleem.
- Journalists and activists in the field of freedom of expression who were kidnapped and detained in Houthi prisons were subjected to formal and politicized trials that lack all standards of fair trial, not to mention the unconstitutionality and illegality of the court itself. The trials were also in violation of international laws and charters that guarantee freedom of expression for journalists.
- The Houthi group exchanged journalists, who had been detained in its prisons for five years, for prisoners of war, as part of a prisoner exchange deal with the internationally recognized Yemeni government. This step constitutes an illegal practice criminalized by international treaties and conventions.
- The Houthi group continues to abduct the forcibly disappeared journalist, Waheed al-Sufi. It has refused to provide any information as to his whereabouts or his status since 2015. Nothing is known about him until the time of writing this report.
- The Houthi group places many restrictions and creates many obstacles during the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. Journalists faced difficulty in practicing their profession, and were unable to report on the Coronavirus outbreak from hospitals, and conduct interviews with patients or the responsible authorities.
- The Houthi group refused to respond to local and international demands to release journalists from its prisons in light of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic for fear of infection with the Coronavirus. Kidnapped journalists and

prisoners of conscience were exposed to the risk of infection especially in the absence of the most basic standards of safety and health care precautions required in prisons.

- Journalists in the Houthi control areas are subject to security surveillance. They are accused of being agents of foreign countries, and this makes it difficult for them to practice their media profession.
- At a time when infection with the Coronavirus increased in Yemen, the Houthi group imposed information secrecy, and restricted the freedom of media professionals. It cites illogical arguments to justify such acts, as it sought to conceal the true number of cases of Coronavirus infection. It tightens control over journalists who cover such news. All journalists and social media activists were instructed not to publish or circulate any information about cases of the Coronavirus infections that is inconsistent with the formal releases by the concerned authorities. All those who violated these procedures would be punished.
- The Houthi group continues to prevent independent and partisan media outlets from operating in the areas under its control.
- Many media outlets in the Houthi-controlled areas were stormed, suspended and restricted, and were prevented from covering many events.
- The Houthis were the direct reason for the displacement of 25 media professionals from al-Jawf governorate after it took control of al-Hazm district, the capital of

al-Jawf governorate.

- Independent journalists in Houthi-controlled areas are not tolerated. The most heinous types of arbitrary practices are practiced against them for fear of the effect of the information or news on channeling public opinion in a way that is not in line with the group's interests.
- The media and journalists in Houthi-controlled areas work under great restrictions and pressure.
- The media outlets in Houthi-controlled areas underwent systematic repression campaigns that began with the control of government media, followed by the closure and confiscation of independent and partisan media that did not adhere to the line of the Houthi group.
- The Houthi-controlled areas witnessed an unprecedented leveling of journalists and activists in the field of media freedom. Many of them were forced to flee to other areas, whereas others had to flee the country, for fear of their lives, or working in safer environments than the Houthi-controlled areas, even at the expense of their displacement from their homeland and families.
- The formal Houthi media or those funded by the Houthi group flourished in the Houthi-controlled areas, where the media scene is dominated by the feature of controlled media.
- Nine journalists are still languishing in Houthi prisons, and the group refuses to release them even though some of them have been detained for 6 years.



## B) Areas controlled by the Yemeni internationally-recognized government:

In the internationally recognized government areas of control, the press environment was not encouraging. The report documents 44 cases of violation of media freedom. The scene was also characterized by the fragility of state institutions and the rise of the role of armed entities beyond the state control.

The most prominent violations may be summarized in the following:

- Journalists in Yemeni government-controlled areas were accused of inciting the public and insulting the army and the government.
- Many military leaders have committed violations targeting journalists.
- Most of the violations were committed in the governorates of Taiz and Hadramout, where the authorities tried to silence and harass journalists.
- The local authority in Hadramout chased journalists and everyone who criticized it. It also well as rejected the Public Prosecutor's orders not to prosecute some journalists whose case had been put before the court.
- Abdullah Bakir, a journalist, has been detained by the security services in Hadramout governorate since the end of May.
- Journalists were arrested and assaulted by parties affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council (STC) which was controlling some southern regions.
- Nabil al-Qu'aiti, a journalist and photographer, was assassinated in Aden by unidentified gunmen riding a Hilux pickup. The assassins fled.
- In Aden, journalists and media outlets opposed to the STC were subjected to persecution, threats and attacks.
- Journalists and human rights activists in Taiz were arrested, persecuted and threatened by military leaders in the city of Taiz due to their writings and for expressing views different from those of the perpetrators.
- Photographer Aseel Suwaid was kidnapped and tortured in Lahj governorate while on his way to Aden. He was released in a poor condition after being tortured. The perpetrators were not held accountable.
- Some authorities have adopted a dangerous behavior in putting pressure on journalists by targeting their families as one of the tools of pressure. The security authorities in Hadramout arrested journalist Mohammed al-Yazidi's brother in an attempt to pressure him to surrender himself. The abducted brother of the journalist was asked to surrender Mohammed, or to show the police his brother's whereabouts, in exchange for his release.
- Some journalists were arrested and suspended from work for the official '26th September' newspaper in Marib governorate. The journalists were accused of incitement against the security authorities in the governorate.
- In the areas controlled by the legitimate government, Minister of Information, Muammar al-Iryani, issued an order banning the printing of all newspapers and limiting their circulation to the electronic versions, under the pretext of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic.

# Repercussions and Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the Media in Yemen

In 2020, 13 journalists died in Yemen with the highest number in Aden and Sana'a.

The Corona virus was an additional threat to journalists causing further hardship and claimed the lives of at least 10 journalists from the virus.

Journalists who died in 2020 from the Corona virus: Thikra Jawhar, Ahmed al-Hubaishi, Badia Awad, Nebras Amer, Intisar Haddad, Taha Makrad, Adel Maisari, Fadl al-Hubaishi, Mohammed al-Hamid, Mohammed al-Sayed.

The pandemic has exacerbated the poor conditions of journalists. They lack the resources and the basic protection equipment to perform their work. Health services are overwhelmed. Many journalists could not access treatment in the country or abroad.

## Journalists in Detention: Coronavirus Infections and Threats of the Prison Wardens

In the Political Security prison in Sana'a, 9 journalists were crammed into one narrow ward in a way that made them suffocate even under normal circumstances. However, the situation turned into more severe suffering and more dangerous health conditions, when they were infected with the virus on May 12, 2020. Despite symptoms of fever, a feeling of suffocation, difficulty breathing, body tremors and severe inflammation in the throat, joint pain, lethargy, and dizziness, which they suffered to the point of inability to move<sup>1</sup>, they only received sedative injections (Voltaren) and a useless antibiotic. Their health conditions did not improve until after they bought some vitamins at their own expense. Since they were completely severed from the outside world, their only source of information on the spread of the coronavirus was the reports of the leading Houthi channel, al-Masirah, which they were allowed to watch in the prison. They did not know that they had contracted the virus except when the prison doctor, Abdul Hakim Abu Fari', told them that, besides about 120 other detainees, they had actually been infected with the virus. This is the same doctor who previously denied their infection, and wrote a report that there were no cases of Coronavirus infection inside the prison, and made only recommendations to the prison management to provide 'oranges and onions' to the detainees, and to wash the 'qat' before delivering it to them<sup>2</sup>.

There was an outbreak of the Coronavirus in the investigations section at the Political Security prison in Sana'a. All detainees in this sections, including the nine journalists, were infected. At that time, visits were suspended, and the virus was the only visitor who was not prevented from visiting them. When they asked the prison doctor if those symptoms

that they had suffered were evidence of their infection with the virus, he told them that it was common flu. The detained journalists were threatened if they did not stop talking about the Coronavirus: "You had better stop talking in this way. Otherwise, by God, you will get into trouble<sup>3</sup>."

There were no tangible medical services in the Political Security prison in Sana'a, even in normal times. With the spread of Coronavirus as a deadly pandemic that can cause death, preventive measures were absent. Therefore, the detainees were not provided with masks, sterilizers, or medicine. The rules of physical distancing were not applied, as the ward that housed the journalists was very narrow. They were left alone to struggle with the pandemic in that crowded place. They suffered from such symptoms of infection, including loss of the senses of smell and taste. Their suffering increased when the prison management suspended visits in the prison as a preventive measure. As a result, they lost the food and drinks that their families were bringing with them during their visits. So, they suffered from malnutrition in addition to their infection. Their conditions worsened, and when they went out to the prison health unit, in the absence of preventive measures, they mixed with other patients, and with many jailers who mixed with people outside the prison and carried the infection to the prison<sup>4</sup>.

- 1- This information was confirmed by three journalists who were detained then in the Political Security prison in Sana'a. They provided information after their release. These journalists are Haitham al-Shihab, Hisham Tarmoom, and Isam Belghith.
- 2- Interview with the detained journalist, Haitham al-Shihab, following his release from the Political Security prison in Sana'a in December 2020. Haitham had seen a copy of the doctor's report that was on the table at the health center when he visited the prison health center.
- 3- Interview with the detained journalist, Hisham Tarmoom, following his release from the Political Security prison in Sana'a in December 2020. The expression 'atwaddifu' means you will get into trouble as a result of talking about infection with the Coronavirus.
- 4- Interview with the detained journalist, Isam Belghith, following his release from the Political Security prison in Sana'a in December 2020. He states that he still suffers from the effects of the Coronavirus infection and from poor immunity.

## Yemeni Journalists in the Face of the Coronavirus and the Authorities

With the extreme secrecy about the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Yemen, by the various authorities, the London-based Yemeni journalist, Nawal al-Maqhafi, negotiated with the Houthi authorities in Sana'a, to grant her a license of two-week visit of a certain hospital to have a first-hand experience of its conditions and the way it deals with the virus. She obtained the license, but she was accompanied by 6 persons who were affiliated with the Houthis. Doctors were prevented from giving her the correct statistics about the victims.

What al-Maqhafi saw as unjustified inflexibility on the side of the Houthi authorities was a privilege for journalists who, unlike her, did not enjoy the protection of international media institutions. These journalists were prevented from covering the repercussions of the outbreak of the virus and the threats for any violations of the approved green lines by the Houthis in Sanaa and the Transitional Council in Aden, both viewing the matter «a security issue.» When Mohammed Abdul Quddus, vice-chairman of the Saba News Agency in Sana'a - which is under the control of the Houthis - reported on the first Coronavirus case in Houthi-controlled areas, the Minister of Information suspended him from work on this account. Journalists did not obtain information from the concerned authorities, as the media outlets in the Houthi-controlled areas were instructed not to deal with the numbers and to calm the situation. Rumors and misinformation about the reality of its outbreak and the ways to fight it spread, giving way to an increase in its effects. All information leaks about the real status of the outbreak was carried out by journalists living outside the country, away from the grip of the local authorities. The effects of these policies were not limited to misleading citizens only, but also directly affected the lives of journalists and their sources

of income. They also reinforced their fears of talking about the Coronavirus. The authors of this report found only a limited response from journalists when asking them questions about how they and their work were affected by the outbreak, while most of them did not respond at all.

Many Yemeni journalists were deprived of international participations due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. The training courses abroad to which some of them were candidates were suspended, canceled or postponed, and some of those courses were implemented online via Zoom and similar applications. Dozens of Yemeni journalists lost many job opportunities, training courses and experiences provided by participation in events abroad.

The ban on field visits limited the ability to work, especially since not all journalists had adequate means of communication as an alternative. Some media institutions gave leaves to their staff, and at the same time, they were deprived of advertisements as a source of income. Therefore, the sources of income of journalists were almost cut off for several months during which they experienced difficult financial hardships. Some of them are still languish in those difficult conditions at the time of writing this report. As a result, they were unable to fulfill their obligations towards the dependents: their children and families.

Nawal al-Maqhafi, "Yemen: the Coronavirus in a war zone," BBC Arabic, 15 Dec. 2020 <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-55302465>

Islam Mohd., "Yemen: Journalists face repression for covering the Coronavirus," al-Mushahid net, 27 Dec. 2020 <https://almushahid.net/69757/>

"Suspending a Houthi official on the background of circulating a rumor on Coronavirus (document)," Yemeni Press Agency, 03 April, 2020, <http://www.yppagency.net/248812>

Islam Mohd., "Yemen: Journalists face repression for covering the Coronavirus," al-Mushahid net, Ibid.

Interview with the investigative journalist, Aseel Saria, in Dec. 2020. Saria and some of his colleagues were deprived of participations in events to which they had been invited in several countries due to the outbreak of the virus.

Interview with Widad al-Badawi, journalist and activist, in Dec. 2020. Al-Badawi was also deprived of participation in an event to which she had been invited.

In Sana'a, journalists were forced to work from home. They were provided with the necessary preventive measures, but rather, they relied on themselves in the provision of those measure. Due to the inability to work in the field, production and by extension financial returns declined, and journalists had to turn to work in other fields in search of alternative sources of income. Some of them contracted the virus.

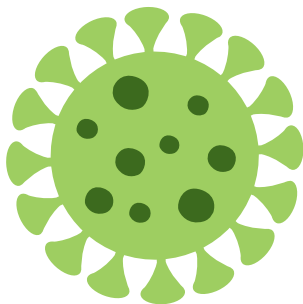
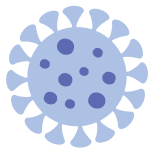
In Hadramout, journalists were provided with protective tools from most of the institutions in which they work. Some of them were granted paid leave, but field work declined due to the cessation of public activities. Therefore, production and financial returns also decreased.

In Taiz, the situation was not different from what was previously mentioned. Journalists resorted to working remotely, but the level of income declined as a result of the circumstances caused by the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

In Aden, some journalists were infected with the Coronavirus. They were not provided with protective tools, and some stopped working or worked remotely, while field work was suspended.

In general, foreign media correspondents received high safety measures and tools, which only a few journalists in the local media enjoyed. However, everyone's income was affected, especially those who earn on the basis of the volume of production, rather than having a fixed salary.

On the other hand, journalists received only a few instructions for dealing with the Coronavirus while at work. They relied on the working on the Internet as an alternative to reduce the repercussions of the Coronavirus on their work, as the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC) did by issuing a guide of good press coverage of the Corona virus.



Interviews with journalists working at public and private institutions in Sana'a, Dec. 2020  
Interviews with journalists working at public and private institutions in Hadramout, Dec. 2020  
Interviews with journalists working at public and private institutions in Taiz, Dec. 2020  
Interviews with journalists working at public and private institutions in Aden, Dec. 2020

## Journalists infected with the Coronavirus

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in Yemen, 10 journalists have died. We were unable to confirm whether all the deceased journalists were infected while performing their work or not, but it is known that most journalists and other media professionals lack the most basic safety tools and the necessary protection to cover the Coronavirus pandemic.

### Death

Ahmed al-Hubaishi

Death

a journalist who held a number of government positions, the most recent of which was the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the 14 October Press Foundation in Aden - was infected with the Coronavirus, and died on 02 June 2020, in the capital, Sana'a.

Nebras Amer

Death

broadcaster at the «Yemen Today» satellite channel, was suffering from kidney failure. While undergoing tests at a hospital in Cairo in preparation for a kidney transplant, she was infected with the Coronavirus, and died on 28 May 2020.

Mohammed al-Sayed

Death

who worked as a cameraman for a number of media outlets, and had previously worked as an Aden TV photographer since 1977, passed away on 20 May 2020, in Aden.

Intisar Haddad

Death

a journalist at the Aden Satellite Channel, was infected with the Coronavirus, and died on 24 May 2020, in Aden.

Badia'a Awad

Death

a journalist and broadcaster at al-Mukalla Radio, was infected with the Coronavirus. She died on 20 May 2020, in Hadramout.

Adel Maisari

Death

Journalist and TV director, died in Aden on 25 May 2020, after being infected with the Coronavirus.

Taha Makrad

Death

Director of the Radio and Television Monitoring Department at the Saba News Agency, the Aden Branch, was infected with the Coronavirus and died on 12 May 2020, in Aden.

Thikra Jawhar

Death

a journalist at the 14 October newspaper, and the director of the Press Syndicate office in Aden, was infected with the Coronavirus and died on 15 May 2020 in Aden.

Mohammed al-Hamid

Death

member of the Press Syndicate branch in Hadramout, was infected with the Coronavirus, and died on 02 June 2020, in Hadramout.

Fadl Hubaishi

Death

a journalist at the Yemeni News Agency (Saba), was infected with the Coronavirus, and died on 03 May 2020, in Aden.



### Infection

**Infection** Ahmed al-Bukari

a journalist and correspondent of al-Arabi TV in Taiz, was infected on 01 June and recovered 20 days later in Taiz.

**Infection** Khaled Rajeh

a cameraman working for al-Jazeera Satellite Channel in Taiz city, was infected with the Coronavirus, in ... June 2020, in Taiz.

**Infection** Suleiman al-Nawwab

a press photographer, was infected with the Coronavirus on 10 May 2020 in Marib governorate.

**Infection** Abdul Rahman al-Shawafi

correspondent of the Yemen Shabab Satellite Channel, was infected with the Coronavirus on 01 June 2020 in Taiz.

**Infection** Malak al-Hakimi

a journalist who writes for a number of news websites, including al-Mushahid Net, and an assistant producer of one of the Balqees channel programs, was infected on the 01 June and recovered 20 days later, in Taiz.

**Infection** Kamel al-Khoudani

a journalist, was infected with the Coronavirus on 22 November 2020 in Aden governorate.

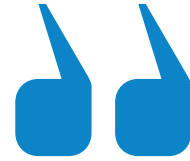
# الحوثي يملك المبرطين ..



photo by: Rashad Al Samai



## Journalists facing death sentences on account of their journalistic writings:



**T**he Houthi group passed death sentences against journalists and activists who hold different views from its own. Eleven death sentences were pronounced in the course of 2020. Last April, the Specialized Criminal Court (State Security court), which is under Houthi control, pronounced death sentences in discretionary terms against 4 journalists; namely, Abdul Khaleq Imran, Akram al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq al-Mansouri, in connection with their journalistic work, following 5 years of detention, enforced disappearances and torture.

In November, the same court passed a verdict in absentia to execute 7 journalists, whom it described as fugitives, and to confiscate their property. These journalists are Nadia al-Saqqaf, Jameel Ezz el-Din, Mohammed Qizan, Abdul Basit al-Qaidi, Ahmed al-Musaibili, Mukhtar al-Rahbi, and Hussain Basleem.

## Illegal trial

The YMFO documented testimonies that the trial violated all procedures. The justice procedures applied in the course of investigations and court sessions were violated. During these stages of the trial, many journalists, if not the majority, were not allowed to meet their lawyers, except for some meetings during the investigation and trial sessions. In addition, journalists received threats.

The journalists' lawyers were threatened and harassed for defending their clients. In one of the sessions, the court refused to hand over the case file and the dates of the trial sessions to the lawyers and prevented them from pleading before it. The lawyer was expelled from the court room in one of the sessions of the trial of the 10 journalists. The verdict hearing was held without the lawyers' knowledge and attendance, without even respecting the journalists' right of defense. The journalists had refused in the first session to respond to the prosecution claims of evidence against them, and referred the response to their lawyers, but the court decided to prevent the lawyers from attending, and pronounced the judgment based on that evidence, without the lawyer responding to or refuting it.

The case of the journalists who are sentenced to death; namely, Abdul Khaleq Imran, Akram al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq al-Mansouri, began with their kidnapping from a hotel in the capital, Sana'a, on 09 June 2015, while doing their journalistic work. They were taken to al-Ahmar police station in Hasabah area, where they were detained for more than 10 days. Then they were forcibly disappeared for more than 3 months, without receiving any family visits. During the period of their enforced disappearance, these journalists were subjected to various types of psychological



and physical torture. Then it became clear that they were forcibly disappeared in the Criminal Investigation headquarters in Sana'a, before being transferred to al-Thawra Remand Prison, where they were detained for more than 6 months, during which they were subjected to torture, concealment and the prevention of visits. Then they were transferred to Habra Remand Prison. There they were placed in solitary confinement and were subjected to enforced disappearance for more than a month. They were also subjected to psychological and physical torture and denied family visits from time to time. Finally, they were transferred to the Political Security prison.

On 09 December 2019, the Houthi group held its first trial session of 10 journalists, including Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Abdul Khaleq Imran, Akram al-Walidi and Harith Humaid in the absence of lawyers, despite the journalists' request. After the session was held, the lawyers submitted a request to obtain a copy of the file, but the court refused to hand it over to the lawyer. This session was held after more than 4 years of enforced disappearance and torture, and the transfer of the journalists among al-Thawra, Habra and Political Security prisons. On 06 January 2020, the second session of the trial of journalists was held, without the presence of journalists. It was postponed due to the announcement by a number of lawyers and journalists that they would attend the session. The third session was held on 27 January 2020, and the fourth session on 17 February 2020, but this latter was postponed due to the absence of the representative of the Public Prosecution. On 09 March, the fifth session was held, in which the journalists' file was referred for pronouncing the verdict. In the sixth session, held on 11 April 2020, the court passed a death sentence against 4 journalists: Abdul Khaleq Imran, Akram al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq al-Mansouri, against the background of their journalistic work. The

other 6 journalists; namely, Hisham Tarmoom, Hisham al-Yousufi, Haitham Raweh, Isam Belghith, Hasan Annab, and Salah al-Qaidi were announced guilty of the charges raised against them. However, the court was satisfied with the terms they spent in prison as punishment.

The kidnapped journalists' lawyer, Abdul Majeed Sabra, underscores the critical legal status of the journalists who were detained in Sana'a by the Houthi group, pointing out to the farcical and invalid political trial they were subjected to. He stated that the court did not guarantee them the most basic right of defense and the presence of their lawyers at the sessions, and that the court deliberately held secret sessions.

He further stated that the kidnapped journalists in intelligence prisons were living in a tragic situation. They were subjected to the most heinous practices of torture and denial of health care. All such practices are outside the framework of the constitutional laws and international covenants. The security authorities refuse to release journalists who have release orders issued by the judicial authorities of the Houthi group.

While the journalists' cases were supposed to be referred to the Press and Publications Court for consideration of publishing cases, journalists are being tried by the Specialized Criminal Court (State Security court). This runs contrary to the recognized law, and means that the court is incompetent and the trial is illegal. This was confirmed by the conduct of the judge who examined the case in one of the court sessions. The judge disclosed his prior persuasion in the conviction of the journalists at the first session of the trial, as he said, openly and frankly addressing the journalists while they were in the dock, «You are the enemies of God and the people.» This is a violation of the impartiality and independence of the judiciary.

# Journalists Sentenced to Death



**Tawfiq al-Mansouri**

Tawfiq Muhammad Thabet al-Mansouri, 34, is a journalist who worked for al-Masdar Online. He is married and has 3 children.



**Harith Humaid**

Harith Saleh Saleh Humaid, 32, is a journalist who is a graduate of the College of Mass Communication, and works for al-Rabi' Net.



**Abdul Khaleq Imran**

Abdul Khaleq Ahmad Abdu Imran, 35, is from Tamar governorate. He is married and has two children (a boy and a girl). He works as the editor-in-chief of the "Islah Online" website.



**Nadia al-Saqqaf**

Nadia al-Saqqaf is former Minister of Information and Vice President of the National Authority for Monitoring the Implementation of the Outputs of the National Dialogue. She is the editor-in-chief of the Yemen Times group, which is a consortium of media in both Arabic and English.



**Akram al-Walidi**

Akram Saleh Musi'd al-Walidi, 31, is a journalist from Raima governorate. He works as an editor of al-Rabi' Net.



**Jameel Ezz el-Din**

Jamil Ezz El-Din is the head of the television sector at the Yemen Satellite Channel.



**Ahmed al-Musaibili**

Ahmed al-Musaibili is advisor at the Ministry of Information, previously worked as a announcer at the Yemen and Suhail satellite channels.



**Abdul Basit al-Qaidi**

Abdul Basit al-Qaidi is a journalist and Deputy Minister of Information.



**Muhammad Qaizan**

Dr. Mohammed Qaizan, Deputy Minister of Information, and former chairman of the Sana'a satellite channel.



**Hussain Basaleem**

Hussain Basaleem is a journalist and deputy minister of information. In 2011, he resigned his post as chairman of the television sector in Sana'a.



**Mukhtar al-Rahbi**

Mukhtar al-Rahbi is advisor at the Ministry of Information, director of al-Mahra satellite channel, and a former press secretary to the President of the Republic.

## The Journalists Released in 2020



**Salah al-Qaidi**



**Isam Belghith**



**Haitham al-Shehab**



**Hisham Tarmoom**



**Hisham al-Yousufi**



**Hasan Annab**



**Bilal al-Arifi**



**Hamid al-Qa'oud**



**Abdul Hafiz al-Samadi**



**Adel al-Hakim**



**Mohammed Ali**

## Journalists Still Detained in Houthi Prisons



**Tawfiq al-Mansouri**



**Harith Humaid**



**Abdul Khaleq Imran**



**Dr. Wadi' al-Sharjabi**



**Sultan Qutran**



**Akram al-Walidi**



**Waheed Alsofi**



**Mohammed al-Salahi**



**Nabil al-Sdiaoy**

# Violations of freedom of expression in 2020



Khadija, the daughter of the detained journalist Abdullah Bakeer during a protest conducted in Hadramout to demand his release.

Photo by: Mohii Aldeen



## Report Methodology

The data and information in this report were collected by a professional team of observers affiliated to SEMC, and based in 5 major governorates.

In collecting data, the observers relied on the methodology of direct contact with victims, the testimonies of their relatives, the media or the reports submitted by victims or their relatives to the SEMC-affiliated Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory (YMFO). The monitoring team at YFMO reviews and verifies all the data and information through a verification

mechanism that employs at least 3 different sources.

The data and information contained in this report do not mean that all violations have been documented. Rather, there are cases of violations in which the victims are afraid to report for fear of retribution and further abuses by the perpetrators.

In this report, we were unable to include all the abuse stories in the report to save space. We only included the most important stories of violations.

### Definitions and Clues

**C**ases of kidnapping: The report uses the term 'kidnapping' to refer to all cases of 'arrest' committed by groups and entities outside the control of the legitimate internationally recognized authority.

## Executive Summary

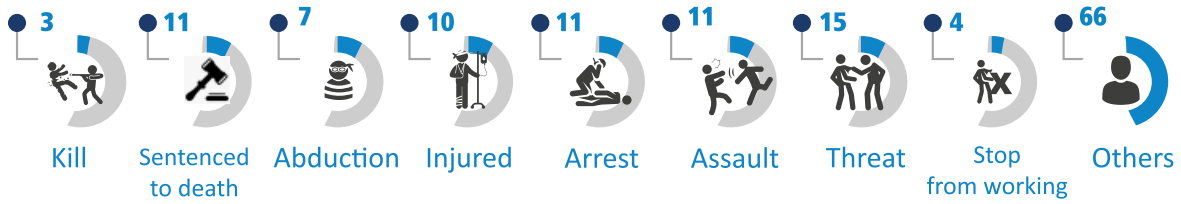
The Violations of Media Freedom in Yemen Report, 2020 monitored 143 violations perpetrated against individuals (journalists and social media activists), and media institutions (suspension and closure). The violations documented by the YMFO were concentrated in the governorates of Sana'a, Taiz, Aden, Hadramout, Marib, Ibb, Socotra, Shabwa, al-Baida, Hodeidah, al-Jawf, Lahj, al-Dhali', and Abyan.

The violations documented by the YMFO in 2020 targeting individuals (journalists and social media activists) included 3 cases of murder, 11 death sentences, 7 cases of kidnapping, 10 injury cases, 11 arrests, 11

assaults, and 15 threats. 4 suspensions from work, 5 violations practiced against media institutions, and 66 other cases.

The Houthi group (Ansar Allah) continues to top the list of perpetrators of violations against journalists, being involved in 70 cases of the total number of documented violations, followed by parties affiliated with the internationally recognized Yemeni government (44 violations). Parties affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council STC were involved in 3 cases. There were 22 violations perpetrated by unidentified individuals, and 4 cases by influential actors.

## Types of violations



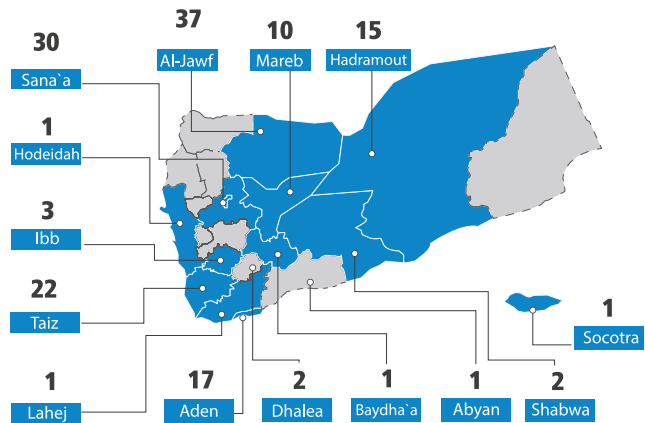
During the past year, 143 violations were documented, including 138 cases of violations targeting individuals (journalists and social media activists), representing 97% of the total number of documented violations, and 5 cases (3%) of violations targeted media institutions.

Violations included 3 cases of murder, 11 death sentences, 7 cases of kidnapping, 10 casualties, 11 arrests, 11 assaults, 15 threats, 4 cases of suspension from work, and 66 other cases.

Five cases of targeting media institutions were also documented. These violations varied between suspending and closure of media institutions. Cases include the storming and looting of Samara FM and Alwan Radio stations by gunmen affiliated with the Houthi group in Ibb governorate. The Press and Publications Court in Sana'a also issued a ruling against the al-Hawiyya satellite network and fined it the sum of one million riyals.

## Geographical Distribution: Violations by Area

Violations of media freedom were practiced in various areas in Yemen. Places where violations were perpetrated include al-Jawf (37 cases of violation), Sana'a (30 cases), Taiz (22 cases), Aden (17 cases), Hadramout (15 cases), Ma'rib (10 cases), Ibb (3 cases), governorates of Shabwa and al-Dhali' (2 cases each) and the governorates of Hodeida, Lahj, al-Baida, Socotra, and Abyan, (1 case each).



## Responsibility for Violations

The Houthi group (Ansar Allah) continues to be the top perpetrator of violations targeting journalists, being implicated in 70 cases of the total number of documented violations during the past year, followed by parties affiliated with the internationally

recognized Yemeni government (44 violations). Parties affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council STC were involved in 3 cases. There were 22 violations perpetrated by unidentified individuals, and 4 cases by influential actors.

## Murder

During the past year, there were 3 cases of murder. Two of these cases were documented in Aden, and the third in Marib.

At the end of December 2020, the YMFO documented the killing of Adeeb al-Janani, correspondent of the Balquis satellite channel in Aden, after being directly hit in the targeting of and explosions at Aden International Airport, while covering the arrival of the new Yemeni government in Aden to carry out its duties.

Photojournalist Nabil al-Quaiti, 32, was killed by unidentified gunmen riding a «Hilux» pickup, as he stepped out of his home in Aden. The perpetrators fled. Al-Quaiti was buried before the truth was revealed, or the perpetrators arrested. He worked as a press photographer for the Agency France Press (AFP) and a number of local and international media outlets.

In January 2020, the YMFO documented the murder of the press photographer at the 26 September newspaper, Badeel al-Buraihi, who was killed in a Houthi missile attack targeting the Reception Camp in Marib governorate, while photographing the graduation ceremony.



3 cases of murder Two of these cases in Aden, and the third in Marib.



al-Janani



al-Quaiti



al-Buraihi

## Kidnapping

**D**uring the past year, the number of kidnappings reached 7 cases, including two cases in the capital, Sana'a, and one case in each of Hodeidah, Socotra, Abyan, Ibb, and Lahj governorates.



Aseel Sweid was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Lahj governorate, while on his way to the Aden, and was released a month later. During the period of his abduction, his health condition deteriorated. There were also signs that he was tortured.

Aseel was released when gunmen contacted his brother to come to al-Wahat area so that they would hand over his brother to him. After Aseel was handed over to one of his relatives by gunmen riding a Tucson automobile, other gunmen were in a Hilux car followed Aseel on his way back to Taiz.



Dr. Wadi' al-Sharjabi, an academic and a founder of the Mass Media Department at Hodeida University, was kidnapped by Houthi gunmen from a street in the capital, Sana'a. After his kidnapping, he was transferred illegally to an unknown area, his family was prevented from visiting him, and the Houthi group refused to release him or refer him to the competent judicial authorities to examine his case. His kidnapping came after his writings on a number of students of the College of Mass Media who were kidnapped by the Houthis in Hodeida governorate.



STC militants kidnapped Abdullah Badhan, after the STC took control of Socotra governorate. Badhan was kidnapped against the background of his anti-STC writings. He was released two days later. Badhan has worked as a reporter for a number of media outlets.



At the dead hours on Sunday, 20 April, Houthi gunmen kidnapped the writer Khaled al-Ruwaishan, and took him to an unknown location. After cordoning off the neighborhood where he lived, they stormed his home by force, and looted all his family's possessions of laptops, mobile phones and papers.

Following the pressure exerted against the Houthi group, al-Ruwaishan was released after signing an undertaking to stop writing against the Houthi group.



On 24 April, Houthi gunmen kidnapped the press photographer, Adel al-Hakim, from Hodeida governorate. Al-Hakim was taken to an unknown destination. The kidnapping of the photographer al-Hakim comes only two days after the release of another journalist.

## Casualties

**I**n March, Majid Ayesh, correspondent of the Yemen Shabab channel, was wounded as a result of a bombing by Houthi militants while covering the events and battles in al-Jawf governorate.

Nine journalists in Aden were exposed to various injuries that varied between fractures of the feet, hands, and separate parts of the body, while covering the arrival of the new Yemeni government to Aden to take over its duties. The journalists were injured in the targeting of and explosions at Aden International Airport on December 30. They are correspondent of Yemen Satellite Channel -Sadiq al-Ratibi, Ashraf Khalifa, Nabil al-Junaid, Amjad Khalifa, Salim al-Ma'mari, Ali al-Hadyani, Nashwan al-Qabati and press photographers Adam al-Husami and Saeed al-Shuaibi. Of all injuries, Sadiq al-Rutaibi's is the most severe. Al-Rutaibi has undergone several operations in his left foot.



## Arrest

**In 2020, there were 11 arrests, including 3 cases in each of Marib, Taiz and Hadramout, and 2 cases in Shabwa.**

Saleh al-Musawi was arrested at one of the Yemeni government checkpoints, while on his way back from Aden to Shabwa governorate. Al-Musawa was released two days later. This is the second time that photojournalist al-Musawa is arrested.



Jamal Shunaiter, correspondent of al-Ghad al-Mushriq satellite channel, was also arrested in the town of Ataq for covering protests. He was released a few hours later.



On 9 May, journalist Basil Ahmed Bama'as was arrested by the security authorities in Hadramout governorate, while he was covering a popular demonstration in the city of Mukalla.



Hasan Baharish, a journalist, was also arrested. He was released a few hours after he was detained and interrogated by security agents loyal to the director of Tarim security director in Hadramout governorate. His detention came against the background of a publication case related to businessman Abdullah Buqshan. In an article Baharish pointed out that Buqshan who owns the Hadramout private satellite channel deliberately hinders launching of the government Hadramout channel.



The security authorities in Hadramout governorate also arrested Abdullah Bakir, journalist and press photographer, and refused to release him. Bakir is a member of the press personnel of the governor of Hadramout, Faraj Salemain al-Bahsani. He was transferred to the Central Prison. His health condition deteriorated lately, and he was transferred to a hospital in Mukalla. Bakir's trial was supposed to start, but it was postponed under the pretext of the instability in the governorate.



The security authorities of the Axis Command in Taiz governorate arrested Jamil al-Samit, a journalist, and raided his home against the background of his journalistic writings. His case was under consideration by the court because of his criticism of the Axis command. After the intervention of the Political Security command, he was provisionally detained at the Political Security prison. The security authorities in Taiz governorate also arrested Jalal al-Muhayya, a journalist, because of his writings and criticism of the security authorities in the governorate.



The security authorities in Marib governorate raided the headquarters of the 26 September newspaper which is the organ of the moral guidance in Marib, and arrested the journalists Mohammed al-Hamidi and Azzam al-Kurdi. The raiding was incited by the seizure of a parcel containing a number of official seals. The parcel was sent to Aden by a moral guidance employee. Available information suggests that the journalist forwarded the home furniture of his colleague, Jalal al-Muhayya, along with the parcel of official seals to Taiz. Al-Muhayya had worked at the institution in Marib.

## Assaults

**There were 11 cases of assault in 2020, including 6 cases in Taiz, 3 in Hadramout, and a single case in each of Sana'a and al-Dhali'.**

Marzouq Yaseen, a journalist, was assaulted by intelligence agents while covering the inauguration of the oncology center in the governorate. He took pictures of a fight that broke out with the governor's guard, and was taken to the intelligence headquarters, and obliged to sign an undertaking not to disseminate the photos. He was forced to delete the photos from his phone.



Tariq Farid, a journalist, was assaulted and his phone confiscated by the pipeline officer in Habban District in Hadramout governorate, while he was preparing a report and taking photos of one of the works of the oil company, in which he found a defect and leakage that could cause an environmental disaster in the region.



Mufid al-Ghailani, a journalist, was assaulted by the local chief of al-Qahira neighborhood, while filming a documentary. He was prevented from filming and his camera was forcibly confiscated. Al-Ghailani tried to convince the chief that he was a journalist, and showed his press ID card, but the latter refused to return the camera, attacked him, dragged him, and uttered obscene words.



On 21 October, a Yemeni satellite channel team members, Abeer Abdullah and Mohammed al-Qayadi, were attacked by Madyan al-Masoudi, commander of the 145th Brigade operations which is affiliated to the Taiz Axis. His attendants attempted to arrest the team and confiscate the camera, despite the fact that they identified themselves as a Yemeni satellite channel team. The incident took place while the team were filming for a media report in Taiz governorate.



Moataz al-Naqib, correspondent of the Yemen Shabab satellite channel, was attacked, threatened and his camera's memory confiscated, by soldiers affiliated to the Second Military Zone in Hadramout governorate, while covering the popular protests in Mukalla neighborhoods, due to the deterioration of services, especially the power outages.



In mid-December, Shawqi Nu'man, a journalist, was physically attacked and verbally abused by the Secretary of the College of Mass Media at Sana'a University. A Houthis patrol car was summoned to arrest him, but he managed to escape from the Houthis patrol who were trying to kidnap him while he was in the college to conduct his viva voci of his graduation project.



## Threats

**D**uring the past year, 15 cases of threats were documented, including 5 cases in Aden, 3 in Taiz, 2 in each of Sana'a and Hadramout, and one case in each of Marib, al-Baida and al-Dhali' governorates.



Fathi Bin Lazraq, editor-in-chief of Aden al-Ghad newspaper, received death threats, and threats of burning of the newspaper headquarters by the STC leader, Yahya Ghaleb al-Shuaibi, in case he carries on his journalistic profession.



A number of journalists in Hadramout governorate were threatened, harassed and displaced due to their journalistic work, including the head of the Journalists Syndicate branch in Hadramout, Salem al-Shahit, who was subjected to a campaign of incitement and threats against the backdrop of his defense of journalists, and his demand for the release of the journalist Abdullah Bakir.



Journalist Sabri bin Makhashin also complained of a number of harassments against him and his family. He reported that the Criminal Prosecution in Hadramout pressured his relatives and his bailman who bailed him out in January 2019. Bin Makhashin is harassed on the backdrop of publishing issues. His family is threatened of imprisonment and his bailman is threatened with the closure of his business in the event the journalist published any criticism of the governor of Hadramout in the media or on social media networks.



This is not the first time Bin Makhashin is subjected to threats. He had been arrested in late 2018. He was detained and his passport confiscated and therefore banned from travel. He has received several threats in connection with his career as a journalist.



Salim al-Maamari, a journalist, received threats from unidentified individuals on his Facebook page, because of his journalistic writings. Journalist Mohammed Qaid al-Azizi was also attacked by an influential person in Taiz.



Fatik al-Rudaini, a journalist, was threatened and harassed at a security checkpoint in al-Baida governorate, while returning with his family from Jordan. He was threatened against the backdrop of his profession as a journalist which was stated in the passport. He was threatened with imprisonment, and his family was frightened. While the police tried to arrest him, the people present at the checkpoint intervened, and he was allowed to proceed on his way.



Salah al-Aqil, correspondent of the Russian RT satellite channel, received a threat of physical liquidation by unidentified assailants if he does not give up his career as a journalist.

Yasser al-Yafi', editor-in-chief of the Yafi' Net website, was threatened with physical liquidation by unidentified persons if he does not give up his career as a journalist.



## Hadramout

**Violations and abusive practices against journalists escalated during the last months of 2020 in Hadramout governorate, which was the quietest and most detached from the armed conflict in Yemen. On 27 May, the press photographer Abdullah Awad Bakir was arrested and forcibly disappeared. He was placed in solitary confinement in poor and inhumane circumstances, which led to the deterioration of his health, and was hospitalized twice.**

**After 4 months of detention of the press photographer Bakir in Military Intelligence prisons in Mukalla, and due to the continuous pressure campaigns by a number of journalists, human rights organizations and human rights activists, the Specialized Criminal Court in Mukalla agreed to consider his detention case. A defense team was formed to defend Bakir. Mohammed Abdul Wahhab al-Yazidi,**

**correspondent of the Balquis satellite channel, was also exposed to abusive practices which were extended to include his family too. The security authorities in Hadramout arrested his brother, in an attempt to terrorize him and stop him from publishing on cases of corruption and the collapse of public services in Hadramout. He was also subjected to threats, persecution and attempted kidnapping by armed men in civilian dress. It became clear later that those gunmen were members of the Military Intelligence in Hadramout. Despite the Public Prosecutor's directive to stop prosecuting the journalist, the security authorities issued a circular to all security checkpoints on the next day of the date of the directive, ordering the arrest of the journalists Mohammed al-Yazidi, Mohammed al-Sharafi, and Sabri bin Makhshin.**



Shabam - hadramot

## Other Cases

In addition to the above-mentioned violations, the YMFO documented 66 other cases of violation, which varied between the displacement of journalists, summoning journalists to prosecution, suspension of journalists' salaries, incitement, and preventing journalists' lawyers from attending court sessions.

Twenty-five journalists and media professionals were displaced, moving from al-Jawf to Marib governorate after the Houthi group took control of a number of al-Jawf governorate districts, including al-Hazm district, capital of the governorate. The journalists ran for their lives, leaving behind their cameras and electronic devices. Some of them were injured and chased. Some lost their cars. Most of these journalists are freelancers, and this added to their misery after their displacement to Marib, which is known for its high house rent.

The management of the 26 September newspaper suspended a number of its journalist staff. Deputy editor-in-chief of the September Net website, Khalil al-Zakri, was suspended from work, and the salary of the journalist, Aref al-Ahmadi, was also suspended, and his name was dropped from the header.

The Specialized Criminal Prosecution in Aden also summoned 10 journalists, and

charged them of launching a campaign of incitement to kill the military leader, Adnan al-Hammadi. A number of journalists and activists launched a social media incitement campaign against the 10 journalists against the backdrop of their writings and criticism of the poor security situation in Taiz. The memos circulated on social media list the names of 10 journalists; namely, Abdulaziz al-Majidi, Wiam al-Sufi, Haitham al-Numairi, Walid al-Khabir, Yasser al-Mulaiki, Amrous al-Samadi, Mazen Aqlan, Musa'b al-Qadasi, Mukhtar al-Wajih, and Ahmed al-Dabhani. Another list that had been circulated last year was also recirculated.

Journalist and human rights activist, Bushra al-Amiri was subjected to a campaign of incitement by activists in Hadramout governorate, accusing her of calling for demonstrations in Aden governorate. The YMFO also received a communique from journalists Mohammed al-Sharafi, Mohammed Abdul Wahhab and Sabri bin Makhshin. They reported that the governor of Hadramout, Faraj bin Salimain al-Bahsani, issued a circular to the security and military checkpoints to arrest them, under the pretext of their writing about corruption cases, their criticism of the declining living conditions and the collapse of public services in the city.

# 66

### Journalist violation cases

Displacement

Prosecution subpoena

Salary suspension

Instigation

Lawyers denied access to trial hearings

## Violations Targeting Media Institutions

On 15 April, a group of militants affiliated with the Houthi group stormed and looted Sumara FM and Alwan Radio stations in Ibb governorate, confiscated all their equipment and accessories, and closed their headquarters illegally, under the pretext that they had no official license to broadcast. The Houthis committed this horrendous act without prior notice, legal justification, or judicial procedures, which resulted in heavy losses to the owners of the two radio stations. The closure and looting of these two private enterprises cost their owners and personnel to lose their sources of income.

On 21 March, the Press and Publications Court rendered a verdict against al-Hawiyya Satellite Network, fining it an amount of one million riyals, and the chairman of the Network, Mohammed al-Imad, was sentenced to 6 months in prison, but was granted a stay of execution. Two other journalists, Amin al-Ghaberi and Abdu Ata', were suspended from work in the channel, due to its programs that

focus on social issues.

The Minister of Information, Muammar al-Eryani, issued a directive banning the distribution of all print newspapers located in areas controlled by the legitimate government, and noting that their electronic copies would be sufficient, under the pretext of the spread of the Coronavirus.

The directive covered all official and private newspapers. It took effect on Wednesday 25 March 2020 and remained in effect until Sunday 12 April 2020. The directive stated that legal measures would be taken against anyone who violated its dictates.

The Media Office of the Governor of Ibb issued a statement prohibiting all media outlets and journalists from circulating news of the Coronavirus. The statement affirmed that journalists should limit their coverage to official releases, with the aim of restricting the freedom of expression, and punishing those who would violate those measures.



# The Lawyers to Defend Journalists Coalition: A Collective Framework



## The Lawyers to Defend Journalists Coalition: A Collective Framework

During the past period, the YMFO made preparations for forming a coalition that comprises a group of lawyers and human rights activists. The coalition is meant to serve as a common framework for cooperation between lawyers and journalists to defend journalists who are arrested or tried in connection with publishing cases.

The coalition comprises more than 30 lawyers and activists from various Yemeni governorates. It is a common framework for cooperation between lawyers and journalists, to defend Yemeni journalists who are arrested, interrogated or tried in connection with publishing issues by the various judicial authorities, and to provide legal advice and training for journalists to help them avoid falling into legal prohibitions. It also seeks to bridge partnership and cooperation between lawyers and journalists so that both constituents can contribute to the promotion of press freedom in the country.

The Lawyers to Defend Journalists Coalition is a voluntary initiative launched by a number of Yemeni lawyers defending human rights and freedom of expression in Yemen. It aims to defend journalists before the courts, and to provide all kinds of support and advice to alleviate the violations they face. The door is also open to lawyers wishing to join the coalition in the next phase.

### Members of the Coalition

Abdul Majeed Sabra - Sana'a	1	Waddah al-Qadiri – Sanaa	17
Abdul Basit Ghazi - Sana'a	2	Raghda al-Maqtari – Taiz	18
Abdullah Barqa – Hadramout	3	Thi Yazan al-Isawani – Taiz	19
Alia al-Hamidi – Hadramout	4	Hussain Ghaddaf – Hadramout	20
Heba Aidaroos – Aden	5	Mohammed al-Hamidi – Taiz	21
Zahir al-Junaid – Aden	6	Ali al-Sarari – Taiz	22
Tawfiq al-Shuaibi – Taiz	7	Hanan al-Qadasi – Sana's	23
Yasser al-Mulaiki – Taiz	8	Hayel al-Hilali – Taiz	24
Omar al-Himyari – Taiz	9	Salwa Suleiman – Aden	25
Salim Allaw – Marib	10	Hamdi al-Hakimi – Marib	26
Nabila al-Jaboubi – Taiz	11	Ammar al-Bukhaiti – Marib	27
Moeen al-Obaidi – Taiz	12	Ali al-Shaddadi – Marib	28
Safa' Bakouneh – Hadramout	13	Mustafa al-Olufi – Marib	29
Abdul Rahman – Ibb	14	Amin al-Khudairi – Marib	30
Waheed Mithqal – Hadramout	15	Mohammed Alwan – Taiz	31
Mukhtar al-Wafi – Taiz	16		

# Activities and Events Carried Out by the YMFO

In a webinar entitled “The status of media freedom in Yemen», organized by the YFMO, the situation of media freedoms in Yemen was reviewed, in addition to discussing the most pressing challenges, journalists’ experiences and obstacles to field work in conflict zones. A group of Yemeni journalists, human rights activists and representatives of international organizations working in the field of freedom of expressions participated in the webinar. Participants called on the international community to play an active role in connection with the issue of violations targeting journalists. They underscored the importance of uniting the efforts and creating a partnership between lawyers, jurists and journalists to defend media freedom, and to enhance the protection of journalists from the brutality and targeting by the parties to the conflict who view journalists as enemies who are no different from combatants.

The participants also talked about the weak international role towards media freedom, despite the ugly arbitrary practices against journalists. They pointed out that the office of the international envoy to Yemen failed

to talk about the status of media freedom in Yemen, although many parties sent them reports and files clarifying the status of media freedom.

In another webinar, the YMFO discussed the issue of rumors and their impact on the credibility of the press, highlighting the significance of this sensitive topic that should be dealt with in scientific and technical ways. A number of academics and journalists working in the media field participated in the webinar.

A number of journalists talked about their experiences in dealing with rumors and fake news, the difficulties they face in view of the vast amount of information, and the lack and difficulty of obtaining information from responsible sources.

On the International Day for the Right to the Truth, the YMFO called for the release of kidnapped and forcibly disappeared journalists, and demanded putting an end to the torture and inhumane treatment they were subjected to in prisons.

The number of violations and arbitrary practices against journalists and media professionals in Yemen increased from late



2014 until today. They are vulnerable to death, injury, kidnapping, torture to death, and sometimes to enforced disappearances. During the past year, the YMFO seized the occasion of the International Press Day (03 May, 2020), to carry out several activities. It sought to mark this occasion in several ways, and to convey the suffering of Yemeni journalists and the arbitrary practices they were exposed to, which varied between killing, kidnapping and displacement. Media institutions too were closed and looted. On this occasion, the YMFO tried to focus on an important issue facing journalists; namely, the Specialized Criminal Court (State Security court) rulings against journalists. This court had rendered death sentences against 4 journalists after 5 years of enforced disappearance and torture. The sentenced journalists are Abdul Khaleq Imran, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Akram al-Walidi and Harith Humaid. Six other journalists were also found guilty of the charges raised against them. The campaign #Don't\_execute\_the\_journalists was launched. and the YMFO sent several memos and petitions to the international envoy to Yemen and

international organizations to stop these sentences.

With the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the YMFO published a number of tips and instruction flyers. It also organized a webinar in which to discuss the status of media freedom at the time of Coronavirus crisis. Nashwan al-Othmani, correspondent of the International Monte Carlo Radio, talked about his experience in covering events. Wedad al-Badawi talked about the danger of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the extent to which journalists adhered to professional safety standards. Finally, the announcer, Abeer, talked about her experience at the Yemen Times Radio station, and her experience as a journalist, as she was the first journalist to broadcast her program from home via Zoom. She also talked about the challenges faced by journalists while covering the Coronavirus. Finally, the Vice-President of the Press Syndicate Branch in Hadramout talked about the threat of the Coronavirus to kidnapped journalists.

## Journalists Winning Awards at Local and International Forums



Wameedh Shakir during her participation in the annual meeting of the Yemeni Women Pact Peace and security, Amman 2018



UN Women chose Yemeni activist and writer Wameedh Shakir to be featured as the story of the season in the prestigious Georgetown University magazine.

In its series entitled «The Forgotten Voices of Yemeni Women,» the American University stated that the great role of the writer Wameedh Shakir was that she closely witnessed the way the women in her country were affected by the conflict.

Shakir spends most of her time documenting the lives and deaths of Yemeni women, the stories of their struggle for survival, their needs, and their future aspirations.

The ‘Johann Philipp Palm Award for Freedom of Speech and the Press’ in Germany is known for being awarded every two years to individuals or institutions who set a model and example in advancing the freedom of expression. It carries the name of the late German publisher, Johann Philipp Palm, who was executed by the decision of the French military courts in 1806, without a fair trial. The non-profit Palm Foundation launched an award bearing his name, with the aim of emphasizing the importance of freedom of expression, not only in Germany, but also at the international level. The Award aims to establish the idea that freedom is a fundamental prerequisite of democracy.



The German «Palm» Foundation has announced that Yemeni journalist and writer Bushra Al-Maqtari won its freedom of expression award, due to her journalistic courage in defending rights, freedoms and demands for change in Yemen. The Palm Prize for Freedom of Speech and the Press is awarded every two years to individuals or institutions who have set a model in advancing public rights and freedoms. The award bears the name of the late German publisher Johann Philipp Palm, who was executed based on a decision by French military courts in 1806 without a fair trial.

Journalists Mohammed al-Hasani and Wael Sharha won Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) awards for the year 2020. Al-Hasani’s investigation on «Covid-19: «The Death Quarries in Yemen» won the first prize, whereas Sharha’s investigation entitled “Prisoners of Procedures: Eternal Hostages” won the bronze prize.





## إعلاميون من أجل طفولة آمنة Journalists For Safe Childhood

Forty male and female journalists competed in the production of written, visual and audio press materials on childhood issues in Yemen. Twelve journalists from different Yemeni governorates won the Journalists for Safe Childhood Network awards. Eight journalists won prizes for written materials. These are Zakaria Hassan, Mohammed Amin, Ibrahim Ali Naji, and Shaima al-Qurashi (first place), Nasr Abdulrahman, Mohammed al-Hasani, Mohsen al-Qurashi and Mohammed al-Huraibi (second place).

In the visual material category, the journalist Sumaya al-Amoudi ranked first, and the journalist Aref al-Shamma' ranked second.

In the audio material category, journalist Huda al-Atafi ranked first, and journalist Khansa al-Kibsi ranked second.

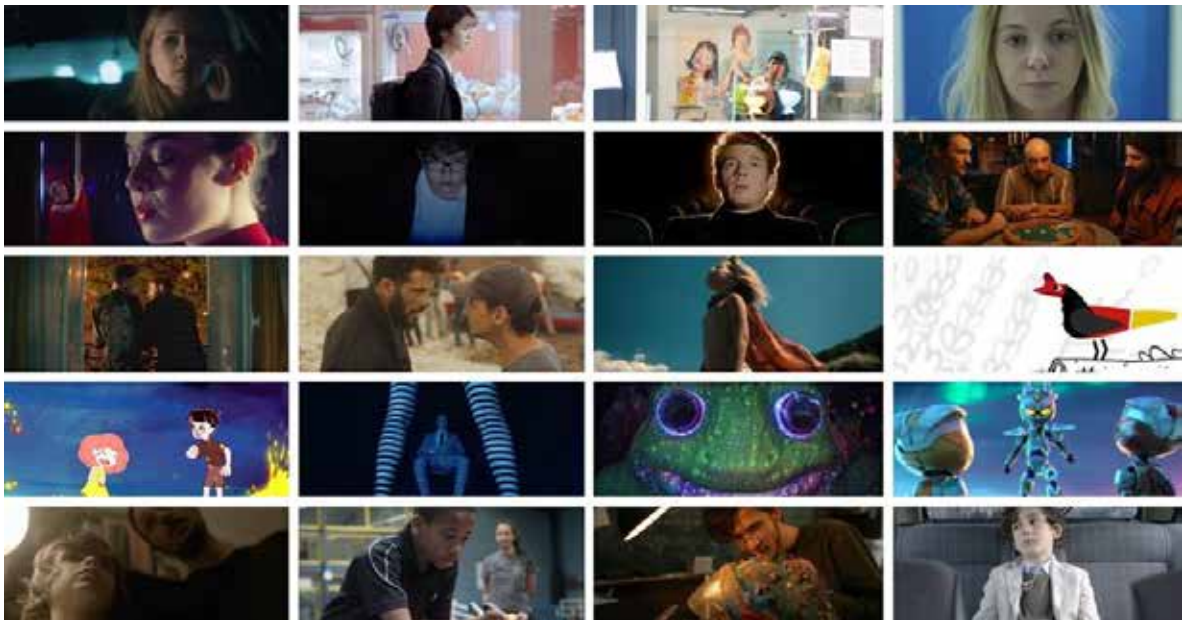
**The Photographers Committee and the Legal Committee at the Arab Union of Sports Press co-opted photojournalist Mukhtar Mashreqi, secretary of "al-Ayyam al-Riyadi" at al-Ayyam newspaper, as a member of the photographers committee, and appointed Ali Sarhan, a journalist, as a member of the legal committee, among a group of journalists and sports media professionals from most Arab countries.**





In September, the ‘Nashti Na’esh’ (We Wanna Live) initiative was awarded the ‘Peace Builders’ award by ‘My Platform 30’, a project of RNW Media. The award was conferred in partnership with UNESCO, and with the support of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

The ‘Nashti Na’esh’ (We Wanna Live) initiative was established in 2015 by 3 journalists; namely, Abdul Razzaq al-Azazi, Hamza al-Hammadi and Nader al-Madhaji. It is an electronic campaign to fight incitement, hatred and discrimination in a peaceful manner.



‘The Helmet’, a film by screenwriter and scenarist, Mohammed Khaled, was nominated to the Best Short Film Scenario Award at the Les Regards de LICART Festival in Paris, France, along with 20 short films by directors and filmmakers from around the world.

It is noteworthy that the film had won the award for the best short film at the Karama Festival held in Jordan.

مرصد الحريات الإعلامية - اليمن

Media Freedom Observatory - Yemen

[Www.Marsadak.org](http://Www.Marsadak.org)



منصة مرصد الحريات الإعلامية منصة رصد ومعلومات مهنية  
ومستقلة تضم خرائط ومعلومات حول الانتهاكات التي طالت الصحافة  
وحرية التعبير في كل أنحاء اليمن

The Media Freedom Observatory Platform is a professional and  
independent monitoring and information platform that contains  
maps and information on press violations and freedom of  
expression throughout yemen