



Enforced Disappeared

Report Enforced Disappearance of Journalists and
Media Workers



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Yemen

Enforced Disappeared

Report Enforced Disappearance of Journalists

and Media Workers in Yemen

March 26, 2015 – August 15, 2026

Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak)



This report was prepared by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak), a platform affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC), dedicated to monitoring and documenting violations against freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Yemen.

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Executive Summary

Enforced disappearance is one of the most serious forms of violations affecting journalists and media workers in Yemen during the years of conflict. This is not only because it entails an unlawful deprivation of liberty, but also because it is accompanied by the denial of the detention or the concealment of the journalist's fate or whereabouts, placing the person outside the protection of the law and leaving their family and colleagues in a state of continuous uncertainty.

This report, issued by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC), focuses on enforced disappearance as a distinct pattern of violations against press freedom in Yemen during the period from March 26, 2015, to August 15, 2026. It draws on the Marsadak's database, as well as documents, testimonies, and other information that it collected, verified, and classified in accordance with its established monitoring and documentation methodology.

The documented cases indicate that enforced disappearance often follows a pattern that begins with the arrest or detention of a journalist or media worker from their home, workplace, or a public place, followed by cutting off communication with their family and lawyer, and the

failure to register them at a publicly known or official place of detention. Their families are then confronted with denials of detention or conflicting information about the person's fate and whereabouts. This situation may continue for days, months, or years. It may also end with the disclosure of the person's location while arbitrary detention continues, or with the initiation of judicial proceedings.

According to Marsadak's database, the report documented 235 cases involving elements of enforced disappearance among 540 cases of arbitrary detention affecting journalists and media workers, representing 43.5% of the total documented cases of arbitrary detention. These figures reflect cases that the Marsadak was able to access and verify and do not constitute a comprehensive record of all cases, particularly given the difficulty of accessing information, the multiplicity of detention authorities, and the fear among some victims and families of reporting violations.

The cases were recorded across a number of Yemeni governorates, with Sana'a accounting for the largest number, at 99 cases (42.1%), followed by Hodeidah with 30 cases, Taiz with 26 cases, and Aden with 23 cases. The four governorates collectively accounted for 75.7% of all doc-

umented cases, while the remaining cases were distributed across other governorates.

The largest number of cases was attributed to Ansar Allah (the Houthis), with 167 cases (71.1%), followed by the Yemen' IRG with 37 cases, and the dissolved Southern Transitional Council (STC) with 17 cases. The party responsible could not be determined in 10 cases, while 4 cases were attributed to Al-Qaeda. The attribution of cases to these parties reflects the outcome of Marsadak's monitoring and verification process and does not constitute a final judicial determination of responsibility.

The year 2015 recorded the highest number of cases, with 76, followed by 2017 with 48 cases. Together, cases recorded in those two years accounted for 52.8% of the total documented cases. Although the number of cases declined after the early years of the conflict, new cases continued to be recorded, including 15 cases in 2025 and four cases between the beginning of 2026 and mid of August 2026.

The cases selected for this report illustrate different forms of enforced disappearance. The fate of journalist Waheed Al-Soufi has remained unknown since April 2015, constituting an ongoing disappearance that has

lasted for more than 11 years. In the case of Naseh Shaker, his detention was officially documented, but his whereabouts remained concealed for at least 441 days before his presence in a prison operated by Security Belt Forces was verified. Despite a court ruling ordering his release in January 2026, he remained detained, according to information collected by Marsadak, until the monitoring period ended.

The report also documents the collective disappearance of six journalists in Hodeidah, during which their families received conflicting information about their whereabouts before their detention at the Hodeidah Security and Intelligence prison was verified. Four of them were subsequently released, while Waleed Ali Ghalib and Hassan Ziyad remained in detention as of August 15, 2026. The report also documents shorter or repeated cases, including those of woman journalist Hala Badhawi and journalist Hamoud Hazaa, demonstrating that disappearance is not measured by its duration, but rather by the combination of deprivation of liberty with concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate and denial of legal protection.

The cases demonstrate that the impact of enforced disappearance extends beyond the direct victim to

their family, the media community, and society as a whole. Families have borne the burdens of searching, traveling, pursuing mediation efforts, and following up through legal channels, while living through prolonged periods of anxiety and uncertainty. Some families have also been subjected to threats or defamation because they demanded information about the fate of their relatives.

These practices have also contributed to increased self-censorship, prompting some journalists to avoid sensitive issues, reduce their professional activities, or use pseudonyms. Others stopped practicing journalism altogether after their release. This has affected media institutions and sources of information and weakened the ability of the press to document violations, expose corruption, and hold influential actors accountable, thereby undermining the public's right to access information.

The report uses the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance¹ as a legal reference for defining enforced disappearance, while considering that Yemen is not a party to the Convention. Accordingly, the report uses the definition contained in Article 2 as a descriptive and analytical framework for the elements of the violation, rather than

as a basis for imposing obligations under a Convention to which Yemen has not acceded.

Where acts are attributed to entities that do not have the status of official state institutions but exercise effective control as de facto authorities or organized parties to the conflict, the application of this definition is by analogy and is intended to analyze the structure of the violation, namely, deprivation of liberty, concealment of fate, and deprivation of legal protection. It does not imply that such entities are subject to the Convention as a treaty. The attribution of actual legal responsibility to these entities is instead based on the rules of customary international humanitarian law applicable to parties to non-international armed conflicts, specifically the prohibition of enforced disappearance.

Accordingly, the report classifies such acts pursuant to the customary rules of international humanitarian law applicable to non-international armed conflicts, not merely as violations, but as war crimes under Rule 98 of customary international law. Enforced disappearance is also considered a continuing crime that is not extinguished by the passage of time. The crime of disappearance does not end merely because the location of detention becomes known, so long

1 - International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006), Article 2: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>.

as the journalist continues to be deprived of legal safeguards.

The report's analysis also draws on the rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ² and the Convention against Torture, both of which are binding on Yemen, as well as the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to the parties to the conflict.³

The report distinguishes between enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and incommunicado detention. Detention does not amount to enforced disappearance unless it is accompanied by a denial of the deprivation of liberty, or concealment of the person's fate or whereabouts in a manner that places the person outside the protection of the law. The subsequent disclosure of the detainee's whereabouts does not negate the occurrence of enforced disappearance during the preceding period, nor does it legitimize the continuation of the detention.

The report concludes that enforced disappearance has become one of the methods used to pressure journalists and remove them from the

public sphere or has effectively produced this result. It also reveals shortcomings in the registration of detainees, enabling them to communicate with their families and lawyers, bringing them before judicial authorities, investigating allegations of torture, and enforcing judicial rulings. The absence of accountability increases the risk of repeated violations and undermines freedom of expression and the public's right to know.

The report calls on local and international actors to take effective measures to establish the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons, end secret detention, release detainees held without a legal basis, enforce judicial rulings, and ensure that all detainees are registered and able to communicate with their families and lawyers. It also calls for independent and effective investigations, accountability for those responsible, protection for victims, their families, and witnesses, meaningful remedies and reparation, strengthened protection for journalists, and legal and institutional measures to prevent the recurrence of enforced disappearance.

Period Covered by the
Report

2026-2015
March 26, 2015
August 15, 2026

Percentage of Documented Arbitrary
Detention Cases:

43.5%

Cases Involving Elements of Enforced
Disappearance:

235

Documented Cases of Arbitrary
Detention:

540

2 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9, 10, and 18.: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

3 - The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Common Article 3, and Additional Protocol II of 1977.: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties>

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Yemen in 2015, journalists and media workers have faced an extremely dangerous working environment characterized by shrinking space for media freedoms and increasing restrictions on the practice of journalism, amid multiple centers of control and influence and weak protection and accountability institutions.

Throughout the years of conflict, violations against journalists have gone beyond restrictions on publication or targeting media content to include more serious methods aimed at disrupting the role of the press and subjecting media workers to sustained pressure. Journalists covering public affairs or reporting information related to political and human rights issues have become vulnerable to multiple forms of violations that affect their ability to perform their professional role.

In this context, enforced disappearance has emerged as one of the most serious and complex patterns of violations, due to its consequences that extend beyond the journalist's loss of personal liberty to create a state of uncertainty and fear affecting their family, colleagues, and the media community as a whole. The absence of information about a journalist's fate or whereabouts not only de-

prives the victim of their fundamental rights but also undermines society's ability to access information and weakens the watchdog role of the press in any society.

This report focuses on enforced disappearance as a pattern of violations against journalists and media workers in Yemen by analyzing cases documented by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC), with the aim of understanding the nature and patterns of this phenomenon and its impact on press freedom and the media environment.

The report does not treat cases of enforced disappearance as isolated incidents. Rather, it seeks to examine the phenomenon as part of a broader context involving the use of detention and concealment as tools to pressure journalists and limit their ability to work freely and independently.

The report also provides an analysis that combines documentation and assessment by drawing on the Marsadak's database, presenting examples of individual cases, and examining common patterns revealed by the documented incidents. This contributes to a better understanding of the nature of the violations and their broader effects on victims, their families, and the media community.

Monitoring and Documentation Methodology

Report Methodology

This report is based on the database of the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak), affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC), which serves as the primary source of the data and cases presented in the report. The database contains cases of violations monitored and documented by the Marsadak against journalists and media workers in Yemen, using a documentation methodology based on collecting, verifying, and classifying information according to the nature of the violation and the party to which responsibility is attributed.

The report focuses on cases of enforced disappearance as a specific pattern of violations against press freedom and analyzes them based on cases classified by the Marsadak as falling within this category, in accordance with the legal and methodological criteria adopted in the report.

The report does not treat all cases of detention as enforced disappearance. Instead, it distinguishes between arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. A case is classified as enforced disappearance when the deprivation of liberty is ac-

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The report does not treat all cases of detention as enforced disappearance. Rather, it distinguishes between arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. A case is classified as enforced disappearance when the deprivation of liberty is accompanied by the concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate, or by a refusal to provide information that would enable the person to access legal protection.

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companyed by the concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate, or by a refusal to provide information that would enable the person to access legal protection.

Sources of Information

The Marsadak relied in documenting the cases included in the report on its own database, which has been developed over time through monitoring violations committed against journalists and media workers in Yemen. The database includes key information related to each case, including:

- The victim's personal information and professional status.
- The circumstances in which the violation occurred.
- The location where the incident took place.
- The party to which responsibility is attributed.
- Information concerning the subsequent course of the case.

The documentation of cases ⁴ is also based on information collected and verified by the Marsadak in accordance with its internal procedures, while ensuring accuracy in describing violations and applying the relevant legal terminology.

In addition to Marsadak's database, the facts of individual cases were verified, where available, through direct interviews with journalists who had experienced enforced disappearance, as well as their family members, law-

yers, and witnesses. The Marsadak also reviewed relevant official documents, including arrest and investigation records, prosecution and court orders and decisions, official correspondence, medical documents, and statements issued by relevant authorities.

Marsadak also reviewed reports published by reliable media outlets and local and international organizations. Whenever possible, information was compared and cross-checked against multiple sources. No incident was included unless it met the established documentation and classification criteria.

Throughout all stages of monitoring and documentation, the Marsadak adhered to the principles of accuracy, independence, impartiality, do no harm, and the protection of victims, their families, and witnesses. This included obtaining informed consent before publishing testimonies or information that could reveal the identities of those providing them, withholding personal or security-related information whenever necessary for the safety of victims and their families, and restricting access to sensitive information to what was necessary for verification and documentation purposes.

4 - It should be noted that the violations documented in this report and attributed to the STC relate to the period preceding the announcement of the STC's dissolution on January 9, 2026. Violations that occurred after that date were attributed to the responsible party based on the prevailing control on the ground and the evidence available at the time the violations occurred:

[Source: YouTube statement/video](#)

Documentation and Classification Criteria

The report classified cases of enforced disappearance based on a set of criteria derived from relevant international legal frameworks, while considering the particularities of the Yemeni context.

The core criteria include:

1. **Deprivation of liberty:** The journalist or media worker was detained, arrested, or otherwise deprived of their freedom of movement as a result of an action taken by an identifiable party.
2. **Connection of the responsible party to a governmental authority, de facto authority, or entity exercising effective authority:** This includes entities exercising security, administrative, or judicial functions on the ground.
3. **Concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate, or deprivation of legal protection:** This may involve failure to disclose the place of detention, refusal to provide information concerning the person's status, or placing the person beyond access to legal safeguards.

Scope and Limitations of the Report

The report focuses on cases of enforced disappearance documented by the Marsadak and does not seek to provide a comprehensive record of all cases of detention or all violations committed against journalists in Yemen.

A dark, atmospheric photograph. In the background, a person is seen from the chest up, behind vertical metal bars, suggesting imprisonment. The person's face is partially obscured by shadows. In the foreground, a pair of ornate metal scales of justice stands on a dark, reflective surface. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a somber and legalistic mood.

Legal Framework for Enforced Disappearance

Enforced Disappearance under International Law

Definition of Enforced Disappearance

Enforced disappearance is considered one of the most serious human rights violations because it entails the deprivation of a person's liberty and the concealment of their fate or whereabouts, thereby placing them outside the protection of the law and depriving them of the fundamental safeguards guaranteed by law.

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance⁵ defines enforced disappearance as:

"The arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which places such a person outside the protection of the law."

Based on this definition, enforced disappearance is not limited to the act of arrest or detention itself. Rather, it consists of a set of intercon-

nected elements that place a person outside the protection of the law.

In the context of Yemen's non-international armed conflict, enforced disappearance constitutes a war crime under Article 8 (2) (e) (vi) of the Rome Statute⁶, as well as under Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 98, which requires parties to a conflict to prohibit enforced disappearance. The nature of this crime also makes it a continuing crime; that is, criminal responsibility does not lapse with the passage of time except upon reconciliation with the victims or their natural death. The subsequent disclosure of the place of detention does not erase the original crime or confer any legitimacy upon it.

5 - International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006), Article 2: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced?utm_source=chatgpt.com

6- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Elements of Enforced Disappearance

The report analyzes cases based on three principal elements:

1. **Deprivation of liberty:** Deprivation of liberty constitutes the starting point of enforced disappearance, whether it occurs through arrest, detention, or any other means that deprives a person of their ability to move freely or communicate with the outside world. The deprivation of liberty does not have to result from a formally declared legal procedure; it may also occur through arrests or detentions carried out outside established legal procedures.
2. **Connection of the perpetrator to the State or an authority exercising state-like functions:** In its legal definition, enforced disappearance is linked to entities that bear direct or indirect responsibility for the deprivation of liberty. This includes State agents, entities acting with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of the State, and, in conflict settings, entities exercising effective authority on the ground.

International criminal law also recognizes the doctrine of command responsibility, which may impose individual criminal responsibility on civilian and military leaders for enforced disappearance when such acts are committed pursuant to their direct orders, or when they knew of such acts and failed to prevent them or punish those responsible, based on the standard of effective control rather than formal recognition of their status.



Subsequent disclosure does not negate the occurrence of enforced disappearance:

The subsequent disclosure of a detainee's whereabouts does not necessarily mean that enforced disappearance did not occur during the preceding period. If a person is deprived of their liberty and the responsible authority subsequently conceals their whereabouts or fate for a certain period before later disclosing it or bringing the person before a judicial authority, that period must be assessed independently against the elements of enforced disappearance.



- 3. Concealment of the person's fate or whereabouts:** This element represents the fundamental distinction between enforced disappearance and other forms of deprivation of liberty. It is not sufficient for an arrest or detention to have occurred. The situation becomes enforced disappearance when the person's whereabouts are concealed, their fate is withheld, their detention is denied, or information is provided in a manner that prevents them from accessing legal protection.

This means that the person becomes unable to benefit from basic legal safeguards, such as knowing the reasons for their detention, communicating with their family, or obtaining effective legal assistance.

Distinguishing Enforced

Disappearance from

Arbitrary Detention

Enforced disappearance is often associated with arbitrary detention, but the two concepts are not identical.

Arbitrary detention refers to the deprivation of a person's liberty in violation of the law or without adequate legal safeguards. Enforced

disappearance, by contrast, requires an additional element: the concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate, or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty.

In the Yemeni context, the monitoring cases examined in this report indicate a recurring pattern that begins with the detention of a journalist or media worker and then moves to a subsequent stage in which information concerning their whereabouts or legal status is concealed.

The relationship between the two violations can therefore be understood as a progressive trajectory: from arbitrary detention to concealment of the place of detention or the person's fate, and ultimately to deprivation of legal protection, resulting in a situation of enforced disappearance.

Yemeni Legal Framework

Although Yemeni legislation does not contain a specific provision criminalizing enforced disappearance as an independent offense, the Yemeni Constitution⁷ and the Criminal Procedures Law⁸ contain a number of safeguards concerning the protection of personal liberty, the regulation of arrest and detention procedures, and the prohibition of depriving individuals of their lib-

7 - Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, Articles 47 and 48.
[Yemen Information Center – Constitution of the Republic of Yemen](#)

8 - Criminal Procedures Law, Articles 22, 74, 76, and 77.
[Yemen Information Center – Criminal Procedures Law](#)

erty outside the legal framework.

These safeguards include the prohibition of arrest or detention except in accordance with procedures established by law, the requirement to notify the arrested person or a person of their choice of the arrest, enabling them to know their legal status, and guaranteeing communication with family members and access to legal assistance.

Article 77 of the Criminal Procedures Law provides:

“When any person is arrested for any reason, the person of his choice must immediately be notified of the arrest. The same shall apply when any judicial order is issued to continue the detention. If the arrested person is unable to make a choice, their relatives or any person concerned shall be notified.”

The relevant provisions of the Yemeni Constitution and Criminal Procedures Law likewise protect personal liberty and guarantee that individuals may not be arrested or detained except in accordance with the law.

However, the cases documented in this report reveal a gap between the existing legal safeguards and their practical implementation in the context of the Yemeni conflict. Some cases involved journalists being detained in undisclosed locations, being denied communication with their families or lawyers,

and receiving no clear information about their whereabouts or legal status. This resulted in periods during which they were effectively placed outside the protection of the law.

These violations are particularly significant in cases of enforced disappearance, where the violation concerns not only the legality or otherwise of the detention, but also the absence of information concerning the person’s whereabouts or fate and the denial of safeguards guaranteed under national law and relevant international standards.

From Detention to Disappearance: The Evolution of the Violation

The cases documented by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) do not generally begin as fully developed cases of enforced disappearance from the outset. Rather, they often progress through a series of stages.

The process begins with the journalist or media worker being deprived of their liberty. Communication with them is then cut off, making it impossible to determine which authority is holding them or where they are being held. Their family may subsequently encounter denial, silence, or conflicting information. At this point, the violation goes beyond the act of

detention and becomes a situation of enforced disappearance.

The duration of each stage varies from case to case. The uncertainty may last for days, as occurred in some cases, or extend for months or years. The manner in which the disappearance ends also varies: the detaining authority may acknowledge the detention, the family may be permitted to visit, the detainee may be brought before a judicial authority, or information may emerge from previously released detainees. In other cases, the person's fate remains unknown and the disappearance continues.

● **Stage One: Deprivation of Liberty**

The documented cases began with journalists being detained or taken away by security forces, military forces, or de facto authorities. In some cases, the detention itself was known, witnessed by individuals, or established through documentation, but the authority that carried it out did not disclose what happened to the detainee afterward.

● **Stage Two: Interruption of Information**

The concealment stage begins when communication with the detainee is cut off and their family can no longer obtain re-

liable information about their condition or whereabouts.

In the cases examined in the report, this was accompanied by the confiscation of communication devices, denial of visits, and deprivation of the journalist's ability to communicate with their family or seek legal assistance.

The interruption of communication is not merely an incidental consequence of detention; it becomes a means of isolating the person from external oversight. In the absence of official registration and reliable information, families and lawyers are unable to verify the detainee's safety or treatment conditions or take steps to challenge the legality of the detention.

● **Stage Three: Denial and Disinformation**

Denial of the detention or the provision of conflicting information represented a key turning point in the documented cases.

Families searched police stations, security facilities, military camps, prisons, and prosecution offices. Some received denials that the detainee was being held, while others were told that the detainee had been transferred to another area or governorate as part of efforts to mislead them.

● **Stage Four: Emergence of Information and Disclosure of the Place of Detention**

The whereabouts of detainees were not disclosed in the same manner in all cases.

In some cases, the responsible authority acknowledged the detention after several days. In others, the information emerged from previously released detainees or following legal pressure and repeated mediation efforts.

● **Stage Five: After the Location Is Disclosed**

The disclosure of a journalist's whereabouts does not necessarily mean that all violations have ended.

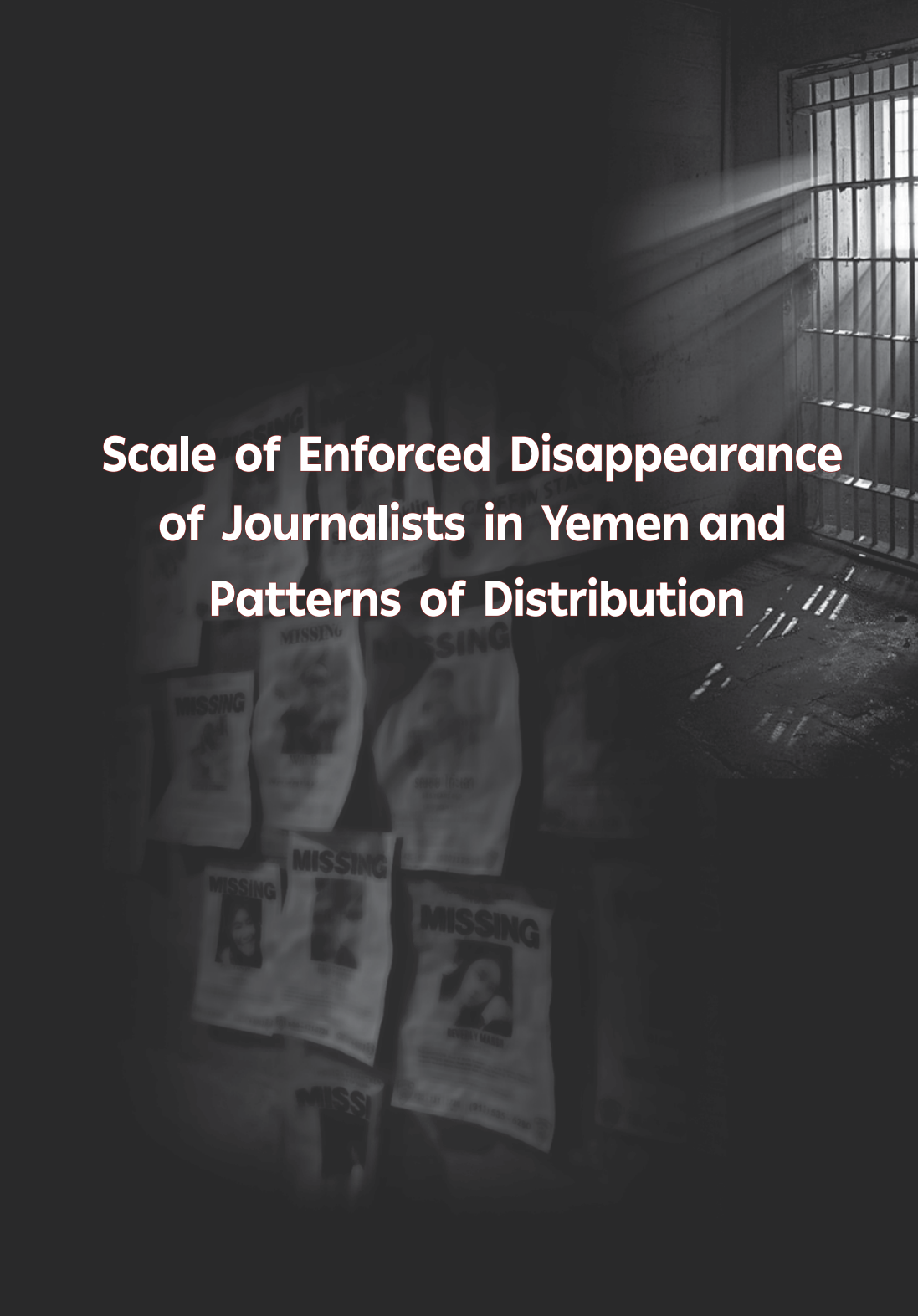
In some cases, the detainee moved from concealed detention to acknowledged detention but continued to be deprived of certain rights, including regular communication with their family, access to their lawyer, medical care, and an effective opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention.

Three Trajectories of Documented Cases

The cases included in the report reveal three main trajectories:

- **Ongoing disappearance:** The journalist's fate and whereabouts remain unknown, as in the case of Waheed Al-Soufi, who has been missing since 2015.
- **Disappearance ending with disclosure of the place of detention:** As in the cases of Naseh Shaker and the six journalists in Hodeidah, where the uncertainty was eventually resolved, while detention continued or the cases moved into judicial proceedings.
- **Short-term disappearance at the beginning of detention:** As in the cases of woman journalist Hala Badhawi and journalist Hamoud Hazaa, where the concealment occurred during the initial days of detention before the detaining authority acknowledged their detention or disclosed their whereabouts.

This classification does not imply differences in the legality of the acts. Rather, it helps explain the evolution of each case and identify the period during which the elements of enforced disappearance were present, as well as the violations that preceded or followed that period.



Scale of Enforced Disappearance of Journalists in Yemen and Patterns of Distribution

Scale of Enforced Disappearance against Journalists and Media Workers in Yemen

During the period from March 26, 2015, to August 15, 2026, Marsadak documented 540 cases of arbitrary detention involving journalists and media workers in Yemen. Of these, 235 cases involved elements of enforced disappearance, according to the definition and criteria adopted in this report, representing 43.5% of the total documented cases of arbitrary detention.

This proportion indicates that enforced disappearance was not a marginal pattern within violations of personal liberty. Rather, it constituted a recurring pattern accompanying a significant number of cases involving the detention of media workers during the monitoring period.

The figures presented in this chapter reflect cases that Marsadak was able to access, document, and verify. They therefore represent a minimum number of documented cases and do not necessarily reflect the full actual scale of the violations, particularly given the difficulty of accessing information and the reluctance of some victims and families to report violations.

Geographical Distribution of Cases

The largest proportion of documented cases of enforced disappearance was concentrated in four governorates. Sana'a accounted for 42.1% of all cases, with 99 cases, followed by Hodeidah, with 12.8% and 30 cases; Taiz, with 11.1% and 26 cases; and Aden, with 9.8% and 23 cases.

Together, the four governorates accounted for 75.7% of all documented cases, while the remaining 57 cases, representing 24.3%, were distributed across other governorates.

This concentration may be related to the importance of these governorates as centers of media and political activity, as well as to the security conditions and the multiplicity of authorities exercising control over them during the years of conflict. However, the geographical distribution should be interpreted in light of the Marsadak's ability to access and document cases. A lower number of documented cases in a particular governorate does not necessarily indicate the absence of violations there.

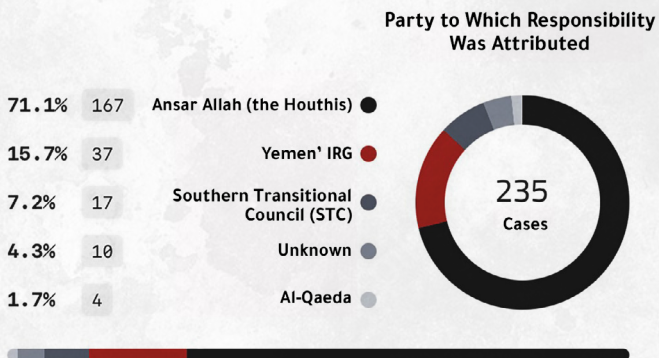


Parties to Which Responsibility Was Attributed

The documented cases were distributed according to the parties to which responsibility was attributed as follows:

Party to Which Responsibility Was Attributed	Number of Cases	Percentage
Ansar Allah (the Houthis)	167	71.1%
Yemen' IRG	37	15.7%
Southern Transitional Council (STC)	17	7.2%
Unknown	10	4.3%
Al-Qaeda	4	1.7%
Total	235	100%

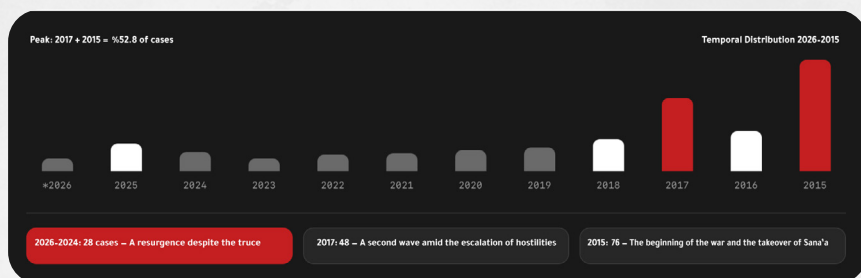
The data show that 71.1% of the documented cases were attributed to Ansar Allah (the Houthis), while the remaining 28.9% were collectively attributed to other parties or remained unattributed. The Yemen's IRG ranked second, accounting for 15.7%, followed by the STC, with 7.2%.



Temporal Distribution of Cases

The documented cases of enforced disappearance were distributed by year of occurrence as follows:

Year	Number of Cases
2015	76
2016	29
2017	48
2018	17
2019	10
2020	7
2021	10
2022	5
2023	5
2024	9
2025	15
Through August 15, 2026	4
Total	235



The year 2015 recorded the highest number of cases, with 76 cases, representing 32.3% of the total documented cases. It was followed by 2017, with 48 cases, accounting for 20.4%. Together, the two years accounted for 52.8% of all documented cases, reflecting the intensity of violations during the early years of the conflict.

Although the number of cases declined after 2017, incidents continued to be documented in subsequent years. The number also increased from nine cases in 2024 to 15 cases in 2025, followed by four cases between the beginning of 2026 and August 15. The 2026 figure should not be directly compared with figures for full calendar years without considering that the 2026 data cover only part of the year.

Enforced Disappearance of Journalists:

**From Silencing the Individual to
Restricting the Media Space**



Enforced Disappearance of Journalists: From Silencing the Individual to Restricting the Media Space

The impact of enforced disappearance extends beyond depriving a journalist of their liberty. It also disrupts their professional role, removes them from the public sphere, and deprives society of information they were working to gather or publish. The disappearance of a journalist, accompanied by denial and uncertainty, also sends a message of intimidation to colleagues and media institutions about the risks that may result from practicing journalism.

A single motive cannot be assumed for all cases. However, the cases documented by the Marsadak indicate that disappearance was used in a number of cases to pressure and silence journalists or effectively resulted in this outcome. Some cases were linked to journalistic activities or the victim's professional status, while others resulted in journalists withdrawing from their work or colleagues refraining from covering sensitive issues.

Removing Journalists from the Public Sphere

Enforced disappearance immediately interrupts a journalist's professional activities by cutting them off from their institution, sources, and audience, and preventing them from continuing their coverage or following up on the issues they were investigating. This impact does not necessarily end when their whereabouts are disclosed or they are released; it may also affect their ability to return to the profession.

The case of woman journalist Hala Badhawi illustrates this impact. After experiencing disappearance during the first days of her detention, accompanied by pressure and fear, she stopped practicing journalism following her release. Her case demonstrates that a short period of disappearance does not necessarily mean a limited impact, as the experience can have long-term consequences for a journalist's professional trajectory and willingness to return to the public sphere.

Disrupting Legal Protection as a Means of Silencing

The repressive impact of enforced disappearance stems from the ability of the detaining authority to isolate a journalist from legal protection mechanisms. When the journalist's whereabouts are concealed and the detention is denied, their family and lawyer are unable to access them, while it becomes difficult to bring their case before judicial authorities or verify the conditions in which they are being held.

The case of journalist Naseh Shaker exemplifies this pattern. He was detained at the Immigration and Passport Authority in Aden on November 19, 2023. According to his arrest record, suspicion arose after he sought to establish his profession as a journalist, indicating a direct connection between his professional status and the initiation of the measures taken against him.

Despite the detention being established, security authorities denied holding him or refrained from disclosing his whereabouts. His family searched for him for at least 441 days, until a released detainee provided the first reliable information about his presence in a prison operated by Security Belt Forces in Aden on February 2, 2025. Nevertheless, his detention continued to be denied

until his family was eventually able to reach him following repeated procedures and inquiries.

This case demonstrates how disappearance can strip journalists of the safeguards intended to protect them against arbitrary treatment. The journalist is unable to determine their legal status, communicate with their lawyer, or challenge their detention, while their family is deprived of information about the authority responsible for holding them. Concealment of whereabouts thus becomes a tool for obstructing legal oversight and enabling the detaining authority to maintain control over the journalist's fate beyond effective accountability.

The Deterrent Effect and the Expansion of Self-Censorship

The impact of enforced disappearance is not limited to the targeted journalist. It extends to colleagues who may perceive that practicing the profession could lead to undisclosed detention and an unknown fate. This has prompted some journalists to avoid certain topics, reduce their activities, refrain from criticizing authorities and armed groups for fear of suffering the same fate, or practice journalism under pseudonyms.

This effect is amplified when disappearance continues for years without clarification of the person's fate or accountability for those responsible. The case of journalist Waheed Al-Soufi, whose fate has remained unknown since 2015, illustrates this prolonged impact. The continuing uncertainty surrounding his fate does not keep the violation confined to him alone; it turns his case into a continuing source of fear within the journalistic community.

This fear produces a form of self-censorship that does not require direct orders prohibiting publication. Journalists and media institutions reassess the risks they face and avoid issues they believe could expose them

to detention or disappearance, particularly matters involving corruption, violations, and the conduct of security and military institutions.

Weakening Media Institutions and the Flow of Information

The disappearance of a journalist affects the institution for which they work. The institution loses one of its staff members, while the articles, investigations, or other assignments they were pursuing may be interrupted. It may also be forced to adjust its editorial priorities or refrain from assigning journalists to cover sensitive issues.

Fear can also extend to sources of information who may become reluctant to communicate with journalists or provide documents and testimonies for fear of being targeted. This restricts access to information and weakens the media's ability to verify facts, expose violations, and hold those responsible accountable.

In this way, enforced disappearance does not merely silence one journalist; it narrows the space for independent journalism and weakens the press's watchdog role.

Undermining the Public's

Right to Know

Society is ultimately affected by the silencing of journalists and the weakening of media institutions. The disappearance of a journalist may mean that an investigation is halted, information is withheld, or a violation remains undocumented, depriving the public of knowledge about issues affecting their lives and rights.

This affects the right to seek and receive information, protected under Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also limits citizens' ability to form opinions and make informed decisions based on accurate and diverse information.

The decline in independent reporting and the reluctance of sources to provide information contribute to widening the information gap, creating greater space for rumors, propaganda, and unverified information, particularly in a conflict environment characterized by multiple authorities and competing sources of public discourse.

Lack of Accountability

and the Deepening of the Intimidation Effect

The impact of enforced disappearance on press freedom becomes more severe when documented cases do not result in independent investigations or accountability for those responsible. The absence of accountability reinforces the perception among journalists and media institutions that the risk of violations remains present, making self-censorship or withdrawal from the profession means of avoiding targeting.

The absence of investigation and accountability also allows the truth to remain concealed from victims, their families, and society. It further undermines confidence in the ability of legal and judicial institutions to protect journalists and safeguard the public's right to know.

An Impact Extending Beyond the Direct Victim

The documented cases demonstrate that enforced disappearance operates across interconnected levels: silencing journalists and removing them from the public sphere; disrupting legal protection; prompting colleagues and media institutions to scale back their activities; and ultimately depriving society of information and weakening its ability to exercise oversight and demand accountability.

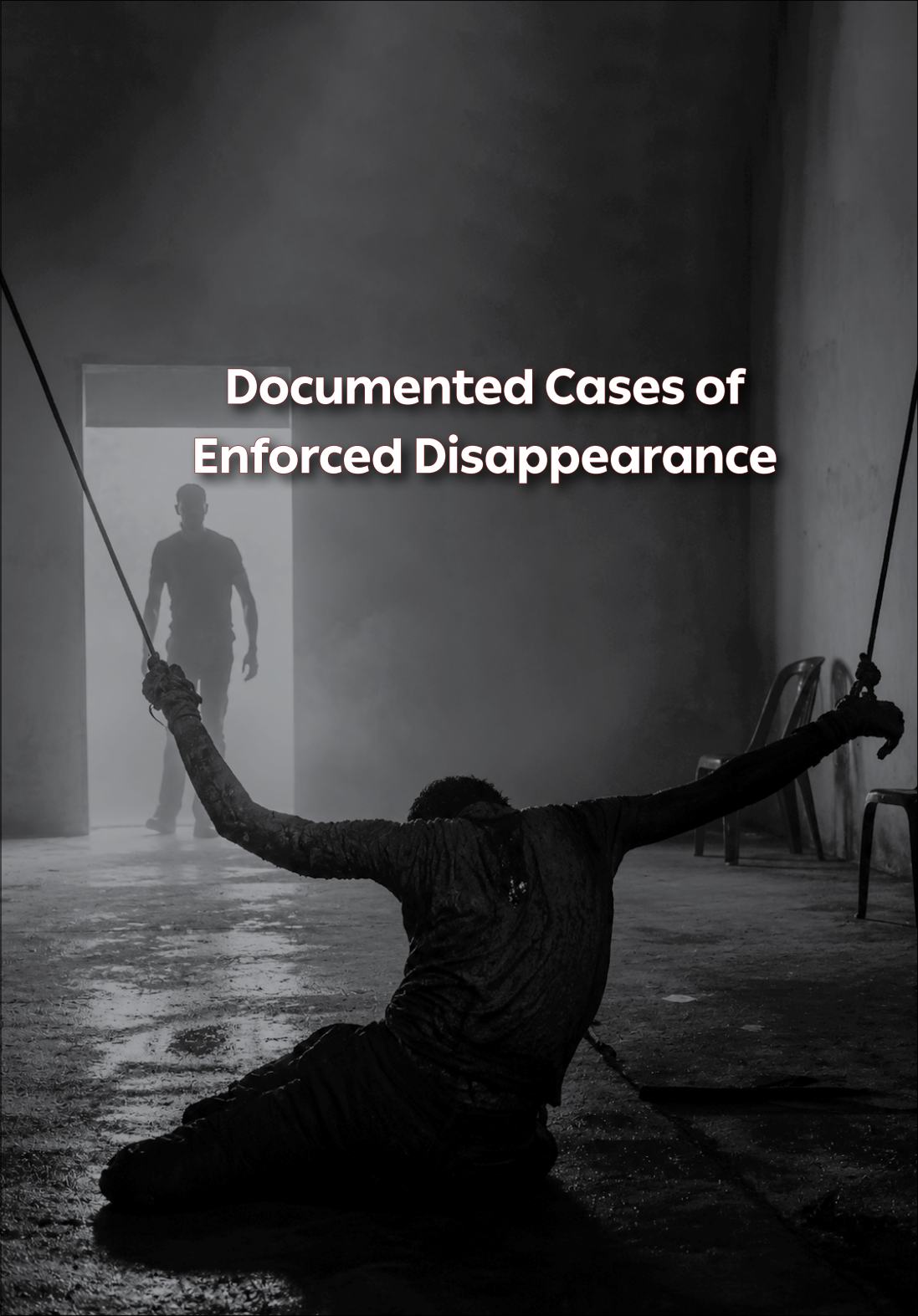
Thus, enforced disappearance does not target the victim's freedom alone. Its effects extend to the media environment and the public's right to know, contributing to a broader climate of fear and reducing opportunities to expose violations and hold perpetrators accountable.

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The report does not treat all cases of detention as enforced disappearance. Rather, it distinguishes between arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. A case is classified as enforced disappearance when the deprivation of liberty is accompanied by the concealment of the person's whereabouts or fate, or by a refusal to provide information that would enable the person to access legal protection.

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Documented Cases of Enforced Disappearance



The Trajectories of Enforced Disappearance Behind the Numbers

The following cases present different forms of enforced disappearance documented by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak): a continuing disappearance in which the victim's fate remains unknown; a prolonged disappearance that ended with the disclosure of the place of detention; a collective disappearance followed by acknowledged detention; and short-term or repeated disappearances that had lasting effects on the victims.

Each case is presented along a chronological trajectory, beginning with the deprivation of liberty, followed by the period during which the person's whereabouts or fate was concealed, the manner in which the detainee's location was eventually disclosed, and any subsequent detention or legal proceedings, concluding with the victim's status as of August 15, 2026, the date on which monitoring was closed.

Waheed Al-Soufi:

Ongoing Disappearance

Since 2015, Fate Unknown

On the evening of April 6, 2015, journalist Waheed Al-Soufi left his home in Sana'a, and never returned. According to statements from his family, armed men wearing civilian clothes intercepted him near a post office and forced him into a white Land Cruiser without a license plate.⁹

His nephew was with him shortly before the incident. After they briefly separated, the nephew returned and witnessed the armed men taking his uncle to the vehicle. From that moment, Al-Soufi's whereabouts disappeared, and his family received no reliable information about his location or fate.

The family contacted various security stations and visited different detention facilities but was unable to identify the party responsible for the incident or locate any official record confirming his presence in a detention facility. No party has claimed responsibility for depriving

9 - Report on the case of journalist Waheed Al-Soufi, Marsadak: <https://marsadak.org/%d9%88%d8%ad%d9%8a%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b5%d9%88%d9%8a-11-%d8%b9%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%8b-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ae%d8%aa%d9%81%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%b3%d8%b1%d9%8a/>

him of his liberty, nor has he been brought before a court or formally charged.

Al-Soufi worked as a journalist and editor-in-chief of the Al-Arabiya newspaper and the Al-Arabiya Online website and was known for covering public affairs. His disappearance occurred during a period of escalating restrictions on journalistic work in Sana'a, coinciding with the expansion of Ansar Allah (the Houthis)' control over state institutions.

As of August 15, 2026, the fate and whereabouts of Waheed Al-Soufi remained unknown. His case therefore constitutes an ongoing disappearance that has lasted for more than eleven years. The documented facts contain the elements of deprivation of liberty and concealment of his fate and whereabouts.

Naseh Shaker: 441 Days

of Disappearance

On November 19, 2023, at approximately 9:00 a.m., journalist Naseh Shaker was detained at the Immigration and Passport Authority in Aden after going there to obtain a new passport. According to the arrest record, suspicion arose after he requested that his occupation in his passport be changed to "journalist." The record also included allegations

of his affiliation with the Houthi group, which were allegations made by the arresting authority and do not constitute a judicial conviction.¹⁰

Following his detention, all contact with Shaker was lost, and his family was unable to determine where he was being held or which authority was responsible for his detention. With the assistance of the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak), the family searched for him at security and military facilities and detention sites in Aden, including camps operated by the Security Belt Forces, the National Security apparatus, and police stations. The authorities contacted either denied holding him or stated that they had no information about his whereabouts.

The family and legal team also traced information concerning his last known movements. A memorandum issued by Yemen Mobile showed that the last signal from his phone was recorded near a police station in Aden. A document issued by Yemenia Airways also indicated that he was not among the passengers on the flight he was believed to have intended to take.

On February 2, 2025, 441 days after his detention, a released detainee reported that he had been held alongside Shaker in a prison operat-

10 - Report on the case of journalist Naseh Shaker, Marsadak: <https://marsadak.org/%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b5%d8%ad-%d8%b4%d8%a7%d9%83%d8%b1-%d8%b9%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ae%d8%aa%d9%81%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%b3%d8%b1%d9%8a-%d9%88%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%85/>

ed by the Security Belt Forces in Aden. This testimony constituted the first reliable information leading to the location of his detention. However, the prison administration continued to deny that he was being held there. Accordingly, the disappearance did not end merely with the emergence of this information; it continued until the family and judicial authorities were subsequently able to verify his presence there.

According to Shaker's statements before the prosecution and the court, during the period in which he was concealed, he was subjected to solitary confinement, beatings, physical and psychological torture, and denial of medical care. He was also denied communication with his family and lawyer and prevented from effectively challenging the legality of his detention. Some restrictions continued even after his location became known, as access to his lawyer was delayed and the prison administration refused to implement certain visitation authorizations.

In January 2026, a court issued a ruling ordering his release, with the period already spent in detention deemed sufficient. According to information available to the Marsadak as of August 15, 2026, however, he remained in detention because the prison administration had not implemented the court's ruling.

Shaker's case combines a detention documented by an official record, prolonged denial of his detention, concealment of his whereabouts, and deprivation of communication and judicial protection. The fact that suspicion reportedly arose after he sought to establish his profession as a journalist also raises concerns about a possible connection between the measures taken against him and his professional status.

The Six Hodeidah Journalists: Collective

Disappearance Followed by Prolonged Detention

On May 26, 2025, Ansar Allah (the Houthis) carried out a security campaign in Hodeidah Governorate that resulted in the detention of a number of people, including journalists Asim Mohammed, Abduljabbar Ziad, Abdulaziz Al-Noom, Abdulmajid Al-Zilai, Waleed Ali Ghalib, and Hassan Ziad. According to information documented by the Marsadak, the detentions were carried out without publicly disclosed judicial warrants or an official explanation of the reasons for their detention.

Following their detention, their families were unable to determine their whereabouts or legal status. The families received conflicting information: some were told that the journalists had been transferred to Sana'a, while others were informed that they were in Hajjah Governorate or had left Hodeidah.

It was subsequently established that the journalists were being held at the Security and Intelligence Prison in Hodeidah City. Some families were unable to verify their presence or visit them until approximately six months later. For these families, the period of disappearance continued until reliable information about the place of detention was established, after which the cases transitioned into acknowledged detention that continued beyond the

period of concealment.

During the period of disappearance, the journalists were denied communication with their families and lawyers. When some family members were eventually able to visit them, they reported deterioration in their physical and psychological condition as a result of detention conditions, prolonged interrogations, and isolation from the outside world.

After more than 420 days of detention in total, four of the journalists were released, while journalists Waleed Ali Ghalib and Hassan Ziad remained in detention as of August 15, 2026. According to information obtained by the Marsadak, Waleed Ali Ghalib suffers from chronic illnesses, including diabetes and high blood pressure, amid concerns that he is not receiving adequate medical care.

Some of those released subsequently faced physical and psychological effects as well as additional restrictions, including requirements to provide guarantees and restrictions on travel and movement. The case represents an example of collective disappearance in which conflicting information was used to conceal the detainees' whereabouts before they were transferred to a phase of prolonged, acknowledged detention.

Woman journalist Hala Badhawi: Three Days of Disappearance and More Than 100 Days of Detention

On the evening of December 30, 2021, woman journalist Hala Badhawi left the headquarters of the Second Military Region in Mukalla, in Hadramout governorate, but never reached her home. Before losing contact with her, she sent a message to her husband informing him that soldiers were attempting to detain her.¹¹

According to information she later provided, and documentation gathered by her family, armed men wearing military uniforms intercepted her as she was leaving and forced her to go to the Military Intelligence headquarters in Mukalla. Her family received no official notification of her detention, while the authorities they contacted denied that she was being held in their custody.

Three days later, Military Intelligence acknowledged that it was holding Badhawi and disclosed her whereabouts. This brought her period of disappearance to an end, while her detention incommunicado continued for an additional two days. Her family was not able to visit her until the fifth day, during a brief visit conducted under strict supervision.

According to her family's account, Badhawi displayed physical and psychological signs of distress during the visit and told them that she had been beaten. Following the end of her disappearance, she remained detained for more than 100 days, before the Specialized Criminal Court in Hadramout ordered her release on the basis of a personal guarantee, while judicial proceedings continued.

Badhawi faced allegations relating to acts of sabotage and hostile activities, which she, her family, and her defense team rejected and attributed to her journalistic work and critical positions. According to information documented by the Marsadak, she also faced defamation campaigns and social pressure linked to her status as a woman working in journalism.

As of August 15, 2026, Badhawi was no longer in detention but had stopped practicing journalism for fear of being subjected to further violations. Her case demonstrates that the end of a three-day disappearance did not end her detention or its professional and social consequences.

11 - Report on the case of woman journalist Hala Badhawi, Marsadak: <https://marsadak.org/%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b6%d8%a7%d9%88%d9%8a-%d8%b5%d8%ad%d9%81%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%8a%d9%85%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a9/>

Nine Journalists: A Collective Enforced Disappearance Followed by Years in Detention

Around midnight on 9 June 2015, armed members of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) raided a room at a hotel in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, where nine journalists were staying. The journalists had sought refuge at the hotel so they could continue their work amid widespread power outages across the city. Those detained were Issam Balghaith, Akram al-Walidi, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Harith Hameed, Abdulkhaleq Amran, Hassan Annab, Hisham al-Yousefi, Haitham al-Shihab, and Hisham Tarmoum.

The journalists were assaulted before being taken to undisclosed locations, cutting them off from their families and the outside world. During the initial phase of their detention, they were subjected to enforced disappearance for approximately 100 days. Throughout this period, their families had no information about their whereabouts, health, or legal status.

Although the initial period of enforced disappearance eventually ended, the journalists remained imprisoned for years in Houthi-run detention facilities. For extended periods, they were denied regular contact with their families and lawyers. They were also transferred between detention facilities while

blindfolded and handcuffed, with no knowledge of their destination or where they would next be held.

According to their testimonies, the journalists were confined in cramped, isolated, dark cells, where they were subjected to beatings, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment. They were cut off from the outside world and denied basic legal safeguards. With no knowledge of where they were being held, they searched for any clues that might reveal their location, examining the names, writings, and inscriptions left on the walls of their cells.

In their testimonies, the journalists described this period as "the most horrific and harrowing experience" they had ever endured. They explained that enforced disappearance was not merely a matter of being detained in an undisclosed location; it placed them in a constant state of fear while depriving them of even the most basic information about their fate. They did not know when their detention would end, where they might be transferred, or what might happen to them.

The impact of their disappearance and detention extended to their families, who endured prolonged periods of searching, waiting, and uncertainty

without reliable information about their loved ones' whereabouts or well-being. For the families, the enforced disappearance continued until they received credible information about the detention sites. The journalists' cases then shifted from enforced disappearance to acknowledged, prolonged detention.

After approximately five years in detention, five of the journalists were released: Issam Balghaith, Hassan Annab, Hisham al-Yousefi, Haitham al-Shihab, and Hisham Tarmoum. The remaining four, Akram al-Walidi, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Harith Hameed, and Abdulkhaleq Amran, remained in custody after being sentenced to death. They were later released as part of a prisoner exchange between the Yemeni government and the Houthis under United Nations auspices.

Following their release, the journalists continued to experience psychological trauma associated with years of isolation, fear, torture, and uncertainty about their fate. Their case illustrates a pattern of collective enforced disappearance followed by prolonged detention, repeated transfers, isolation, and denial of contact with families and legal counsel.

Families' Suffering: The Impact of Enforced Disappearance Extends Beyond the Victim



Families' Suffering: The Impact of Enforced Disappearance Extends Beyond the Victim

A family's suffering begins as soon as communication with a person is cut off and it becomes impossible to determine their whereabouts or the authority responsible for holding them. As denial or conflicting information continues, the family is left facing an unknown fate and bearing the burden and cost of searching, along with the accompanying health, psychological, and social pressures.

Testimonies collected from families by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) show that the nature of this suffering varies according to the duration of the disappearance and the circumstances of each case. However, they share one common impact: a significant part of the harm is transferred to the family, disrupting its daily life even after the detainee's whereabouts are disclosed.

An Unknown Fate and Psychological Distress

The absence of information represents the most severe source of suffering for families, depriving them of knowing whether their relative is alive or dead, whether they are being subjected to torture, or whether they require medical care.

The family of journalist Waheed Al-Soufi has lived with this uncertainty since his disappearance in April 2015. As of August 15, 2026, the family had received no conclusive information about his fate or whereabouts. The impact of the disappearance was not limited to prolonged waiting; according to family testimonies, some family members were also threatened because of their demands for information about his fate.

The family had created a Facebook page calling for his release but was forced to shut it down after the threats escalated. Some family members also changed their phone numbers and reduced their contact with others for fear of being targeted. Thus, the demand to know Al-Soufi's fate became an additional source of fear for the family's safety.

The Cost of Searching and Financial Strain

In the absence of official information, families are forced to conduct searches themselves, visiting police stations, security agencies, military camps, prisons, and prosecution offices. They also turn to lawyers, human rights organizations, community and tribal figures, and intermediaries, while bearing the costs of travel, accommodation, and legal follow-up without any guarantee of obtaining results.

The journey undertaken by journalist Naseh Shaker's mother illustrates this burden. For at least 441 days, she made repeated trips between Sana'a and Aden, traveling hundreds of kilometers along difficult roads and through checkpoints controlled by different parties, despite her advanced age and deteriorating health.

Finding someone to accompany her was an additional challenge, as she feared taking one of her sons with her due to the possibility that he too could be detained. On one of the trips, she was forced to take her grandson with her, and he stopped completing his school examinations in order to accompany her. This incident demonstrates how the effects of disappearance extend to children and the family's daily life, rather than remaining confined to the missing person and their parents.

Health and Psychological Consequences

Prolonged periods of waiting and searching place families under continuous pressure, which may coincide with deterioration in their physical and psychological well-being. The case of the family of journalist Tawfiq Al-Mansouri illustrates this dimension. The family spent eight months without knowing where he was being held, while his parents traveled from Raymah Governorate to Sana'a searching for him among prisons and police stations.

His mother's anxiety was compounded by her son's kidney disease, which she feared would worsen with the onset of winter, without having any means of checking on his condition. According to the family's testimony, his parents' health deteriorated during the years of detention and searching. His father later died following a stroke, while his mother developed diabetes and high blood pressure. Despite this, she continued participating in sit-ins demanding his release.

These testimonies are not sufficient to establish a direct medical causal relationship between the disappearance and those illnesses or the death. However, they illustrate the extent of the psychological pressure under which the family lived and the health deterioration that accompanied years of uncertainty and waiting.

Threats, Defamation, and Social Stigma

Families' suffering may be accompanied by defamation campaigns or social pressure, particularly when the victim is a woman. This dimension was evident in the case of woman journalist Hala Badhawi, whose fate remained unknown during the first three days of her detention before the detaining authority acknowledged that she was in its custody. Her family was not able to see her until the fifth day.

During this period, the family's concerns extended beyond her physical safety to include fears about what a woman detained in an undisclosed location might experience in terms of violations and social stigma. The case also coincided with defamation campaigns and pressures related to her being both a woman and a journalist, thereby expanding the scope of harm suffered by her and her family.

Legal Characterization



Legal Characterization of the Cases and Resulting Responsibilities

The legal characterization of the cases documented by the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) is based on the definition of enforced disappearance set out in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, both of which are binding on Yemen, in addition to the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to the parties to the conflict.

Although Yemen is not a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, its definition constitutes an important legal reference for assessing the facts. The acts constituting enforced disappearance also violate rights protected under the International Covenant, while customary international humanitarian law prohibits enforced disappearance in both international and non-international armed conflicts.¹²

Application of the Legal Characterization to the Documented Cases

Enforced disappearance requires the presence of three elements: deprivation of liberty; refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or concealment of the person's fate or whereabouts; and, as a result, placing the person outside the protection of the law. The characterization also requires determining the status of the perpetrators and their connection to the state or a de facto authority, or their position as an organized party to the conflict.¹³

12 - The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Common Article 3, and Additional Protocol II of 1977. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties?utm_source=chatgpt.com

13 - Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; Rule 98 of customary international humanitarian law. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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These elements are evident in the case of Nasseh Shaker, whose detention was documented in an official record, followed by denial by security authorities and concealment of his whereabouts for at least 441 days. They are also evident in the case of the six journalists from Hodeidah, whose whereabouts were concealed and whose families received conflicting information before their presence at the Intelligence and Security prison was verified. In the cases of woman journalist Hala Badhawi and journalist Hamoud Hazza, the characterization of enforced disappearance applies to the initial period of detention, during which information about their whereabouts was withheld.

In the case of Waheed Al-Soufi, the factual elements concerning deprivation of liberty and the concealment of his fate and whereabouts have existed since 2015. However, a final legal characterization and attribution of

responsibility to a specific party require identifying the armed men who took him and establishing their connection to the state, a de facto authority, or an organized party to the conflict. The failure to identify the party responsible does not relieve the relevant authorities of their duty to investigate and establish his fate.

The Continuing Nature of Enforced Disappearance

Enforced disappearance remains ongoing as long as the person's fate or whereabouts remain unknown, or the responsible party continues to deny having detained the person. The subsequent disclosure of the place of detention does not terminate the violation under international law or render it lawful. Rather, the conduct may constitute arbitrary detention and, where the relevant conditions are met, a war crime if the detainee continues to be deprived of legal safeguards or is subjected to torture.

Nor does enforced disappearance become extinguished through the passage of time, and national amnesty laws or states of emergency cannot be invoked to justify it under the customary rules of international humanitarian law applicable to non-international armed conflicts.

Accordingly, the case of Waheed

Al-Soufi remains ongoing as long as his fate remains unknown. The statement by a released detainee concerning Nasseh Shaker's whereabouts was not, by itself, sufficient to end his enforced disappearance because the prison administration continued to deny his presence and the family and judiciary were unable to verify his location. The subsequent end of the disappearance does not erase the preceding violation or legitimize any continued detention.

Liberty and Judicial Oversight

Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ¹⁴ prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. It requires detainees to be informed of the reasons for their arrest, notified of the charges against them, brought promptly before a judge, and enabled to challenge the lawfulness of their detention before a court.

The Covenant does not require a prior judicial order for every arrest. However, it requires a clear legal basis and that detention be necessary, proportionate, and non-arbitrary, as well as subject to effective judicial oversight. Denial of detention or concealment of a person's whereabouts undermines these safeguards because the

detainee is effectively prevented from accessing judicial protection or challenging the deprivation of liberty.

Continued detention despite the issuance of an enforceable judicial order for release also constitutes arbitrary and unlawful detention. This applies to the case of Nasseh Shaker if his continued detention following the release judgment issued in January 2026 is confirmed.

Isolation and Torture

Denial of communication with family members and lawyers was a common feature of the documented cases. Such isolation helps keep detainees beyond external oversight, prevents them from seeking legal protection, and increases the risk of torture or ill-treatment.

International standards ¹⁵ recognize detainees' right to legal counsel and to communicate with their lawyers, as well as to receive family visits and maintain contact with the outside world, subject to necessary and reasonable legal restrictions. They also emphasize the need for detainees to be registered and held in recognized places of detention subject to oversight.

Statements from several journalists indicate that they were subjected to

14 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [OHCHR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

15 - Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. [OHCHR – Body of Principles](#)

beatings, solitary confinement, denial of medical treatment, psychological humiliation, and coercion to provide statements or sign undertakings. If established, such acts may constitute torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

The prohibition of torture is absolute and cannot be justified by war, emergencies, or security considerations. Authorities are also required to conduct prompt and impartial investigations whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that torture has occurred, and to ensure victims have access to medical examinations, protection, and remedies.

Fair Trial and Enforcement of Judgments

Referral of a detainee to the judiciary does not remedy violations that occurred during the period of disappearance. Where proceedings are based on secret detention, the accused is denied access to a lawyer, or coerced confessions are used, the guarantees of a fair trial are undermined.¹⁶

Referral of a journalist to a specialized court does not, in itself, constitute a violation of international law. The assessment depends on whether

the court was established by law, whether it has jurisdiction over the case, whether it is independent and impartial, and whether it respects the rights of the defense.

Failure to enforce a judicial order for release undermines judicial authority and the effectiveness of remedies. Judicial oversight cannot be effective if the detaining authority is able to disregard court judgments and continue depriving a person of liberty.¹⁷

16 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9 and 14. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights?utm_source=chatgpt.com

17 - Yemeni Code of Criminal Procedure, Articles 132 and 172.

Freedom of the Press and the Rights of Families

When an arrest or disappearance is connected to journalistic activity or to the gathering and dissemination of information, the violation extends to freedom of opinion and expression, protected under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This connection must be established on a case-by-case basis through arrest and investigation records, the nature of the charges, the journalist's activities prior to the arrest, and any threats associated with those activities.

Some of the documented facts indicate such a connection. These include the case of Nasseh Shaker, whose arrest record states that suspicion arose after he requested that his occupation be recorded as "journalist," and the case of Hamoud Hazza, who reported being forced to sign undertakings not to criticize the government or the Minister of Information in exchange for his release.

The effects of enforced disappearance also extend to family members, who suffer harm as a result of being deprived of information about the fate of their relative. The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as an international legal refer-

ence, recognizes the right of victims and their families to know the truth concerning the circumstances of the disappearance, the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared person, and the progress and outcome of investigations.



Referring a detainee to the judiciary does not remedy the violations that occurred during the period of enforced disappearance. If the proceedings are based on secret detention, if the accused is denied access to a lawyer, or if confessions obtained through coercion are used, this undermines the guarantees of a fair trial.



Legal Responsibility

Attributing responsibility requires identifying those who carried out the deprivation of liberty, issued orders, assisted in the detention, or participated in denying the detention and concealing the victim's whereabouts. It also requires establishing whether the acts are attributable to a state, a de facto authority, or an armed organization by verifying the official status of the perpetrators, their relationship with the relevant entity, and the nature of the orders, support, or control exercised over them.

Membership in a security body or organizational structure alone is not sufficient to automatically establish all levels of responsibility. Responsibility may extend to civilian or military commanders where it is established that they exercised effective control, knew or had reason to know of the violations, and failed to take reasonable measures to prevent or stop the acts or refer them for investigation.

The characterization of enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity does not arise merely from the existence of multiple cases. It requires establishing that the acts occurred as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, together with the other legal elements, including the connection of the acts to a state or

organizational policy and the perpetrators' knowledge of the broader context. Repeated cases and the involvement of multiple agencies may justify opening an independent investigation into whether these elements are present, but do not, by themselves, establish them.

Resulting Obligations

The relevant authorities are obligated to establish the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons, register all detainees, enable them to communicate with their families and lawyers, bring them before a judicial authority, release those whose detention lacks a legal basis, and enforce judicial decisions.

These obligations also include conducting independent and effective investigations into cases of enforced disappearance and allegations of torture; protecting victims, families, and witnesses; holding those responsible accountable; providing remedies and reparations to both direct victims and their families; and taking measures to prevent the recurrence of such violations.

Recommendations



Recommendations

Based on the facts and patterns documented in this report and its legal analysis, the Yemeni Media Freedoms Observatory (Marsadak) presents the following recommendations aimed at ending ongoing cases of enforced disappearance, investigating past cases, preventing recurrence, strengthening the protection of journalists and media workers, and ensuring the rights of victims and their families:

First:

All Parties to the Conflict, Existing Authorities, and Entities Exercising Effective Authority

1. Immediately disclose the fate of all journalists whose whereabouts or fate remain unknown, foremost among them journalist Waheed Al-Soufi, and provide their families and lawyers with reliable information regarding the authority responsible for their detention, their whereabouts, and their health and legal status.
2. Immediately release journalists who are arbitrarily detained or detained solely for exercising their legitimate journalistic work. Where a detainee is alleged to have committed acts criminalized by law, the reasons for detention and charges must be made public, and the detainee must be brought without delay before an independent judicial authority, with full guarantees of the right to defense and a fair trial.
3. Implement all judicial judgments and orders concerning the release of detainees.
4. Urgently review the lawfulness of the continued detention of journalists Waleed Ali Ghalib and Hassan Ziad, who remained detained as of the end of the reporting period, and release them unless there are specific and legitimate criminal charges requiring that they be brought before a court in accordance with legal safeguards.
5. Completely end undeclared, secret, or incommunicado detention, and prohibit the detention of persons in unrecognized facilities or facilities not subject to judicial oversight.
6. Immediately register every arrest or detention, recording the identity of the detaining authority, the reasons for detention, the place of detention, and the timing of any subsequent transfer, and notify the detainee's family or a person designated by the detainee without delay.
7. Ensure that detainees are able, from the beginning of their detention, to communicate with their lawyers and families, receive necessary medical care, and challenge the lawfulness of their detention

before an independent judicial authority.

8. End torture and all other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and refrain from forcing journalists to sign undertakings restricting their right to practice journalism or exercise legitimate freedom of expression.
9. Allow the Public Prosecution and independent oversight bodies access to all places of detention, and facilitate regular humanitarian visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross in accordance with its mandate and working procedures.
10. Preserve records of arrest, detention, transfer, and interrogation, and prevent their destruction or concealment, thereby ensuring that they can be used to establish the fate of disappeared persons, investigate violations, and hold those responsible accountable.
11. Conduct independent and effective investigations into all documented cases of enforced disappearance, including cases that subsequently ended with the disclosure of the detainee's whereabouts or their release, and refer persons against whom sufficient evidence of responsibility exists to the judiciary, while protecting victims, their families, and witnesses from threats or retaliation.

12. Legally characterize the failure of security leaders and prison directors to implement judicial orders for release as a punishable offense, and refer those involved to the competent criminal courts.

Second:

The Judiciary in All Areas of Control

1. Register reports of enforced disappearance and act upon them immediately upon receipt, without making the investigation conditional on an admission by the authority suspected of holding the person.
2. Exercise legal powers to establish the whereabouts of detainees, request arrest and transfer records, summon relevant officials, and take urgent measures to protect the life and safety of the disappeared person.
3. Conduct regular and unannounced inspections of all prisons and detention facilities operated by security and military bodies, and verify the identity of detainees, the legal basis for their detention, and the conditions in which they are held.
4. Take the necessary legal measures to end the use of secret and unofficial detention facilities, transfer persons whose continued detention has a legal basis to official facilities subject to oversight, and re-

lease those whose detention lacks a legal basis.

5. Ensure that every detainee is brought without delay before an independent judicial authority, and is allowed access to a lawyer, communication with their family, and the ability to challenge the lawfulness of their detention.
6. Investigate allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and denial of medical care, and disregard any statements or confessions proven to have been obtained through coercion.
7. Investigate the responsibility of perpetrators, supervisors, and commanders who ordered, authorized, or knew of violations and failed to take the necessary measures to prevent them or hold those responsible accountable, in accordance with the law.
8. Monitor the implementation of release judgments and judicial orders, and take legal action against anyone who refuses to implement or obstructs their execution.
9. Prevent the referral of forcibly disappeared journalists to specialized courts for prosecution on the basis of political or professional allegations, and declare null and void any proceedings or judgments issued, or to be issued, on the basis of confessions or statements extracted under

conditions of disappearance, torture, or coercion, in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention against Torture.

10. Require the competent Public Prosecution to conduct immediate and unannounced inspections, in accordance with the Constitution and the law, of all security facilities and prisons operated by security agencies, including Military Intelligence, Political Security, Preventive Security, and Criminal Investigations/Financial Crimes units; require these agencies to transfer all detained journalists to the judiciary; and close all unlawful detention facilities.

Third

The Yemen's IRG

1. Take the constitutional and legal measures necessary to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and make the declaration provided for under Article 31 of the Convention recognizing the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider individual communications.
2. Immediately release journalist Nasseh Shaker, who was the subject of a judicial judgment ordering his release in January 2026, as documented in this report, and hold accountable those respon-

sible for obstructing its implementation.

3. Bring national legislation into line with international standards and criminalize enforced disappearance as a distinct offense, covering all of its elements, recognizing its continuing nature, regulating individual criminal responsibility and command responsibility, and establishing penalties proportionate to the gravity of the crime.
4. Provide that any statutory limitation period does not begin to run until the disappearance has ended, and ensure that its duration is proportionate to the gravity of the violation, while recognizing that acts amounting to crimes against humanity are not subject to statutes of limitation where the relevant legal conditions are met.
5. Establish an independent national mechanism with the necessary powers and resources to search for forcibly disappeared persons, receive complaints from families, access detention facilities and official records, and inform families of the results of searches and investigations.
6. Establish an accurate and centralized national register of all persons deprived of their liberty, update it regularly, and enable judicial and oversight bodies, families, and lawyers to obtain

information permitted by law, while protecting personal data.

7. Guarantee the right of victims and their families to truth, justice, and comprehensive reparation, and provide medical, psychological, social, and economic rehabilitation services.
8. Adopt measures to protect the families of disappeared persons, witnesses, lawyers, and human rights defenders from threats, defamation, or retaliation arising from their efforts to locate victims or seek justice.
9. Adopt institutional safeguards to prevent the recurrence of violations, including training law-enforcement personnel, strengthening judicial and civilian oversight of detention facilities, and maintaining records relating to arrest, detention, and transfer.
10. Ensure the right of journalist victims and their families to comprehensive reparation, in accordance with international standards, for all violations committed against them through the five forms of reparation: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.

Fourth:

The International Community and UN Organizations

1. Apply coordinated political and

diplomatic pressure on all parties to disclose the fate of forcibly disappeared journalists, end secret detention, and release persons arbitrarily detained or detained because of their journalistic work.

2. Include the cases of forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily detained journalists in mediation efforts and political and human-rights negotiations concerning Yemen, and do not limit the treatment of the detainee issue to prisoner-exchange agreements between the parties to the conflict.
3. Refer all documented evidence and legal cases contained in this report to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression as preliminary material for investigating the crimes committed, and support calls for the establishment of an independent international investigative mechanism for Yemen to ensure the collection and preservation of criminal evidence for future accountability proceedings.
4. Impose targeted international sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans, on military and security leaders proven to have been directly involved or to bear command responsibility for ordering enforced disappearances,

pursuant to the existing UN sanctions framework concerning violations of international humanitarian law.

5. Support efforts to document violations and preserve evidence in accordance with rigorous professional standards, ensuring the integrity of evidence and chain of custody so that such evidence remains admissible and properly documented for use in future national or international accountability proceedings.
6. Refer the documented cases of enforced disappearance of journalists in this report to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, to activate its renewed mandate under Human Rights Council Resolution 3/45 to intervene urgently with the parties to the conflict to establish the fate of disappeared persons, and to expand independent criminal investigations into these crimes to ensure that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity.
7. Adopt appropriate accountability measures against those responsible for serious violations, including targeted international measures where there are sufficient legal grounds and evidence, while respecting due-process guarantees.
8. Provide technical and financial support for programs dedicated

to searching for disappeared persons, monitoring and documentation, legal assistance, and medical, psychological, and social support services for victims and their families.

Fifth:

Human Rights Organizations and Media Institutions

1. Strengthen coordination in documenting cases of enforced disappearance of journalists, and establish unified minimum standards for documentation and classification to help identify patterns, follow up on cases, and avoid duplication in reported figures.
2. Develop secure databases while maintaining information confidentiality, obtaining the consent of victims or their families before sharing their data, and applying the do-no-harm principle.
3. Provide legal assistance to detained journalists and families of disappeared persons, and support the submission of complaints to competent judicial authorities and international mechanisms.
4. Provide psychological and social support services to journalist survivors and victims' families, with particular attention to women, children, and older persons who, according to documented cases, may experience additional

impacts.

5. Assist media institutions in establishing procedures to protect journalists, their sources, and their data, and provide legal and security support to media workers at risk.
6. Continue national and international advocacy campaigns to keep the cases of disappeared persons in the public sphere until their fate is established, while considering the safety, wishes, and right to privacy of their families.

Emergency Support

legal support



Through a group of lawyers who are ready to defend journalists, MARSADAK provides all kinds of legal support to journalists and media personnel who are subjected to violations and harassment in connection with their journalistic work.

Legal support includes providing legal advice related to carrying out the press duties and in case journalists face legal issues in addition to allocating a lawyer in cases pending against journalists before the courts.

[Click here](#) to submit a request for legal support.

psychological support



The Media Freedom Observatory provides support to journalists and workers in media institutions who face psychological pressure while practicing their profession.

The support includes psychological counseling as well as direct psychological support sessions through psychologists.

[Click here](#) To access psychological support

Digital Support



The Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen, through digital experts, provides digital support to offer consultations and assist journalists in resolving digital issues they face in the media field. This includes helping those subjected to hacking and harassment due to their journalistic work.

To submit a request for digital support, click [\[here\]](#).



The Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC) is a leading Yemeni civil society organization dedicated to promoting economic awareness, transparency, and good governance. It actively encourages citizen participation in decision-making processes and advocates for the development of a professional and responsible media landscape in Yemen.

<https://economicmedia.net/>

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Yemen Media Freedoms Observatory (MARSADAK) is a monitoring and information platform aimed at disseminating all matters relating to freedoms of opinion and expression in various Yemeni regions in a professional and independent manner, as well as, analyzing and advocating for journalists' issues at the local and international levels.

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