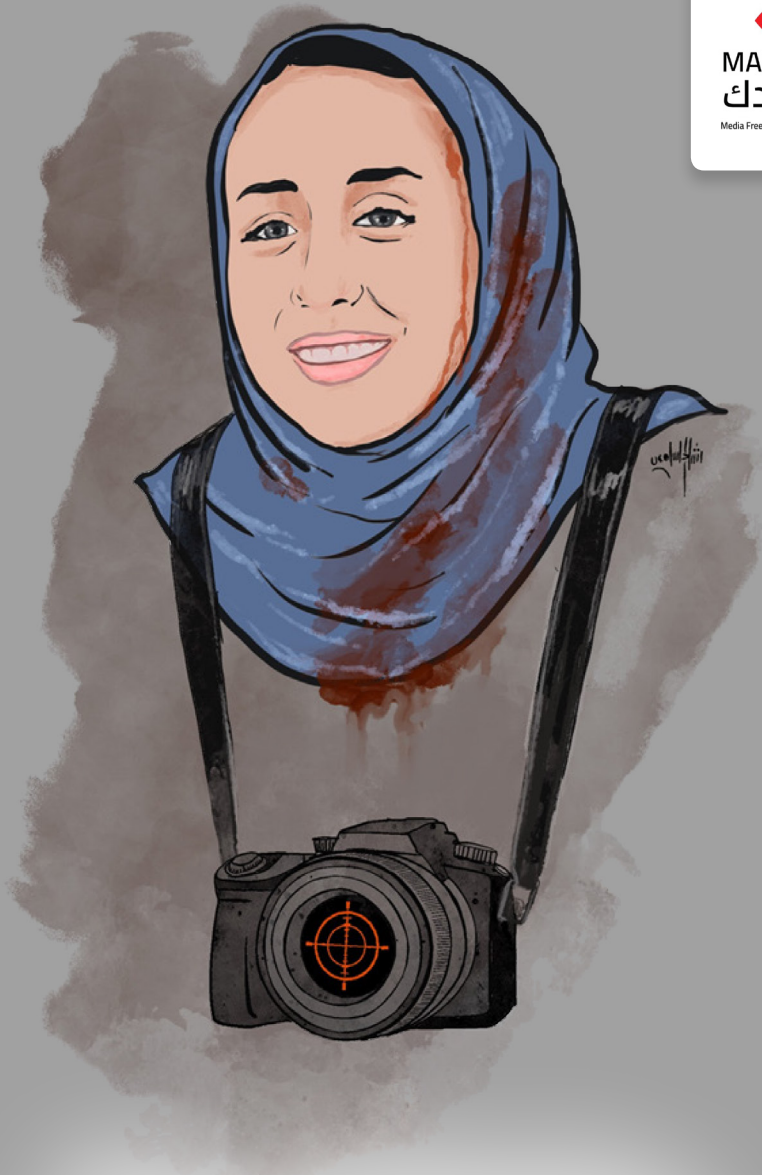




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Media Freedom Observatory - Yemen



Yemeni Media: Bleeding Lives and Facts



Yemeni Media:

Bleeding Lives and Facts

The Status of the Media in Yemen, 2021



STUDIES & ECONOMIC MEDIA CENTER



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Table of Contents

● Foreword	6
● <u>Chapter 1</u>	
Yemeni Media:The Full Picture	8
Overview	10
Brutality towards the Press	12
Mock Trials to Suppress Freedom of Expression	16
Forcibly Disappeared Journalists	16
Journalists Languishing in Prisons	17
Malicious Charges Amounting to the Death Penalty	18
Laws Violating Media Freedom	19
The Penal Law	20
Arbitrary Measures to Suppress Freedom of Expression	21
Impunity	22
Unemployment and Homelessness	23
Spread of Rumors	24
Growing Digital Threats	24
The Migrant Media Phenomenon	25
● <u>Chapter 2</u>	
Violations of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression	28
Executive Summary	29
Types of Violations	31
Responsibility for Violations	32
Geographical Distribution of Violations	33
Sana'a	34
Aden	35
Taiz	36
Hadhramout	37
Murder	38
Casualties	39
Arrest	41
Threats	43
Other Violations	44
Media Institutions	45

● Chapter 3

New Actors	47
------------------	----

● Chapter 4

A Roadmap for Media in Yemen	50
------------------------------------	----

Topic One:

Freedom of the Media and Challenges of Access to Information	51
--	----

Recommendations Matrix	53
------------------------------	----

● Topic Two:

War and media role in building peace	56
--	----

Recommendations Matrix	58
------------------------------	----

● Topic Three:

Disinformation, misinformation, and the role of investigative journalism	60
--	----

The role of investigative journalism in combating disinformation	61
--	----

Recommendations Matrix	62
------------------------------	----

● Topic Four:

Occupational Safety of Journalists	64
--	----

Recommendations Matrix	66
------------------------------	----

● Topic Five:

Women in the media and the level of their presence in decision-making positions	68
--	----

Recommendations Matrix	71
------------------------------	----

Foreword

Yemenis have experienced a seven year period of infertility, is marked by escalating the suffering of Yemeni journalists, social media activists, and human rights activists in particular.

The material cost of the war is estimated in billions, but in terms of violated rights and abused dignity, the loss is above estimation. As the war goes on, Yemen loses its gains in the democratic margin and reasonable exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, which had once been tangible.

Journalists and human rights activists in Yemen are paying dearly in terms of their blood which is being shed in the streets, homelessness, prosecution for treason, enforced disappearances, death sentences and other endless charges.

Another tragic year commences, with an appalling toll. The Media Freedom Observatory (MFO) documents 86 violation cases, including 4 killings of journalists, including a female journalist; the first female victim since the war began.

A female journalist is still unprecedentedly imprisoned in Hadramout on a serious charge. Four journalists in Sana'a are facing death sentences, being tried by incompetent courts on publication charges.

Documenting these violations and practices against freedom of expression and freedom of the press represents the first step towards ensuring that perpetrators of these violations will not go unpunished and will be brought to court soon.

As we express our regret for the continuation of this bleeding of media freedom in Yemen, we affirm that our responsibility is to continue the struggle to preserve a wide margin of freedom of expression, and the right of all citizens to express their opinions. These rights are guaranteed by the Constitution, all international treaties and conventions Yemen is a signatory thereto.

By monitoring violations targeting media personnel and social media activists, our aim is to defend a segment that is the spearhead in the struggle for the right of the people to attain authentic and realistic information.

In this annual 2021 report, we have attempted to present an integrated picture of the media scene in Yemen, providing a panoramic picture of the media scene and the repercussions of the war on media freedom. We have also provided an accurate monitoring of the violations perpetrated by the various parties to the conflict. We do not ignore the positive aspect of the media which have been

functioning in difficult circumstances and managed to succeed despite of the complexity of the situation and the associated risks.

Here, too, I present to you a roadmap for the future of the Yemeni media, which is the summary of discussions with 42 independent Yemeni media organizations and institutions. It includes the top priorities and requirements during the forthcoming phase.

I would also like to express my appreciation to our partners at the Dutch Embassy for their continuous support of Yemeni journalists, and joint work for press freedom in Yemen.

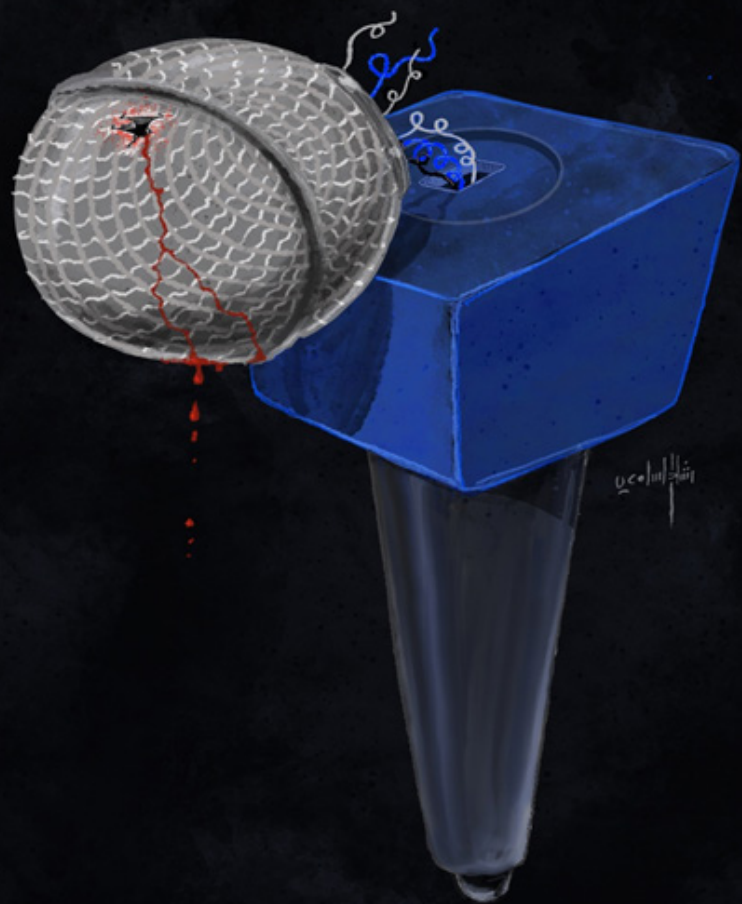
I would also like to express my appreciation of the team of the Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen, all partners in the Yemeni governorates, journalists and social media activists inside and outside Yemen.

Mustafa Nasr

Chairman of the Studies and
Economic Media Center

Chapter 1

Yemeni Media: The Full Picture



Overview

Perhaps one of the main problems in this part of the world is the tendency of the authorities to control the media rather than to allow the media to control the scene.

In Yemen, as a typical country in the region, the margin of media freedom continued to fluctuate during the period 1990-2015. The freedom of the media witnessed a relative expansion during the period of political balance (1990-93), and then contracted again in the following year and continued until the beginning of the millennium due to the fact that Yemen witnessed a shift from partnership to autocracy.

With the consummation of autocratic control, the freedom of media and the freedom of expression fluctuated until 2011, which witnessed an unprecedented media openness that sadly did not last long.

With the outbreak of the current conflict, the Houthi group made the media and civil society organizations a primary target for closure and dissolution. The media discourse was replaced by media war strategies, including rumors, misinformation, and mobilization, which contributed to the polarization of the media in line with military and political divisions, in effect producing a division within the society.⁽¹⁾

In addition to the war rhetoric of the two parties of the conflict, the internationally recognized legitimate government and the Houthi group, a new type of media confrontations have arisen among factions within the great conflict. Uncontrollable Media discourse became prevailed among the components of the legitimate government and parties affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council (STC). Likewise, components within the Houthi group followed suit. These factions were dedicated to a bitterly misleading discourse about everything that is southern, northern, or middle regions. A spirit of hostility pervades all official media, and most of the private media.

The period 2015-2018 was mostly devoted to the dominance of war and hate rhetoric, which undermined the social cohesion of the components of the Yemeni society across the country. consequently, it gave rise to isolated conflicting areas.

Having closed all non-conformist media in its respective area of control, each party to the conflict then controlled all media, leading to loose discourse because of the collapse of institutions, and the suspension of the judiciary system for a period of time. As a result, the whole country entered the stage of "no voice is louder than the sound of battle."

1 - Media in Yemen, <https://fanack.com/ar/yemen/media-in-yemen/>

Under this slogan, independent media outlets were closed down, and alternative partisan media outlets replaced the comprehensive, although full of shortcomings, discourse of State-sponsored media outlets despite their numerous shortcomings.

Although weird enough, all fighting parties in Yemen came together to oppress journalists, each abusing them in its dominions. Consequently, Yemen witnesses the largest waves of migration, displacement and silencing of journalists, as the various parties have opened the gates of hell before them.

Between 2015 and the beginning of 2022, journalists in the country have been relentlessly subjected to persecution, pressure, threats, intimidation, enforced disappearances, abuse, and arrests. Worse still, during this period, journalists became a direct target for killing with explosive devices, sniping, torture, and death sentences, based on fabricated charges, as a result of the parties' misuse of power.

Rumors, misinformation, and hate speech were the key features of this stage in light of the state of multiple polarization. Each of the controlling parties has its own agenda, which constitutes a condition for the journalist to obtain a job opportunity, a gateway to their displacement or arrest once they deviate from the expected path in the absence of protection, salaries and independent alternatives.

All parties can misuse power to harm journalists, their families, job, and life, with impunity. This is proven by the absence of liability for any of the acts violating Journalists' rights and freedom of expression since the outbreak of the war until the beginning of 2022.

Another recent development constitutes targeting journalists' families, but it is relentlessly practiced. Families of journalists, living in Houthi-controlled areas, were subjected to the oppression of the Houthi group which pressures migrant journalists' family request them to return to Yemen, or to sign binding undertakings not to contact them, or even to disavow them. The internationally recognized government authorities arrest journalists' families as a means of pressure, as happened in Hadhramout governorate. The authorities arrested journalist Mohammed al-Yazidi's brother to pressure the journalist to deliver himself to be detained in connection with publishing opinions or reporting news coverage⁽²⁾.

Recently, a ray of hope began to appear at the end of the tunnel, as intervention efforts supporting the rehabilitation and expansion of the influence of independent media played a good initial role. This contributed to opening a gateway to move in that direction, but it is still in its early stages

2 - Media Freedom Observatory

Brutality towards the Press

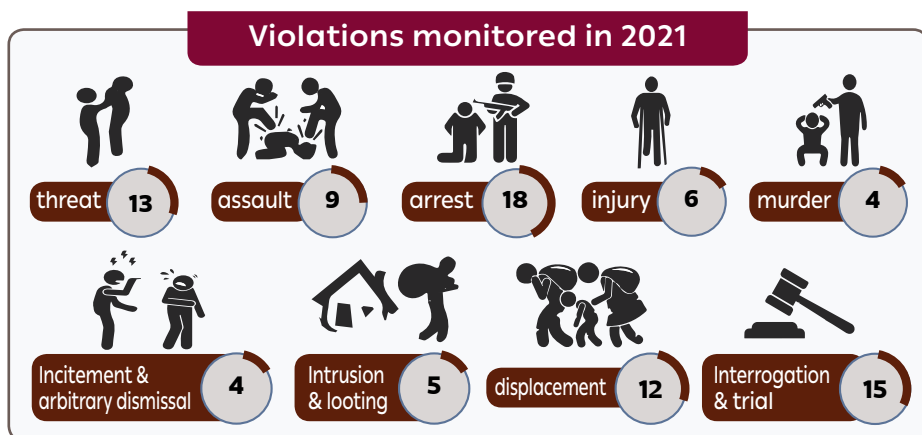
The current conflict in Yemen has resulted in a humanitarian and human rights situation that abounds in violent practices and systematic violations. Perhaps the most precarious manifestation of the war is the universalization of violence and its means as a unilateral option that pervades the country, preventing individuals and people from any other alternatives or options.

This spread violence is embodied in the form of hostile policies, restrictive measures, confiscation of civil space, closure of public space, abolition of peaceful means of expression in favor of means of repression, and right-and-freedom-undermining rhetoric of war ⁽³⁾.

If the term "violation" means any act that results in a breach of human rights by governments, groups, or individuals against the rights guaranteed by international, regional or national laws, then this is what is frequently and continuously practiced by the various parties.

Statistics issued by the Media Freedom Observatory on violations of press freedom in Yemen during the seven-year period of war (2015-2021) indicate that 2,369 violations of press freedom were recorded in Yemen. This includes murder, kidnapping, arrest, dismissal, shutdown of media institutions, etc.

Journalists are subjected to murder, arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, threats, assaults, verbal violence, harassment, and censorship. They are also tried before unconstitutional courts called 'specialized criminal courts.' They are not civilian courts, but state security courts.



3 - A paper entitled "The status of the right to peaceful assembly in Yemen" issued by Muwatana Establishment in June 2021. The paper was monitored on 1 March 2022 through the following link: <https://mwatana.org/right-to-peaceful-assembly/>

Restriction of freedom of expression included civil society organizations, parties, and various segments of society, in addition to minorities and refugees. There is also gender-based repression and intimidation.

According to the Media Freedom Observatory, 50 journalists were killed during the 7 years of war. The year 2021 is considered the worst in terms of targeting journalists. The Media Freedom Observatory documented 86 violations during 2021: including 4 killings, 6 injured cases, 18 arrests, and 9 assaults, 13 threats, 15 trials and interrogation by prosecutors and police officers, 12 displacements, 5 intruding and looting incidents and suspension of media institutions, and 4 cases of breaking into houses, looting, inciting and arbitrary dismissing.

During the same year, the temporary capital, Aden, witnessed numerous violations, and targeting of journalists by laying explosives in their cars. Press photographer Mahmoud Al-Utumi and his wife, journalist Rasha al-Harazi, were targeted in such an incident leading to the death of Mrs. Harazi, who was heading to deliver her baby. They were torn to pieces.

In mid-August three journalists, Ahmed Bousaleh, Tariq Mostafa, and Ahmed Baras also died in a vehicle bomb blast while accompanying the Minister of Agriculture and the Governor of Aden.



Direct killing is not the only crime targeting journalists. There are also 82 violations which varied between 6 injuries, 18 arrests, 9 assaults, 13 threats, 15 trials and interrogation by prosecutors and police officers, 12 displacements, and 5 cases of storming, looting and shutdown of media institutions, as well as 4 other cases ranging between storming of residence, looting, incitement, and arbitrary dismissal.



In Sana'a, through mock trials before unconstitutional 'state security' courts, the Houthi group issued death sentences against four detained journalists: Abdul-Khaleq Imran, Akram Al-Walidi, Harith Humaid, and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri. According to lawyers and local and international organizations, the litigation procedures in those trials lacked the basic legal rights of the accused. Those procedures were merely acted to justify the capital sentences.

The United Nations questioned the trials of the four journalists in Sana'a where death sentences had been issued against the tried journalists. It was a daring precedence for silencing the media.

In Sana'a, too, the Houthi authorities arrested the famous photographer Abdurrahman Al-Ghabiri, the most prominent photographer of landscapes and tourism in Yemen, and confiscated his cameras and equipment. The media are also subject to blocking, razing, storming, and shutdowns.⁽⁴⁾

The Yemeni capital, Sana'a, was subject to an unprecedented repressive campaign targeting the press and various media activities. A unilateral approach is imposed in all Houthi controlled areas. As a result, hundreds of journalists have ceased to carry on their media careers.

Television content producers are under severe censorship. Several TV program-producing companies have been banned from working for channels and media organizations that do not conform to the line of the group.

In Aden, STC forces raided the headquarters of the Yemen News Agency (Saba), in June 2021, expelled its personnel, and vacated the headquarters for the purpose of using it for its own purposes under the name of the South News Agency⁽⁵⁾.

The security authorities in Hadhramout governorate arrested all opposing journalists who do not share the prescribed line of thought or criticize the authorities in the media or social media.

Late in December, Hala Badawi was arrested in connection with her journalistic activities. She was accused of sabotage and hostile acts, and was detained in the Military Intelligence prison, before allowing her family to visit her only once. Later, she was transferred to the Central Prison illegally and in violation of international laws and treaties. The authorities also raided her family residence, intimidating family members and confiscating their phones.

Abdullah Babkir, a journalist and press photographer, was arrested on malicious charges and imprisoned for a year. In the court, he was acquitted of all charges.

Three media professionals, Mu'taz Al-Nageeb, Hala Mohammed and Zakaria Mohammed, were arrested while covering a peaceful march calling for improving the living conditions in the governorate.

In Hadhramout, too, journalists Awad Kashim and Sabri bin Makhashin are being tried in absentia before an incompetent court. The prosecutor also summoned Abdullah al-Shadli because of his journalistic profession.⁽⁶⁾

In Taiz, the media profession became risky. In 2021, a number of activists who criticized the security and military authorities in the governorate were arrested.

The Faculty of Arts, Taiz University also ended the contract with journalist Aref Al-

4 - Media Freedom Observatory

5 - Media Freedom Observatory

6 - Media Freedom Observatory

Atam, against the backdrop of information included in the syllabus. In addition, he was held accountable for his publications and positions on social media, which were viewed offensive to the legitimate government and its officials.

At the university, too, head of the Media Department at Taiz University, Dr. Mansour Al-Qadasi, was targeted in a campaign of incitement and was accused of treason because of his statements to a satellite channel.

Ibrahim Al-Husaini, a journalist, was arrested while photographing a prisoner in the security department prison of Al-Shamayatain District. He was transferred to the military intelligence prison on the pretext of his writings that criticized the security situation in the district.

Moreover, a number of journalists, including Naif Al-Wafi and Taha Saleh, were illegally prosecuted by the security authorities in Taiz governorate, and fled from their homes out of fear of arrest,

Several journalists were harassed and arrested for taking photos downtown. Imran Farhan, a journalist, was assaulted by armed militants led by Abdulmalik Nasr Al-Fuhaidi, while filming a customary reconciliation between an armed militant and a government entity.

Photojournalist Naif Al-Wafi received a death threat from a soldier while filming a demonstration suppressed by the authorities. A soldier angrily commanded the photographer saying, "Turn off the camera or I will kill you." ⁽⁷⁾

These violations of freedom of expression are committed due to the absence or poor performance of the judiciary in some conflict areas, and its bias and politicization in others.

7 - Media Freedom Observatory

Mock Trials to Suppress Freedom of Expression

Mock trials of media professionals and death sentences represent the most prominent restrictions imposed on freedom of expression. All of these trials were illegal and lacked the minimum requirements of justice in conducting interrogation and court hearings. During those trials, many journalists - if not the majority - did not have access to their lawyers, except for some interviews during interrogation and court hearings. The journalists also received threats.

In 2021, 15 journalists were tried and interrogated by prosecutors and police officers in several Yemeni governorates. All these trials and legal proceedings were politicized and represented a violation of the basic legal rules and procedures, let alone the unconstitutionality and illegality of the court itself. They breached international laws and conventions that guarantee freedom of expression to journalists. After nearly a year of sentencing them to death on account of their profession, the trial of four journalists, Abdel-Khaleq Imran, Akram Al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, has been resumed.

The Houthi group also interrogated journalists, although known for their loyalty to the group. They were working in areas under its control and for Houthi-affiliated media outlets, or Houthi-supportive foreign media outlets.

The Dar Saad Police Station in Aden summoned Saleh Al-Obaidi, a journalist, and accused him of defamation against the backdrop of a press report on corruption of the Sanitation Department. Abdullah Al-Shadli was interrogated by the public prosecutor office against the backdrop of authoring a press report on the deterioration of university education. Both Awad Kashmim and Sabri bin Makhashin were being tried in absentia by the Criminal Court in Hadhramout governorate.

In spite of its incompetence, the Eastern Ibb Governorate Prosecution Office summoned Walid Hisham Al-Sada, editor-in-chief of the independent, Sana'a-based Al-Liwa newspaper, for interrogation. He was accused of incitement due to publishing corruption cases involving Executive Office and security services leaders.

Forcibly Disappeared Journalists

Enforced disappearance is used as a means of spreading terror in society. The feeling of insecurity and fear due to enforced disappearance does not only end with the relatives of the victims, but also affects local communities and the society as a whole.

Enforced disappearance, an abuse common during internal conflicts and wars, is a crime under the international law.

At the top of universal lists of victims of enforced disappearance usually including human rights defenders, families of the disappeared persons, and key witnesses and lawyers, are Yemeni journalists.

During the war, a number of journalists were subjected to enforced disappearance carried out by various conflict actors in clear violation of international conventions and treaties.

Some typical examples of such violation are the two journalists, Younis Abdas-salam and Waheed Al-Sufi, who are detained in Houthi prisons, and Mohammed Al-Muqri, who was detained in al-Qaeda prison during its control of Mukalla, Hadhramout governorate in 2015, Raafat Rashad, who was forcibly disappeared before his release in Aden, and Hala Badawi in Hadhramout.

Journalists Languishing in Prisons

The Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen monitored 13 detained journalists during the war. According to the conflict theaters, they are distributed as follows:



- 11 journalists detained in Houthi prisons. Some of these journalists have been detained for more than 6 years, during which they were subjected to enforced disappearance and torture. They were denied family visits and health treatment.



One journalist, Hala Badawi, is detained in the legitimate government prison in Hadhramout governorate.



One journalist, Mohammed al-Muqri, is detained in Al-Qaeda prison. The fate of this journalist is unknown since 2015.



While the journalists released from Houthi prisons are undergoing treatment due to their poor health and psychological condition, all those released from the prisons of the various parties to the conflict are silent, refusing to share the abuses they experienced in prison, due to fears for their lives, on the one hand, and for their families on the other hand.

Party	No.	Duration
Houthi prisons	11	6 yrs
government prisons	1	Less than a year
al-Qaeda prisons	1	7 yrs

Malicious Charges Amounting to the Death Penalty

In 2007, through its legal cadre and intellectuals, the Houthi group was actively involved in mobilizing public opinion, civil society organizations, and journalists to condemn charges of “communication with foreign powers”. They were fabricated, malicious and politicized charges according to the group’s statements at the time. It also relentlessly demanded the closure of the specialized criminal courts, described as unconstitutional.

This took place during the trials in the former Saleh’s regime. Two key personalities, al-Dailami and Miftah, affiliated with the Houthi group were the subject of these trials. Today, the matter has changed, as the group itself is using the same unconstitutional courts, and the same malicious, fabricated, and politicized charges, previously condemned by the group, against independent civilian journalists.

In the absence of an independent judiciary capable of enforcing the law, the judicial bodies, which are subordinated to the executive organs, become an instrument of repression manipulated by the authorities to suppress citizens, silence journalists, and restrict the movement of activists.

In a direct and persistent practice of using the judiciary as a heavy stick against the freedom of expression, the parties to the conflict in Yemen referred 15 journalists to trial and interrogation before public prosecutors and police stations in several governorates.

Since the judiciary is not an independent institution, it has become easy for the governments of the various parties to politicize cases and trials. Journalists were brought before unconstitutional courts known as specialized criminal courts, i.e.,

state security courts. Trials were carried out on the basis of procedures lacking in minimum legal rules and rights guaranteed by international laws and conventions.⁽⁸⁾

For example, the trial of four journalists, Abdel-Khaleq Imran, Akram Al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, has been resumed, after nearly a year of sentencing them to death on account of their profession as journalists.



The Houthi group also interrogated journalists, although known for their loyalty to the group. They were working in areas under its control and for Houthi-affiliated media outlets, or pro-Houthi foreign media outlets. In other areas, security and judicial authorities interrogate journalists in connection with publishing issues.



In the same governorate, journalists Awad Kashmim and Sabri bin Makhshin, are being tried in absentia by the Criminal Court.

In spite of its incompetence, the Eastern Ibb Governorate Prosecution Office summoned Walid Hisham Al-Sada, editor-in-chief of the independent, Sana'a-based Al-Liwa newspaper, for interrogation. He was accused of incitement.⁽⁹⁾

Laws Violating Media Freedom

The Yemeni Constitution of 1994 guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Article 41 of the Constitution states: "The state guarantees freedom of thought and expression of opinion verbally, in writing and in photography, within the limits of the law."⁽¹⁰⁾

The Yemeni Press and Publications Law No. 25 of 1990 also guarantees freedom of the press, freedom of thought, and the issuance of newspapers and magazines, as demonstrated by Articles 3, 14, 16 and 33.⁽¹¹⁾

However, these constitutional and legal guarantees are not backed by an effective independent judiciary capable of enforcing the content of the constitutional and legal texts in this field. This opened the door to arbitrary practices against freedom of expression. For many years, the authorities have manipulated the phrase "within the limits of the law" mentioned in the aforementioned constitutional article, to impose excessive restrictions on freedom of expression using both Penal Law and a range of repressive practices.

8 - Media Freedom Observatory

9 - Media Freedom Observatory

10 - Yemeni Constitution of 1994

11 - The Yemeni Press and Publications Law No. 25 of 1990

These practices reinforce fears among journalists and editors and push them towards intensifying self-censorship, at the expense of discourse targeting public opinion and the public interest.

Although Yemen is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, there are gaps in legal texts and practices that still restrict those rights.

The "Yemen: Freedom of Expression in Peril" report issued in January states in Article 19 that "Yemeni legal and constitutional provisions can be viewed as positive principles, but fail to find their way to execution in practice."⁽¹²⁾

Absence of legislative application means the absence of recognized procedures for requesting access to official records, or of a time limit to respond to such requests."

There are no legally established criteria for whether or not such requests will be duly processed, and the applicant lacks a guaranteed right to appeal if his request is not adequately responded to."

The Penal Law

The Yemeni Penal Law restricts exercising the freedom of expression by placing loose limitations such as "in the interest of national security" or "within the limits of the law." The law also includes a list of several rhetorical crimes, such as apostasy, which carries the death penalty (Article 259).⁽¹³⁾

According to the Article 19 report, Yemeni legislations in connection to freedom of the press and freedom of expression include articles that violate Yemen's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The restrictions in both the Press and Publications Law and the Penal Law contravene Yemen's obligations under international human rights laws, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁽¹⁴⁾

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Yemen ratified in 1987, guarantees the right to freedom of expression, and allows for its limitation only where the law stipulates and the restriction is necessary to "respect the rights or reputations of others" or "to protect national security, public order, public health, or public morals."⁽¹⁵⁾

12 - Yemen: Freedom of Expression in Peril" Jan. 2008 report issued by Article 19

13 - A Life-Threatening Career: Attacks on Journalists under Yemen's New Government," Human Rights Watch, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/node/256453/printable/print>

14 - Ibid.

15 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, approved in December 1966 under UN General Assembly Decision 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), entered into effect 23 March 1976, Article 19

The United Nations Human Rights Committee, a body of independent experts that provides authoritative and binding interpretations of the articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, stresses that laws limiting freedom of expression "must be sufficiently precise and not overly broad." It clarifies, "The law shall provide adequate guidance to those charged with its implementation; to enable them to ascertain appropriately which types of expression are subject to limitations and which are not."⁽¹⁶⁾

Although there were several legal reform initiatives in Yemen over the previous years, including the initiative to amend the Press and Publications Law, no amendments have been enacted until 2022.

Arbitrary Measures to Suppress Freedom of Expression

In addition to the vague provisions of the Press and Publications Law of 1995 on the types of news that can be published, and the manipulation of Article 103 by successive authorities to impose censorship on independent press, and due to war in the country, arbitrary practices and violations against the media and journalists have increased. Violations are often carried out either on the basis of undeclared decrees or under the so-called 'media reorganization'.



Areas controlled by the Houthi group have recently witnessed strict restrictions on freedom of expression, and against journalists and photographers. Journalists were prevented from appearing on foreign media outlets without obtaining approval from the group's authority, as in the case of Mohammed Shubaita. The group also banned journalists from filming any press or television reports, or even taking personal photos without prior permission from the Houthi-affiliated Ministry of Information.



Such procedures make it difficult for journalists who prepare press reports to publish their press materials under their real names. Therefore, they currently resort to write under pseudonyms due to fears for their lives, thereby losing their intellectual rights and journalistic effort.⁽¹⁷⁾



16 - A Life-Threatening Career," Op. Cit.

17 - Media Freedom Observatory, <https://marsadak.org/>



In the southern part of the country, the Southern Media Authority, a new entity established in May 2021 by a decision of the STC Chairman, Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, imposed several illegal and restrictive measures on freedom of expression. Limitations include the obligation of all print and broadcast media, and correspondents of Arab and international channels and newspapers to register with the Authority and obtain work permits from its offices in Aden.



Authority practices add up to the list of violations targeting the press and journalists in Yemen, as they target the media that do not conform to the directions of the STC.



One of the decisions of the Authority was to ban correspondents of Arab, international and local channels from recording programs or conducting interviews without obtaining an official permit from the Information Office in the governorate; yet, the Minister of Information issued a directive halting the Authority decision.



Impunity

For someone to act with some form of impunity, it means that there will be no consequences for their actions, which may include intimidation, threats, assaults and murder, all of which go unpunished.

Dozens of artists, bloggers, activists, and journalists in Yemen have been harassed, threatened, tortured, intimidated, imprisoned, and killed simply because they exercised their basic right to free expression, and in most cases, the perpetrators have not been held accountable.

It is a culture of impunity, according to IFEX, in which the balance of society is greatly distorted. ⁽¹⁸⁾

18 - IFEX website, <https://ifex.org/ar/campaigns/no-impunity/what-is-impunity/>

The culture of impunity stifles social criticism and limits raising difficult questions, for fear of being subjected to violations or violence by those who seek to prevent exercising freedom of expression. Thus, it allows the perpetrators to go unpunished. This is very common in this country dominated by several groups and circles of polarization. Yemen witnesses acts of persecution and repeated violence against journalists and creative individuals who are 'disloyal' to the parties.

This leads to bad repercussions, such as denying people of their right to authentic information, to exercise freedom of expression, and limiting their ability to fully participate in societal decision-making, all of which are elements of democratic practices.

Impunity in Yemen has contributed to exposing a wide range of opponents, journalists, and artists to repression and abuse, exposing society to rumors and misinformation, and making it difficult to obtain accurate information in various conflict arenas.

Unemployment and Homelessness

The war in Yemen led to the dismissal of numerous journalists from their full-time and freelance jobs for various reasons including the closure and razing non-partisan media, shunning prosecution, displacement or migration, fear for life, and fear of disappearance and arrest. This state of affairs turned the lives of most professional and independent journalists as well as journalists working for official or opposition media into a tragedy.

The displacement of Yemeni journalists and their fleeing of the country is an ongoing, yet scarcely documented process. Perhaps the most significant documentation effort in this regard is a report entitled "Yemeni Journalists: 3 Years of Homelessness and Displacement" issued by the Studies and Economic Media Center in May 2018.

The report revealed that the wave of displacement and forced displacement of Yemeni journalists was the largest in the history of Yemen. ⁽¹⁹⁾

19 - "Yemeni Journalists: Three Years of Homelessness and Displacement," A Report by the Studies and Economic Media Center, <http://economicmedia.net/?p=1481>

Spread of Rumors

In an atmosphere of conflict, the public needs to know the truth about what is going on, but it may not get it, because the nebulous atmosphere serves as an ideal setting for the spread of rumors. Poor opportunities to qualify Yemeni journalists on how to verify information and confront rumors makes them partake in good faith to those rumors thereby contributing to their spread.

In the past year, a group of newly established verification platforms detected more than four hundred rumors and misinformation on various websites and social media platforms.



459 rumors and misinformation were monitored by Sidq and Haqeeqa platforms in 2021.



As the parties to the conflict vigorously seek to change the facts to obtain more gains, on the one hand, and win the sympathy of the public, on the other, a number of platforms specialized in fighting rumors have been recently launched. These platforms include Haqeeqa Platform, Yemeni Sidq Platform, al-Mushahed Net, and Tafneed Platform, all of which are active in confronting rumors and misinformation.

Growing Digital Threats

Due to the nature of their work, journalists use various online accounts, which include work-related information, and personal information about themselves, their colleagues, their families, and their sources of information. Protecting these accounts by making backup copies and deleting information from public accounts on a regular basis helps protect data.

Journalists have to protect themselves and their sources of information. They can do that by keeping abreast of the latest news, updates, programs and applications of digital security, as well as familiarizing themselves of the latest digital threats such as hacking, phishing and surveillance.

Journalists should also consider the information they are responsible for, assess the possible consequences if it falls into the wrong hands, and take the necessary

precautions to protect their accounts, electronic devices, contacts, and online activities.

Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) has developed a suite of digital protection and security tools that journalists can benefit from.

All of this is important and necessary. However, the most complex problem is the journalists' lack of adequate knowledge, skills and experience related to those procedures which are constantly updated, while many journalists have not mastered the ABCs of such procedures.

Journalists in Yemen lack training and qualification opportunities in the field of digital security and data protection, even though most of their activities are conducted online, which makes them easy victims of cybercrime.⁽²⁰⁾

The Migrant Media Phenomenon

The media needs large space to breathe freedom and democracy, which is a conducive environment for a professional media that conveys the truth and provides the public with authenticated information.

A narrow margin freedom and democracy constitutes a restriction on the media and even suffocates media outlets and journalists. What will the scene look like in the absence of these conditions and their replacement by killing, repression, kidnapping and detention?

At the inception of its takeover of Sana'a, the Houthi group's first priority was closure of the media that is not loyal or affiliated with it. Local TV channels and offices of unsympathetic Arab and international channels were closed. It also suspended licenses, and closed newspapers and magazines, looted their offices and persecuted their personnel.

As a result of these measures, journalists fled the country for their lives. A number of local television channels also relocated abroad. To create what is known as the migrant Yemeni media.

Migrant media needs funding in order to survive. However, funding often goes with conditions that collide with the principles of the profession, such as shifting towards misinformation and bias in order to continue functioning.

Although external funding has its agenda and goals that will undoubtedly be taken into account by media personnel if not by the editorial staff, journalists in

20 - Digital Security Toolkit, International Journalists' Network, <https://cpj.org/ar/2020/01/post-550/>

some of these media exert remarkable efforts to provide a professional service. Yet, other media simply follow the dictates and whims of their backers.

In one way or another, all of this causes the media to bombard the public with huge amounts of misinformation and shady, biased, and conflict-promoting practices to the point where the Yemeni citizen is at a loss: whom they can trust.

TV channels such as Belqis and Yemen Shabab operate from Turkey, Suhail TV channel operates from Saudi Arabia, Yemen Today and Al-Jomhuria channels operate from Egypt, and al-Ghad al-Mushriq channel operates from the UAE. Each host and/or funding country has its agenda and perceptions about Yemen. Failing to take its positions into account will implicate the media and personnel in a series of endless troubles. Moreover, those media outlets are owned either by parties to the conflict or by certain wings within those parties, which further doubles the complexities of the media scene abroad.

Nevertheless, the positive aspect of the migrant media shall be stressed. These media outlets function in a broader margin of freedom, despite all obstacles and difficulties they might encounter. This enables them to present various viewpoints and try to cover events from all its aspects, unlike the local media, which often provides coverage from a particular viewpoint due to the division and polarization caused by war and conflict in the country.



Chapter 2

Violations of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression

Executive Summary



The report on violations of media freedom in Yemen in 2021 monitored 86 violations targeting individuals (journalists and social media activists), and media institutions ⁽²¹⁾

. The data and information in this report were collected by a professional team of observers affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center in five major governorates.

Violation cases documented by the Media Freedom Observatory focused on the governorates of Sana'a, Taiz, Aden, Hadhramout, Ma'rib, Ibb, Amran, and Shabwa.



In collecting data, team members rely on direct contacts with the victims, testimonies of their relatives, reports in the media, or the victims' reports, or their relatives' report to the Media Freedom Observatory. Then the monitoring team screens and verifies all observed data and information through a verification mechanism that involves at least three different sources.

The violations, recorded by the observatory in 2021, that were directed against individuals (journalists and social media activists), included cases of killing, injury, arrest, assault, threat, trial and interrogation of several journalists by prosecutors and police officers, and displacement of many journalists, as well as cases of storming, looting and suspension of media institutions. Other violations involved storming residence, looting, incitement, and arbitrary dismissal.

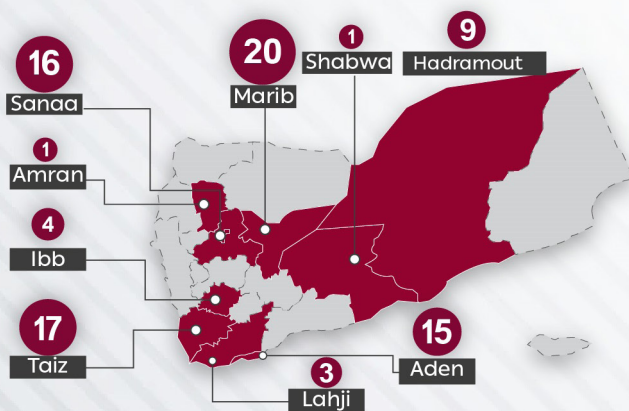
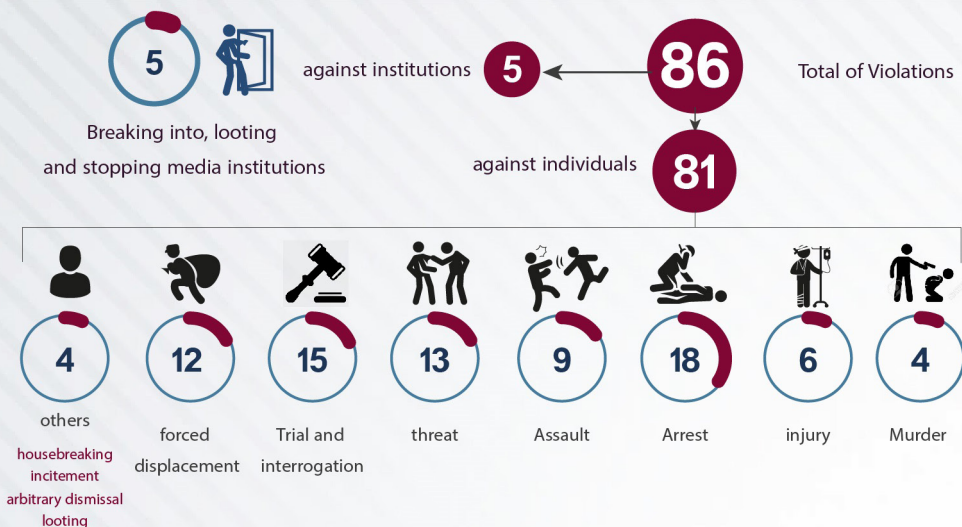
Perils to which journalists, human rights activists and observers are susceptible multiplied. Apprehension reached unprecedented levels. All parties to the conflict practiced persistent violations to varying degrees. Houthi-controlled areas are completely devoid of independent and partisan media. The media diversity once enjoyed in Yemen is now absent from the scene. In the various cities.

The Houthi group tops the list of perpetrators of violations targeting journalists in Yemen, followed by parties affiliated with the Yemeni government, parties affiliated with the STC, forces commanded by Tariq Saleh, or other influential actors, respectively. Other violations were carried out by unidentified perpetrators, and yet another violation by activists.

21- Data and information in this report do not mean that all violations were monitored. In many cases, victims choose not to report violations out of fear of further more perilous consequences.

Media freedom violations in Yemen

During 2021



Geographical
Distribution
of Violations

Types of Violations

In 2021, the report documented 86 violations, 81 cases (94%) involved targeting individuals (journalists and social media activists), whereas 5 violations (4%) targeted media outlets.

Violations were included 4 murders, 6 injured cases, 18 arrests, 9 assaults, 13 threats, 15 trial and interrogation by prosecutors and police officers, 12 displacements, 5 incidents of storming, looting and closure of media institutions. There were also 4 cases of violations ranging between raiding homes, looting, incitement, and arbitrary dismissal.

During 2021, five media organizations were subjected to various violations. Three violations were perpetrated by the STC armed forces; namely, the storming and seizure of the office of the Yemeni News Agency (Saba) in Aden and changing its name to the Aden News Agency, and storming the headquarters of Bandar Aden Radio, and Adania FM and halting the broadcasting of the two radio stations. The Houthi group stormed the headquarters of the Yemen Digital Media Company in Sana'a and took control of its assets and property. Houthi militants also stormed the headquarters of the Holy Quran Radio in Harib Baihan, Marib, after their takeover of the district.

Total of violations

86

5

against institutions



Breaking into, looting
and stopping media
institutions

Housebreaking
Incitement
arbitrary dismissal
looting



murder

4



injury

6



arrest

18



assault

9



threat

13



Interrogation
& trial

15



Force
displacement

12



Other

4

81

against individual

Responsibility for Violations

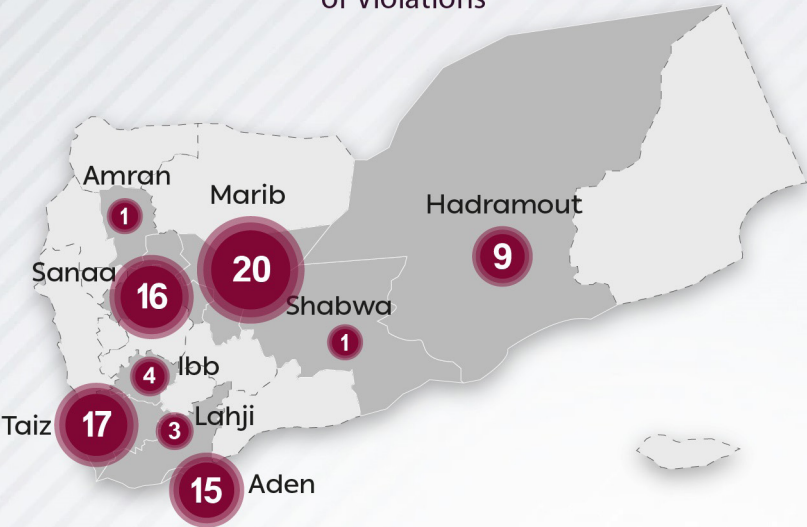
The Houthi group (Ansar Allah) tops the list of perpetrators of violations directed against journalists, being responsible for 46% of the total cases documented during past year, followed by parties by parties affiliated with the Yemeni government (24%). A total of 13% of violations were perpetrated by parties affiliated with the STC, while 19% of the total violations were committed by other parties (one violation was by Tariq Saleh's forces, 3 violations by influential actors, 9 violations by unidentified perpetrators, and another violation by activists).



Geographical Distribution of Violations

Various regions in Yemen witnessed cases of violations of media freedom. These included Marib, Taiz, Sana'a, Aden, Hadhramout, Ibb and Lahj, where 20, 17, 16, 15, 9, 4, and 3 violations took place, respectively. There was also one case of violation in each of Shabwa and Amran governorates.

• Geographical Distribution •
of Violations



Sana'a

The Yemeni capital, Sana'a, experiences a different media reality. It has become devoid of independent and partisan media after having hosted most newspapers, websites and various channels. Sana'a is dominated by one media color, since the Houthi group controls the capital and a number of northern governorates. It has ensured to allow only media with a single political orientation that serves the group and its line. Even journalists affiliated with pro-group media outlets were not spared brutality. Some of these were subjected to arrest, threats and trial. It can be affirmed that all the journalists who were released from Houthi prisons were in poor health conditions, and that some of them are still suffering from poor health.

The Houthi group deals brutally with anyone opposing it, in total indifference to international laws and charters. It has hitherto turned a deaf ear to continuous demands to cease targeting journalists. Such a call was done by international and local bodies and organizations working in the field of freedom of expression.

The Houthi group imposes strict restrictions on journalists who are still present in its areas of control. Houthi authorities prevent them from appearing on foreign media outlets without approval, as happened to Mohammed Shubaita. Journalists are also prohibited from photographing any press and television reports, and even prevented from taking personal photos, without prior permission from the Ministry of Information. On the other hand, it is difficult for journalists who prepare press reports to publish their press materials under their real names. Therefore, they currently resort to write under pseudonyms due to fears for their lives, thereby losing their intellectual rights and journalistic effort.

Journalists detained in Houthi prisons are subject to formal and political trials that lack the most basic rules and legal procedures. After five years of detention, enforced disappearance and torture against the background of their careers as journalists, four journalists- Abdul-Khaleq Imran, Akram Al-Walidi, Harith Humaid, and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri- have been sentenced to death.

With this painful record, Yemen is classified as one of the most repressive countries in terms of press freedom, not to mention the unconstitutionality and illegality of the court itself, and its violation of international laws and conventions that guarantee freedom of expression.

On the other hand, over the past years, Houthi authorities have persistently hid many journalists for months before their places of detention were discovered, as happened with Younis Abdussalam and Majed Yassin. Similarly, Waheed Al-Sufi is still forcibly disappeared, and nothing has been known about his fate for nearly seven years.

Aden

Aden has recently been a theater of practicing repression of journalists and restrictions on press freedom. The authorities have issued several decisions and directives circumscribing press freedom in the governorate. The Information Office in Aden governorate issued a circular instructing the media to obtain new work permits. Otherwise, they risk closure. This decision violates the law and superseding the powers of the Minister of Information to issue such decisions. Therefore, the decision prompted the Yemeni Minister of Information to issue a converse decision negating the circular.

The authorities in Aden prevent Yemeni media from importing media equipment without prior permission, while independent newspapers and channels are facing difficulties in opening offices or operating officially in Aden.

After the STC takeover, Aden witnessed a series of practices that restrict media freedom. The premises of the Yemeni News Agency (Saba), which is the official news agency of the internationally recognized government, was stormed. STC security forces also arrested director of Adania FM and Bandar Aden radio stations, Ra'fat Rashad, who was forcibly disappeared before revealing his place of detention. Sports journalist, Ammar Makhshaf, was also arrested from his home, while he had stopped writing on politics and focused exclusively on sports.

On the other hand, Aden was the locale of the most violent murders of Yemeni journalists in 2021. Four journalists were killed in Aden in a gruesome manner in less than a month. Ahmed Bu Saleh, Tariq Mustafa and Ahmed Baras were killed in a car bomb blast while they were accompanying the convoy of the Minister of Agriculture and the Governor of Aden.

Rasha Al-Harazi was assassinated as a result of planting explosive devices in her car, which led to her killing together with her fetus. Her husband, journalist Mahmoud Al-Utumi, was seriously injured. The incident took place as she and her husband both were on their way to hospital where Rasha was heading for child delivery.



The Southern Media Authority, a new entity established in May 2021 by a decision issued by the STC Chairman, Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, imposed several illegal and restrictive measures on freedom of expression. Limitations include the obligation of all print and broadcast media, as well as correspondents of Arab and international channels and newspapers to register with the Authority and obtain work permits from its offices in Aden.



Taiz

In the city of Taiz, violations against Yemeni journalists escalated, and the media profession has become fraught with perils. Due to restrictions on media freedom by partisan actors and influential figures in the security and military apparatus. Restrictions were imposed on opposition journalists creating difficulties for them to move around the city, not to mention charges of treason and campaigns of defamation aiming to silence opposition and voices critical of the civil, security and military authorities.

Many journalists critical of security and military authorities or armed militias in the governorate have been arrested, assaulted, and prosecuted. Ibrahim Al-Hussaini, a journalist, was arrested and detained in the Security Office prison in al-Sha-maitain district and then forcibly disappeared in one of the prisons of the Fourth Brigade in the Al-Afa' area against the backdrop of his writings reprimanding the security situation in the district.

Moreover, several journalists, including Naif Al-Wafi and Taha Saleh, were illegally prosecuted by the security authorities in Taiz governorate, and fled from their homes for fear of arrest. Aref al-Atam, who had a part-time job at the Media Department, Faculty of Arts, suffered an employment contract termination by the college due to the volume of the syllabus considered by students to be too extensive. He was also held accountable for his posts on social media viewed as offensive to the Yemeni government and officials.

In Taiz, the outlaws with influence and weapons is alarmingly growing. These outlaws play a substantial role in narrowing the margin of press freedom. The case of Imran Farhan is a good example. Farhan was attacked by a host of militants led by Abdulmalik Nasr Al-Fuhaidi, while filming a customary reconciliation between a gunman and a government entity. Four other journalists were banned from filming a report on a humanitarian program in Al-Jahmalia district. The head of the media department at Taiz University, Dr. Mansour Al-Qadasi, was targeted by an incitement campaign because of his statements to a satellite channel. He was also accused of treason.

Hadhramout

Although under the control of the legitimate government, Hadhramout is classified as one of the most press freedom violating governorate. A series of violations and crackdowns on freedom of expression, including arrests and prosecutions of dissident and critical voices, were documented.

The security authorities in Hadhramout have followed a belligerent behavior to pressure journalists, charging them with serious offences, such as destabilizing security and communication with foreign powers. Journalists are illegally arrested. Many journalists, such as Mohammed Al-Yazidi, Awad Kashmim, Sabri bin Makhashin, and Mohammed Al-Sharafi, have been unable to return home after fleeing the province for fear for their lives. These journalists are being tried in absentia by the Specialized Criminal (state security) Court.

Security authorities in Hadhramout governorate have been blatantly violating the rights of journalist and photographer Abdullah Babkir, who was arrested on malicious charges, and detained for a year. He was then referred to court where he was acquitted of all charges.

In an unprecedented violation of Yemeni press rights over the last two decades, the authorities in Hadhramout arrested female journalist Hala Badawi against the backdrop of her media activities, accusing her of sabotage and hostile acts. She was detained in the Military Intelligence prison, but was later transferred to the Central Prison.

The authorities denied her family visits, except for a single visit. Her family residence was also raided, and family members were intimidated and their phones confiscated. Badawi is still detained at the time of writing this report.

Murder

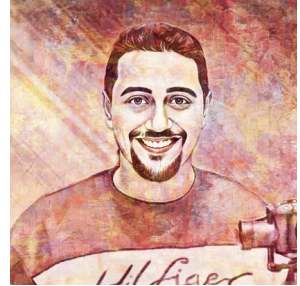
Four journalists were killed in 2021, and all cases were perpetrated by unidentified persons in Aden.



Ahmed Hadeej Baras



Ahmed Bu Salih



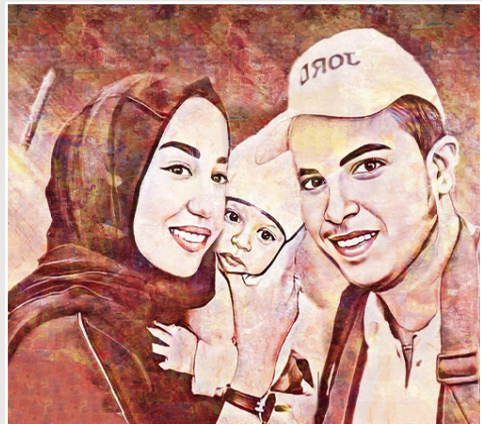
Tariq Mustafa



On October 10, as the convoy of the Minister of Fisheries, Salem Al-Suqatri and the Governor of Aden, Ahmed Lamlas passed at Hajif, Tawwahi District, a car parked on the side of the road exploded. Several escorts, including three journalists were killed. Two journalists, the press secretary of the governor of Aden, Ahmed Bu Salih, and photographer Tariq Mustafa, died immediately. The third journalist, Ahmed Hadeej Baras, was seriously injured, but died in the hospital three weeks later.



On November 09, Rasha Al-Harazi and her fetus were killed in a horrific bomb incident, and her husband, Mahmoud Al-Utumi, was seriously injured in the car bomb blast. As the press photographer was heading with his wife to hospital, and a few minutes before they arrived, the bomb exploded, throwing Mahmoud out of the car. He was seriously injured. As for his wife, since the explosives were laid under her seat, she was torn to pieces along with her fetus.



Mahmoud Al-Utumi And his wife Rasha Al-Harazi



This ugly method was used to target Mahmoud Al-Utumi and his wife, Rasha Al-Harazi. Mahmoud worked for Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath satellite channels, while Rasha worked for several local and international organizations as well as to Manasati 30. This incident is one of the most horrendous incidents targeting journalists in Yemen during the past seven years. It created an aura of fear among Yemeni journalists who feared that they and their families would be targeted due to their careers in a country that lacks the most basic safeguards of safety and human rights.

Mahmoud Al-Utumi had informed his colleagues a few days before the incident that he had received threats from Houthi leaders in Hodeidah, his hometown. Several other displaced journalists from Hodeidah received similar threats and were warned to stop anti-Houthi activities. The Houthi authorities summoned journalists who knew Mahmoud and questioned them on his address, car made, and movements. Previously, his brother had been kidnapped as a means to pressure him to stop his activities.

Mahmoud Al-Utumi, who narrowly escaped death in the incident, is still in a serious condition. He was transferred abroad for treatment and underwent seven operations, including four limb fracture bandaging operations, two wound dressing operations in the abdomen and thigh, and another dressing operation in the left hand. Yet, as he remembers the fate of his wife and her fetus, his conditions worsen.

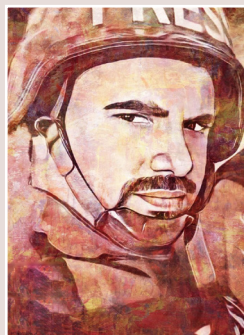
Casualties



On December 23, Yemen Shabab Satellite Channel correspondents in Marib, Majid Ayyash and Mohammed Abdulkarim, were slightly injured by shrapnel in different parts of their bodies. The shields they were wearing helped protect them in the explosion of a projectile launched by the Houthis.



Majid Ayyash



Mohammed Abdulkarim

It is noteworthy that Ayyash had been previously injured.

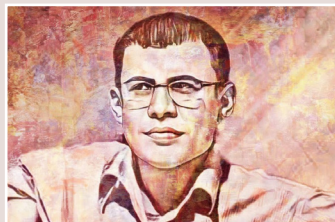
He was displaced from Al-Jawf governorate last year after the Houthi group took control of the area. As for journalist Mohammed Abdulkarim, he was nearly killed in a previous explosion, but his commitment to safety tools and wearing a shield protected him from the incident.



Mahmoud Al-Utumi was seriously injured in the explosion of a mine laid by unidentified perpetrators in his car on November 09, 2021, while he was taking his wife to hospital for childbirth. His wife, Rasha Al-Harazi, died in the explosion, while he was hospitalized in Aden and transferred to the UAE. He underwent several operations, and has not yet fully recovered.



Yemen Shabab Satellite Channel correspondent in Marib, Abd Al-Ilah Al-Buri, was slightly injured while covering the battles between the Yemeni government forces and the Houthi militia in the southern front of the Marib governorate. A Houthi sniper tried to target him. The journalist has survived similar incidents before.



Abd Al-Ilah Al-Buri



Yemen Satellite Channel correspondent, Abdullah Abu Saad, was injured during his coverage of the battles between the government forces and the Houthi group in al-Kassara front, west of Marib.



Abdullah Abu Saad

Arrest



On December 30, Hala Badawi was arrested in connection with her journalistic activities. She was accused of sabotage and hostile acts, and was detained in the Military Intelligence prison, before allowing her family to visit her only once. Later, she was transferred to the Central Prison illegally and in violation of international laws and treaties. The authorities also raided her family residence, intimidated family members and confiscating their phones.



Hala Badawi

Badawi has been detained since December 30, 2021. Security authorities seek to prolong her detention under various pretexts.



Journalist Raafat Rashad was detained and forcibly disappeared for three months. On the September 27, forces of the so-called STC Security Belt stormed the headquarters of Bandar Aden and Adania FM radio stations, and searched for Raafat Rashad, who then managed the two radio stations. The two radio stations were stopped without any legal reasons, even though all documents proving the legality of the two radio stations were submitted. Employees were instructed to inform Rashad to report at the Security Belt camp. He was detained for two days, after which he was forcibly disappeared for two weeks until his family learned that he had been transferred to the Round Palace Prison in Tawahi District, and were allowed to visit him for ten minutes. Yet, during the short visit were two soldiers present.



Raafat Rashad



On August 03, Younis Mohammed Abdassalam was arrested and forcibly disappeared by the Houthi group as he left his residence at night in poor health. According to information obtained from one of Younis' relatives, his family searched for him in vain. After repeatedly calling him, another person answered his phone, telling them that he was in the Security and Intelligence Prison, and that no one was allowed to visit him. This is the typical way whereby the Houthi group deals with journalists and activists in the field of freedom of expression in its areas. Younis is in poor condition due to the economic and psychological situation he is going through, especially after he was arrested in Abyan governorate a year ago at an STC checkpoint, while on his way from Marib to Aden. He was released after three days. During detention, he was subjected to cruel treatment, torture and starvation.



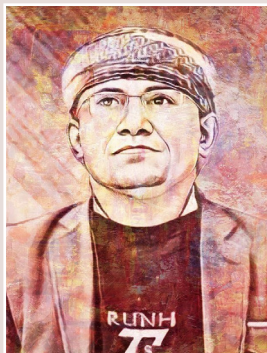
Younis Mohammed Abdassalam



Ibrahim Al-Hussaini was detained in the Security Department prison in the Al-Shamayatain district, then forcibly disappeared in a Fourth Brigade prison in Al-Afa under the pretext of his journalistic writings in which he rebuked the security situation in the district. His salary was suspended and was targeted by an incitement campaign that aimed to silence him.



On July 12, 2021, the Houthi group arrested Fahd Al-Arhabi, searched his house, and terrorized his family without any legal justifications. It was carried out against the backdrop of his publication of posts and videos on his Facebook page, documenting the moment Houthi armed men stormed a wedding party in Amran governorate. He upbraided the arbitrary practices practiced by the group against citizens. Al-Arhabi was detained for 25 days during which he was interrogated and terrorized. His home and personal phone were searched and his recorded phone calls were listened to in an attempt to find a ground for indicting him.



Fahd Al-Arhabi

Threats



In August 2021, the two journalists, Naif Al-Wafi and Taha Saleh, received threats and were illegally prosecuted by the security authorities in Taiz. The journalists were forced to leave their homes and move to a safer place out of fear for their safety. The



Naif Al-Wafi

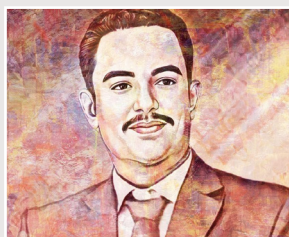


Taha Saleh

incident aroused their families' concern, especially as armed patrols affiliated with the Taiz Military Axis Command were stationed in front of the house. The prosecution of Naif Al-Wafi, who works for Al-Jazeera Mubasher, and Taha Saleh comes against the background of their coverage of the events of killing Al-Hareq family in Taiz.



Ali Al-Uqbi, who works for the Al-Thawra newspaper website in Marib, received death threats from Houthi leaders on account of his journalistic career. He has received several death threats, being menaced that he would face the fate of the journalists murdered or killed by explosives in Aden. His family in Al-Mahwit governorate, which is under Houthi control, has been harassed and threatened from time to time.



Ali Al-Uqbi



On December 20, journalist Abd al-Rabb Al-Fattahi was threatened by influential figures in Lahj governorate, because of his journalistic writings. The latest of which was a report on corruption in relief organizations and crooked delegates in community committees. He received several threat messages from influential people in the region. Al-Fattahi was displaced from Taiz governorate to Lahj, fleeing the oppression of the Houthi group.



Abd al-Rabb Al-Fattahi

Other Violations

In 2021, the Media Freedom Observatory documented the trial and interrogation of 15 journalists by prosecutors and police officers in several Yemeni governorates. All these trials and legal proceedings were politicized, and in blatant violation of the basic legal rules and procedures, let alone the unconstitutionality and illegality of the court itself. They violated international laws and conventions that guarantee freedom of expression to journalists. The trial of four journalists, Abdel-Khaleq Imran, Akram Al-Walidi, Harith Humaid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, has been resumed, after nearly a year of sentencing them to death against the backdrop of their journalistic careers.



The Houthi group also interrogated journalists who were known for their loyalty to the group, and who worked in areas under its control, and for media outlets affiliated with the Houthi group, or foreign media outlets loyal to it. Correspondent of Lebanon-based Al-Manar Satellite Channel, Khalil Abdullah Al-Umari, was interrogated by the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a in relation to the Ministry of Telecommunications charges against the Intelligence apparatus of smuggling calls via long distance optical fibers. Al-Umarai had been previously summoned by the same authority on July 12 in connection with the same charges. Similarly, Dar Saad Police Department in Aden summoned Saleh Al-Obaidi and charged him of defamation against the background of a press report on corruption of the Sanitation Department. Likewise, Abdullah Al-Shadli was interrogated by the Public Prosecution Office in Hadhramout for his writing of a press report on the deterioration of university education. In spite of its incompetence, the Eastern Ibb Governorate Prosecution Office summoned Walid Hisham Al-Sada, editor-in-chief of the independent Al-Liwa newspaper, based in Sana'a, for interrogation, accusing him of incitement against the backdrop of publishing corruption cases involving Executive Office and security services leaders.



In October 2021, 12 journalists were displaced, some of whom were displaced with their family from the districts of Abdiya and Harib in Marib governorate after the Houthi militia took control of these areas and bombed them with various types of weapons. The journalists fled for fear of oppression by this group, which is known for its hostility to all journalists and activists who criticize it.

Head of the Media Department at Taiz University, Dr. Mansour Al-Qadasi, was targeted by a campaign of incitement and accusations of treason. These intimidating practices were motivated by his statements to a satellite channel and his defense of the legitimacy of the decision of the Taiz University Council to suspend work, and his demands of putting an end to the repeated assaults on university's employees and property. His statements in which he demanded putting an end to exploiting students by the parties to the conflict and dragging them into their vain battles were distorted.

Media Institutions

A host of Houthi militants in Sana'a stormed the Yemen Digital Media Company. The militants prevented employees from doing their jobs, confiscated company assets, appointed a new manager, and imposed special guards while seizing its property. On April 18, security personnel and delegates from the Specialized Criminal Court of First Instance in the Capital Municipality stormed the building. They had an undated judicial seizure notice that carried no name or seal. It included malicious accusations of the CEO of the company, Taha Al-Maamari, including committing crimes against state security, subsidizing aggression and communication with foreign countries. It is a charge raised against many journalists earlier. Last September, Houthi militants stormed the Holy Quran Radio in Harib Bayhan and looted its library after taking control of the area.

STC gunmen stormed the office of Saba News Agency in Aden and threatened journalists with arrest if they returned to the building. The gunmen seized the building and looted its contents before changing its name to Aden News Agency in a manner that lacks any legal justification. This act is a flagrant violation of the freedom of expression.

On September 27, STC gunmen broke into and stopped the broadcast of Adania FM and Bandar Aden radio stations without any legal justifications. The closure of the two radio stations caused material losses as both stations were bound with contracts with companies, agencies, institutions, and civil society organizations; and were obligated to broadcast advertisements and programs. The two radio stations are run by Raafat Rashad, who was arrested for three months. The radio stations are investments owned by the Generation Foundation for Artistic Production.

Chapter 3

New Actors

New Actors

When journalists are placed at the top of the targeting list, violence is at its peak. Those involved in violence and human rights violations deem it necessary to get rid of witnesses.

In order to spare their life, or to escape prosecution and arbitrary measures, many experienced and qualified journalists have emigrated. This was discussed at length under (Unemployment and Homelessness). In the meantime, the scene was void of professional journalistic work, save a few exceptions.

However, the few remaining first-class journalists did their best. In order to rehabilitate a new generation of journalists, the Studies and Economic Media Center, along with other civil society organizations, have played a tangible role in preparing young male and female journalists to reestablish the professionalism and ethics of journalism. These are the ones dubbed here as 'new actors'.

These journalists have covered the diverse aspects of the issues. Besides covering the humanitarian situation, they cover events in an analytical manner, or through professional and sensitive reports. They boldly monitor and report violations perpetrated by the parties to the conflict, while abiding by ethics of the profession. They also address issues of women, peace, etc.

The professionalism and independence of that coverage have qualified a number of new actors to win international and regional awards, including the following:

Rania Abdullah won the RT International Award, or better known as Khaled Al-Khatib Award, 2021, for her short documentary film "Labor".

Salem bin Sahl won the first place in the media award on migration issues in Yemen, 2021.

Bassam Al-Qadi received the Journalism and Science Award organized by the Journalism and Science Project in the Middle East and North Africa, 2021.

These actors work through independent media platforms. These platforms emerged successively through joint coordination between civil society organizations focusing on press and media affairs and international organizations interested in creating independent platforms to save the Yemeni media scene. It is done in collaboration with journalists who have been rehabilitated

through joint projects between these local and international organizations. Platforms interested in general and specialized press coverage include:

Al-Mushahed Net platform

T platform

Dekka platform

Khuyut platform

Hodge platform

Al-Maqala platform

Expatriate Channel

Al-Gomhoria Channel

Marib 360 platform

Taiz Time platform

Arwa platform

Sukoon platform

Adeniya Radio FM 88.9 FM

Several platforms specialized in fighting rumors have also emerged recently, including: Haqeeqah platform, Yemeni Sidq platform, Al-Mushahed Net, and Tafneed platform, all of which are effective platforms in confronting rumors and misinformation.

Chapter 4

A Roadmap for Media in Yemen

A Roadmap for Media in Yemen

Over five months, the Studies & Economic Media (SEMC) Center, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) , organized a series of meetings that brought together media workers, where deep discussions took place on the most prominent issues and priorities. The spirit of the joint teamwork was the most prominent title of these meetings, as well as the brainstorming to draw the features of the Yemeni media future in the coming years.

The participation of about 42 media organizations and institutions, with their expertise and diversity in media work, was a focal point in building the road map, and contributed very effectively to reaching consensus and creating innovative work mechanisms that would make an important leap for media work in Yemen, provided that there are capabilities to implement it in practice.

The methodology followed by the program contributed to reaching unique and practical discussions and proposals. Initially, there was an opportunity for general discussions about the media in Yemen; its reality and challenges, in addition to reviewing and exchanging experiences, and identifying lessons learned from field work.

The methodology allowed the organizations to choose the areas most close to their goals and areas of work. These organizations were divided into five priorities (topics) that were reached by voting on predetermined topics during the first

coordination meeting, and those topics were as follows:

1. The reality of media freedom and the challenges of access to information
2. War and media role in building peace
3. Disinformation, misinformation and the role of investigative journalism
4. Occupational safety for journalists
5. Women in the media and the level of their presence in decision-making positions

Topic One:

Freedom of the Media and Challenges of Access to Information

The Yemeni constitution and Yemeni legislation ensure the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, and stipulate the implementation of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the generally recognized rules of international law. Articles (58, 42, 27) of the constitution ensure the right of opinion and expression, scientific, artistic and creative achievements, and intellectual pluralism.

The Yemeni Press and Publications Law No. (25) of 1990 also ensures the freedom of the press, thought and the issuance of newspapers and magazines.

However, these constitutional and legal guarantees are not backed by an independent, effective and impartial judiciary capable of enforcing the content of the constitutional and legal texts in this field. Although Yemen is one of the countries that have ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, there are gaps in legal texts and practices that still restrict these rights.

The report "Yemen: Freedom of Expression in Danger – January 2008" issued by Article19, indicates that the provisions of the law and the constitution are positive principles, but they have not found their way to be applied and practiced ⁽²²⁾.

According to the same report, the Yemeni Press and Publications Law imposes severe and difficult restrictions on freedom of the media, especially Article 103 of it, which includes a list of restrictions on journalists. Besides, the Yemeni Penal Code sets broad restrictions, such as "in the interest of national security" or "within the limits of the law." The law also includes a list of several rhetorical crimes, such as apostasy, which carries the death penalty. (Article 259).

Yemeni legislation and laws of freedom of media and expression contain articles that violate Yemen's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ⁽²³⁾.

During the current situation, where the civil war is at its most intense since 2015, media freedom has been uprooted and freedom of expression is mostly blocked

22 - Yemen: Freedom of Expression in Danger. A report by Article19 organization, January 2008. It's read on January 3, 2022

23- Yemen: Freedom of Expression in Danger. A report by Article19 organization

with limited exceptions from one region and another in the conflict areas. 50 journalists have been killed since the outbreak of the war. Journalists are subjected to killing, arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, threats, attacks, verbal violence and harassment, censorship. They are also subject to trials, and death sentences have been issued against 4 journalists detained in Sana'a, which we fear to be executed.

The journalism in Yemen has become fraught with many dangers, and journalists are among the largest segments that have paid the price of the war, in terms of abuse, displacement, and silencing of mouths. The Media Freedoms Observatory documented 86 cases of violations against media freedoms in Yemen during the year 2021 only, including the killing of 4 journalists, including a pregnant journalist was targeted with an explosive device placed in her car.

Due to the increasing volume of violations against journalists in Yemen, hundreds of male and female journalists were forced to move to other cities and countries. A report on "Yemeni Journalists.. 3 Years of Displacement" has revealed that the displacement and forced displacement of Yemeni journalists during the current period of war are the largest in the history of Yemen. The report stated that more than 400 journalists who are members of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate at least have been displaced by the war.

Violations against male and female journalists in Yemen are one of the most significant challenges facing journalists while practicing their media job in various Yemeni governorates. Therefore, this issue was a topic discussed by Media Freedom and Access to Information Group, and a road map was produced to reduce these challenges and promote media freedoms in Yemen.

Recommendations Matrix

Sector	Activities
Work to end violations against journalists and media freedoms during the next stage. This axis includes the following proposals:	<p>Implementing advocacy campaigns to support freedom of expression and ensure the right of journalists to work freely and independently.</p>
	<p>Activating the mechanism for monitoring violations against Yemeni journalists and sending them to local, regional and international public opinion.</p>
	<p>Adopting blocs established outside Yemen that aim to support the cases of journalists and send them to international public opinion in order to pressure to end violations against journalists at the local level.</p>
	<p>Forming local human rights groups to defend journalists and freedom of expression</p>
	<p>Strengthening solidarity among journalists themselves and implement activities that unify their position on issues of freedom of opinion and expression.</p>
	<p>Mobilizing all partners, including lawyers, trade unionists, and human rights activists, to stand with journalists in maintaining freedom of opinion and expression as one of the main pillars of democracy and human rights.</p>
	<p>Supporting detained and abducted journalists of media and advocating their cases.</p>
	<p>Activating the role of the Journalists Syndicate in a way that promotes media freedom, and freedom of expression and access to information.</p>
	<p>Coordinating with the international system concerned with media freedom, including the UN envoy to Yemen, to work to end violations against journalists, and to provide an enabling environment for journalism.</p>

Sector	Activities
	<p>Having pressure to open an investigation file into the violations against journalists, and to demand accountability for the parties that committed them.</p> <p>Organizing advocacy campaign in line with the International Day to end Impunity for Crimes against Journalists 2021.</p> <p>Producing in-depth investigative reports that ensure accountability for those involved in violations of freedom of opinion and expression and attacks on journalists, for the purpose of ensuring judicial follow-up and the impunity. These investigative reports will be discussed with the competent authorities to implement the law.</p> <p>Establishing an early warning system linked to the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, through which journalists can obtain legal support and professional and legal advice immediately upon the occurrence of a violation. They can also report any case of violation.</p>
Training and making Yemeni journalists aware of freedom of expression and media rights and freedoms.	<p>Organizing training and awareness programs on freedom of expression, local legal texts concerned with freedom of opinion and expression, and international charters and agreements that ensure this right.</p> <p>Preparing professional guide books to protect journalists during media coverage in conflict areas, including physical and occupational safety, providing guidance, legal and psychological support.</p> <p>Qualifying journalists legally to deal with violations</p>
Developing legislation concerned with freedom of opinion and expression	<p>Preparing studies on the legislative environment related to freedom of opinion and expression and identifying the shortcomings in such legislation compared to what is included in international charters and treaties in this regard.</p> <p>Proposing amendments to legal texts that hinder or limit freedom of opinion and expression in a way that improves the legal system for freedom of expression.</p> <p>Implementing advocacy campaigns for the abolition of legal texts that violate the right of journalists to freedom of expression and criminalize or punish journalism.</p>

Sector	Activities
Supporting the right of access to information and dissemination	Establishing a civil information and research center with a database that facilitate the searching or coordinating with the government to activate the National Information Center that was established by Republican Decree No. 155 for the year, which link between information centers in the different governorates sectors, and signing a protocol between the Yemeni journalists' syndicate and information centers of governorates o facilitate journalists' access to information in accordance with the Right to Information Law.
	Training and educating journalists about the right to obtain information, as information is a right guaranteed by the constitution and laws.
	Pressure by journalists to raise awareness that information is a right of citizens in general, through their press materials and media outlets.
	Building the capacities of journalists and training them on how to use the Right to Information Law, in addition to training them on technical tools to access open source information.
	Preparing a "Guide for Journalists and Citizens" on the right of access to Information

Topic Two:

War and media role in building peace

The Yemeni media has been directly hit by the war in Yemen, as its role has recently been characterized as (inciting, inflammatory, biased) with some simple models whose performance was supportive of peace and coexistence.

The Yemeni media lived a state of polarization by the parties to the conflict in Yemen. It often adopts a discourse that incites hatred, treason, and the absence of a different opinion.

Many media outlets in Yemen are owned by the parties to the conflict, which makes them ditching against each other according to the events in the fields of armed military operations. With the escalating armed conflict, the inflammatory and inciting media discourse rises, and the media owned by the parties to the conflict have turned into means of mobilization, which contributes to prolonging the war and complicating the situation.

A study carried out by Studies & Economic Media Center, on how much the visual media adhere to professional standards, concluded with interesting results, including:

- The circle of incitement language widens, the inflammatory mobilization tone rises, and the low level of impartiality in media work prevails.
- The awareness of Yemeni journalists about professional standards and conflict-sensitive journalism is poor.
- The media discourse is unilateral and bias towards this or that of the conflict parties ⁽²⁴⁾.

Except some calm that accompanies prisoner exchange deals, the media and social networking sites in Yemen represent an additional battlefield beside the military operations. Calling back past conflicts prevails, and the tones of treason, sectarianism, blasphemy, regionalism, hatred and psychological warfare rise.

The newly emerging independent media in the form of independent platforms and websites is trying to present a different model, but it faces many difficulties,

24 - How much the visual media adhere to professional standards, a study by Studies & Economic Media Center, in 2018.
<http://economicmedia.net/?p=826>

such as lack of funding, insufficient qualification of independent journalists, and poor financial returns for journalists working in it in light of a war environment and deteriorating living conditions.

What gives cause for optimism, despite the complexities of the Yemeni scene, is the efforts made by some local organizations, such as the Studies & Economic Media Center, the Yemeni Center for the Measurement of Public Opinion, and the "Manasaty30" organization, in coordination with international organizations to improve awareness in the media community about the dangers of negative media and the importance of moving towards positive media supporting opportunities for coexistence, peace and human rights. Also, it is optimistic to see the tangible results achieved by these efforts at the level of independent media discourse.

Although many specialized training workshops were implemented in peace journalism, conflict sensitive journalism, coexistence journalism, and journalism in support of women's and children's rights, in addition to organizing webinars and issuing specialized knowledge and training manuals, such as a conflict-sensitive journalism guide book, a coexistence-and-peace journalism guide book, and a guide book to Child rights journalism, however, there is still an urgent need in Yemen for more informed media, highly qualified journalists, and new ideas towards peace and coexistence in the face of the widespread war machine.

The complexities of the scene in Yemen also require to develop plans for holding continuous series of activities aimed at bringing about a change in awareness and creating rapprochement between the conflict parties by reducing the tone of inflammation and increasing the discourse supporting the peace and coexistence.

Recommendations Matrix

Sector	Activities
Building the capacities of journalists on peace journalism.	Holding in-depth and advanced training for journalists on conflict sensitivity, constructive coverage, and making campaigns and media plans for peace.
	Training specialized journalists throughout Yemen within the TOT program on peace journalism.
	Adding theoretical frameworks to the curricula of mass of communication faculties, which give students a culture of tolerance, conflict-sensitive journalism, and coexistence journalism.
	Training journalists on appropriate mechanisms to learn about the culture of violence and hatred and to abide by international laws and covenants guaranteeing human rights.
	Taught journalists on local publishing laws, international charters and treaties that ensure freedom of expression, and ethical and professional standards related to this aspect.
Studies, guidelines and media charters in support of the media of peace and coexistence	Making a dictionary of hate terms in Yemen and publishing it widely.
	Developing charters for professional media that take into account conflict-sensitive journalism and promote peace and coexistence.
	Providing a scientific and procedural framework for the role that the Yemeni media can play in resolving conflicts and building community peace.
	Establishing initiatives for meetings and joint activities between the leaders and cadres of the Yemeni media of the conflicting parties, to agree on points of convergence.
	Preparing a series of theses that discuss the war, its motives, its consequences, and the experiences of other countries to form a knowledge base for the media.
	Establishing media alliances to support peace and develop joint media work charters.

Sector	Activities
Monitoring content that promotes violence and hatred	Creating specialized teams to monitor and track the hate speech in the local media, and trying to dissuade them through focused training programs.
	Spotting media practices that promote conflict and spread hatred.
	Establishing departments to control the media quality of the media institutions, focus on excluding hate speech and violence.
Supporting independent professional media, which aims to promote tolerance and spread a culture of peace and coexistence.	Supporting independent media platforms that adhere to professional media standards in publishing.
	Helping media institutions develop their own internal regulations and bylaws to adhere to conflict-sensitive journalism standards and promote coexistence and peace.
	Producing different materials to combat hatred and violence, and disseminating them widely in the modern and traditional media.
	Implementing media programs that promote and highlight the common points of convergence between Yemenis, and promoting the national spirit that transcends small affiliations.
	Providing legal support to the independent media.
	Supporting initiatives to establish centers and institutions concerned with peace and to enhance the space for dialogue among Yemenis.

Topic Three:

Disinformation, misinformation, and the role of investigative journalism

Media disinformation means false information, fake news, and misdirection of news, which are usually used with the aim of misleading the reader and causing confusion in public opinion. During wars, disinformation promoters aim to mobilize public opinion and get new supporters to the battle.

By information disorder or «information chaos» we mean the sharing or development of fake news with or without intent to harm. This phenomenon is in social media more than others.

In our discussion of this topic, we focused on three main axes, including the following:

- The experience of investigative journalism in Yemen.
- The reality of misinformation in Yemen
- The role of investigative journalism in combating disinformation.

During its short experience in Yemen, investigative journalism since 2007 has shown an optimistic effect in fighting corruption. A number of Yemeni investigative journalists have won regional and international awards in combating corruptions and suspicious commercial activities, human rights activities violations. This gives a hope that investigative journalism is able to play a good role in combating disinformation and enabling public opinion in Yemen to contribute to the look for the truth.

With the start of the war on March 26, 2015, the media in Yemen turned into a war media that fabricates news and guides the media message for the benefit of the parties to the conflict and their supporters from abroad. The professional and objective media are almost absent from the scene due to the monopoly of funding and the dependence of most of the media on the parties to the conflict, as well as the dangers of death facing independent journalists.

There are many implications of the misleading media discourse in Yemen, but they all converge at the dangers of tearing the social fabric, fueling the fighting and getting away of calls for peace and efforts to stop the war.

Forms of media disinformation in Yemen:

- Declaring others as disbelievers: and religious hostility, where the terms of «the Rawafids, the Nawasibs, the fire-worshippers, the Shiites, the Sunnis, the Brotherhood followers, the atheists, the secularists, the hypocrites, and other terms fueling division and so on are frequently used.
- Treason: such as using the terms of «mercenaries, agents, Iran's tails, followers of the Emirates, and the remnants of Affash.»
- Criminalization: It is confiscating the right to disagree, and prohibiting freedom of expression, which has caused widespread targeting of journalists who became the first victims of the war, whether they were killed, detained, abducted, or persecuted.
- Taboo: Women are the first victims of it, as the media discourse works to compose negative content about women's dress, social activity, and mixing with males in markets and cafes.

Disinformation practices are "falsification, fabrication, irony, plagiarism, misrepresentation and intentional lying in shaping news and directing media content towards unilateralism closed to oneself in hostility to the other."

The role of investigative journalism in combating disinformation

Investigative journalism is characterized by its ability to monitor and exercise criticism, by checking facts and exposing falsehood and disinformation. The history of investigative journalism in the world and the Arab region shows how this type of journalism succeeded in reeducating the media in public opinion, and showing the dangers of manipulating content on society.

The priorities of investigative journalism in Yemen are to combat hate speech, incitement to violence, and misleading media discourse, in addition to strengthening public opinion trends towards peace and coexistence, and enabling public opinion to contribute to look for truth.

Recommendations Matrix

Sector	Activities
Training on investigation and verification of misinformation and investigative journalism.	Train journalists on investigative journalism and tools for verifying information and misinformation.
	Carry out awareness campaigns and programs for university and high school students about misinformation and mechanisms for verifying fake information and news.
	Hold an extensive and real training by media organizations for their employees to verify and detect misinformation.
	Train third and fourth-level students in media faculties on the basics of verification and publishing methods.
	Train academic cadres in media faculties on issues of verification and confronting misinformation.
Raising societal awareness in order to confront fake news and rumors	Establish a platform specialized in educating citizens about the mechanisms of news and information.
	Spread societal awareness through social media and the traditional media about misinformation and the basics of verifying information.
	Develop mechanisms for community reporting on rumors and misleading news, so that qualified bodies undertake the research, investigation and auditing of such information.
	Create a community network that handles the reporting of misinformation.
	Establish a mechanism for a regular refutation of misleading and false information.
	Support platforms specialized in spotting misinformation and rumors in Yemen.
	Produce press and media materials that expose misinformation and verify information.

Sector	Activities
Mechanisms of verification and detection of misinformation.	Establish a Yemeni specialized network specialized in investigating and verifying misleading information and data.
	Prepare a media code of conduct to combat misinformation and fake news.
	Prepare guides to verify information and spot media misinformation
	Facilitate the communication of Yemeni journalists with international journalists and institutions to exchange experiences with regard to investigation and detection of disinformation.
The policy of transparency and disclosure in the media.	Publish the publication policies of all media outlets, including funding sources.
	Prepare guides for editorial work within the framework of media institutions, which include standards for auditing and verification of information and all methods of journalism in newsrooms.
	Adopt a disclosure policy in media institutions, including their editorial structures and employees.

Topic Four:

Occupational Safety of Journalists

The concept of occupational safety for journalists is defined as everything related to the physical, psychological and digital safety of journalists while working or travelling, and the safety of their work tools.

The procedures are determined by a set of measures, guidelines, and rules of conduct that ensure the protection of the journalist from physical, psychological and social risks and the protection of his electronic devices and accounts from hacking.

Under arranging for the meetings of the group on occupational safety of journalists, a survey was carried out to measure the reality of occupational safety and digital security in Yemen, which included a random sample of 30 male and female journalists from 13 governorates.

The results showed a low level of awareness of the principles, behaviors and guidelines of occupational safety in general, as it was found out from the survey.

Findings of Survey:

- The awareness of occupational safety procedures is poor and training efforts provided in this field are insufficient.
- The hostility of the parties to the conflict to journalists and the high risks that journalists are exposed to in Yemen (killing, arresting, abduction, and hacking).
- The media work environment and the movement between conflict areas in Yemen are risky. Dozens of journalists were killed, (50 journalists were killed during the conflict, and hundreds of journalists were harmed and their safety threatened).
- The psychological suffering of journalists is worsening in conflict zones. They are considered as enemies and their work is disrupted due to the war.
- The authorities in conflict areas don't shoulder their responsibilities towards holding accountable those who violate the safety of journalists, or threaten their safety. The media outlets journalists work for don't care much to the safety of

their journalists, which forces some reporters work in danger areas without first aid tools, protection shields, or gas prevention tools.

- The psychological anxiety of journalists has reached its peak due to the growing hostility to them by the various parties to the conflict and the mounting cases of public incitement against them.

About the digital safety, and according to the findings of the survey, a number of Yemeni journalists were exposed to: (hacking, loss of accounts on social media, threats and intimidation) due to the low level of awareness of digital security procedures by journalists as a result of not obtaining sufficient training in this field.

Common challenges and threats can be summarized in the following points:

- Censorship, threats, attack, intimidation, and ill-treatment.
- Poor awareness of the media outlet of the importance of the journalist's life and the necessity of providing safety tools.
- The unavailability of occupational safety tools for journalists in the market for those who want to buy.
- The high risks of field media work, killing, abduction, harassment, threats and other violations.
- Social difficulties (harassment and male domination) towards female journalists working in the field.

Recommendations Matrix

Sector	Activities
Building the capacity of male and female journalists on physical and psychological integrity and digital security	Holding a training on occupational safety for journalists working in the field.
	Holding intensive training courses in digital security for journalists.
Raising journalists' awareness of occupational safety and digital security	Creating a tendency among media organizations to adopt a policy including the professional and digital safety for its workers.
	Establishing a mechanism to oblige the media outlets to provide tools of occupational safety.
	Publishing a variety of press materials and television programs that keep pace with digital developments, and giving knowledge about the tools of physical and psychological safety.
	Creating digital awareness among journalists.
	Journalists working in media organizations should force their institutions to provide all digital protection applications and programs to ensure their digital safety and security.

Sector	Activities
Awareness and psychological support for journalists	Working on practical and continuous psychological support programs for journalists.
	Developing a specific methodology for psychological support programs for journalists.
	Educating doctors from different governorates outside the country on professional and psychological safety programs for journalists and return them within the project to support the media in Yemen.
	Contracting with psychological consultants in various governorates to provide psychological support sessions for journalists.
	Developing a strategy for integrated psychological support and counseling centers and clinics in certain Yemeni governorates.
	Taking care about the psychological state of journalists and workers in media institutions through arranging annual home and abroad trips for them.
	Adding the health insurance in the work contracts of journalists during the work period.
	Providing an appropriate working environment for journalists in newsrooms and work offices, and providing physical safety tools during field coverage.
	Creating entertainment spaces within the media establishments for its members, or at least a mini-lounge to release negative energies and have coffee and refreshing drinks.
	Providing a gym or equipment that meets the minimum level of any physical effort to ease the mental burdens of male and female journalists in their institutions.

Topic Five:

Women in the media and the level of their presence in decision-making positions

Yemeni women achieved a remarkable leadership and media presence between the sixties and nineties of the last century. Mahia Najeeb was the first woman journalist, franchisor and editor-in-chief of the "Shamsan Girl" magazine in the Arabian Peninsula, which was published in 1960. And Radhia Shamsheer is the first journalism graduate in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula in 1972, and one of the founders of the Democratic Journalists Syndicate in 1976 and a member of its Central Council in the nineties. Adila Bayoumi is one of the media cadres and one of the founders of Aden Radio. She started as a broadcaster in 1964, then moved to work for BBC Radio in 1968.

In northern Yemen, Raoufa Hassan was the first journalist and head of a department in the official Al-Thawra newspaper. She was credited with founding the College of Media (Mass of communication faculty) at Sana'a University. She founded the Media Department at the College of Arts, and in 1996, it was turned into a faculty. However, the media landscape has been declining after that.

During the years of the revolution and the Yemeni war, we haven't not seen women experts in the economic, military and security fields. Of course, their presence as a political analyst in the media is rare, and mostly in non-Yemeni media.

Because of the ongoing war, a number of well-known female journalists have disappeared from the media scene and not working in journalism either for security reasons, or for the closure of the media outlets they were working in. However, many skilled young female journalists have made a hit, who may not engage in politics, but they like the societal media.

Despite the presence and success of women, even in a few numbers, in various fields, the media is still far away and does not reflect this reality as it should be.

The Yemeni women are the most viewers of negative media because of their role as a housewife and staying at home for a long period of time doing housework and watching series, films and programs that give the same image; the broken, weak woman, the housewife, the mother, the successful wife, and the unsuccessful woman if she worked in business.

The Yemeni media perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of women and their subordination to the authority of men, and forces them to surrender to this reality. With the emergence of modern media and social media, the presence of women journalists has been linked to the same model, far from their core issues.

According to the statistics of the Central Statistical Organization for the year 2013, the percentage of women working in the media is only 20%, while male journalists is 80%.

A study carried out by the French Agency for Media Development (CFI) concluded that there is a significant absence of Yemeni women in the media, programs and news. The percentage of her presence in the news, whether as a journalist, a source of information, or the subject of a news story is (12%), compared to (88%) for men.

This comes at a time when the number of graduates from media colleges in their various departments reaches approximately 125 graduates annually, half of them are women (statistics of media colleges in Yemeni universities).

The absence of women from decision-making in the media is similar to their deliberate absence from decision-making in politics, the economy, health and other fields and institutions, including political parties and the Journalists Syndicate, because male leaders misestimate their capabilities and competence. From men's point of view, women are weak, emotional and unable to assume leadership or decision making.

No woman has ever take the position of representative or general secretary of Journalists' Syndicate. There is only one female journalist in the Syndicate's council. Out of 1500 members of the journalists' Syndicate, only 170 are female journalists.

According to CFI's study, a limited number of female journalists were able to reach decision-making positions. Only one female journalist held the position of Minister of Information, under exceptional circumstances and reasons.

The results of the survey indicated that only 3% of female journalists held position of (general manager or deputy), and only (6%) of female journalists held the position of editing manager or editor-in-chief.

The events of Yemen since 2011 have been resulting in a decline in media freedom, which negatively affected journalists in general, and female journalists in particular. Journalism has become a risky career, forcing most female journalists to end their career or leave Yemen, because of the risks they were exposed to and the difficulty of field work, transportation, and access to information.

There are many reasons that hinder the work of female journalists or prevent their access to decision-making centers in Yemen, and these obstacles include:

- Culture and the inferior societal view of women in the media.
- Threats, harassment, defamation campaigns, distortion and harassment of women working in the media field.
- Discrimination on the basis of gender in training, qualification, privileges, rewards, and promotion.
- The absence of legislation ensuring women's rights, partisan quotas in assuming positions, and preference for men over women in holding positions.
- Women's need for a job and competing with men make women accept a lower wage to get the job, in an exploitation way.
- The political and security situation the country has been going through and the low level of media freedom, which puts their lives at risk.
- The general policies of media organizations that take into account the political dimensions instead of professionalism, and limit the leadership to pleasing politicians.

Recommendations Matrix

Sector	Activities
Qualification and Training	Holding training programs for journalists according to gender.
	Preparing a curriculum that can be used to train women journalists.
	Disseminating educational guides for women more widely.
	Holding technical training and expanding the circle of qualification and capacity-building for women in the media field, in view of technical developments and in light of the outbreak of the Corona virus.
	Holding specialized and qualitative training for women journalists on professional safety and digital security.
	Keeping abreast of developments in the media and holding specialized training programs for women journalists.
Raising community awareness	Implementing advocacy campaigns to support women journalist in order to be accepted by the community and accept what they do for the community.
	Prohibiting the use of discriminatory terms when addressing women's issues in media outlets.
	Criminalizing women's use of arousal through a binding media honor code.
	Implementing awareness and education campaigns on women's issues and related local and international laws and legislations.

Sector	Activities
What can be done by the relevant governmental and private agencies	Providing an opportunity for women who have experience and skills in training on gender and women's issues.
	Developing a strategic plan that includes activating the role of women in every media institution.
	Working with the media to defend women's issues and gender equality and to identify ways and methods of adopting support for women's issues.
	Giving women the opportunity by media organizations to reach advanced decision-making positions in the same institution.
	Developing a strategic plan to rehabilitate and train women to reach decision-making positions.
	Allocating 30% of the media and training programs in media institutions to women.
	Preparing a style guide for working on materials related to women's issues by media organizations.
	Assigning women to work on materials concerned with women's issues.
	Issuing governmental directives to overcome the difficulties that women journalists face during their field work by official agencies and offices.
	Developing a strategic plan to bridge the gap in media institutions in dealing with women compared to men in terms of tasks and wages, and the need for equality between them.
	Linking Yemeni women journalists with national and international organizations concerned with the media, and producing joint works.
	Motivating activists and journalists to publish the successes achieved by women, and to deal with their issues in a positive way.
	Criminalizing inferiority of women in publishing and treatment.
	Establishing a women's media network for local and international networking, coordinating joint specialized training, producing cross-border press work and exchanging experiences.

This report is issued by the Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen, a professional and independent monitoring and information platform that provides informational maps on violations of the press and freedom of expression throughout Yemen.

The Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen is one of the most important sources of information for local and international observers and stakeholders about media and media freedom in Yemen. The platform systematically provides documented stories on violations of, and issues periodic reports on, media freedom and the media scene in Yemen in general.

The platform seeks to contribute to the protection of journalists and enhance their safety through monitoring, analyzing and advocating for their issues at the local and international levels.

The Media Freedom Observatory is an affiliated program to the studies & Economic Media Center (SEMC)



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