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RIGHTS  
RADAR

A child set on the ruins of his family's house destroyed by the Houthis in Arhab

Photo: Nabil Alawzari

# YEMEN: ARHAB

## BRUTALITY OF HOUTHIS REVENGE

Report on Houthi Human Rights Violation in the Arhab Tribe  
December 2014- December 2016

AUGUST 2017



## INTRODUCTION

The 33-year presidency of Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh led the country into an insurmountable situation of corruption that resulted in Yemen's position as the world's thirteenth failed state according to the American Peace Fund for failed states in 2011. Following [these results](#), Yemen's cities have witnessed widespread popular protests calling for a new president. The Arhab Tribe, located north of the capital Sana'a, was one of the most prominent tribes that supported protester demands for a regime change. The Arhab Tribe's support for the protests exposed them to the worst types of abuse by former president Ali Abdallah Saleh forces and armed allies such as the Ansar Allah movement or the Houthis. The government declared war against the

of the Mount of Olives and Camp Freijah. The government forces used tanks, Hawazers, mortars, Katyusha rockets and various types of weapons, targeting civilians, their homes and farms. The use of different military weapons led to the killing and injuring of at least 1,000 people from the Arhab tribe, many of which were women and children. In late 2013 and early 2014, the Arhab Tribe was prompted to engage in armed confrontation with the Houthi group when they attacked the tribe, set up check points, and developed new military sites. The defensive war that a group of armed men from the Arhab tribe fought against an armed Ansar Allah militia took place at the same time as a conflict between the Houthi militia against the people of the Damaj tribe

Houthi gunmen in uniform after their coup against the state



Arhab Tribe during March 2011 - June 2012 as a result of the Arhab tribe's absolute refusal to use the army and security forces to suppress the demonstrators during the popular revolt against Salih. The tribe was heavily exposed to bombardment by the loyal Republican Guard forces in favor

in Saada province of northern Yemen. After the Houthi militias and Salih forces took control of the capital Sana'a, seized the weapons of the Ministries of Defense, Interior, army camps and security, the Houthi and Salih militias launched a reprisal war against the Arhab tribe in December 2014. The Ar-

hab Tribe then preferred peace and declared that they will not initiate armed confrontations with the forces of Houthi and Saleh. In return, the forces insisted on storming and bombing the villages of the Arhab tribe, displacing its inhabitants and destroying their homes. Political and social leaderships that led the confrontations against Saleh's forces in 2011 and the Houthi militia in early 2014 were especially targeted during these incidents. Tribal leaders of the Arhab Tribe accused Saleh and Houthi forces of committing war crimes where during the Houthi militia military operations, large-scale killings were carried out, abductions were made, torture and enforced disappearances were implemented, and the looting of private and public property occurred. The operations also resulted in the destruction of homes, religious schools, places of worship, orphan care institutions and aid association for those in need. They resulted as well in large-scale displacement of villages residents affected by shelling and bombing. The regional and international silence served as a "green light" for both the forces of Saleh and Houthi to avenge the forces and political and intellectual bodies that supported and participated in the overthrow of Saleh in 2011. Following the dominance of Saleh forces and Houthi militia on the Capital, Sana'a and its surroundings in 2015 and 2016, the Arhab Tribe witnessed severe deterioration in living conditions ranging from deliberate marginalization, the complete absence of healthcare and education services, to severe economic deterioration. Such conditions followed the continued systematic repression and persecution of the Arhab tribe, the forced displacement of hundreds of families to return to their homes and farms, the continued use of inflammatory and racist hate speech against opponents of the authority of Saleh, Houthis, and tribal symbols against the ideology of the Houthis. The areas and villages of the Arhab tribe are given great strategic importance from the military and security aspects of the cap-

ital Sana'a and its vital facilities where the geographic spot of the Arhab Tribe connects the capital Sana'a with other Yemeni Governorates, including Amran, Jouf, Saada and others. It also overlooks Sana'a International Airport, Yemen Air Navigation Center and the main headquarters of the Yemeni Company for Civil Aviation which includes the Yemeni Air Force Base. Al Sum'a Mountain adds extra value to Arhab's strategic location where the most important pro-Saleh camps are located in it, with three brigades of the Republican Guard.

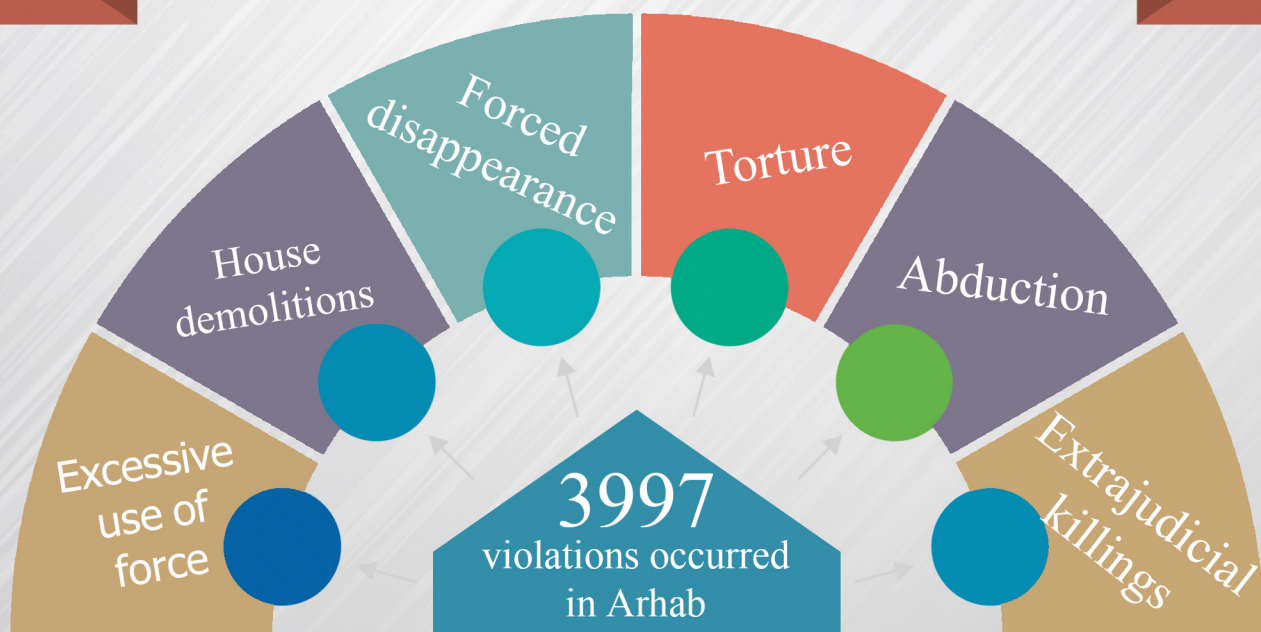
Believing the Arhab tribe would pose a threat because of its strategic geographic importance and role in the security belt of the capital Sana'a, the Arhab Tribe has been subjected to the worst forms of abuse and reprisal by Houthi and Saleh forces. In view of the large number of human rights violations committed by Houthi and Saleh forces in the Arhab tribe, the Rights Radar has launched this report, which includes unprecedented documentation of cases of violations committed in the villages of the Arhab tribe in the Sana'a Governorate during 2015 and 2016. These violations were documented and provided by Rights Radar reporters to enable access to human rights organizations and international forums, so as not to let these violations be forgotten and so the rights of the victims not to be lost. The Rights Radar has relied on a field monitoring team to prepare this report that collected data, information, documents, photographs and videos on various incidents of abuse in the villages of the Arhab tribe, north of the capital Sana'a. The team has, as well, interviewed dozens of victims and witnesses and documented their testimony in accordance with the terms of reference of the International Human Rights Law and the International Humanitarian Law applicable to the state of non-international conflict, especially the four Geneva Conventions, and charters for children and women, and conventions against all forms of torture and discrimination.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the field monitoring team of Rights Radar, 3,997 incidents of human rights violations on the Arhab Tribe by Houthi militia and Saleh forces during December 2014 to December 2016 have been documented. These violations ranged from extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions and detentions in private and secret prisons, torture and forced disappearances, house demolitions, looting of property and excessive use of force against

and Saleh forces during December 2014 to December 2016 have been documented. The team checked 11 people who were subjected to attempts of murder, during in which four of them sustained serious injuries that resulted in permanent disability. 849 cases of abduction have also been monitored by the team, 19 of which are children, in addition to more than 300 people who had been forcibly hidden for months in unknown locations.

### A field report on the violations taking place in Arhab-Yemen



civilians. The monitoring process of violations included the documentation of 41 civilian deaths, including two women and two children, and 57 serious injuries, including three injuries of women and one injury of a child. 3,997 incidents of human rights violations on the Arhab Tribe by Houthi militia

The authorities did not disclose any information about them. Moreover, 81 detainees were subjected to physical torture, while the majority of detainees were subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment. More than 200 cases and 453 displaced families were permanently relocated to secure areas in eastern Yemen.

At least 268 cases of house raids and siege were documented, 39 cases of total houses destruction, 18 cases of partial damage and 6 cases of house occupation and turning into military barracks and secret detention centers, in addition to 148 cases of looting and confiscation of properties, including 118 cases of looting and destruction of vehicles and agricultural machinery. The report also documented the bombing of five religious schools after the confiscation of its contents and the complete destruction of 2 of the headquarters of the Yemeni Rally for Reform. One case of a mosque destruction along with 97 break-ins into public, private, village and residential facilities have been reported. In addition, 30 facilities have been looted by Houthi/Saleh forces. Moreover, the monitoring Group documented 681 cases of violations falling within the framework of undermining State institutions and authorities. This report, along with the attached report statistics document the violations that the women and children of Arhab Tribe have been subjected to wherein 71 cases of child recruitment have been monitored and documented. These statistics are incomplete because they do not cover every instance of violations committed on the Arhab Tribe for some cases were difficult to reach in order to be documented by the team. The team faced difficulties in finding the accurate number of victims, especially women and children, because of the dispersion of victims between forced displacement and displacement of people to unknown locations or locations that are difficult to access. The lack of accurate civil records of the population of the tribal villages was a main obstacle in defining the accurate number of victims as well.

The violation of human rights committed on the Arhab Tribe included in this report reveal that the bloodshed of non-Houthi backing civilians and the destruction of their homes is an instance of systematic vengeance aimed to strike terror in their hearts; a traditional approach aimed at reviving old methods of war as a way to reach power. According to Rights Resources, the exposure to cru-

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According to the field monitoring team of this report, the Houthi forces and their allies from former president Ali Saleh's forces are accused of being responsible of these crimes against the civilians in the Arhab Tribe from the end of 2014 to the end of 2016. The Human Rights Monitoring group collected the information of this report through visits and interviews of abuse cases, a close relative, or eyewitnesses. Moreover, the team verified the accuracy of these violations and documented their details, their results and their current and future impacts on the victims.

## CONFLICT PARTIES

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### The Arhab Tribe

The Arhab Tribe is considered one of the prominent tribes which opposed the centralization of authority for 33 years by the former president Ali Saleh since the summer of 1978 until the fall of 2012. It also strongly supported the public revolution in Yemen against Saleh's regime in 2011. Moreover, in cooperation with Nhm, Bani Harith and Beni Jarmoz tribes, Arhab Tribe formed one cohesive geographic and tribal spot which it was able to impose effective and important protection for demonstrators in the center of some Yemeni cities, such as the capital Sana'a, Marib and Shabwa and others. Such spots formed open yards for activists of the revolution of February 2011. The geographic spot inhabited by the people of Arhab Tribe and the nearby Hamdan tribe is considered to be the main gate of the capital from the north from which the linking road between Sana'a, Sa'ada, Hajjah, Mahweet, and Aljoug provinces can be crossed. The linking road is considered to be the capital's only road; where through it the other provinces can be reached. Therefore, the Arhab Tribe was given great geographic importance, the thing that led Houthi and Saleh forces to strike against anyone who opposes them from the Arhab Tribe.

### Ansar Allah Movement (Houthi Group)

Ansar Allah is an armed (Shia) religious group which is named after its founder Hussein Badruddin al-Houthi. The group's practices are based on the doctrine of divine right in power as a religious merit. Former president Ali Saleh accused the

movement of intentional use of violence in imposing its influence and ideology. It is accused of receiving support from Iran, the same accusation the current president, Abud Rabuh Mansour Hadi, is claiming. In 2012, Yemen filed a complaint against Iran to the Security Council after Yemeni security forces seized arms shipments from Tehran. The US Navy announced during 2013-2014 that they had intercepted arms shipments coming from Iran to Yemen. Moreover, the Houthis have contributed to the failure of the steps taken to reach a political settlement in Yemen, including the peace and partnership agreement. The later agreement was adopted after the Houthis gained control of the capital Sana'a in September 2014 and never complied with the agreement. According to a number of experts, Houthi is took advantage of the government crisis regarding the price increase in the value of fuel and oil derivatives. In addition, its social and popular repercussions were used to serve its objectives of rebellion and aggression against the state, in light of the weakness and degradation of state authority. Today, the Houthi group has control over large districts of the country including San'a and the territories of Arhab Tribe. In accordance to statements made by the spokesman of the group, Mohammed Abdulsalam, the war between Houthi forces against Arhab Tribe is a "security need" and that the group comes within a framework of confronting extremist groups known as "Takfiri and al-Da'isiyyah (ISIS). After taking control of the capital San'a, Houthis attacked the Arhab Tribe in which operations of killing and destructions took place. Such operations reinforced the accusations against it where the stated goal - to drop the price increase - was only a

military tactic to find a justification and an appropriate environment to rebel against the state authorities and expand the sphere of influence and control over the joints of governance and the Yemeni regions. Today, the Houthi group has control over large districts of the country including San'a and the territories of Arhab Tribe

## The Yemeni Government

One of the main reasons why armed forces were able to flourish was their ability to easily take over state facilities and institutions in the capital Sana'a along with other large areas in Yemen due to the absence of state authority. It has been confirmed by military sources that President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi has not acted on the incidents caused by the armed Houthi group in the province of Amran during the summer of 2014, and as they advanced towards the capital Sana'a. This

lack of disapproval by the president played a major role in undermining the foundations of the state and the destruction of its components. The strong influence of former President Ali Saleh among Yemeni army units has also contributed to the taken over state. These movements led to forcing the state to make concessions to the Houthi group, limiting the army and security forces and keeping them away from the course of events so as not to be involved in the confrontations with the Houthi militants. Claiming that the war is between Houthis and armed groups, Houthis asked the army forces to commit to neutrality. The absence of the government's role encouraged the armed Houthis to commit unprecedented violations when they invaded the capital Sana'a. The militia broke into the houses and homes of their opponents. They raided the headquarters of their opponents in the Islah Party, and launched large-scale arrests of its leaders, including ministers in the government.



This led to breaking into the Palace of the Presidency of the Republic and the house of President Hadi himself, imposing house arrest on him as well as the killing of 14 of his relatives. The state military institutions were also broken into and looted by the Houthi militia. However, these were clear signs of the revolutionary orientation of Houthis against the state authorities along with violating human rights in the capital Sana'a and other areas, including Arhab Tribe. The Houthi group was first seen as the UN solution to the Yemeni crisis. However, starting its armed rebellion, the Houthi group became the spearhead in the Yemeni problem. Therefore, the UN Security Council issued its resolution 2216 in 2015 against parties that threaten international peace and security and undermine the political transition in Yemen.

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Under this resolution, former President Saleh and his son Ahmad and three leaders of the Houthi group; the group's leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi, his brother Abdul Khaliq and the military commander of the Houthi group Abdullah Yahya al-Hakim, are subject to international sanctions as a result of the reports submitted to the Security Council. Pro-military units in favor of the Houthi armed militia have been hit by intermittent aerial bombardment by Saudi Arabian forces in an attack led by Saudi Arabia since March 26, 2015. Saudi Arabia intervened in the Yemeni crisis as justification for sup-

porting the legitimate government of Yemen; however, Saudi Arabia has also committed serious human rights violations by targeting air strikes on civilians and civilian gatherings in several Yemeni provinces, where thousands of civilians were killed and wounded.

## The International Community

The regional and international community did not take immediate action towards the human rights violations by Houhti and Saleh forces against the Arhab Tribe. The elders of the Arhab Tribe called out the silence of the international community, and particularly the lack of response from the United Nations. Both the positions of the United Nations and the ten countries, sponsoring the Gulf initiative regarding Yemen, towards the rebellious movements of the armed Houthi militia were described as a "weak position" by the elders of the Arhab Tribe. A few months back, an armed invasion of the province of Arman by the gunmen of the Houthi group preceded the invasion of the Capital Sana'a and the storming and sieging of the presidential house and the President Hadi. The members of the Arhab tribe confirmed that the United Nations and the ten sponsors of the initiative did not take any explicit position to reject these armed insurgent movements against the state in Yemen. This silence was considered as a «green light» and a diplomatic cover indicating satisfaction of these Houthi armed rebellions in spite of all the committed human rights violations that were in full view and have been published in the media.

## EXPLOITATION OF ANTI-TERRORISM LAWS

The Houthi group and Saleh forces had taken advantage of war against terrorism to harm their political opponents. Due to this, major violations of human rights were committed. As a result, the security cooperation agreements between the regime of former President Ali Saleh and the American administration have been taken advantage of. Despite the fact that war against terrorism neither justifies the violation of human rights nor does it justify the violation of fundamental freedom, the security card was arbitrarily used to achieve political objectives of the Houthis and Saleh against their opponents in a way that does not serve the desired objectives of counter-terrorism operations. The security agreements between Sana'a and Washington ruled that Americans provide technical and logistical support to Yemeni military units specialized in fighting terrorism within the Republican Guard brigades, Special Forces and various security services loyal to Ali. Local residents accuse Saleh's regime of taking vengeance from the Arhab Tribe through military campaigns claiming that some of al-Qaeda-linked members have fled to the nearby areas of the Arhab tribe. Such movements followed the presidential elections in 2006 in which Saleh won a small percentage of votes. The population is aware of intensive military campaigns on their tribe starting in

2007, a few months after the elections. These campaigns continued intermittently until the end of 2011. In all these stations, Saleh has well used the American support dedicated to Combating terrorism and confronting political opponents which was accompanied by human rights violations. Such approach is denied by the United Nations as commitment to the principles of human rights is considered the optimal method to combat terrorism, encircle it and address its causes. The existence of legal legislation and independent judiciary committed to the criminal justice system is also considered a necessity to reach the desired results. It has been noticed that the Houthi group is following the same pattern that was utilized by the former President Saleh. As the Houthi group justified its military actions on the Arhab tribe by claiming that they are fighting al-Qaeda members, however, the fact that Houthi gunmen stormed the presidential palace and President Hadi's house in Sana'a early 2015 reveals that the Houthis are seeking to take control over the state. The military actions of the Houthi group coincided with a massive attack by Saleh forces and the militia of Houthis on the southern provinces and resulted in the intervention of Arab forces supporting the authority of President Hadi, under the umbrella of the Arab coalition forces Saudi leadership on 26 March 2015.



## WILLFUL KILLINGS

Media propaganda and politics white-washed Houthi militants' abuses in the name of "religious jihad under divine guidance" against their adversaries – calling them "mercenaries, takfirist and ISIS members." Such propaganda made the killing of Houthi-Saleh political adversaries a mark of "courage, worship and national duty". 41 civilians were killed, including two women and two children, as a result of the repeated attacks on civilians. Houthi-Saleh forces

carried out systematic killings of unarmed civilians. It is obvious that most of these cases are some form of willful killing, as 29 of the victims were shot dead, under the pretext of fighting Takfirist ideology and four of them were killed without trial. Two cases of killing by roadside bombs and another by torture were documented. Houthi gunmen also deliberately ran off a man and then refused to help the victim or allow his family to save him until 18 hours after the incident - which



Table (1): Willful Killings Committed by Houthi and Saleh Forces

left a negative impression about the group among families, and infuriated them. In addition, two people were killed by a sniper, while another two cases were documented to have been killed in home shelling. To give more details on some of the cases, our team has documented the case of the disappeared Suhaib al-Yahyassi. His Family has found his body in the refrigerator of Hospital 48 where Saleh forces in Sana'a are treated on 12th February 2015. This is a month and a half after his abduction and after his family paid large sums for his release, he was found to have died from torture, according to eyewitnesses. Moreover, on August 12th 2015 Salim al-Assami was hit by a Houthi military ve-

hicle at the Issam cross-roads in Arhab. They then left him to bleed for over 18 hours, also according to eyewitnesses. On July 30, 2015, Arif Mohammed Saleh al-Zubairi went from Shara' village to buy supplies from the university market in Arhab. On the main road, he was followed by a Houthi military vehicle and the Houthi gunmen shot him and left his body on the road.

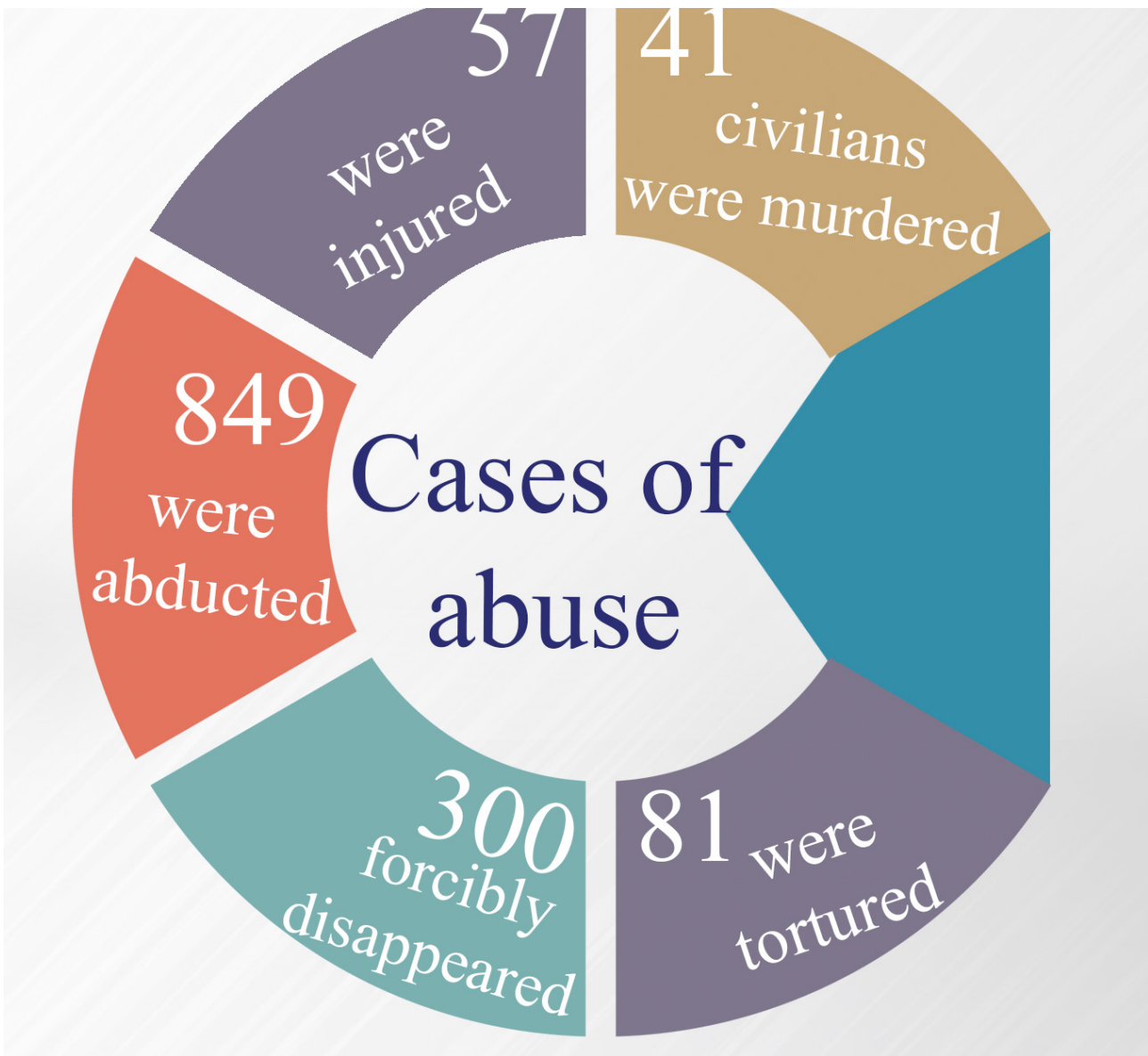
57 cases of civilian casualties were documented by Rights Radar, including three women and a child. Another 11 people were subject to attempted murder, seven of them managed to escape, while the other four were seriously injured, causing them permanent disability.

## ABDUCTION

According to the results of observation, most cases kidnappings of civilians by Houthi-Saleh militants were in the villages of the Arhab tribe, which amounted to 849 cases, including 19 cases of child detention. 787 of them were released by the end of 2016, while 62 detainees—including 5 children—are still kept in detention. More than half of arbitrarily abducted people were taken from their homes and villages. Their families were threatened in their homes. Children, women and the elderly, who have the right to special protection in international and national laws, were especially subject to harm.

In most cases, the abductions were carried out collectively and without a clear charge. According to local resources, civilians were abducted from checkpoints around the village and its roads, at the entrances to villages and neighborhoods and in the capital Sana'a and in the governorates under Houthi-Saleh control.

Abduction, detention and enforced disappearance are prohibited under international law. No one shall be convicted except by a fair trial, in which all fundamental judicial guarantees are made possible. No one may well be convicted of a crime except on the basis of individual criminal responsibility.



## AFTER THE ABDUCTION: CRUEL TREATMENT



The report documented 81 cases of physical torture by brutal means during 2015-2016. According to the testimonies and witnesses collected by the observation team, they can be classified into:

- *Brutal beating of victim by several people.*
- *Hanging the victim to the ceiling for a long time; their feet barely touching the ground.*
- *Tying the victim's hands to the wall during interrogation and causing small burns by cigarettes.*
- *Hitting the head with rifle end and the beating of sensitive body parts.*
- *Electrocution, fake death penalty and incommunicado detention.*
- *Detention in dirty places, soiled and dark bathrooms, and preventing water and food for long hours.*
- Prevention of visits and psychological torture of the victims' families, as well as financial extortion of victims' families.

International treaties and conventions on human rights have prohibited all forms of torture against detainees or prisoners

International treaties and conventions on human rights have prohibited all forms of torture against detainees or prisoners. Such conventions stressed the importance of punishing individuals and parties committing crimes of enforced disappearance, torture and inhumane treatment. The cases mentioned in this report show that Houthi-Saleh forces have routinely and systematically practiced torture, humiliation and enforced disappearance against most cases subjected to arbitrary detention.

## EXAMPLES OF VIOLATIONS

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RightsRadar obtained testimonies from some of the victims. Examples include:

### DAYS IN A TOILET 90

"I was abducted on 08/01/2015 from a military checkpoint of Houthi gunmen on the main road to Arhab area. They took me to the university student residence in Sanaa, where they take the kidnapped. During the week I stayed there, I was blindfolded and brutally beaten. Then I was transferred to the building of the Dar al-Qur'an building in Madhbah neighborhood, to the north of the capital, Sana'a. Houthi forces also turned the building into a special prison," said A.

S. H, adding, "they put me in a solitary dark room for a while before they took me to a building in 60s Street. I was held there in a bathroom for three months. It was there that I ate, slept, and defecated. Then they returned me to Dar al-Qur'an prison and put me in a narrow room under the stairs, used to collect rubbish and waste. Nine months later, I managed to get out of prison, but had already suffered psychologically."

### TRAGIC CASES

Q. A. was abducted and tortured twice, the first in December 2014 and the second in February 2015. He explained to Rights Radar about the brutal torture he and his colleagues were subjected to. "After Houthi-Saleh forces entered Arhab village, we heard knocking on doors at dawn and found that they were a group of Houthi gunmen wanting to search the house. We allowed them into the house, but they abducted me and took me to an unknown place. I stayed in a prison for a whole month. My family knew nothing about me until I was released." "The second time, on November 14th 2015, the Houthi gunmen returned and abducted me. I was taken to one of their detention centers where I was under severe torture. I was beaten by an iron chain (motorbike chain) on my back, hips and shoulders. My body turned blue from torture. I stayed for a week, unable to move, eat or sleep," he said, adding, "they abducted me with a group of other detain-

ees in a narrow room full of insects and lice, without ventilation. They gave us unhealthy food. Oftentimes they would call one of us late at night to be beaten and kicked repeatedly and especially on the face and head." "I saw the bodies of some detainees with marks of torture beyond imagination. I could hardly compare my torture to theirs. We had to pee in water bottles because we were allowed to use the bathroom only once a day. One of the detainees was subjected to electric shock and brutal beating until he went mad, while another beaten so badly that he was unable to move. We carried him to the bathroom to pee. Another one we used to carry all day long, because his body couldn't touch the ground or sit to eat. He was the most tortured, because he was repeatedly hanged to the ceiling and beaten with whips and sticks until he fell unconscious. He was then left hanging. If he's awake again, they hit him and so on."

## ABDUCTION ON ID

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M. J. showed his ID to Houthi gunmen at al-Hattarsh checkpoint, east of the capital, Sana'a, on the Marib road. Being a member of the Arhab tribe, it was enough to abduct him and take him to an unknown location. "I was transferred to a private detention center deep into the farms in the Bani Hashish area on May 14, 2015. I was placed in a dark room with no food until midnight," he said. «The door was opened by a group of men. They held a hand-light to my eyes and then began to interrogate me with provocative questions. I told them what I know, but they refused to believe any word I said. With every

question they asked, my hands were burned with a cigarette. If I said yes, they burned me. If no, they burned me too, until I had over 25 burns in my hands and other areas of my body. Then they beat me and hit me every few hours. They got tired of torturing me, so they left and closed the door of the room. I did not get a drink of water at that time. Moments later, I heard the flying of the Arab coalition warplanes, and suddenly a terrible explosion blew up next to us. The windows of the place were torn and smashed but we managed to escape from the place through the qat farms in the dark."

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

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Houthi-Saleh forces have systematically practiced enforced disappearances, initially refusing to recognize the existence of their victims, denying their knowledge of their place of detention, deciding to prevent their families from visiting them and imposing strict measures to prevent detainees from communicating with the outside

world. International standards for enforced disappearance are applicable to over 300 cases of abduction and detention, some of whom were subjected to enforced disappearance for more than two years. The following are some cases of enforced disappearance documented by our team:



## TEARS OF OPPRESSION

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On 25/12/2014, E. S. R, 25, was forced to leave his house to treat his sick daughter. He was abducted by a group of Houthi gunmen while he was leaving. His only daughter died during his abduction which occurred in front of his house in Beit Maraan. He was taken to a house occupied by Houthis in the center of the Arhab tribe. Two days later, he was transferred to a private detention center of the Houthi group in the capital, Sana'a. While his wife was in deep sorrow for the loss of her husband and her only daughter, she was approached on the third day of abduction by a group of armed Houthi men who were raiding and searching the house, according to an eyewitness. The two detainees (J. J. and A. A. Sh.) and others who were released reported that E. S. R. was held with them in the Dar al-Qur'an building, near the camp of the 1st Army Division Medre', north of the capital Sana'a, who was transferred to a Houthi detention center. He was constantly tortured and after about two months of his detention, Houthi leader Anwar Shamar (Abu Aqil), who belongs to the same village, transferred him to an unknown destination. There is no further information about his whereabouts to the date of publication of this report. Despite his family's keen follow-up, they did not know anything about him. His elderly father (S. R.) reported to Houthi group's supervisors in Arhab and in Sana'a governorate until he reached the political office of the group in the capital Sana'a, but to no avail. He went to Sa'da governorate and the Dahyan district but could not find any information to guide him to the whereabouts of his son. During the follow-up, his brother was abducted for several days in an attempt to humiliate and defeat his father and family. Eyewitnesses told Rights Radar that Houthi-Saleh forces do not allow visits to detainees and once they know or reveal their place of detention, they transfer them to other se-

cret detention centers. Some families have not been able to visit their detained relatives despite the fact that more than two years have passed since their abduction. Lawyers, local and international human rights organizations were also denied visits to detainees. Sometimes detainees are released in return for large sums of money paid by their families to Houthi supervisors, who are using prisons as an opportunity for financial gain and extortion of civilians. In addition, the group confiscates money and valuables from the detainees once they abduct them. All violations by Houthi-Saleh forces are not based on any local law and are contrary to tribal customs and religious legislation. They kidnap civilians as hostages to force another relative to surrender. In one instance, on July 21st 2015, a Houthi armed group abducted the son of Sheikh al-Qibli (M. J. J) to pressure his father, who is one of the most prominent tribal leaders who opposes the Houthis in Arhab. Al-Qibli's son has been in detention for more than a year and a half, until he was released in an exchange of prisoners. Such acts are crimes under international humanitarian law and are imprescriptible. Houthi-Saleh forces impose severe restrictions to conceal detention, torture and enforced disappearance by their members in the National Security Service, Political Security Service and the headquarters of the Houthi-controlled Interior Ministry in an attempt to mislead public opinion and facilitate impunity for its members in the future. Detainees at Houthi centers are not allowed to deny the charges against themselves and do not have the right to defend themselves or the right to a fair trial. Instead, their confessions are recorded under torture while forced to speak in front of cameras.

## CHILD HOSTAGES

E. A. J., 15, was kidnapped by gunmen of al-Houthi group on 7/5/2015. He was kept hostage until his father, who is wanted by the group, left the country after he was fired from his job as director of the education office.

On 13/3/2016, the gunmen of al-Houthi group raided, searched and looted R. A. S.'s house. He managed to escape, but they took one of his children as a hostage and refused to release the child until he surrendered. Be-



The child remained in detention for several months, and then was released 2 months after his father's death. His father wished to see his son free before his death, relatives said.

cause of his fear for his child, he was forced to surrender himself and spent more than 20 days in one of their detention center in Arhab.

## FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Houthi armed group and Saleh forces forcibly displaced civilians directly or indirectly by harassing them or forcing them to leave their homes and migrate from their villages in the Arhab tribe. They used means of pressure, intimidation and persecution, adopting a policy of house demolitions and raids, abducting opponents and continuing harassment of residents through checkpoints and barriers, which have consistently exceeded 50 points. This has led many of the people of the Arhab tribe to believe that their lives are at stake, their money, their homes and their families are insecure and many of them preferred to leave the tribe to other safe areas. According to the observation of our team, nearly 500 families from the Arhab tribe had become displaced.

IDPs suffer from difficult living conditions and lack of adequate housing. Some of them live in tents and rely on humanitarian aid, while children and women have no access to healthcare and education.

According to the concept of forced displacement in international law, ordering the displacement of civilians is considered a war crime. International law guarantees the right of return for displaced persons, respect for property rights, special care for women and children, neither recruitment of children in armed groups nor participation in hostilities. It also demands special treatment and respect for the elderly and people with disabilities, which Houthi-Saleh forces refuse to abide by.



## TARGETING FAMILIES WITH INTENSIFIED SHELLING

Houthi-Saleh groups started attacking certain families to end their influential social status, which is seen to threaten the authority of al-Houthis. In this regard, they have destroyed the house of MP Mansour al-Hannaq and other prominent members in the local authority, as well as destroyed homes of other social figures. This policy of destruction is followed in all areas under al-Houthi control, according to local and international human rights reports .

**“Al-Makroub” Family in the Face of Torture**  
Yahya Saleh Taqi al-Makroub, an effective social and personal figure in the field of Social Reconciliation and is considered as one of the most important figures in his area which was targeted by Houthi/Saleh group. He was shot with two of his sons during the attack launched by the armed Houthis on his village. The injured were moved secretly to private hospitals inside the capital. At this time, Houthi/Saleh groups began to siege his house and the houses of his four sons. Their homes were broken into and looted. On 21st Dec, 2014, the five houses were completely destroyed and leveled to the

ground. Soon after, Houthi/Saleh security groups received information on the location of the injured who were being treated. They broke into the hospital located in the Capital Sanaa, and abducted his two injured sons, Mohammed and Mabrouk, leading them to an unknown place. They were released after two months. It was only a few months before his son Mabrouk was shot dead by a Houthi sniper. The group prevented men from attending his funeral, leaving women to do that instead. According to his relatives, Abdullah, the third son of Sheikh Yahya al-Makroub, insisted on returning to his village after a year of displacement. Upon his return, he set up a small tent on the ruins of his house to continue his daily life. This was considered by Houthi/Saleh group as a challenge to them and that motivated the group to execute him with two of his guests in that tent. This crime then became known as the crime of the tent. The two guests, Fazl al-Jundubi and Hamid al-Jundubi, were murdered in a horrific way; the armed Houthis intentionally shot them inside the tent without stating reasons or even allowing any discussion despite even the fact that they were unarmed.



## THE BOMBING OF CIVILIAN POSSESSIONS

On Sunday, 28th Dec. 2014, Houthi gunmen blew up four houses in the village of Sharaa, south of Arhab. The forces loyal to Saleh, stationed in Al-Som Mountain were found in the village following artillery shelling of the villages. The following statistics show how systematic these attacks were:

- 39 houses were leveled to the ground using high explosives, damaging 18 neighboring houses in the process.
- 252 houses were raided and looted, 6 of which are still under the control of al-Houthi's special detention centers.
- 22 houses were besieged with children and women horrified by al-Houthi militants.
- 272 cases of looting of property,

money and personal belongings. According to statistics mentioned in this report, Houthi-Saleh forces systematically violated the right to own property and to privacy. In addition, there are 987 cases of private and public property violations, ranging from the destruction and looting of houses and facilities to confiscating valuable things and money. Violations of the public and private establishments amounted to 192 violations (the description is in the table at the end of the report), ranging from bombings, looting, incursion, pillaging, capturing, control and storming of villages, and collecting taxes by force by al-Houthi's War Effort. International law requires that private property be respected, that it should not be confiscated, and that objects belonging to medical, religious, educational and cultural work should not be targeted, used for military purposes or considered military targets. It is prohibited to direct attacks to demilitarized areas such as villages and residential neighborhoods. Article 46 of the Fourth Hague Convention states "family honour and rights, the lives of persons, private property, and religious convictions and practice, must be respected. Private property cannot be confiscated." The article immediately following stipulates that "Pillage is formally forbidden," and ordered "authorities to issue criminal regulations to prevent pillage and to punish those who commit it, whether civilian or military." Also, article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits "Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations."

### Violations against houses and property



## SUPPRESSING POLITICAL LIBERTIES

Houthi-Saleh forces have suppressed any political voice that opposes their rebellion against President Hadi's authority. Statistics indicate that the majority of those who have been subjected to repression and violations belong to the reform party in support of the government of President Hadi. Offices and homes of members of the party in Arhab town were subject to bombing, looting and takeover. Houthi-Saleh forces do not permit any political activity or establishment of unions and gatherings unless they follow al-Houthi's standing. It calls its opponents «takfirists» or Jihadi extremists, while its supporters (mujahideen) or faithful fighters. This trend has led to a growing human rights violations, threatening the future of the Yemeni community. Coexistence and social fabric in Yemen is exposed every day to further erosion and disruption. After taking control of the town of Arhab, Houthi-Saleh forces blew up two partisan offices after they pillaged them. They occupied two other locations and are still using them today as headquarters and operating rooms of the group. It also bombed and blew up two

wedding halls and community meetings in the village of Al-Janadbah in Arhab, estimated to cost more than 100 million riyals (about 310,000 dollars) and attacked three weddings on the grounds that they are suspicious and illegal gatherings. Al-Houthi group also imposed illegal financial leases on the population in the name of supporting (war effort), as well as attacking and storming the 43 villages of the town on the pretext of searching for political opponents wanted by al-Houthis. Our field research team confirmed six cases in which al-Houthi/Saleh forces deliberately endangered the lives of civilians by firing ballistic missiles from locations next to villages and homes during military incursions, exposing them to the risk of bombing by Arab Coalition aircrafts. Al-Houthi/Saleh forces have broken the ban on attacks on people known to be unable to fight. They have also made practices that prohibit the human right to freedom of movement and travel or the right to a fair trial, the right to physical protection and personal security. These are the only documented cases, among others



## VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

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The Houthi groups took over a student residence owned by Abdullah Qais al-Arhabi, home to around 250 students from Yemeni governorates for the purpose of studying at the Faculty of Education in Arhab. However, the militia seized the residence place, confiscated it and used it as a prison and detention center for its opponents. College students were driven out and study in the college was suspended.

The Houthis have deprived more than 1,650 students of education, as a result of military control of Houthis over governmental schools. The Houthi forces carried out repressive measures against anyone who oppose them and banned any educational activity of those they described as “mercenaries.” They broke into 18 mosques, blew up a mosque and looted another, damaged 3 others and still occupy seven mosques used for military activities. In addition, The Houthi groups forced 18 orators of its followers to spread their own ideology and beliefs which incite violence and racial discrimination. They destroyed five schools that their educational services were suspended, burned

another and are still taking over two others. Not only did they burn three schools, confiscated three cultural libraries but also looted all schools under the pretext that they contained inflammatory books against the family of the leader of the Houthi group, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. They also blew up a building that was used as a shelter for literacy and Koran teachers, besides looting two other university housing buildings. International humanitarian law prohibits all conflicting parties from setting military objectives within densely populated areas as well as objects related to medical, religious, educational and cultural work. It is also prohibited any direct attacks to demilitarized areas such as villages and population centers. Buildings dedicated to religious, scientific, educational, historical and charitable purposes such as mosques and historical monuments in Arhab must not be considered as military objectives. Especially when there is no evidence or testimony stating that such places have been used for military means.

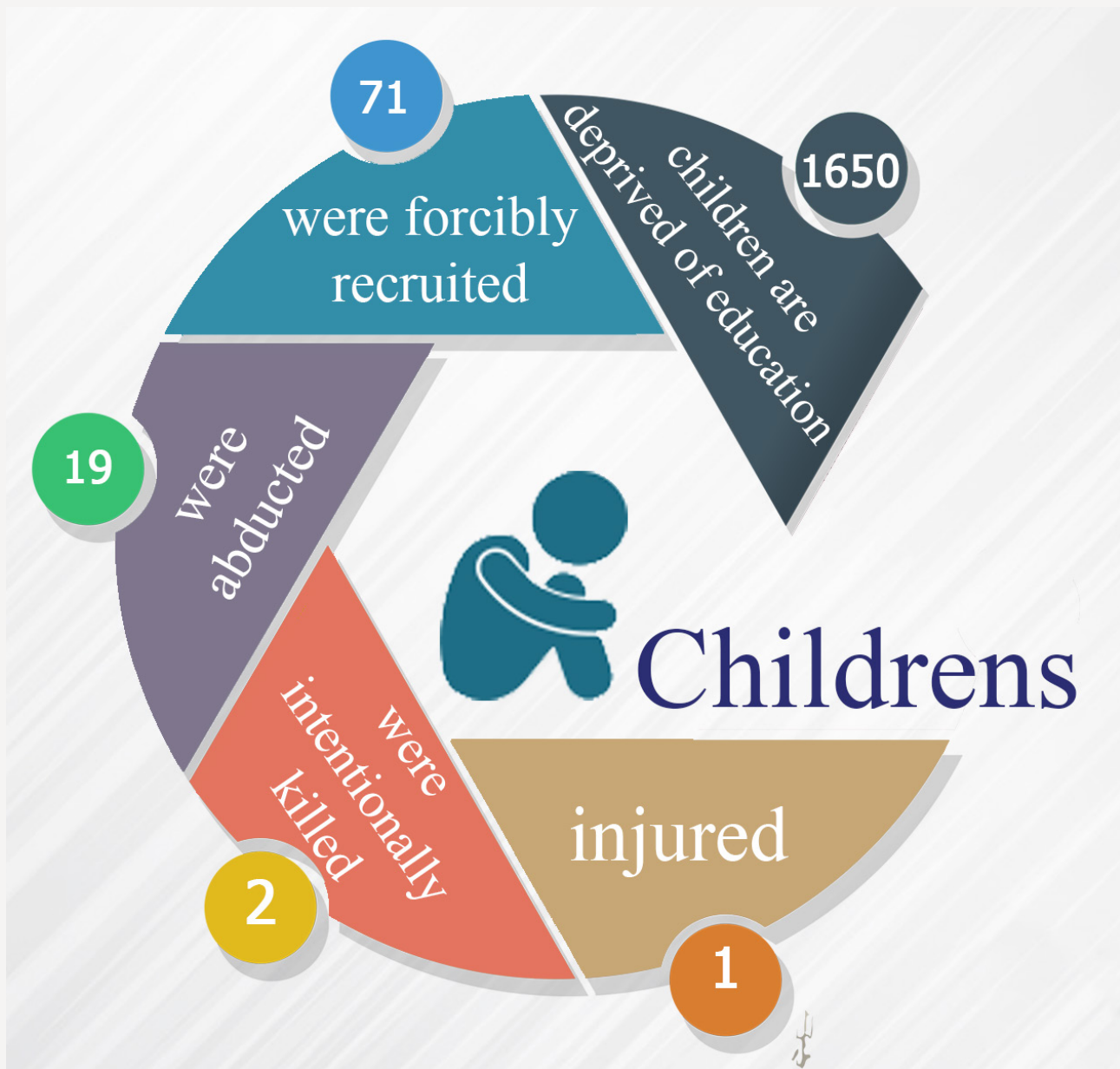
The Houthis have deprived more than 1,650 students of education



## VIOLATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children are among the most vulnerable to their rights and lack of experience in life, so international law has provided them with special protection as well as public protection. Under international law, the recruitment of children under the age of 15 is a war crime whose perpetrators must be held accountable. Rights Radar fieldworkers documented 93 violations against children, namely,

two cases of murder and one injury, besides 19 cases of abduction and 71 cases of child recruitment. All of which spread fear and panic among children, of whom were hundreds who could not get access to education due to the security situation and displacement of most families, harassment or persecution of a family member.



## VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND CUSTOMS

Yemeni women of the Arhab tribe have experienced real tragedy since the storming of the Houthi militants to their region did not exclude any women. Women are among the dead, wounded, displaced, or deprived of food and drink. Women are continuously worried about losing their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers due to the ongoing armed confrontation, besides the fact that they're being socially discriminated against with limited access to education and health care. Local sources in the tribe of Rahab told Rights Radar that two woman were killed in Arhab and three injured , and one case prevented relief to save her life. Women constitute 55% of the number of displaced persons from the Arhab tribe, estimated at more than 5,000 person. The destruction and raiding of houses, the looting of their contents, the attacking of villages and the abduct of their inhabitants is primarily a violation of the rights of women and their children. Most raids and kidnappings take place late at night and in a violent

and inhumane manner meant to intimidate children and women. This is what happened when the citizen (A.kh) was abducted when a military force broke into his home after midnight. He was driven in his sleep clothes and when some women tried to prevent his abduction, the gunmen fired in their direction. Tribal customs provide special protection for women and children. However, on 6/12/2015 at 7:00 PM, while the citizen (A.A) was on his way to the medical clinic near his village to relieve his wife, a number of Houthi gunmen stopped him at a checkpoint and asked him to get out of his car as he was wanted for arrest. The man asked them to allow him to help his sick wife and take her to the hospital, but they refused to leave him. They confiscated his possessions, including his car. His wife was asked to exit and was left abandoned on the road. They took him to an unknown destination and released him and his car a month later. His car was used subversively by Houthi militants during his detention until it became unusable.



## DRESS UP AND DEATH LULLABY

Aleya Abdel Hamid, 19 years old, from Beit Sawa village. A few days before her wedding, Houthi gunmen stormed her village, blowing up houses, looting property and killing civilians. On 13/12/2014, the Houthi gunmen broke into her family's house and started fir-

ing at her brother, Saddam's head. As he fell down dead to the floor, she turned to the masked murderer and asked: "what prompted you to kill my brother?" The murder shot her down immediately too.



## INFERNO IN THE VILLAGE OF JANNADBEH

The village of al-Janadabah belonging to the Arhab tribe was attacked by armed Houthi / Saleh forces on December 13, 2014, and the house of tribal sheikh Abd al-Khaliq al-Jundabi was the first house to be destroyed. There were massive instances persecution, destruction, kidnapping and humiliation of civilians. "Residents of the village, its roads, farms and residences, still keep the details of

the tragedy and the scenes of terror that raided our houses that evening," residents told fieldworkers of Rights Radar. Residents explained that after Al Houthi and Saleh's forces took control over most of the country in late 2014, the Houthi armed forces imposed a siege on the small village of Aljandaba in the countryside of the capital Sana'a. Al-Jandadba village, which has a population of only 2100 people, witnessed

the killing and injuries of 13 civilians including two women, while other 44 civilians were kidnapped and abused, including one woman. Houthis completely destroyed 14 houses using high explosive materials, burned

literacy teachers was also blown up. As a result of the explosions and shelling, more than 7 houses were damaged. In Arhab, Rights Radar documented 141 cases of looting, confiscation and destruction

of property that belong to the residents of Jandabeh village, most of whom were unable to leave because they were prevented from leaving their homes. A man and a woman were shot by Houthi gunmen as they tried to cross the village to leave. The spokesman of the Houthi groups described what happened as "individual actions" calling on the victims to be tolerant and forgiving. woman amid firing bullets:

On February 15, Houthi gunmen blew up the houses of two civilians, named Hanin Al-janadbi and her relative, Mohammed Al-janadbi. On the same day, they fired at Mukhtar, the leader al-Jundabi after he tried to prevent the explosion of the house of his neighbor Muhammad Al-Daba'a. When women rushed to help aid him, the



down one house and turned two houses into a prison and a headquarter for the group. Two educational establishments and two occasions halls were blown up and destroyed. The residential building for il-

Houthi gunmen opened fired at them, which resulted in injuring (A.M), the wife of Abdulaziz al-Jundabi.

## TARGETING BY KILLING

On 10 May 2015, the house of the educator Hameed Alaw, 30, was subjected to heavy gunfire by Houthi militants from all directions for several hours. At dawn, he tried to sneak

out with his wife and children to leave the house in an attempt to survive. As soon as he reached his house gateway, he was shot to death in front of his children and wife.

## THE BANNER OF FIGHTING TERRORISM



The Houthi forces continued their occupation of al-Janadabah village and used the houses of civilians as prisons and headquarters for their military activities. In addition, they forcibly imposed levies and royalties on farmers under the pretext of “securing the village from ISIS militants and takfiris” (A.H.J) reported to Rights Radar that the Houthi gunmen ambushed him on his return to his home from his farm late on the night of 15 August 2015 and shot him with seven bullets in different areas of his body. (A.A.J) reported that he was subjected to attempted murder on the same day (A.H.J) was shot. Houthi gunmen ambushed him on the highway, and kept shooting at him while riding his motorcycle. When he managed to jump off and flee, the Houthis took hold of his own motorcycle as they failed to catch him. On 10 August 2015, (A.M) reported that the Houthi gunmen kidnapped his injured cousin (M.M.M) and forcibly hid him for more than 8 months. During this period, he was not provided any health care, which eventually caused him permanent disability in his feet. He lost the ability to walk normally again.

## UNDERMINING STATE AUTHORITIES

Al-Huthi forces carried out actions that undermine the state authorities by exercising the powers of the government, causing collapse of official apparatuses, disrupting the governmental service institutions and imposing delegates on the executive departments and offices. They empowered their committees to play the role of the judiciary and court. Such actions have contributed directly to increasing human rights violations

in Yemen, which is a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 2216 (2015), which called on the Houthi and Saleh's forces to stop the practice of competences assigned to the legitimate government and respect human rights. Rights Radar monitoring team managed to verify 681 cases of violations committed in Arhab by the Houthi and Salih militias.

## FINAL WAR RESOLUTION

On the night of August 8, 2015, the Houthi attackers took the final decision of declaring war in the village of al-Janadba, and their military vehicles began to deploy at the entrances to the village, announcing a curfew in the village. Eyewitnesses said the residents had been forced to stay indoors as the military forces presence was worrying them. Houthi militias claimed that they were looking for weapon caches in the village, however, after storming the village and besieging homes and families for four days, they revealed their true intention, which was manifested in the destruction of houses, the looting of property, killings and other human rights violations. Through video footage of the horrific violations against the civilians of the village of al-Janadbeh, it was clear that the tribe of Arhab, and the village of Al-janddabeh in particular was systematically attacked and, and the media and human rights organizations were

prevented from covering and documenting it. Al-Huthi's forces took advantage of the houses, cars, farms, money and belongings of the people of al-Janadabah village and seized them. In this operation, Houthi militants bulldozed and detonated 12 houses at once, in addition to a number of educational and civil facilities. Four of the villagers were also subjected to deliberate sniping at various times by professional snipers believed to be members of the Republican Guard. As a result of the sniping operations, 3 were killed; Abdelwali Ali (22) Saleh al-Mahdi, (40), Jamil Ahmed, 21, while Farouk al-Jandabi, 20, lost his left eye. The previously detained (S.A.M) was subjected to severe physical torture which resulted in a very serious deterioration of his mental state. The detainees (AM), and (W.B) are still in detention under mysterious circumstances.

The numbers and types of violations committed in the Arhab tribe

Type of violations	Number of violations	Notes
1 Killing civilians	41	women, 2 children 2
2 Civilian Casualties	57	children, 1 women 3
3 Attempted murder	11	3
4 abduction	849	4
5 Forced disappearance of abductees	300	5
6 Torture of abductees	81	6
7 Prevent visiting abductees	279	7
8 Forced displacement	200	8
9 Families displaced	450	9
10 Banning work	174	10
11 Prevention of women's relief and treatment	1	11
12 Assaults on women and children at home	43	12
13 Recruiting children	71	13
14 Raiding houses and tampering with their contents	246	14
15 Looting houses	119	15
16 Blowing houses	39	16
17 Houses damaged by direct bombardment or the bombing of a neighboring house	18	17
18 Occupation of houses	6	18
19 (Trapping houses (house siege	22	19

20	Blasting private rooms	2	20
21	Looting private rooms	2	21
22	Breaking into shops	12	22
23	Looting shops	4	23
24	Looting and damaging means of transport	118	24
25	Looted personal possessions	148	25
26	Suspension of staff salaries	360	26
27	exclusion from public service	7	27
28	Looting and destruction of qat farms	59	28
29	Creation of checkpoints	35	29
30	Forcing moderators	22	30
31	Special prisons	15	31
32	Special courts	15	32
33	General violations	192	33
Total			3997

## CONCLUSIONS

1) Houthi and Saleh forces have deliberately committed massive human rights violations against the Arhab tribe, as measured by 3997 during the period December 2014 to December 2016.

2) Many of the crimes committed by Houthi-Saleh forces could be classified as “war crimes” or “crimes against humanity”, both are under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Such crimes are considered a grave violation of the four Geneva Conventions and its protocols.

3) The Republican Guard forces loyal to former President Ali Saleh, who are present in Jabal al-Suma and Freijah camp, were among the perpetrators of these violations.

4) According to the principle of leadership accountability, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Ansar Allah al-Houthi movement and former president Ali Saleh are directly responsible for these violations and must be held accountable on this basis. As well as the high officers of the armed forces that committed the “war crimes” mentioned in the report.

5) The Yemeni authorities, led by President Abdurbo Mansour Hadi, bear responsibility for the failure and abstention of the state forces to protect Arhab, which eventually facilitated the invasion of the Huthi militants to the tribe.

6) The Houthis used the term “Takfiri” (atonement), “terrorism” and “arbitrariness” to arbitrarily retaliate against opponents for political objectives.

7) Torture of detainees and enforced disappearance of civilians has been systematically practiced with most abductions.

8) Women have been subjected to various abuses through persecution, endangerment and forcible displacement.

9) Children are the most affected by what has been done to the tribe of Arhab, including war and violence scenes that reflected on their psychological and health state.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Rights Radar calls on:

-Calls on international human rights organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, to monitor and document violations committed by Houthi and Saleh's forces.

-Calls on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take serious action, monitor and document violations, protect human rights and force the conflicting parties to comply with international law.

-Calls on the United Nations committee of experts on Yemen to meet the victims and visit the Arhab tribe and its displaced civilians in other areas.

-Calls on relief organizations to provide humanitarian and relief assistance to the people of Arhab.

-Calls on international human rights organizations to address violations by providing means to support the documentation of such cases.

-Calls on the United Nations and the states parties to the Geneva Conventions, to monitor the implementation of international treaties that assure the protection of human rights in Yemen overall.

-Calls on the forces of Houthi / Saleh, government forces and Arab-led coalition forces to spare civilians the risk of war and confrontation.

-Calls on local, regional and international actors in Yemen to put pressure on all conflicting parties to end human rights violations and abuses.

# RIGHTS RADAR

## WHO WE ARE?

Rights Radar is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that monitors, promotes and defends human rights in the Arab world. It was founded by a group of Arab human rights defenders and activists. We monitor, document and report violations against human rights, as well as provide advocacy and legal support for victims and capacity building for human rights activists. We cover all topics and areas of human rights, including public liberties and freedom of expression, women's rights, children's rights, disability rights, prisoner rights, right to justice, refugee rights and fundamental rights.

Rights Radar works through a wide network of professional reporters and monitors on the ground, using the latest techniques in monitoring and documenting human rights cases.

## OUR OBJECTIVES:

- 1- Monitoring and documenting violations against human rights in the Arab World.
- 2- Providing advocacy and legal support for Arab victims of human rights.
- 3- Capacity building and leadership developing for Arab human rights activists.
- 4- Networking and communicating with international human rights organizations.

## OUR VISION:

To provide excellence in monitoring and documenting the status of human rights in the Arab world.

## OUR MISSION:

Rights Radar monitors and documents human rights abuses in the Arab world in order to reduce violations against human rights and track the perpetrators, advancing the principle of no-impunity. We do this using professional and proven method, providing advocacy and legal support for Arab victims of human rights violations, creating training opportunities for human rights' capacity building and leadership, as well as networking and communicating with international human rights organizations.

## OUR VALUES:

- 1- Independency and balance.
- 2- Credibility and excellence.
- 3- Professionalism and responsibility.



**RIGHTS  
RADAR**

# **YEMEN: ARHAB**

**BRUTALITY OF HOUTHİ'S REVENGE**

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