

# Barriers of Fear and Misleading Discourse

A Human Rights Report Documents the Violation of the Right to Freedom of Movement at Security Checkpoints and Misleading Discourse by Ansar Allah Group

From January 2015 to December 2021

DRAWN BY RASHAD AL-SAMI



**SAM**  
Rights & Liberties

February 2022

[SAMRL.ORG](http://SAMRL.ORG)



# WHO IS SAM?



## SAM FOR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

An independent and non-profit human rights organization headquartered in Geneva. It started its activities in January 2016 and obtained a work permit in December 2017. It seeks to defend human rights in the Middle East and Yemen in particular and to communicate human rights violations to decision-making institutions, and effective and influential international organizations. It has been subjected to many smear campaigns, in addition to hacking its social media platforms by the parties to the Yemeni conflict because of the role of SAM in exposing the crimes they have committed. It issued dozens of human rights reports and statements in both Arabic and English documenting violations of the war and human rights in Yemen.



S A M R L . O R G  
SAM ORGANIZATION FOR  
RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



# Barriers of Fear and Misleading Discourse

A Human Rights Report Documents the Violation of the Right to  
Freedom of Movement at Security Checkpoints and Misleading  
Discourse by Ansar Allah Group

From January 2015 to December 2021

# CONTENT

Introduction .....	6
Executive Summary .....	8
Misleading Context .....	10
Methodology .....	14
Parties to the Conflict in Yemen and their Roles in Restricting Freedom of Movement.....	16
Legal Background .....	17
Refuting the Misinformation .....	18
<b>Chapter One: Restriction of Movement and Mobility .....</b>	<b>20</b>
First Section: A Network of Security Barriers .....	
Second Section: Preventing Movement without Judicial Warrants .....	
Third Section: Restricting the Movement of Women .....	
Fourth Section: Restriction for the Purpose of Extortion and Looting of Assets	
<b>Chapter Two: Associated Violations .....</b>	<b>23</b>
First Section: Detention and Enforced Disappearance .....	
Second Section: Torture .....	
Third Section: Examples of Restricting Movement and .....	
the Accompanying Violations .....	
Recommendations .....	36
Acknowledgement .....	39





## INTRODUCTION

---

Freedom of movement is one of the basic and necessary freedoms that must be enjoyed by all. It is one of the personal rights and basic freedoms on which all other freedoms depend. Any restriction of it, is violation to the most important human rights guaranteed by international charters, the Yemeni constitution and laws. Restricting this right lead to breach all other individual and collective rights and the population becomes under collective detention.

This right has been breached by the parties to the Yemeni war, especially with the country's geographical division, where each party controls the destinies of the people in areas under its control, and takes unjust measures and precautions against civilians, including illegal searches, detention on identity and political, geographical and sectarian background, in addition to accompanying violation such as extrajudicial killing, inhumane treatment, gender-based assault, robbery of assets, and denial of the delivery of vital supplies to civilians, and Taiz city is a case in point.

The ongoing conflict in Yemen, for the seventh year, has its devastating impact on the right to freedom of movement, which has been restricted. And the report aims to refute and expose the misleading information disseminated by Ansar Allah against the victims. It also, strives to highlight the plight and suffering of the civilians due to the checkpoints deployed in and between Yemeni governorates, as well as the looting of assets in the "illegal" customs points established by Ansar Allah group (Houthis).

The report is the result of an investigation that SAM conducted, as part of project activities documenting restrictions on freedom of movement since October 2021 in seven governorates under control of Ansar Allah, namely Sana'a, Taiz, Marib, Al-Bayda, Sa'da, Ibb and Hodiedah. It covers the violations committed during January 2015 to December 2021. The Organization complied with the rules of transparency, integrity and impartiality during the investigation to reveal the truth. Although, all Yemeni parties committed these violations and crimes in different proportions, the organization focused on the violations committed by Ansar Allah, and will document other parties' violations in future reports.

In light of the United Nations and international mediators' inability, to reach a solution that ends the war, and absence of international and domestic criminal justice mechanisms, the violations to the International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws, exacerbated these violations. In addition, the roles and external support by Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia to the parties to the war, has further complicated the situation and undermined Yemeni institutions and contributed to the division of Yemeni geography, which in turn reflected in increasing the restriction of freedom of movement within the country and complicated travel of Yemenis abroad.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the conclusion of an investigative project on restricting the movement and traffic at security checkpoints, and the associated violations committed by Ansar Allah, which SAM started in October 2021, and covering seven governorates, namely the capital Sana'a, Ibb, Hodiedah, Taiz, Al Bayda, Sa'da and Marib.

The report strives to refute and expose the misleading and misinformation that Ansar Allah disseminated against the victims whose right to freedom of movement and travel was denied and who were subjected to accompanying violations by narrating information provided by victims and witnesses. The report also highlights the tragedy of civilians due to the checkpoints and security points. Spreading in and between Yemeni roads and governorates, extortion and assets looting by the network of customs offices established by the de-facto authority in Sana'a. In this investigative report, SAM concluded that there is a link between the disinformation practiced by Ansar Allah media outlets, and their practices on the ground in restricting freedom of movement and the accompanying violations. It also concluded that, there is link between restricting movements, and looting of assets, where the Houthis used some of the victims that it detained at the checkpoints to defame its opponents, especially those who had, or intend to loot their assets, by accusing them with trumped-up charges, such as treason, mercenaries, ISIS, recruits of aggression, providing coordinates, being of criminal records, against many of those whose movement was restricted at the security checkpoints.

The report concluded that Ansar Allah has established a network of security checkpoints in its areas of control and between other areas controlled by other parties. The report documented (38) security checkpoints in (7) governorates, and restricting movement has become a systematic methodology by the group.

The report also documented informal prisons adjacent to the security checkpoints to detain civilians and harass them, which are often primitively built or iron "containers" or houses that they seized near these checkpoints.

SAM also, documented many violations accompanying this restriction of movement, such as unlawful detention, torture, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, financial extortion and gender-based assaults.



The report reviews the looting of assets by the customs offices established by the de facto authority, especially from traders, suppliers and businessmen. SAM believes that these customs points are illegitimate and were established in violation of the financial and tax laws that place customs points at the land, and sea borders of Yemen.

SAM documented illegitimate customs points in Afar, and Rada'a, in Al-Bayda, Maitam, and Al-Hazm, in Ibb, Sufyan, and Amran, Dhamar, Al-Thawra Stadium, 22 May center, Al-Sha'b Center, Shawabah center in Sana'a, Saqam, and Jabal Ras in Hodiedah, Al-Rahida in Taiz, Sa'da center, and Hajjah customs center.

In the past years, SAM documented dozens of incidents of restricting freedom of movement and the accompanying violations at security checkpoints, however, during implementing the project on Restricting Freedom of Movement since October 2021, it has investigated (52) incidents committed during January 2015 to December 2021, whose victims included, educators, merchants, government employees, citizens, expatriates, media and human rights activists, politicians, sheikhs, soldiers, women and children.

Among these victims, (15) were subjected to torture, (7) enforced disappearance, (9) extrajudicial killing, (10) robbery and extortion of assets, (9) detention, and (2) gender-based violence.

The report is based on the testimonies of the victims, their relatives or their acquaintances, in addition to collected documents, information, audio and video recordings, and the information published by Ansar Allah on security checkpoints and customs points, and other credible information published by other media outlets.

The report lists examples of (12) incidents of restricting freedom of movement, and accompanying violations, by security checkpoints and customs centers, namely; Al-Amera checkpoint in Ibb governorate, the detention and torture of the educator Sadiq Al-Batra at Al-Rahida junction point in Taiz, the disappearance of the two women, Hadeel Fotaini and Sawsan Fuad at Al-Kadan point in Hodiedah, the detention and torture of Hassan Khattab at Al-Marazem point in Sa'da governorate and killing of Jamel Sherian after he refused being blackmailed at a military checkpoint in Sana'a. In addition to Abu Hashem checkpoint in Al-Bayda, and the detention of Khaled Shalabi at Al-Mubarraz checkpoint in Hodiedah, the detention and torture of Yasser Mukrid after he was abducted from Ka'boul checkpoint in Taiz, killing of the expatriate Abdel-Salam al-Sha'r at Al-Odayn checkpoint in Ibb governorate, detention and torture of the journalist Muhammad al-Zouba and the human rights defender Abdullah al-Oqbi after Detaining them at security checkpoints in Al-Bayda, and investigating the case of looting assets at Al Rahida customs point, east of Taiz, and killing of three brothers at Arhab customs point.

## MISLEADING CONTEXT

Out of (52) incidents investigated by SAM on restricting movement and security checkpoints, (15) were associated by misinformation by Ansar Allah media outlets. However, other investigated incidents included misleading information, where the victims were stigmatized with baseless charges, including; recruits of aggression, mercenary, treason, and of having criminal records. In this section of the report, the misinformation and the media outlet that published such misinformation, will be listed, with details of the incident in question.

Al-Amera checkpoint militants committed crimes of restricting freedom of movement, where SAM has documented the detention of politician Muhammad Qahtan, while Al Maserah channel described the checkpoint as a security gateway to the city of Ibb that confronts "ISIS"<sup>1</sup> to coverup the violations committed.

Following detention of the educator, Sadiq Al-Batra, at Al Rahida junction point in Taiz, Al Maserah channel reported that a criminal cell affiliated with the Islah Party, led by Al-Batra, was arrested in Taiz.<sup>2</sup>

Ansar Allah media outlets condemned the claimed abduction of women by the countries of aggression and their mercenaries.<sup>3</sup> Within this misleading context, SAM investigated the disappearance of Hadeel Fotaini, her two children, and her friend Sawsan Fouad at Al-Kadan point in Hodiedah, which contradicts the group's claim of its rejection of these crimes.

SAM investigated the restriction of freedom of movement at al-Marazem checkpoint in Sa'da against civilians and the group's opponents. In the general context, the group's media praises what the security checkpoints in Sa'da have achieved in detaining recruits for aggression<sup>4</sup>.

Under allegation of tax evasion at customs points, Ansar Allah committed many crimes, including murder. SAM investigated the killing of Fadlallah al-Abbasi in a custom point in al-Bayda Governorate. On the other hand, Houthis media claimed that establishing such customs point, came to address losing control over of many customs posts, reduce the negative effects of the aggression and the unjust siege on the country<sup>5</sup>.

Muhammad Ali al-Houthi, head of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, wrote on Twitter, reprimanding the policemen to stay in their homes if they cannot serve citizens with integrity and discipline.<sup>6</sup>

This comes in the context of deception by showing concern for citizens. And after the killing of the young Jamel Sherian at a military checkpoint in Sana'a.

Ansar Allah media published many misinformation about the achievements of the security checkpoints in Al-Bayda, including the notorious Abu Hashem checkpoint, that links Al-Bayda and Marib.

Where the Security Media Channel published on YouTube what it called the detention of a number of mercenaries and recruits of the aggression on their way to Marib.<sup>7</sup> However, the findings of SAM investigation revealed that these checkpoints are restricting freedom of movement.

1. See sinbad6262, who quoted Al Maserah channel. "Confronting ISIS in Al-Amera area, Ibb city. October 17, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN9NwoYbFBU>

2. See Al Maserah channel. Confessions of criminal cells belonging to the Islah Party were arrested in Taiz. 10/17/2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eap0FC0Q2Rw>

3. See Al-Manar pro-group website. Yemen: A popular stand in Hodiedah condemning the crimes of the aggression, especially the abduction of women. February 4, 2021

<https://www.almanar.com.lb/7818010>

4. See Ofoq News website. Arrest of 12 recruits for aggression in Al-Bayda and Sa'da. September 5, 2018

<https://www.ofqnews.net/archives/122980>

5. See the National Information Center. Presidency. A meeting with the Central Organization for Control and Auditing to discuss the reports of the findings of the audit of the revenues of the Customs Authority. January 7, 2019.

<https://yemen-nic.info/news/detail.php?ID=73194>

6. See Muhammad Ali al-Houthi's Twitter. July 9, 2021.

[https://twitter.com/Moh\\_Alhouthi/status/1413596771062796290](https://twitter.com/Moh_Alhouthi/status/1413596771062796290)

7. See the Yemeni security media channel on YouTube. From the archives of the guards, a number of mercenaries of the aggression were arrested on their way to Marib. 18/8/2020.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DNEs-vs\\_R0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DNEs-vs_R0)

Al-Masera channel and the Military Media channel published on YouTube<sup>8</sup>, the alleged confessions of Khaled Abdel Rahman Shalabi<sup>9</sup>, one of the recruits of the aggression in Hodiedah. SAM interviewed him after his release. He mentioned that the recording and the publication was to coverup his arrest and harsh treatment he was subjected to at the Al-Mubarraz checkpoint in Hodiedah.

A year after the abduction and detention of Yasser Mukrid Al-Selwi in Al-Saleh prison, east of Taiz, Al-Masera channel published a misleading video<sup>10</sup> in which it claimed that "Taiz mercenaries" recruit their women for surveillance and reveal the army's and committees' sites for the aggression, and broadcast the alleged confessions of Yasser and other detainees in Al-Saleh prison.

Ansar Allah insurgents killed Ayman Nabil Radman at a checkpoint in Sanaa, he is a son of a sheikh in Arhab. After his murder, a security source stated, justifying his murder, that he refused to respond to the checkpoint orders to stop, claiming that he was wanted in cases by the security authorities.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Rahida customs point, east of Taiz, restricted freedom of movement, and its staff confiscated assets from some civilians and merchants, claiming that they are executing the Central Bank of Sana'a instructions, to confiscate the cash money of passers-by from in the checkpoint if it exceeded (YR100,000), of the old banknotes.<sup>12</sup> SAM documented the confiscation of the cash of Fadel Ghanem Al-Haddad family in this checkpoint.

Ansar Allah claimed that the customs point it has established are a model in defending the homeland.<sup>13</sup> And its media published news about the role played by the security checkpoints in Arhab district in establishing security and stability,<sup>14</sup> however, SAM documented shocking incidents committed at these checkpoints, including the murder of Kamal Ahmed Manna and his two brothers Salim and Jamel at Arhab customs point north of Sana'a.

Abu Ali al-Jarmozi checkpoint detained in Rada', Abdul Haq Muhammad al-Najjar, who was



killed later in Dhamar Community College prison in an air strike by the Coalition airstrike. Ansar Allah's media claimed that the killed detainees were prisoners of the aggression,<sup>15</sup> although majority of killed detainees are civilians who have been detained at security checkpoints or from their homes and workplaces.

The Houthi-run Yemen satellite channel published a report on the role of the security checkpoints in Sa'da governorate in protecting the homeland and citizens from the aggression and its mercenaries, during an Eid visit to these points by the governor of Sa'da and the Ministry of Interior officials.<sup>16</sup>

SAM has documented restriction of movements in these checkpoints, and murder of civilians, including Al-Qasim Munasir Abu Kheira who was killed at a security checkpoint on the main street in Sa'da city.

Al Masirah TV published the alleged confessions of Faris Al-Mikhlafi, one of the soldiers of the aggression in Taiz,<sup>17</sup> to justify his detention at Ka'boul checkpoint in Khadir, east of the governorate.

8.SAM didn't put the link at the victim's request, who fears reprisals because he resides in Hodiedah Governorate.

9. A Pseudonym

10. See Al Maserah Channel's video site. The mercenaries of Taiz employ their women to monitor and reveal the sites of the army and committees for the aggression, an "unprecedented scandal" 11/15/2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFM7kayUfcl>

11. See the YEMEN DAYS website. Sana'a... Sources reveal details of the murder of Ayman Radman in Al-Nasr roundabout, and Arhab tribes demand the surrender of the perpetrators. 11/9/2021.

<https://yemendays.com/posts/4154>

12. See Houthis-run Saba Net. Circular of the Central Bank for comers to the areas of the Salvation Government. June 27, 2021.

<https://www.saba.ye/ar/news3145591.htm>

13. See Al Wahda newspaper. Customs honors its active staff on the World Customs Day 2020. January 26, 2020

<https://www.alwahdahnews.net/73562/>

14. See Saba Net. Governor of Sanaa inspects security checkpoints in Arhab district. March 15, 2018

<https://www.saba.ye/ar/news490395.htm>

15. See Al Maserah Channel website. The aggression's targeting of its captured mercenaries in Dhamar. Premeditated murder. September 2, 2019.

<http://www.almasirahnews.com/44433/>

16. See the Yemen channel correspondent channel on YouTube, Issa Atef. Sa'da; Inauguration of the Eid visits to the deployed security men in the security belt. 13/8/2019.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_78570YtAQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_78570YtAQ)

17. SAM obtained the video, but couldn't link to the source, as the channel was blocked by the US Treasury.





## METHODOLOGY

SAM implemented the project Investigating the crime of Restricting Freedom of Movement, as one of the major individual rights that were restricted by the parties to the armed conflict in Yemen. Within this context, SAM adopted a clear methodology for investigation and access to information, including transparency, impartiality and objectivity. The premise of the project was to refute the misleading information published by Ansar Allah media about the victims of restricting freedom of movement or security checkpoints. Where the organization collected evidences and information and concluded that Ansar Allah, uses it to falsify awareness and influence the audience.

In keeping with the methodology of neutrality, SAM sent a letter to Ansar Allah through the Houthis-appointed Minister of Human Rights, requesting their viewpoint on questions raised during the writing of the report or about specific incidents, but it did not respond, until the publication of this report.

SAM relied on credible sources to refute the misinformation, and pursued authentic information, such as interviewing the victims and witnesses and collecting and verifying documents, photography, videos, and information published by media outlets and platforms after verifying their sources or based on facts supported with evidences, as well as statements and letters issued by Ansar Allah.

SAM assigned 13 researchers for five months, to develop this investigative report. Who investigated the incidents documented in this report, taking advantage of seven years of SAM work in documenting violations against the right to freedom of movement at security checkpoints.

The report focused on the restriction of freedom of movement at the security checkpoints practiced

by Ansar Allah and the violations accompanying the restriction of freedom of movement, namely, extrajudicial killings, detention, enforced disappearances, inhumane treatment, denial of delivery of vital supplies and gender-based attacks. It also focused on the newly established customs offices and the illegitimate customs and levies imposed in Sana'a, Hodiedah, Ibb, Taiz, Sa'da, Al-Bayda, and Marib governorates. SAM will produce another report on violations committed by other parties to the conflict.

**The organization's researchers managed to interview victims and witnesses, and used questionnaires, video recording, photography and secured telephone calls despite difficulties in collecting photos related to security checkpoints and customs posts.**

**The organization investigated more than (52) incidents of restriction of the right to freedom of movement and the accompanying violations committed during the period from January 2015 to December 2021. SAM interviewed more than (117) victims and witnesses, including women, and social and political groups.**

**SAM organization was keen on the security and safety of the victims and witnesses it interviewed and the confidentiality of the information it collected. To this end, the report concealed the identities of witnesses and some victims and adopted pseudonyms. It also kept many interviews and investigations confidential of certain incidents at the request of the victims and witnesses.**

## PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT IN YEMEN AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESTRICTING FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Iran-backed Ansar Allah controls the capital, Sanaa, and ten other governorates in northern and central Yemen,<sup>18</sup> and parts of Taiz and Marib. Ansar Allah also, receives support from armed movements such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Popular Mobilization in Iraq, due to the sectarian homogeneity between Ansar Allah and Iran regime, and Iran-backed groups in the region.<sup>19</sup>

The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia also played a role in bringing Iranian support to Ansar Allah, being in a military confrontation with Saudi Arabia.

The Internationally Recognized Yemeni Government forces control Marib city, Shabwa, Mahra, Hadramout, and parts in Taiz and Abyan. Saudi Arabia backs the Yemeni government; however, its interventions and the UAE in the Yemeni sovereign affairs are burdening the government, according to a joint statement issued by the Speaker of the Shura Council, and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, the policy of the Arab coalition that led the battle against the Houthis has taken Yemen to different goals from those announced by Decisive Storm.<sup>20</sup>

The forces of the so-called (Security Belt) of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council<sup>21</sup> control the governorates of Aden, Lahj, Socotra Island and parts of Abyan. The STC seeks to reestablish the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, with its borders before 1990.

The UAE-backed Joint Forces control the western coast of Yemen, the areas along the Red



Sea coast that extend from Ras al-A'ara in the south to the outskirts of Hodiedah city in the north, it also controls Bab al-Mandab Strait and Mayun and Hunaish, islands. These forces consist of the Giants Brigades, most of whose commanders are affiliated with the Salafi sect,<sup>22</sup> from the southern governorates, the "National Resistance" led by Tariq Muhammad Abdullah Saleh ,nephew of the late President Saleh<sup>23</sup>, and the "Tihami Forces" in which popular groups from the population of Tihama are involved.

Ansar Allah, government forces, the Southern Transitional Council, and the Joint Forces operate dozens of security checkpoints at the entrances to the areas they control. SAM documented many practices that restricted entry and exit movement at these checkpoints and many accompanying violations. These checkpoints restricted civilians' movements, vital supplies, and harassed journalists, human rights defenders and activists.

18. Dhamar, Ibb, Al Bayda, Hodiedah, Amran, Sa'da, Al Jouf, Hajjah, Al Mahwet, and Raimah.

19. See Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. Analysis: How Iran's Islamic Revolution Does, and Does Not, Influence Houthi Rule in Northern Yemen, Houthi Rule in North Yemen. y Mohammed Almahfali & James Root

20. See Dr. Ahmed Obaid bin Daghr's Facebook. A call for a national salvation. November 30, 2021

<https://bit.ly/3ucBstq>

21. A political bloc backed by the Emirates, which includes military forces, seeks to restore the situation in Yemen to before the establishment of Yemeni unity.

22. A religious movement that is strict in applying the Sunnah, with limited presence on the political side, where many of them criminalize political activities.

23. After his uncle Saleh was killed by the Houthis in December 2017, Tariq fled Sanaa, and the UAE provided logistical and military support to establish forces affiliated with him to fight the Houthis.



## LEGAL BACKGROUND



Human rights covenants guaranteed the freedom of movement, mobility and travel. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.”<sup>24</sup> “The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that: “Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence”, “Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own”<sup>25</sup>. This article guaranteed that these rights may not be restricted by any restriction other than those provided by law and within their narrow limits and necessary to protect national security, order, health and public morals, the rights and freedoms of others.

Yemen is among the countries that have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Other non-state parties including Ansar Allah, STC, the Joint Forces, are abide by international instruments, as they control geographic areas and have the command and control over their members, and a large number of populations in areas under their control.

In addition, detention, enforced disappearance, torture, extrajudicial killing, prohibition of delivery of vital materials to the population, gender-based attacks and looting of assets are criminalized in international humanitarian law and human rights law. The International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman Treatment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article Three Common to the four Geneva Conventions prohibits all forms of torture, including sexual abuse, and criminalizes attacks on life, physical integrity and human dignity, and starvation of the population as a method of warfare even in cases of extreme military necessity.<sup>26</sup> Noting that Yemen did not ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the fragile and divided judicial system in Yemen, access to justice for victims and accountability of perpetrators has become extremely difficult, in addition to weak national human rights protection mechanisms, which has encouraged Ansar Allah and other war parties to commit. SAM is seriously concerned that criminal justice is not of much concern of the international community and the parties involved in Yemeni warfare, a matter that calls for everyone's attention to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure redress to the victims.

24. Article 13-1

25. Article 12-1,2

26. Article (14) of the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. And Rule No. (53) of the customary rules of international humanitarian law, according to the study of the International Committee of the Red Cross



## REFUTE THE MISINFORMATION

The organization sought to issue the report to refute the misleading and deception campaign launched by Ansar Allah media and its leaders to coverup its restriction of the freedom of movement.

Since its takeover of Sanaa in September 2014, Ansar Allah has disseminated misinformation to defame and stigmatized its opponents, with "treason", "mercenaries", "aggression recruits", "agent cells", "has criminal records"<sup>27</sup> to intimidate them and deter them from defending themselves and expose these violations.

The organization documented false and misleading information describing the government-control areas as "a mecca for criminals and those with criminal precedents."<sup>28</sup> Through such misinformation, Ansar Allah covered up many practices that restricted movement and the accompanying violations against passengers coming from government-controlled areas, who are mainly civilians.<sup>29</sup>

Laa website, reported that: "Most of the fugitive criminals, and those wanted by the security forces, are arrested at the checkpoints controlled by the security services and the Popular Committees on the roads leading to the areas controlled by the aggression and its hypocrites. Also, those who are arrested inside the capital are from Those coming from those areas, to destabilizing the security of the areas under the control of the national forces." SAM verified some of detention incidents, and concluded that the victims had nothing to do with charges reported by Ansar Allah media.

SAM investigated the incidents of restricting freedom of movement, whose victims were civilians forced to make media statements from inside prisons targeting the group's opponents or those whose assets were looted. Ansar Allah uses these videos to cover up the crimes perpetrated by its forces. SAM documented many incidents in its report "The Feudalism of the Receiver and the Deception Machinery".

27. See a security report published by Houthi-run Al-Thawra Net website. "The latest achievements, a British espionage cell busted by the security services... The fence of internal front and tributary to the battle fronts". March 3, 2021.

<http://althawrah.ye/archives/660859>

28. See Laa newspaper website, close to the Houthis. The mercenaries' control areas... a mecca of criminals and those with precedents. To spread the news of the arrest of 2,761 by the security services of Ansar Allah, on criminal charges. No date

<https://laamedia.net/news.aspx?newsnum=1545>

29. See the Yemeni Press website loyal to Ansar Allah, "Security Services Arrest 64 Recruits of the Aggression in a Number of Governorates" October 11, 2019.

<https://pressn.net/show6658374.html>

## CHAPTER ONE

# RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT AND MOBILITY

SAM investigated the practices of restricting freedom of movement and mobility perpetrated by Ansar Allah at its security checkpoints and customs posts, and obtained information confirming that the group uses these checkpoints for security and military purposes, and it authorizes its insurgents to arrest, search and restrict the movements of its opponents, human rights defenders, journalists, and traders. Ansar Allah imposed strict restrictions on movement alongside the governorates under its control and that controlled by other parties.

The First Section in this chapter addresses Ansar Allah restriction of movements, and the Second Section addresses unlawful restriction of movement without any warrants. The Third and Fourth Sections addresses restriction of women movements, and the extortion and looting of assets at Ansar Allah customs posts.

SAM interviewed victims and witnesses who were subjected to violations, all of whom confirmed that the Houthi forces have systematically restricted the right of movement during the past years.

### **First Section: A Network of Security Checkpoints**

SAM organization documented (59) security checkpoints controlled by all parties throughout the Yemeni territory, where restrictions on freedom of movement and other crimes were committed. Also, obtained data on (38) security checkpoints run by Ansar Allah forces in seven governorates covered by the report, and investigated (13) checkpoint and customs post.

The organization is concerned that the prolonged conflict may severely complicate the freedom of movement and mobility, especially with the prefiltration of armed groups, to which the security checkpoints has brought them material gains, in light of inaction of the Yemeni government and the absence of accountability mechanisms.

## **Second Section: Restriction of Movement without Judicial Warrants**

In all restriction incidents investigated by SAM, it could not detect judicial warrants to restrict the freedom of movement of the victims. And all restriction of this right, were made on instructions by Houthis security elements, or by its leaders, or initiated by militia insurgents at the security and military checkpoints on personal motives or retaliatory or under the security obsession.

The judicial system in Yemen is divided between the parties to the war. Where there is a judicial council run from Aden and another council run from Sana'a. The judicial union entities were divided between a supporter of Ansar Allah in Sana'a, another supporting the Yemeni government, and a third supporting the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. This reflected on the judicial procedures and jeopardized the role of law.

SAM has documented disgraceful practices against judicial staff, during the course of performing their mandate, by all parties, especially in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden.

## **Third Section: Restricting the Movement of Women**

SAM investigated (6) cases of violations against women and children at Ansar Allah security checkpoints, including detention, extortion and gender-based sexual assaults.

SAM noted that women are reluctant to disclose the assaults that they have been subjected to, sexual harassment, due to the social norms and stigma, that haunt the victim and her family. In an incident that SAM documented in Al-Bayda governorate, a militant at one of the security checkpoints attempted to sexually assault a girl who tends sheep, who resisted them, and they killed her. Her family was threatened by Ansar Allah not to talk to SAM or go public.



#### **Fourth Section: Restriction for the Purpose of Extortion and Looting Assets**

SAM investigated (10) incidents of financial extortion of civilians committed by Ansar Allah security checkpoints. In addition, SAM had documented incidents of financial extortion and detention against civilians at Ansar Allah checkpoint in Al-Aqroudh, Taiz city.<sup>30</sup>

SAM also, investigated and documented establishment of customs posts, by Ansar Allah, at cities under<sup>31</sup> its control in violation of the law that established the land customs posts at Yemeni beaches and borders and at the first internal land road after these borders. Ansar Allah, collected unlawful taxes and customs at these posts.

Houthi-run media published false news on these new customs posts, alleging that they were established to counter the consequences of losing control over other customs posts and mitigating the fallouts of the aggression and the unjust siege on the country.<sup>32</sup>

**The Organization documented examples of customs revenues collected by the these customs posts published the Houthi-controlled Central Organization for Control and Auditing, who reported that the customs revenues for the years (2016-2017) and (January-June 2018) amounted to (YR79 billion)<sup>33</sup>. The Director General of Customs Control of Sana'a, Ali Hamed said that the customs duties on vehicles in Sana'a Governorate, by end of March 2017, reached (YR3,444,894,000)<sup>34</sup>. The Customs Authority stated that the revenues generated by customs centers, from January 1 to June 30, 2017 reached (YR5,122,000,000)<sup>35</sup>**

The organization believes that Ansar Allah used the revenues collected by illegal customs posts to finance its warfare, security checkpoints and prisons, especially with its disavowal of its obligations towards the population in its areas of control, and the security checkpoints became a source of personal enrichment for many of the militia elements.

30. southeastern part of Taiz, and passes through Al-Aqroudh, and Khader area, and reaches the eastern side of the city of Taiz, where the Ansar Allah controls.

31. Houthi-controlled Customs Authority Department released news on the establishment of customs posts at governorates of Dhamar and Amran. 4/4/2017. <https://customs.gov.ye/news/Details/3172>

32. See the National Information Center. Presidency; A meeting with the Central Organization for Control to discuss the reports on the Customs Authority revenues' audit. January 7, 2019 <https://yemen-nic.info/news/detail.php?ID=73194>.

33. Ibid

34. See Saba Net. More than YR3 billion vehicle customs duties revenues at Sana'a customs until end of last March. April 1, 2017. <https://www.saba.ye/ar/news/460795.htm>

35. See Saba Net. Holding the first consultative meeting for the customs authority and customs control centers. 6 July 2017. <https://www.saba.ye/ar/news/468543.htm>

## CHAPTER TWO

# ASSOCIATED VIOLATIONS

Ansar Allah practiced various violations associated with the restriction of freedom of movement, namely, detention, enforced disappearance, torture, extrajudicial killings, gender-based assaults, and denial access of vital supplies to the civilians. This section of the report addresses the findings related to detention and enforced disappearance, as well as torture and inhuman treatment, listing examples of the restriction of movement and associated violations.

### First Section: Detention and Enforced Disappearance

The organization investigated (16) incidents of detention and enforced disappearance of civilians at the security checkpoints of Ansar Allah in seven governorates covered by the report, and documented the detention facilities designated by Ansar Allah adjacent to the security checkpoints.

SAM organization had previously produced a report on the victims of enforced disappearance in August 2021, a report on the violations against detainees by Ansar Allah against in Al-Saleh prison, east of Taiz in February 2020, and a report on the women detainees in Ansar Allah prisons in July 2019.<sup>36</sup> The organization noted that some of the female detainees whose names mentioned in these reports were detained at the security checkpoints.

### Second Section: Torture

SAM organization has interviewed (15) victims of torture and inhuman treatment committed by Houthi forces at security checkpoints or after they were transferred to its prisons. The security checkpoints were the beginning of a trouble-filled journey for these victims.

The organization had produced reports on the victims of torture and cruel treatment during the past years, namely "the Houthis Tortures them and Blackmailed their Families" about the victims of Al-Saleh prison in Taiz and the "Slow Death" highlighted the treatment of sick detainees and "Brutal Killing" on some cases of brutal murder.<sup>37</sup> The reports contained examples victims of torture who were arrested at security checkpoints.

---

36. See SAM for Rights and Liberties. <https://samrd.org/index.php?e=10.A.c.1.html>

37. Ibid



### Third Section: Examples of Restricting Movement incidents and the Associated Violations

#### Al-Amera Checkpoint in Ibb Governorate

Al-Amera checkpoint used by Ansar Allah to restrict freedom of movement and mobility in Al-School area, northern entrance to Ibb city. SAM investigated violations committed by this checkpoint elements, throughout the years of the war, and verified misinformation by Ansar Allah media on this checkpoint. Where Al Maserah channel described this checkpoint as the gateway to the security of Ibb, which confronts the "ISIS".<sup>38</sup>

The checkpoint was named after Princess Umm Jalawi bin Saud bin Abdulaziz, who built a mosque and a rest house adjacent to it, early nineties. After the Houthis-Saleh alliance forces took control of Ibb in early 2015, Houthis deployed its gunmen at this checkpoint. The checkpoint searches the passenger from/to Ibb city. In February 2015, they arrested five young activists, including Fares Fouad Al-Banna, on charges of organizing a protest against the group. And detained them at Bin Laden resort, as human shield, exposed to the Arab coalition airstrike, being a military site of the militia.

At this security checkpoint, Houthis detained the leader of Islah party, Muhammad Qahtan, who remain incommunicado since April 2015. Qahtan was passing by to visit his relatives in his hometown of Al-Odayn, and he was detained and returned to Sana'a.

SAM investigated detention of Qahtan, and documented various testimonies in this regard. Also, inquired Ansar Allah about his whereabouts. One of his relatives said that Qahtan was denied visitation, and they do not know his whereabouts. Although he is old and suffers from several chronic diseases, however Ansar Allah, refuses to disclose his fate. Hassan Zaid, the former minister in Ansar Allah government, said in a press interview that: "He has strived to find out Qahtan's whereabouts, and demanded his release, but he did not get any news, especially after the start of negotiations on the release of prisoners and the last news." Last information attributed to Muhammad al-Bukhaiti that the prisoners exchange will include Professor Muhammad Qahtan).<sup>40</sup>

38. See sinbad2626, who reported on Al Masirah channel. Confronting ISIS in Al-Amera area of Ibb city. October 17, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N9NwoYbFBU>

39. Interview dated, 16 October 2021.

40. See Al-mawqea post site. Hassan Zaid in an interview with Al-Mawqea Post: Saleh was not killed treacherously, and we do not know the fate of Qahtan. January 28, 2019. <https://almawqea.net/interviews/37760>

## Detention of Educator Sadiq Patra for Allegedly Leading a Criminal Cell

Al Maserah channel reported on what it called a criminal cell affiliated with the Islah Party, whose members were arrested in Taiz, led by Sadiq Abdul Jalil Al-Patra, and detained at Al-Saleh Prison.<sup>41</sup> SAM investigated and verified this information, and interviewed three victims and (5) witnesses, also, interviewed Al- Patra, in Taiz after his release as part of an exchange deal<sup>42</sup> with the government forces in Taiz, which took place on December 19, 2019.

Al-Patra told SAM that: (On June 5, 2017, I left the Taiba mosque in Al-Zindani market, Al-Hawban Junction after evening prayer. I got into my car and passed Al-Rahida Junction point, which is controlled by the Houthis. The Director of National Security, called "Kameel", and three armed men pulled me out, tied me to the back and blindfolded me. They took me in Prado vehicle to Al-Saleh prison. They took me to an apartment in the prison called "Aden" apartment. It was all dark and they treated me brutally. They tortured me with electricity - SAM saw the signs of electric shock on his hand – my left leg was broken, and suffered impaired vision, for being in this dark room for one and half years. The investigations continued for (11) months in an exhausting manner.

The victim added: (The reason for my abduction, according to my knowledge from their investigations, was accusing me of collaborating with the Arab coalition and providing coordinates, due to my refusing to join in the mobilizing at schools, as I'm the head of the Systems and Information Department in the Education Office in Atta'izyah, and after my abduction, they put me in solitary confinement for 27 days, they tortured me, beat me and deprived me of food and medicine that I used for Thalassemia, and they asked to videotape a confession that I recruit for the aggression and coordination of sleeper cells affiliated with the government forces. I refused, so they tortured me severely, depriving me of food for three days, depriving me of treatment, and forced me to do the shooting in exchange of allowing my brother to bring the medicines, so I surrendered to the pressure and recorded the video that they broadcast on Al Maserah channel).

The victim said that his submission to record, was under pressure of torture, and that what he said in the video was not true, and he had never worked in the military side throughout his life. He is an educator and has nothing to do with the war parties. His family was also forced to pay (YR8,000,000), by Houthi leaders who kept promising them of his release, but he stayed in Al-Saleh prison for two years and eight months, then he was released as part of an exchange deal between government forces and Ansar Allah in Taiz.

41. See Al Maserah channel. Confessions of criminal cells affiliated with Islah Party were arrested in Taiz. 10/17/2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaap0FC0Q2Rw>.

42. Interview dated 25 November 2021.



## Hadeel Fatini and Sawsan Fouad; Victims of Detention on the Grounds of their Return from Marib

Ansar Allah claims that they care for women, and criticizes what it calls the crimes of abducting them by “the aggression.” Their media outlets published news denouncing these actions,<sup>43</sup> however, SAM investigated and documented crimes of detention and restricting the movement of women at the group’s security checkpoints, a behavior that totally contradicts what it claims through its media.

Hadeel Khaled Fotaini and her two children,<sup>44</sup> and Sawsan Fouad, were subjected to detention and enforced disappearance. SAM interviewed the husband of the first in Marib city<sup>45</sup> and communicated with the second through a secret means of communication. The organization investigated the incident and collected details of the incidents.

Hadeel and her two children, Al-Baraa and Osama, and her friend Sawsan were returning from Marib to Hodiedah after a visit to her husband (who works as a soldier with the government forces). When arrived Al-Kadan checkpoint at the outskirts of Hodiedah, the checkpoint elements search the passengers, and they were dropped off with the children on the justification that they returned from Marib, and they were taken to a detention room in a house near the point. Hadeel managed to call her husband in Marib on November 21, 2018, and told him what had happened. He took her phone, and kept them incommunicado. Their relatives searched for them in vain. And when the checkpoint elements learned that Hadeel, is the wife of one of the fighters with the government forces in Marib, they made her to disappear.

Sawsan said: (They detained me in a room in a house for seven days and released me, while my friend Hadeel stayed for 18 days). A relative to Hadeel, stated that the gunmen intimidated her and her two children, refused her visitation, and plundered sums of money, and extorted money from her family in exchange for her release.

Hadeel’s relatives knew her whereabouts her place of detention from her released friend, and followed up with the checkpoint led by Houthi supervisor, Ali Ibrahim Al-Qadimi, who released her and her two children, after paying YR20 thousand, and pledge by her father not to travel to Marib again, after (18) days of her disappearance

43. See Al-Manar website. Yemen: A popular stand in Hodiedah condemning the crimes of the aggression, especially abduction of women. February 4, 2021 <https://www.almanar.com.lb/7818010>.

44. A pseudonym.

45. Interview dated 15 October 2021.

## Al-Marazem Checkpoint, Sa'da

SAM investigated this checkpoint and obtained relevant information, as Ansar Allah media reported misinformation about the security checkpoints and their role on detain the recruits of the aggression,<sup>46</sup> however, SAM confirmed that such allegations were made to coverup restriction of movement of civilians and has committed accompanying violations, including enforced disappearance and inhuman treatment.

The checkpoint is located at entrance to Al Marazem market in Al Sha`af area, Saqien district, Sa'da, which was established by Houthi in 2009 during war against former President Ali Abdullah Saleh government. and established a nearby prison for detainees at the checkpoint. According to witnesses, passengers through that checkpoint get their phones searched to monitor who is loyal and who opposes it.

Hassan Muhammad Khattab, one of the victims of the movement restriction at this checkpoint, SAM<sup>47</sup> interviewed him, he said: (On December 29, 2018, I went to the health unit for treatment, so I passed through Al-Marazem checkpoint, and three Houthi supervisors stopped me, headed by Abu Hassan Margham, and detained me at a prison in Saqien for one day, then they transferred me to a prison in Dahyan city, where I was beaten and hung on the roofs, and they put me in a "ditch" and told me that they would kill me, and shot near my head. Then they take me back to the cell and continue torturing me. They did that repeatedly for three months).

Khattab added: (After three months, they transferred me to the Political Security prison in Sanaa, and interrogated me repeatedly. I was beaten with cables, they deprived me of food and forced me to drink bathroom water, cursed me with harsh and abusive words. They tied my feet for a whole year, claiming that I collaborated with the "aggression" and forced me to sign papers, I do not know what was written in them, and I stayed in this prison for two whole years. I was only released as part of an exchange deal between the Yemeni government and the Houthis on October 28, 2021). During the interview, Khattab showed signs of psychological distress, SAM also, interviewed witnesses who confirmed the incident and reported that the victim became mentally disturbed due to the torture.

46. See Ofqnews News website, The arrest of 12 recruits for aggression in Al-Bayda and Sa'da. September 5, 2018  
<https://www.ofqnews.net/archives/122980>

47. Interview dated 20 November 2021.

## Jamel Sherian; Murdered at a Military Checkpoint while Driving his Vehicle

After the killing of Jamel Sherian by gunmen at the Al-Hafa camp checkpoint, east of Sanaa, Muhammad Ali Al-Houthi, head of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, reprimanded the policemen, saying (that it is honorable for them to stay in their homes if they are not able to serve citizens with integrity and discipline)<sup>48</sup>, and media outlets close to Ansar Allah, quoted an official source in the Ministry of Interior that the checkpoint is not affiliated with it, but with Al-Hafa camp. Policemen from Al-Omari police station, moved to the checkpoint immediately after the incident, and they arrested three elements at the checkpoint and put them in the custody.<sup>49</sup>

SAM investigated the incident and the tweet by the head of the Revolutionary Committee and Houthis media, and concluded that what was published was to coverup the incident and pacify the angry families of the victim who had demanded surrender of the killers of Sherian. Where in similar documented cases the perpetrators were not prosecuted, rather Houthis leaders and media statements were intended to coverup the incidents.

SAM interviewed witnesses to the incident<sup>50</sup> and obtained the details of his killing. The driver, Jamel Sherian, was driving his truck on Khawlan Street on Friday, July 9, 2021. He passed through a security checkpoint next to Al-Hafa camp. The gunmen, led by Qanaf Attia, asked him for money, but he refused to stop. One of the gunmen chased the truck and shot Jamel, and prevented passers-by from taking to hospital, and left him bleeding until he died on the truck. His family gathered and set up a tent next to Al-Hafa camp, demanding that the security services hand over the perpetrators to the justice.



48. See Muhammad Ali al-Houthi's Twitter. July 9, 2021. [https://twitter.com/Moh\\_Alhouthi/status/1413596771062796290](https://twitter.com/Moh_Alhouthi/status/1413596771062796290).

49. See the Crater Sky website. A security source clarifies the repercussions of the killing of a truck driver in Sanaa. July 10, 2021. <https://cratersky.net/posts/70618>

50. Interview dated 25 October 2021.



## Abu Hashem Checkpoint, Rada'a

SAM investigated the incidents of restricting freedom of movement and mobility by elements at the checkpoint located at the eastern entrance to Rada'a on the international road linking Al-Bayda, Marib, Shabwa and Hadramout Governorate. It was named after its leader Abdullah Muhammad Al-Riyami. The checkpoint controls passengers from and to Marib city, and the expatriates returning from Saudi Arabia to the areas under Houthis control pass through it after the closure of the Haradh border crossing on the western side of Yemen.

The point is notorious among travelers and drivers of vehicles and trucks, due to unlawful levies imposed, and restriction of their movement and other accompanying violations, such as detention, disappearance and inhuman treatment.

Ansar Allah media published many misleading information about the security checkpoints in Al-Bayda, namely Abu Hashem checkpoint, where the Security Media channel on YouTube reported alleged arrest of mercenaries and recruits of the aggression on their way to Marib.<sup>51</sup> However, SAM investigation concluded that the detainees at the checkpoint are often accused of being recruits of the aggression, as stated in the testimony of one of the relatives of the victims who were subjected to disappearance and torture, which led to a mental disorder.

SAM interviewed the wife of the victim, Ali Rashid Al-Omeisy,<sup>52</sup> who said: "My husband was returning from Marib to Sana'a, where he worked as a government employee there, and while he was at Abu Hashem checkpoint on February 21, 2019, he was detained and transferred to the military prison in Sana'a, and his legs were tied with iron chains throughout his four-month detention. Months after his release, we took him to a mental hospital due to his deteriorated mental health. We later learned from him that he had been subjected to cruel treatment, as he was hung on the roof of the cell for three days, and abused by the jailers. The guards showed him dozens of pictures of people he did not know in order to confess that he was in contact with them. The victim's wife added: (My husband was beaten by rifle butts on sensitive parts of his body and they denied him access to the bathroom for days. He urinated in his room, and this harsh treatment continued intensively. On the last day at the cell, they beat him harshly and threw him in the prison yard, then released him).

51. See Yemeni security media channel on YouTube. From the archive of the guards, a number of mercenaries of the aggression were arrested on their way to Marib. 18/8/2020.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DNEs-vs\\_R045](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DNEs-vs_R045)

52. Interview dated January 4, 2022.

## **Khaled Shalabi was detained at Al-Mubarraz Checkpoint, Hodiedah, for political motives**

Khaled Abdel Rahman Shalabi,<sup>53</sup> was arrested, subjected to cruel treatment, and forced to give false confessions. SAM obtained the video published of the victim on Al-Maserah channel and republished by the Military Media Channel on YouTube.<sup>54</sup> The victim was forced to confess that he transfers money from Hodiedah Governorate to government recruits in Marib and recruiting youth for government forces.

SAM interviewed him<sup>55</sup> about the confessions he made to Al Maserah TV. He said: (after three months of my detention and torture, the jailers threatened to transfer me to Sa'da governorate if I refused to record a video with confession, and promised to release me if I accepted. So, I recorded the video, hoping that I will be released and getting rid of the bad situation in in the cell.”

He continued; (On November 2017, I was passing by on my motorbike at the Al-Mubarraz checkpoint in front of the Jabal Ras district office, in Hodiedah, and the supervisor of the checkpoint, Abu Muhammad detained me and transferred me to a detention room in a building next to the checkpoint for two days, then transferred me to a prison in Zabid district is located inside a building that was previously used as a school for teaching Islamic teachings, and there began the investigation and accused pf working for the legitimate government and provide the coordinates of the Coalition aircraft. During my interrogation, they tortured me, with slapping, hanging for long hours, starvation, and showering with cold water after midnight, and they shot next to me in a mock execution for psychological torture, and the torture continued for intermittent periods during three months).

The victim added: (After three months, they asked me to speak before the camera about what they would dictate to me in order to release me, and if I refused, they would re-interview me and they would transfer me to Sa'da. I accepted to talk and Al Masirah channel broadcast the video. But after the video was published, they transferred me to four prisons, the first in a school in the At-Tuhayta district, the second in Zabid, the third in Al-Qalaa prison in Hodiedah, and the fourth in Hunaish prison, and I stayed in these prisons for about a year before they released me).

53. A pseudonym.

54. SAM refrained from publishing the link at the request of the victim, for fears of reprisals, as he resides in Hodiedah Governorate.

55. Interview dated 15 October 2021.

56. See Al Maserah Channel's video site. The mercenaries of Taiz employ their women to surveillance and identify the army and committees' sites, in favor of the aggression, an "unprecedented scandal" 11/15/2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEM7kayUfcl>

## Yasser Mukrid, Five Years in Detention, After his Abduction from Ka'boul Checkpoint in Taiz

A year after his abduction and detention in Al-Saleh prison of Ansar Allah, east of Taiz, Al-Maserah channel reported that the "mercenaries of Taiz" are recruiting their women to surveillance and identify the army and committees' sites, in favor of the aggression, and it broadcasts confessions of detainees in Al-Saleh prison, including Yasser Mukrid Al-Selwi.<sup>56</sup>

SAM investigated the incident and verified the information published by Al Maserah channel, and interviewed the victim<sup>57</sup> after his release in an exchange deal between government forces and Ansar Allah in Taiz on September 29, 2021. And asked him about his confessions, he said: (the confession was made under threat and temptation to release me, and they wrote what I shall say, that I provided the coordinates of the coalition aircraft about the locations and movements of the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis, and they promised to release me, if I recorded this video, but they left me in prison for nearly four years after that recording). SAM concluded that the alleged confession broadcast by Al Maserah channel was part of the misleading it practiced against detainees in the group's prisons, in order to deceive the public that the detainees are guilty of the charges raised against them.

The victim recounted the details of his abduction, and torture in Al-Saleh prison, where he stayed for nearly five years, and two of his children died while in prison without knowing their deaths. Yasser was working as a driver to transport doctors between Dimnat Khadir, Al-Selw and Haifan in the Family Care Organization, and on October 30, 2016, one of Houthi elements, Mushtaq Muhammad Saghir contacted him, and asked him to come near Ka'boul checkpoint, located in Al-Selw, Haifan and Dimnat Khadir triangle, to help his mother, so the victim drove his car to the nearby point, but he was received by armed men, who took his car, blindfolded him and took to Al-Saleh prison, where they took his phone and money.

Yasser was detained in the special "Kameel" section of the prison run by the National Security Agency for Ansar Allah, where he remained for a whole year and his family did not know his whereabouts, where he was tortured with electric shocks, beating at his head and chest, and detained at solitary confinement for one year, according to his prison inmates' testimonies, interviewed by SAM.<sup>58</sup> While in prison, two of his children died of Thalassemia disease. His wife was unable to provide them with medicines. Yasser remained in detention for five years and was only released as part of an exchange deal between government forces and Ansar Allah in Taiz, although he is a civilian, yet he was exchanged for Ansar Allah fighters.

57. Interview dated 17 October 2021.

58. Interview dated 18 October 2021.

## **Abdel-Salam al-Sha'r (a pseudonym) Returned from Diaspora to be Killed Al-Odayn checkpoint**

Abdel-Salam returned from the United States, and decided to visit his sister in Al-Sibra area, Ibb governorate. He drove with his wife and mother, and passed through one of Ansar Allah security checkpoint. One of the Houthi supervisors killed him before his wife and mother. While considering the case, gunmen belonging to the Houthis raided the court and took the suspect by force from the courtroom at gunpoint. SAM traced Ansar Allah media outlets, but couldn't see any news on the incident.

SAM investigated the case and interviewed witnesses who testified that Abdel-Salam was passing by on the street leading to the Qa'taba area in June 2017, when intercepted by checkpoint at Al-Mahwa area, whose element allowed him to continue, but the supervisor disagree,<sup>60</sup> and chased the car on a motorbike and shot at it. The bullet penetrated the victim's body and he died instantly. His mother and wife were shocked.

The accused - the supervisor of the point - was brought to trial before the Criminal Court of First Instance in Ibb Governorate, but while the case was proceeding, armed men on board military vehicles shot at the building and raided the courtroom, took the accused by force and assaulted one of the prosecutors.

SAM obtained a statement of facts from the court stating the raiding of the court by armed group on board of seven vehicles on November 27, 2017, who shot the court guards and the prisoner transport vehicle and stormed the court. One of the officers mentioned in his testimony that the armed group belongs to Ansar Allah and that they mentioned during the storming that they did so under the instructions of the Sayed<sup>61</sup>, and attacked Mustafa Al-Zubayri, the attorney general of Al-Sabra, and took the suspect out of the court building.

## **Detention and Torture of Journalist Muhammad Al-Zouba and Human Rights Defender Abdullah Al-Oqbi**

SAM investigated the detention and torture of Al-Zouba and Al-Oqbi, along with their colleague, the director of a humanitarian association in Al-Bayda,<sup>62</sup> and interviewed them about their detention. They said: (During our detention, the Houthis were circulating false news in Rada'a city, and among the mediators that we work for the government forces and receive cash from

59. Interview dated 30 November 2021.

60. SAM kept his name confidential on the witnesses' request, for fear of reprisal on the victim's family.

61. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of Ansar Allah

62. SAM kept his name confidential.

the Yemeni government to implement plans against the Houthi, and they said that this news was incorrect and was for the purpose of justifying our arrest and what happened to us).

Al-Zouba and Al-Oqbi were arrested at the Abu Hashem point in Rada'a city while they were returning to the city on April 7, 2015. SAM interviewed them.<sup>63</sup> On their return to the city of Rada'a. When they are passing through Abu Hashem checkpoint, the gunmen detained them and transferred them to a detention room in the government complex in Rada'a. After a week, they were transferred to the prison of the Central Security Forces camp led by Walid Al-Qaffaf, where their personal belongings were looted; including phones and others, and they were denied to call their families. They were charged with being linked to the countries of the Arab coalition, providing coordinates to the aircraft and surveillance to the movements of Ansar Allah (Houthis), and according to Al-Zouba, the camp commander was threatening not to release them because their presence prevents coalition airstrikes.

He was threatening not to release them because their presence prevented coalition airstrikes.

Al-Zouba added: (One night, they took us blindfolded to weapons depot. Which they said the air force will bomb it and they put us as human shields. When the warehouse was not bombed, they returned us to the prison of the Central Security Camp in which we were detained for four months until we were released.

SAM investigated the restriction of movement and detention of the human rights defender Abdullah Al-Oqbi again on December 7, 2019. Al-Oqbi said: (I was traveling on a bus from Rada'a to Seiyun, and passed through Al-Wattia checkpoint in Al-Malajem district on the road between Al-Bayda and Marib, the Houthi gunmen stopped us, took us all the 12 passengers out of the bus, and searched our bags. The commander of the checkpoint, Abu Ali Al-Saqqaf, ordered the passengers to return to the bus and kept me. He added:

(After two hours, they transferred me to Al-Wattia prison, a prison inside one of the health centers, for one week. They accused me of being agent and mercenary to the Arab Coalition and I was detained with (5) other prisoners who were detained at that checkpoint).

Al-Oqbi said: (After a week, they transferred me to Al-Ahmadiyya prison in Rada'a, which was a sports club that Houthis turned into a prison. I was detained there for about a month. Among the prison officials was a leader named Muhammad Ali Ahmed Al-Dailami, they interrogated me again and brought the same charges against me. One of the sheikhs belonging to my area had tried to mediate for my release, but the prison leaders made him believe that I had confessed to working with government forces, so I asked him to see the investigation minutes, and after the intervention and intense pressure of that sheikh with Houthi leaders in Al-Bayda and Sana'a, I was released).

---

63. Interview dated 20 October 2021.

## Al Rahida Customs Point and Outlet East of Taiz

A security checkpoint in which Ansar Allah established a customs center to collect import customs for commodities coming from Aden port to Houthis-controlled. This checkpoint also confiscates Yemeni currency circulating in the areas of government control (the new banknotes), as well as cash if it exceeds (YR100,000) of the currency circulating in Ansar Allah's control areas (old banknotes)<sup>64</sup> based on the Central Bank of Sana'a, instructions.<sup>65</sup>

Ansar Allah media claims that confiscation of the new banknote is a legal matter as it is forged and counterfeit.<sup>66</sup> SAM believes that this information is false as it is not based on a legal basis that allows Ansar Allah to invalidate and confiscate the national currency approved by the Yemeni government for circulation in all governorates.

The Organization investigated practices committed by the security checkpoint, including restricting movement and confiscation of Fadel Ghanem Al-Haddad family's money.<sup>67</sup> On October 14, 2021, Al-Haddad was coming from Aden to Ibb governorate, with three of his female relatives. They passed through Al-Rahida checkpoint. Armed men dressed in police uniforms intercepted them and pulled them out of the car and began searching them. They found in the purse of his relative (the bride) an amount of (YR439,000) of the currency circulating in the areas controlled by Ansar Allah, and they found in Al-Haddad's possession an amount of (YR15,000) of the currency circulating in the areas controlled by the Yemeni government, so they confiscated all those amounts.

The gunmen continued to search the car for three hours. Al-Haddad requested them to return the money of his niece who is preparing for her wedding, but they refused and issued a report of confiscation of the money, claiming that part of it is illegal and the other part is exceeding allowed amount (i.e. YR100,000), and they ordered Al-Haddad and his family to leave. After a week, Al-Haddad went to the Public Prosecution Office in the Al-Saleh Complex in Taiz to complain about the confiscation of his money. The Public Prosecution reasoned that he was unable to register the complaint because that is the jurisdiction of Military Intelligence.

64. In Yemen, there are two monetary systems, one in the areas controlled by Ansar Allah and the other in the areas controlled by the Yemeni government. The first depends on the Yemeni banknotes in circulation before the war, and the other depends on a new Yemeni banknote printed since the beginning of 2017, but it is similar to the old currency. See Debriefier. The Central Bank of Yemen receives 147 billion riyals of a new printed currency, of one thousand and 100. 12/21/2018.

<https://debriefier.net/news-5493.html>

65. See Houthis-run Saba Net. Circular of the Central Bank for those coming to the areas of the Salvation Government. June 27, 2021.

<https://www.saba.ye/ar/news3145591.htm>

66. See Houthis-controlled Saba Net. The Central Bank of Sana'a reveals the printing of 5.32 trillion riyals of illegal currency. June 23, 2021.

<https://www.saba.ye/ar/news3145063.htm>



## Arhab Customs Point and the Murder of three Brothers from Sa'da

This checkpoint was established by the Ansar Allah in Arhab district, north of Sanaa, to impose unlawful duties under the pretext of customs duties on goods and violations related to restrictions of movement and mobility were practiced.

Ansar Allah media published news about the role played by the points in Arhab district in establishing security and stability,<sup>68</sup> and Ansar Allah claimed that what the customs centers are doing is a model model for defending the homeland.<sup>69</sup> SAM investigated the credibility of this news and concluded that the checkpoints, including Arhab customs point, had committed many violations, including the murder of the cooking gas cylinder seller with two of his brothers.

SAM documented testimonies<sup>70</sup> about the killing of Kamal Ahmed Mann'a and his two brothers, Salem and Jamel, who were extralegally killed on Wednesday, June 5, 2019. Kamal was driving a truck loaded with gas cylinders and passed through Arhab customs point, heading to Sa'da.

The customs point element asked for money, to let him pass, as he hadn't money, they asked him to call his brothers Salem, and Jamel, to bring him the required amount, and to meet the gunmen at Al-Khamis point, which is not far from the first point. This request was unusual, but their intentions became clear later, as his two brothers came with the required amount, and when they reached the specified point, the gunmen were waiting for them on board two cars, and immediately shot at the three brothers and they all fell dead.

Kamal was accompanied by one of his colleagues, Amin Khaled, who was also shot in the body, but he escaped death. SAM obtained information that Faris Mana'a, a leader in Ansar Allah, mediated with family of the wounded Amin, and was able to close the case and take a pledge from him not to talk about the incident to the media the murderers of the three brothers were not brought to justice, and their family were not remedied.

67. A pseudonym, interviewed by SAM on December 25, 2021.

68. See Saba Net. Governor of Sanaa inspects security checkpoints in the Arhab district. March 15, 2018 <https://www.saba.ye/ar/news490395.htm>

69. See Al Wahda newspaper. Customs honors its active staff on the occasion of World Customs Day 2020. January 26, 2020. <https://www.alwahdahnews.net/73562/>

70. Interviews dated, 8-16-25 December 2021.

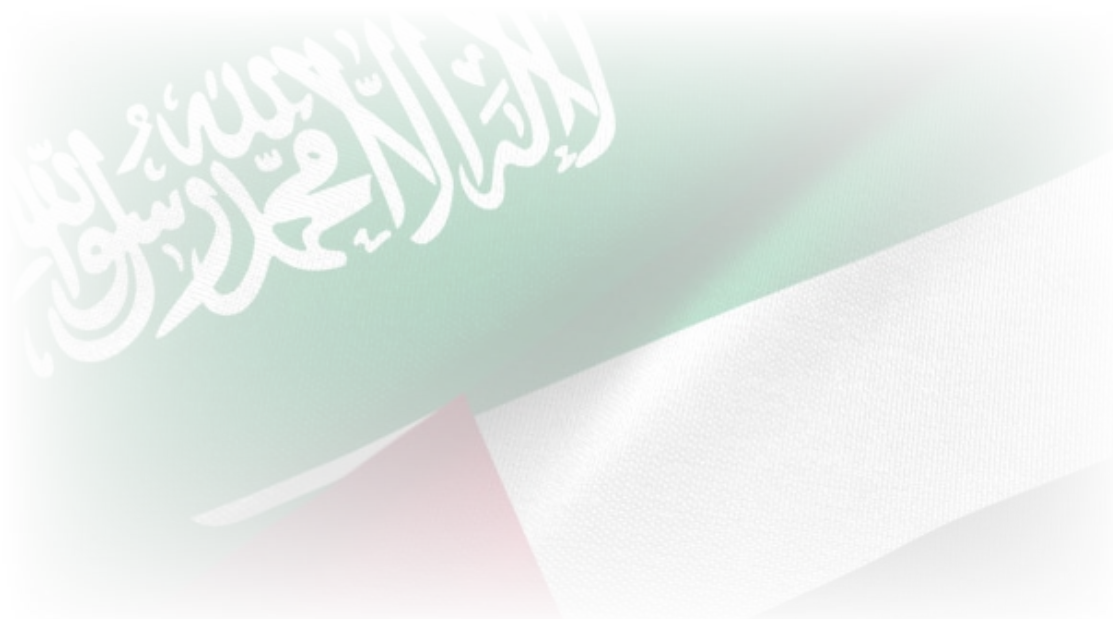
# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO ANSAR ALLAH (THE HOUTHIS)

- Immediate cessation of all restriction of the freedom of movement and mobility at all security checkpoints under its control.
- Refrain from misleading media discourse and hate speech and adopt a media policy that respects human rights and preserves the social fabric.
- Refrain from defaming and stigmatizing detainees in the prisons by forcing and blackmailing them to take videotape and photography, and threatening them to publish them on media outlets.
- Commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law related to the exercise of private and public freedoms, especially freedom of movement and mobility, and ending all restrictions that hindered the enjoyment of these rights.
- Refrain from all forms of extortion, looting and imposing illegal duties at unlawful customs posts and security checkpoints, and to remove the so-called customs offices that were set up in violation of Yemeni monetary and tax laws.
- Stop all forms of violations accompanying restrictions on freedom of movement, including detention, enforced disappearances, inhuman treatment, extrajudicial killings and gender-based assaults.
- Release all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons and prevent the inhumane treatment they practice in prisons against victims of restrictions on freedom of movement and mobility.
- Close all informal prisons, those designated for detention near security checkpoints and other prisons.
- Open roads around the city of Taiz, allowing the free movement of people and vital supplies.

## TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- End all practices related to restricting freedom of movement and mobility practiced by the forces backed by them, in the southern governorates of Yemen or what is known as the western coast.
- Stop all forms of support provided to paramilitary units not controlled by the Yemeni government.
- Work with the Yemeni government to unify the military forces to ensure their subordination to one authority and to end all practices that restricted freedom of movement and violations and crimes accompanying this restriction.
- Close all informal prisons controlled by the forces backed by them and subject them to the authority of the judiciary.



## TO THE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED YEMENI GOVERNMENT

- Refrain from restricting freedom of movement and mobility at security checkpoints controlled by government forces.
- Commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law related to the exercise of private and public freedoms, especially freedom of movement and mobility, and to end all restrictions that hindered the enjoyment of these rights.
- Stop all forms of violations accompanying the restriction of freedom of movement, including detention, looting of assets, and road blocking by armed gangs and outlaws.
- End multiple forces that control security checkpoints, and subjecting them to a single security authority.
- Subjecting all prisons, including those of the military forces, to the authority of the judiciary, to ensure its supervision and to due legal process in arrests and detentions.

## TRIBUTE

Supervisor of the Investigation

**Tawfiq Al-Hamidi**

This report was written by lawyer and legal researcher

**Yasser Mahyoub Abdul Aziz Al-Maliki**

Field Coordination Officer Lawyer,

**Mohamed Mudhish**

Lawyers and researchers in the governorates of Sana'a, Hodeidah, Taiz, Al-Bayda, Saada, Ibb and Marib participated in the investigative reporting

It was directed by

**Mr. Abdul- Rahman Mohammed**



# **BARRIERS OF FEAR**

**A Human Rights Report Documents the Violation of the  
Right to Freedom of Movement at Security Checkpoints  
and Misleading Discourse by Ansar Allah Group**

**From January 2015 to December 2021**



# BARRIERS OF FEAR

A Human Rights Report Documents the Violation of the  
Right to Freedom of Movement at Security Checkpoints  
and Misleading Discourse by Ansar Allah Group



**SAM**  
Rights & Liberties

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

 [info@samrl.org](mailto:info@samrl.org)

 [sam4rights\\_ar](https://twitter.com/sam4rights_ar)  [sam4rightsar](https://facebook.com/sam4rightsar)