



SAM
Rights & Liberties



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Death Trade

How Yemenis Were Exploited to Fight in Ukraine



SAM
Rights & Liberties



Who are we? } **SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties**

SAM is an independent, non-profit Yemeni human rights organization that began its activities in January 2016 and obtained a license to operate in December 2017. The organization aims to document human rights violations in Yemen, work to stop violations through advocacy in partnership with local and international organizations, raise human rights awareness through societal rights development, and hold human rights violators accountable in Yemen in collaboration with international mechanisms and human rights organizations.



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Executive Summary

This human rights report provides a comprehensive investigation into the recruitment of Yemeni youth for the Russian-Ukrainian war through coercive recruitment networks that exploit the dire humanitarian conditions in Yemen caused by years of ongoing conflict. The report reveals coordination between Yemeni and Russian networks aiming to transfer Yemeni recruits to Ukraine to fight alongside the Russian army. The implications of this recruitment pose deep human rights and social consequences for these recruits amidst the ongoing war.

The report sheds light on a complex network of forced recruitment, wherein local groups collaborate with international intermediaries to recruit Yemeni youth under false promises of lucrative jobs and salaries that sometimes reach \$10,000 USD. Due to the lack of oversight and weak legal awareness, Yemeni youth become easy prey for exploitation in military conflicts. Recruits are transported via Oman using fake tourist visas issued by the Russian consulate, facilitating the recruitment process.

The report concludes that the forced recruitment network extends beyond local agents to include individuals affiliated with political groups in Yemen, such as Abdul Wali Al-Jabri, a prominent figure in these networks. Recruits are lured with promises of migration and employment, only to be transferred through illegal channels to Russia, where they are detained in forced military training camps. These operations often occur without the recruits' full understanding of the legal or humanitarian consequences of signing untranslated contracts.

The report also provides detailed accounts of the severe violations faced by recruits upon arriving in Russia. They are forced to fight under harsh and inhumane conditions, deprived of food and medical care, and subjected to injuries and death due to random shelling on the front lines. This highlights the extent to which these networks exploit the humanitarian vulnerability of the recruits.

The report points to Yemen's dire economic conditions, including widespread unemployment and poverty, which make Yemeni youth easy targets for exploitation. The lack of awareness of international and local laws further exposes them to coercion by forced recruitment networks, leaving them more vulnerable to abuse in military conflict zones.



The report also highlights the relationship between the Houthis and Russia in this context, pointing to coordination between these networks to achieve political and military objectives. This coordination contributes to expanding Russia's influence in Yemen by using recruitment networks to bolster its presence in the conflict. This clearly reflects the intersection of regional and international conflicts with the suffering of Yemeni citizens.

The report concludes with several recommendations for the Yemeni government, including the necessity of taking firm steps to pursue and punish those involved in forced recruitment. This involves strengthening national laws to protect youth from exploitation, raising community awareness about the dangers of forced recruitment, and providing necessary support to returning recruits. Additional recommendations are directed at the international community, emphasizing the need to intensify oversight over the channels through which Yemenis are being recruited, such as Oman and Russia, as well as to launch international investigations into these violations. The report also calls for pressure on the United Nations and relevant human rights councils to investigate violations related to the recruitment of mercenaries.

The report concludes by stressing that the exploitation of Yemeni youth in the Russia-Ukraine war is not merely a violation of human rights but also part of a broader crisis in which international and regional interests intersect with humanitarian tragedy. It highlights the urgent need for legal measures to protect returning recruits and to prevent the recurrence of such violations.



General Context of the Report

The suffering of Yemenis has worsened due to the ongoing conflict, now in its tenth year. Yemen is witnessing the complete collapse of state institutions, creating a political and security vacuum exploited by internal and external forces for political and military gains. Under these circumstances, Yemenis have turned to risky options in search of a decent livelihood.

Deteriorating economic and social conditions, such as rising poverty and unemployment rates, have driven Yemenis to either migrate or risk joining fighting factions, domestically or abroad. Reports increasingly indicate the involvement of Yemenis in international conflicts, with testimonies revealing how some have been exploited through false promises of lucrative jobs, only to find themselves embroiled in armed conflicts.

A notable example is the recruitment phenomenon targeting Yemeni youth for the Russian-Ukrainian war, exploiting their dire economic circumstances. These developments are inseparable from the regional political landscape. Various reports suggest a growing relationship between the Houthis and Moscow, with indications of indirect coordination in recruiting Yemenis to fight in conflict zones. This comes amid the Houthis' expanding international relations, particularly with forces supporting their stance, raising questions about the extent of coordination in using Yemenis as fuel for international conflicts.





General Context of the Report

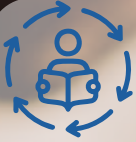
In addition to recruitment, many Yemenis seek to migrate to Europe to escape catastrophic conditions. However, the absence of a functioning state and weak protection mechanisms leave them vulnerable to human trafficking networks that exploit their desperate need for work. Previous reports have indicated the involvement of Yemenis in regional conflicts, such as fighting in Sudan, reflecting a dangerous pattern of exploitation based on false promises.

This phenomenon highlights the ethical and legal dimensions of recruiting individuals for conflict zones. Forced recruitment and the exploitation of Yemenis' dire economic conditions constitute a clear violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, including the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit exposing civilians to danger. These violations also fall within the scope of human trafficking as defined by United Nations protocols on preventing, suppressing, and punishing trafficking in persons.

In light of these developments, there is an urgent need for an independent international investigation to identify those responsible for recruiting and exploiting Yemenis in the context of international conflicts. International actors must also enhance protection mechanisms and provide humanitarian support to Yemenis to reduce their vulnerability to economic exploitation for political and military agendas.

This issue poses a significant humanitarian and legal challenge that requires swift international action to ensure accountability and protect human rights.

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Methodology of the Report

The preparation of this report relied on various sources to provide an accurate and comprehensive overview of the issue of Yemeni recruitment to fight in the Ukrainian war on behalf of Russian forces. The first of these sources was open-source information, including tracking published reports and news on local and international news websites, as well as on social media platforms, which documented relevant events and testimonies.

Additionally, the report drew on over **12 interviews** conducted via WhatsApp with Yemeni recruits, whether still in Russia or those who had returned to Yemen. Most of these individuals were from the governorates of Taiz and Ibb. The interviews were carried out by SAM's team between June and November 2024. These interviews documented the circumstances experienced by the victims, from their recruitment process to the challenges they faced during their transportation or upon arrival in conflict zones.





Methodology of the Report

The individuals contacted were informed of the purpose of the interviews and how their accounts would be used in a specific report on recruitment to Russia. Informed consent was obtained for the publication of their statements. While some agreed to have their names published, the majority declined out of fear of negative repercussions. Consequently, the organization decided to anonymize all names to ensure their safety.

The organization also conducted remote interviews with eyewitnesses, lawyers representing some of the victims, and a relative of one of the recruits. In addition to the interviews, the research team reviewed numerous reports and legal documents related to the recruitment process, including police records. The team also examined and analyzed videos and audio recordings that were sent.

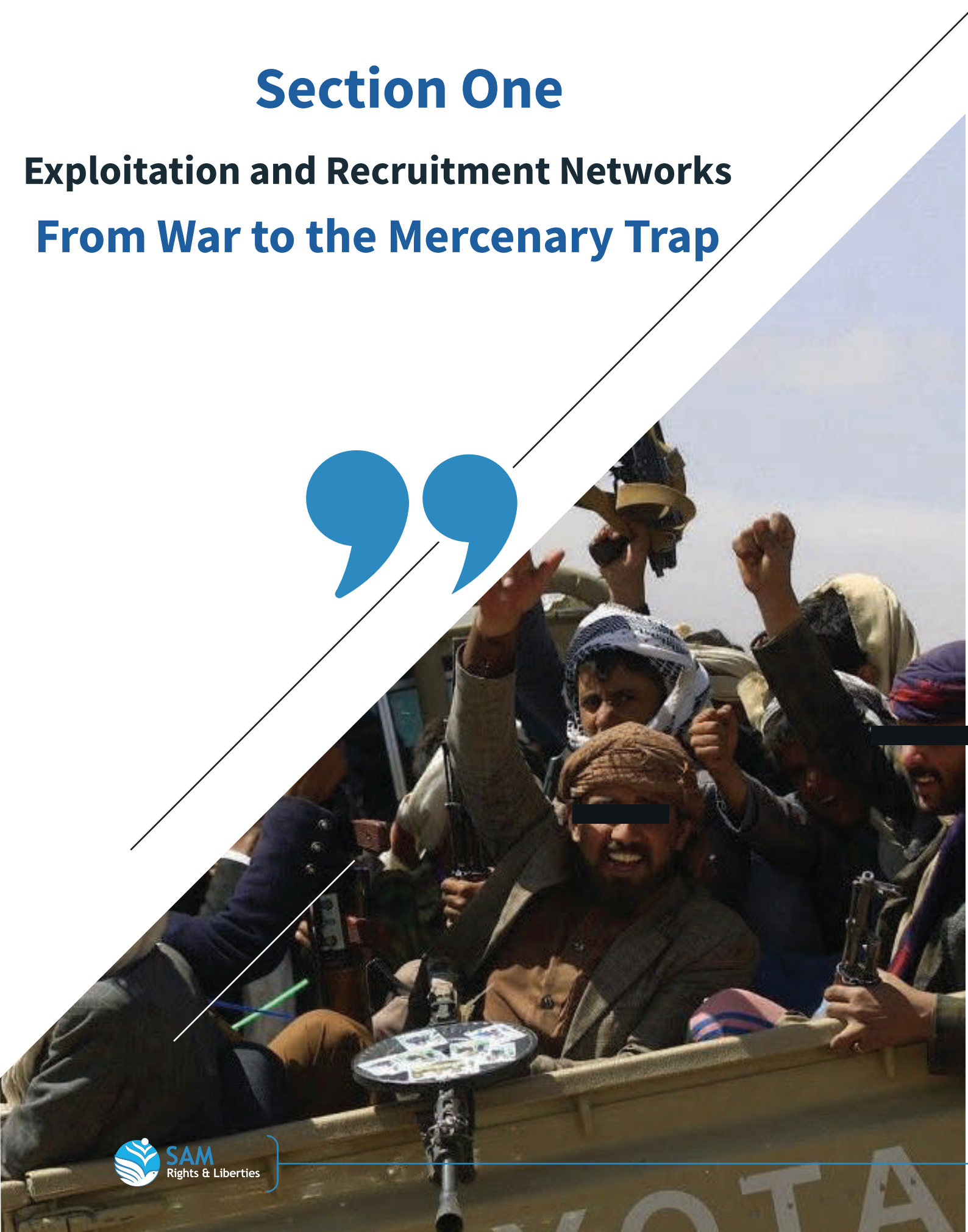
As part of its commitment to neutrality and objectivity, the organization sent official letters to the Russian Consulate in Oman requesting clarifications or responses to the allegations made, and incorporated these into the results of the organization's investigation. Furthermore, on [date], the organization sent a letter to "Abdulwali Al-Jabri" to inquire about his views on the allegations documented by the organization regarding his involvement in recruiting Yemenis to fight in Ukraine on behalf of Russian forces, under false promises. The aim of this step was to enhance transparency and respect the principle of the right to reply.



The report analyzed the information in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law, focusing on principles related to combating human trafficking and preventing forced labor. The credibility of the evidence was verified and documented in a manner that allows its use as a basis for legal accountability against the parties involved in these violations.

The organization faced many challenges and difficulties during the preparation of the report, the most significant being the security situation experienced by the recruits and the surrounding fear, as well as the difficulty of communicating with the relevant authorities related to the report. This comprehensive methodology highlights the report's commitment to providing a solid legal foundation, allowing for the exposure of ongoing violations and the demand for accountability from the involved parties, in order to achieve justice and protect the fundamental rights of the victims.


Section One

Exploitation and Recruitment Networks From War to the Mercenary Trap





This chapter explores the complexities of the issue of recruiting Yemenis to fight in Russia, beginning with the economic and social motives driving the youth, and progressing to their exploitation through organized networks that use deceitful tactics and false promises. It also reveals the involvement of local and international entities in operations characterized by fraud and human trafficking, shedding light on the harsh conditions faced by recruits within Russia, and what this reflects about deeper crises within the Yemeni context.



War and Other Causes

Yemen is facing an unprecedented economic and humanitarian crisis, with %80 of the population—about 24 million people—living in poverty, according to United Nations reports. The unemployment rate among youth has surpassed %60, while 17 million Yemenis suffer from food insecurity, with 5 million on the brink of famine. Rising inflation has caused food prices to increase by %300 since 2015, while the cost of a basic food basket has reached unprecedented levels, with individuals needing more than twice the minimum wage to meet their daily needs. The Yemeni rial has experienced a catastrophic collapse, with the exchange rate exceeding 1500 rials to the dollar in government-controlled areas, compared to just 215 rials before the war, leading to a complete paralysis in the purchasing power of citizens. The halt in oil exports, which constitute %70 of national revenue, has cost the state billions of dollars, while the total cost of the war on the economy has exceeded 90 billion dollars, according to the World Bank. With salaries having been suspended for over seven years, 1.2 million government employees are left without sustainable income, pushing millions of families to the brink of hunger. These factors have driven young people to seek dangerous opportunities for survival, including fighting for one of the warring sides, either inside Yemen or abroad, such as in Ukraine, for salaries of up to 3,000 dollars per month. Amidst this chaos, Yemen has become a "failed state," according to the World Bank, with more than %70 of the population dependent on humanitarian aid. However, the humanitarian community is experiencing severe funding shortages, which threatens to worsen the situation in a country suffering the worst humanitarian disaster of the modern era.

In a conversation with the SAM Organization, one of the recruits, who was arrested at the Sarfit crossing in Al-Mahra governorate in eastern Yemen, explained that the difficult economic conditions and the absence of community solidarity led him to accept an offer to go to Russia to work with the Russian army in Ukraine. He added, "I had previously thought about migrating to the European Union, and when I heard about the visa [to Russia], I thought it was an opportunity. I never imagined they would take them by force or directly from the airport to the camp.

He continues, saying: "I used to dream of a conscious society filled with love, a society that accepts your opinions, where you live with freedom and dignity. What happened is the opposite; the homeland has become prey to be plundered, and the citizen is helpless, living in a state of estrangement in his own country, while the government ignores the suffering of the people.

According to military expert Ali Al-Zahab, recruitment is one of the main consequences of wars and conflicts, with profound social repercussions, especially for the youth. Among the reasons driving young people to engage in these processes is the lack of opportunities within society, particularly for educated youth and those with professional skills. This inability to find suitable employment becomes a major driver for migration and displacement, both within the country and abroad. In this context, Al-Zahab points out that some of these young people may find themselves forced to join armed groups as mercenaries in conflict areas like Sudan and Russia, where they are attracted by enticing financial offers from entities, whether Arab or foreign. This reality is reflected in the youth's desire for economic opportunities, clearly demonstrating the impact of war on the current generation.

Al-Zahab also sees the ambition to reach Europe and acquire citizenship as another motivating factor. Obtaining European citizenship has become one of the main aspirations for Yemenis, whether educated or not, especially given the harsh economic conditions. This strengthens the desire to engage in military operations. The expert notes that Russia may have offered attractive deals to draw Yemeni youth, including the possibility of obtaining Russian citizenship in exchange for joining the Russian army, along with the financial compensation, which serves as a significant incentive.

The third factor is ignorance and poverty. Al-Zahab points out that many recruits are exploited by intermediaries who promise them money in exchange for joining the fight. He does not believe that ideological motivations lie behind this recruitment; rather, he sees the causes as primarily social, stemming from the widespread corruption and the lack of opportunities for young people. This has made them vulnerable to exploitation by powerful groups controlling job opportunities for their own benefit.

Al-Zahab concludes by saying that the issue of recruitment in the context of war is not just a military matter but also a reflection of the social and economic crises facing Yemeni society.

Abdulwali Al-Jabri and the Yemeni Recruitment Network for the Russian Army: Revealing Details in a Security Report

According to a confidential security report issued by a body affiliated with Yemen's legitimate government and reviewed by the SAM organization, the report uncovered a complex network led by Abdulwali Al-Jabri, a member of the House of Representatives affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group in Sanaa and a military leader holding the rank of Major General. The report asserts that Al-Jabri established a company in Muscat, the capital of Oman, described as a front for organizing operations to transport Yemeni recruits to Russia for the purpose of joining the Russian army.



The report states that Al-Jabri visited Russia in May 2024, accompanied by his assistant, Mohammed Qasim Al-Alyani. The organization reviewed a visa application submitted by Al-Alyani to the Russian consulate on May 2024, 15, as well as a copy of the visa issued by the consulate on May 2024, 22, valid until August 2024, 12. According to testimonies, it is believed that Al-Jabri held meetings with unofficial Russian figures to finalize the logistical and financial details for transporting the recruits. These meetings appear to have resulted in facilitating the entry of an initial group of 120 Yemeni recruits into Russia.

Additionally, Al-Jabri's office received a large number of Yemeni passports to submit to the Russian consulate in order to expedite travel procedures.



The report also highlights a mysterious figure named "Dmitry" a Russian national who acts as a representative of the Russian side with Al-Jabri's office. Dmitry's role was pivotal in facilitating operations between the involved parties, indicating a high level of coordination between both sides.

This information reveals new dimensions of the Yemeni conflict, where regional and international interests intertwine to exploit internal conditions for military and political agendas. In this context, the activities led by Al-Jabri raise broader questions about the nature of Russia's role in Yemen and the extent to which this move might influence the dynamics of regional and international conflict.

Promises, Deception, and Exploitation

Testimonies obtained by SAM, along with media reports, reveal that Yemeni recruits were subjected to systematic deception by the company “**Al-Jabri and Partners.**” These recruits were enticed with lucrative financial promises, including payments of up to \$10,000, a monthly salary of \$2,500, and additional incentives such as insurance and citizenship. However, the reality was drastically different. The workers found themselves confined in camps within Russia, where strict restrictions were imposed on their movements. They were only allowed to leave under heavy guard and for very limited purposes, such as purchasing basic necessities, after which they were immediately returned to their detention sites.

The Financial Times quoted one of the recruits, identified as Nabil, who stated that he was part of a group of **200 people** recruited in September. He was promised that his trip to Russia would be for study and work. He added that they signed contracts that they were unable to read, only to later discover that these were enlistment contracts for the Russian army. Another recruit, Abdullah, reported being promised a **\$10,000 bonus**, a **\$2,000 monthly salary** for drone manufacturing work, and the acquisition of Russian citizenship. However, he was shocked to find himself forced into combat operations. Abdullah further stated that he was forcibly transferred from the airport to a military facility and coerced at gunpoint to sign a recruitment contract. He was then sent to a military base near Rostov, close to the Ukrainian border.

Some recruits who arrived in Russia told SAM that upon realizing the true purpose of their recruitment, they strongly refused to engage in combat. They emphasized that they had come under civilian work contracts, not as combatants. However, this stance further complicated their situation, as they were informed that there was no way to leave or return to their homeland. The detained workers reportedly tried to communicate their suffering by submitting formal complaints to the relevant ambassador in the region, but to no avail. Their situation worsened, particularly amid reports of the deaths of some workers under mysterious circumstances during combat operations.





SAM obtained recordings that reveal the recruits face various forms of financial exploitation. The network’s coordinator demanded payments from them, claiming these funds were for covering legal follow-up costs. The recordings also expose threats, including warnings against “screaming,” a local term that seemingly implies retaliation or severe consequences.

The recordings further mention arrangements to receive Al-Jabri in Russia, strengthening suspicions of an organized network involving intermediaries and multi-party companies. The threats included statements suggesting that if the recruits refused to pay, they would be pursued. Specifically, Al-Aliyani, the company representative, allegedly warned the recruits that he would track them down inside Russia. He accused them of breaching agreements and hinted at “precautionary measures” if payments were not made.



The threats escalated with statements that Al-Aliyani’s travel to Russia would not be in their favor, as he would relentlessly pursue them from “place to place” within Russia. He also used Yemeni expressions to threaten the recruits with regret for their refusal to comply.

Section Two

The Path of False Promises


Exploitation of Yemeni Youth in International Recruitment





This chapter examines the systematic recruitment operations targeting Yemeni youth under the guise of false economic opportunities. It uncovers the intricate pathways and organized networks orchestrated to achieve the goal of recruiting individuals to fight in foreign conflicts, relying on enticing financial promises that exploit the deteriorating living conditions in Yemen.

The chapter also delves into the legal and human rights dimensions of these violations and their impact on individuals' fundamental rights.



Before the Journey of Death

SAM Organization has closely followed the issue of the illegal recruitment of Yemeni youth in Russia, gathering direct testimonies from former recruits along with reports from security sources. It has become evident that these operations, conducted under the guise of promises of large financial rewards, constitute a blatant violation of human rights and highlight economic exploitation amidst Yemen's worsening living conditions.

According to one testimony obtained by the organization, a recruit who was returned at the Sarfeet border crossing with Oman stated:

"I attempted to travel to Russia after deciding to join the recruitment. I contacted representatives of Abdulwali Al-Jabari's company in my city. They asked me for my passport, which they sent to the company's office in Muscat. They told me they would secure a travel visa to Russia. After that, the passports and visas were sent to a representative in the city of Al-Ghaydah in Al-Mahra Governorate, where preparations for travel began."

A security report reviewed by Sam corroborated these testimonies, revealing that the recruitment process heavily relies on enticing young people with promises of financial compensation of up to \$10,000 USD, exploiting the dire economic situation in Yemen. The process begins with registering recruits in their local areas, after which their passports are sent to Oman for obtaining Russian visas. Once the visas are issued, the recruits are organized and transported in stages, starting with crossing the border into Oman and eventually reaching Russia.



The First Stage

From Local Residences to Al-Ghaydah, the Capital of Al-Mahra

The first stage of transporting recruits begins after the issuance of travel visas from the Russian consulate in Muscat. According to testimonies and reports collected by the Sam Organization, individuals who obtain visas through the Russian consulate are contacted by representatives of Abdulwali Al-Jabari's company. The recruits are instructed to travel to Al-Ghaydah, the capital of Al-Mahra Governorate, which borders Oman, where they are assembled before crossing into Omani territory.

A security report states: "The recruitment to Russia involves attracting Yemeni youth to fight in Ukraine alongside Russian forces. This is orchestrated by Yemenis—some of whom had previously been recruited to Russia—by luring them with significant financial incentives, exploiting their deteriorating living conditions."

The recruitment process begins with representatives registering individuals in their local areas. Passports are then collected by intermediaries appointed by Al-Jabari's office and sent to the company's headquarters in Muscat, Oman, to secure Russian visas. Once visas are issued, the recruits travel to Al-Ghaydah in Al-Mahra Governorate. In a testimony obtained by Sam, a recruit from Taiz—who requested anonymity—shared his experience:

"I wasn't aiming to recruit anyone. I told a few young men about my intention to travel to Russia, and they expressed their desire to join. Each of them brought more people. I handed over my passport to someone who contacted me, and once the visa was issued, I was asked to travel to Al-Ghaydah. I was unsure, so I decided to take a small group—about ten people—while asking others to wait until we assessed the situation." He added: "We traveled in separate buses, passing through Al-Mahra Governorate. There, we met other individuals from various areas—including As-Sawa, Hayfan, and Ibb—all of whom had been instructed by representatives of the company, including a man named Mohammed Al-Sharabi."

This testimony underscores that the transfer of recruits is highly organized, involving precise coordination across multiple stages: assembling recruits, navigating between governorates, and completing official procedures in Oman. Such revelations raise serious concerns about the exploitation of Yemen's humanitarian crisis to recruit individuals into international conflicts, which constitutes a blatant violation of international legal and human rights standards.

The Second Stage

From Al-Ghaydah to Muscat

Testimonies obtained by Sam reveal the existence of a carefully orchestrated network responsible for transporting recruits, employing multiple fronts to obscure the true nature of their activities.

Several recruits provided statements detailing the mechanism used by Abdulwali Al-Jabari's network to facilitate the transfer of individuals to Russia. According to the testimonies, visas are issued by the Russian embassy in Oman. Once the visas are secured, recruits from various Yemeni governorates are instructed to travel to Al-Ghaydah, the capital of Al-Mahra Governorate, where those with valid visas are assembled.

The network reportedly relies on a travel and tourism company managed by Al-Jabari's office, which serves as a front to conceal the recruitment operations. According to an interrogation report of one participant, Mohammed Mahyoub Saif Al-Nasiri, a resident of Oman, he was contacted by Al-Jabari's office to work as an intermediary in Al-Ghaydah, tasked with transporting recruits to Muscat via private buses. Al-Nasiri confirmed that the company covered all transportation costs, while intermediaries received a fixed payment for each person transported to Muscat.

The organization also interviewed one of the returnees intercepted at the Sarfeet border crossing while attempting to enter Oman. This young man, from Taiz Governorate, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that he had no initial intention to join any recruitment process. Instead, he discussed the idea of traveling to Russia with friends, which led some of them to volunteer for the journey.

He explained: "I took a small group with me to Al-Mahra while instructing others to wait until we could assess the situation. We traveled in separate buses and gathered in Al-Ghaydah alongside other individuals from various regions."

The witness added that Mohammed Al-Sharabi, the coordinator in Al-Mahra according to multiple testimonies, played a key role in organizing the operation. He reportedly arranged the rental of buses to transport the recruits from Al-Ghaydah to Muscat.

This testimony highlights the systematic coordination underpinning the transfer process. Recruits are moved discreetly across borders under the guise of tourism, using rented buses and intermediary agents. These findings expose a highly organized operation exploiting Yemen's humanitarian crisis to facilitate recruitment for international conflicts, in violation of human rights and international legal standards.

The Third Stage

From Muscat to Moscow

The third stage of the recruitment process begins once the transport buses cross the Sarfeet border crossing between Yemen and Oman, reaching a critical hub managed with organizational precision. According to testimonies obtained by Sam, individuals holding Russian tourist visas issued by the Russian consulate in Al-Ghaydah, Yemen, are facilitated through this stage.

Upon arriving in the Omani capital, Muscat, Al-Jabari Transport and Travel Company takes charge of the recruits, housing them in furnished apartments specifically arranged for this purpose in the Al-Khuwair and Al-Ghubrah districts of Muscat. Their temporary accommodations are overseen by Al-Jabari Import Company, which manages logistics and support during this phase.

The next step involves organizing the recruits' travel to Moscow via Dubai International Airport, facilitated by Mohammed Qasim Al-Aliyani, a Yemeni national. The objectives of this journey are divided into two main pathways: **Joining Russian Forces in Ukraine:** Recruits are transferred to join military operations alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, enticed by promises of financial compensation. **Smuggling to European Countries:** Some individuals are diverted from the original route to facilitate illegal entry into European nations.

Sam has successfully documented these movements through concrete evidence, including travel tickets. One such ticket, dated August 2024 ,2, revealed a clear itinerary starting in Muscat, transiting through Dubai, and concluding in Moscow.



Other paths

Oman, specifically Muscat, has become the central hub for recruiting Yemeni citizens to fight in Ukraine. According to investigations conducted by SAM, a significant number of recruits pass through the city of Al-Ghaydah and the Sarfeet border crossing into Oman, before being transported to Moscow. The recruits arrive in Al-Ghaydah via various routes, which involve several key stops along the way.

In this context, a network of local and international brokers, in collaboration with the Al-Jabari Import and Export Company, facilitates these operations. They exploit the dire economic conditions in Yemen by offering large sums of money to lure recruits. The process is managed by Al-Jabari Company, which works closely with brokers and intermediaries across several countries.

There are multiple pathways through which individuals are being recruited, including:

The first path: Gathering recruits at the Sarfait border crossing with the Sultanate of Oman, where they are later transported to Moscow via Muscat.

The second path: Starting from Yemen to Mecca for Umrah, then moving to Dubai and Moscow, where they are received and facilitated by individuals associated with the Al-Jabri company.

The third path: Departing from Yemen to Djibouti, and then to Moscow.

The fourth path: Starting from Yemen to Egypt, where individuals stay for up to ten days before traveling to Moscow.





These operations clearly indicate practices that constitute violations of international human rights law, including fundamental human rights related to personal freedom and security, as well as human trafficking and deception. Recruiting individuals through deception and trickery is a violation of their right to make free and informed decisions, and exposes them to serious violations in Russian territories, including exploitation and coercion to fight in unlawful conditions.

Section Three


Government Efforts in Uncovering the Recruitment Network





This chapter outlines the details of the apprehension of a group of Yemenis at the Sarfait border crossing in Al-Mahrah Governorate as they attempted to travel to Russia on entry visas. It reveals the role of local and international recruitment networks that exploit the humanitarian conditions of Yemeni youth.

The chapter sheds light on the government's efforts in the investigations and conditional releases, and places these events within a legal and humanitarian framework that reflects the complexity of the situation in Yemen.



The Sarfait Customs Crossing in Al-Mahrah and the Efforts of the Yemeni Government

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties obtained documents that reveal the details of the apprehension of 26 Yemeni individuals on August 2024 ,11, at the Sarfait crossing, located near the Yemeni border with the Sultanate of Oman. The documents indicate that these individuals were holding entry visas to Russia.

The initial investigations suggest that the group included 18 people from Taiz Governorate, one individual from Sana'a, and seven others from Ibb Governorate. According to the reports, these individuals were recruited through a network of intermediaries, including a person named Mohammed Mahyoub Saif, who played the role of the coordinator, as well as three bus drivers who transported the individuals from Al-Mahrah to the Omani capital, Muscat.

After their arrest, measures were taken that included the confiscation of their passports, with a portion of the group being released later on the condition of ensuring their return to their homes in Yemen. According to the testimony of one of the individuals who was released by the Yemeni security authorities to the SAM Organization, "several buses crossed into the Sultanate of Oman, and the bus we were riding was stopped, and we were arrested and interrogated, after which they sent us to the security of the governorate, before they later released us."

In the Grip of Yemeni Security

The SAM organization was able to obtain the names of several individuals after communicating with some of the recruits or those who were apprehended and returned to Yemen. According to one of the individuals, who preferred to remain anonymous, "When someone learned of our desire to go to Russia, he gave me the phone number of a person named Mohammed Khalil, who then contacted me. This person receives the passports and sends them to the Sultanate of Oman, and after ten days or half a month, he returns them with a tourist visa for entry to Russia."

According to the investigation report of the Yemeni security at the Sarfait crossing, there are suspicions and allegations against three individuals involved in the recruitment and deception of Yemeni youth: Riad Said Al-Rashidi from Taiz Governorate, who is currently in Russia, Nayef Mohammed Al-Jamal, a representative in Ibb Governorate, who is currently in Russia, Mohammed Qasim Mohammed Mahyoub Al-Aliyan, from Taiz Governorate, who is a representative of the Al-Jabri office in Muscat for processing passports.

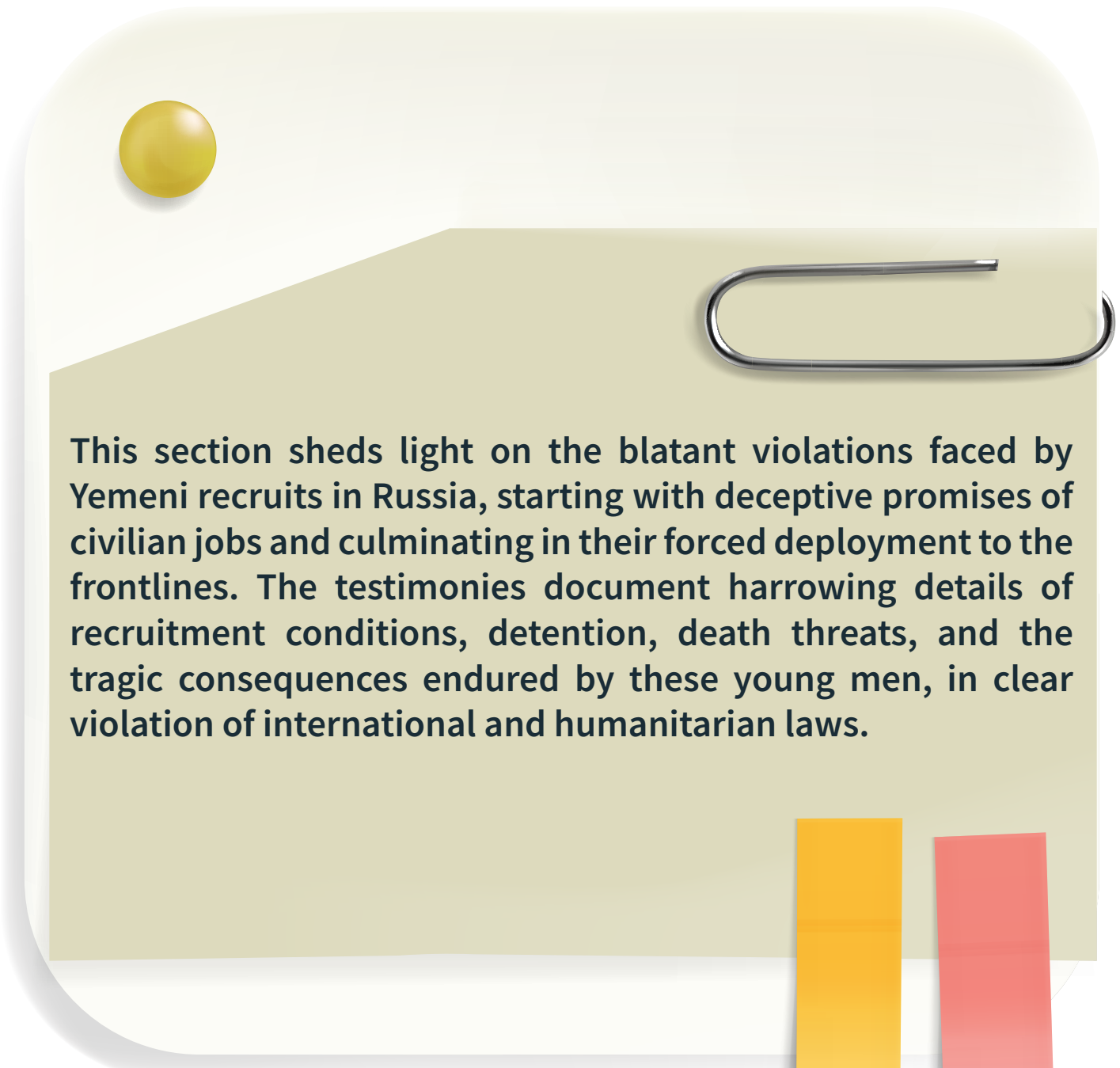
Reception Upon Arrival in Russia

The reception of Yemeni recruits in Russia represents a critical step in the chain of operations, revealing the multifaceted dimensions of this issue. According to testimonies documented by Sam, the recruits—lured by deceptive promises—were met with tightly controlled conditions upon their arrival.


Section Four

The Tragedies of Forced Recruitment: Testimonies from Yemenis in Russia





This section sheds light on the blatant violations faced by Yemeni recruits in Russia, starting with deceptive promises of civilian jobs and culminating in their forced deployment to the frontlines. The testimonies document harrowing details of recruitment conditions, detention, death threats, and the tragic consequences endured by these young men, in clear violation of international and humanitarian laws.



From the Airport to the Frontlines

Testimonies collected by SAM from Yemeni recruits in Russia reveal numerous violations they faced upon their arrival on Russian soil. They were subjected to exploitation and deception through a suspicious recruitment process under the guise of logistical work.

One recruit, part of a group of 19 individuals—13 from Oman and 6 from Saudi Arabia—described their shock when they were met by Russian Ministry of Defense forces upon landing at Moscow Airport. According to his testimony, the recruits immediately refused to be transported by the Russian forces to training camps. However, they were forcibly taken to the Nizhny Novgorod region, where they were detained and compelled to sign contracts written in Russian without the presence of a translator or an explanation of the rights and obligations involved. This constituted a clear violation of their right to full understanding and informed consent regarding the agreements they were signing.

After signing the contracts, they were transported at night to the Rostov training camp. The following morning, they woke to the sounds of gunfire, only to realize they had been misled about their role. Instead of logistical tasks, they were forced into combat training. They were told the training—lasting four to five days—was mandatory for self-defense and not for frontline combat. However, they quickly felt deceived again, as the training clearly focused on combat techniques. When they refused to continue the training or participate in combat, they were arrested by Russian authorities.

Their mobile phones were confiscated, and they were imprisoned, where they faced an unfair military trial. Reports indicate that they went on a hunger strike for three days to protest their inhumane treatment. After a month of detention, they were taken to the airport and abandoned without any support, forcing them to purchase tickets at their own expense to return to Oman and Saudi Arabia, before eventually making their way back to Yemen.

Degrading Treatment and Rebellion

The organization documented multiple testimonies shedding light on forced recruitment, inappropriate detention conditions, and death threats. These accounts underscore an urgent need for investigation and action to protect recruits and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. One recruit who spoke to SAM reported that, after donning civilian clothing, he was summoned by the military police and subjected to a military trial on a Sunday. He was detained for four days under harsh conditions, deprived of bedding or blankets. During this time, he was promised that the military police would arrive, yet he endured a lack of food and basic necessities.

Another recruit, who appeared in video footage injured, had refused to advance to the frontlines due to the high risks. His refusal led him to shoot himself, leaving him untreated for an entire day. When he finally received medical attention, he was transported on a motorcycle, which resulted in a broken leg.



Another video revealed two Yemeni men digging trenches while wearing civilian clothing. One of them stated that Al-Jabri Company had deceived them and sent them to Russia. They called on the Yemeni government to rescue them, but their pleas went unanswered.

The men reported being detained by Russian military police for four days under inhumane conditions, deprived of bedding and receiving only minimal food to survive. Later, they were told they would either face a military trial or be returned to their country. Instead, they were transferred to the frontlines and threatened with death if they refused to comply.

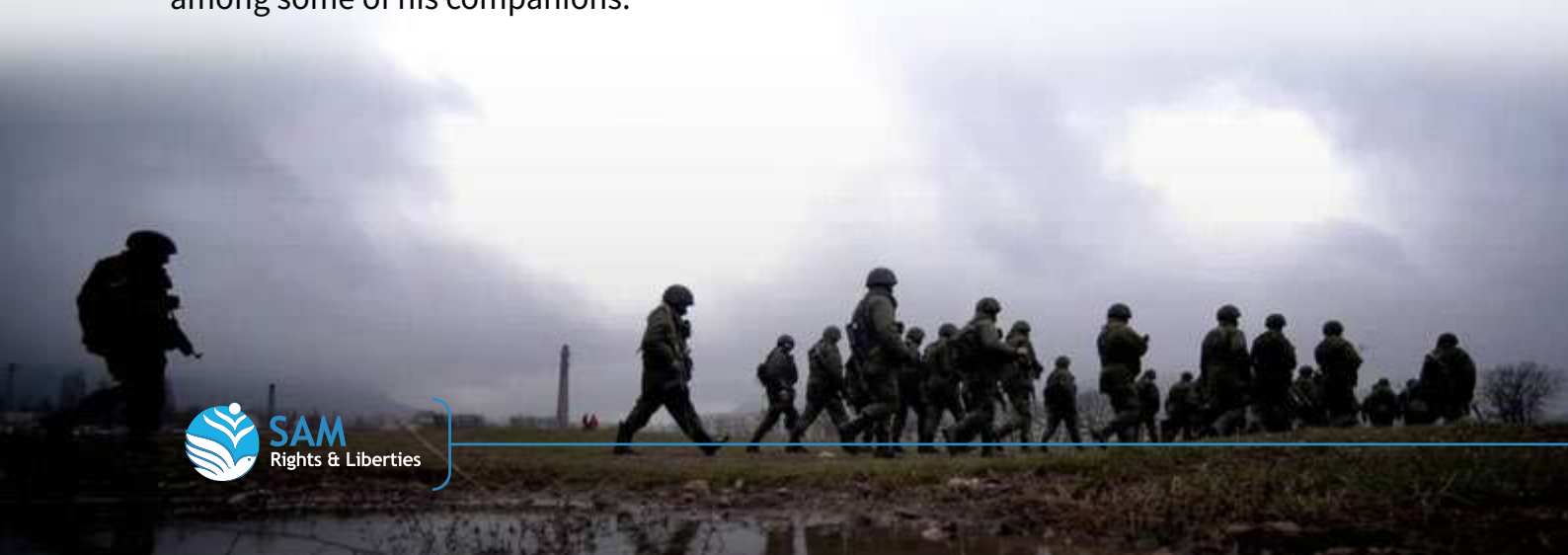
The recruits spoke of direct threats, including being told they would be shot if they did not obey orders. They were forced to hand over their weapons and civilian clothing, only to face similar conditions again after being detained and relocated to other sites.

Casualties and Injuries from the Frontlines

SAM organization received an audio recording via WhatsApp, which, upon verification, was confirmed to be from a Yemeni young man who was deceived and sent to the frontlines under false promises of civilian employment. In the recording, the young man recounts harrowing details of their experience. Shortly after being moved to the battlefield, they were struck by drone attacks, resulting in the death of one of his companions, Hamada, and severe injuries to another named Mohammed Jamal. The speaker himself sustained minor injuries, forcing them to hide in a trench until nightfall before struggling to retreat to the rear lines. They were later transferred to a "defense" area in Russia for medical treatment.

In a related incident, the death of 19-year-old Ahmed Rashad Hamid Ali Al-Jaafari from Ibb Governorate was reported. Ahmed had recently completed high school in 2024 and had been lured with a contract for civilian work in Russia, along with promises of university studies in Moscow after completing a one-year contract. However, according to accounts from those close to him, he was shocked to find himself sent to combat zones. Despite repeatedly appealing to the Yemeni government to rescue him and return him home, his pleas went unanswered.



Ahmed had dreams of reuniting with his family and pursuing university studies, but his tragedy ended with the heartbreaking news of his death, along with reports of injuries among some of his companions.





Section Five

Forced Recruitment in International Conflicts Exploitation of Yemeni Prisoners and Civilians





This section reveals the involvement of Houthi leaders in exploiting former detainees, prisoners, and Yemeni citizens by recruiting them into foreign conflicts, including the Russian war in Ukraine. It highlights the strategies of enticement and exploitation, taking advantage of Yemen's deteriorating economic conditions. These practices constitute blatant violations of international humanitarian law and call for independent investigations to hold the responsible parties accountable.



According to Al-Mijhar, a security source in the Ministry of Interior of Yemen's internationally recognized government reported that investigations into the recruitment of youth for deployment in Russia have uncovered the involvement of the Houthi group in these "dubious activities." The source revealed that the primary orchestrator of the recruitment operation is "Abdulwali Abdu Hassan Al-Jabri," a member of the unrecognized Houthi parliament and commander of the so-called "115th Brigade" affiliated with the group. Operating from his residence in Oman, Al-Jabri coordinates through local intermediaries (brokers) in both Houthi-controlled and government-liberated areas.

The government security forces are deeply concerned about the dangers of such recruitment activities, which extend beyond Yemen's borders. They have directed their units to take immediate action in areas where such operations are active, resulting in the arrest of several individuals in Taiz governorate.

Despite these efforts, the phenomenon persists due to the dire economic conditions and the promises of financial and other incentives offered by the recruiters to entice young people. Reports from Houthi-controlled areas indicate that youth from these regions have also been sent for the same purposes, further exposing the Houthis' complicity in this activity, which has been described as a form of human trafficking.

In November, Belqees TV aired an interview on its Yemeni Evening program with the mother of Mujib Jameel, a former soldier in Yemen's internationally recognized government forces. According to the mother, her son was captured by the Houthi group (Ansar Allah) in 2018 during battles in the Al-Jawf front. She had been informed by the brigade Mujib served in, under the leadership of Raddad Al-Hashimi, that he was taken prisoner during the clashes in Al-Jawf.

Since that time, his family had no information about him until November 2024, when his mother recognized him in widely circulated videos showing Yemeni recruits in Russia. In the video, Mujib was partially veiled, but his son, who appeared on the program, confirmed recognizing his father.

Mujib's brother, residing in Sana'a, corroborated the family's identification. He stated that the family lost contact with Mujib after his capture and had no updates on his fate until the photos surfaced. The family suspects that Mujib's dire financial situation and prolonged separation from his family might have pushed him to accept recruitment to fight in Ukraine under Russian forces. This is especially plausible given the location of others in the video, which reportedly includes individuals from Al-Samsarah, an area near Mujib's hometown.



Walid Al-Khawlani, a Yemeni officer contacted by SAM Organization, corroborated the story of Mujib Jameel. He revealed that Mujib's mother had traveled from her hometown in Al-Misrakh District, Taiz Governorate, to the city of Taiz in a desperate search for any news about her son after he was captured in 2018 during fighting in Al-Jawf. Mujib, a member of Brigade Al-Fateh under the command of Raddad Al-Hashimi, had been deployed as reinforcements to Al-Jawf before his capture. The family's distress intensified with the circulation of videos showing Yemeni fighters on the frontlines in Ukraine. Among them was Mujib, who is from a well-known family in Bani Ali Al-Hajj village. This revelation raises alarming questions about the fate of Yemeni prisoners and the mechanisms used to transfer them to international conflict zones such as Ukraine.

The incident underscores severe human rights abuses and forced recruitment practices targeting Yemenis, many of whom are coerced into fighting in foreign wars. Such actions represent blatant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, demanding an independent investigation to identify and hold accountable the parties responsible for these egregious acts.

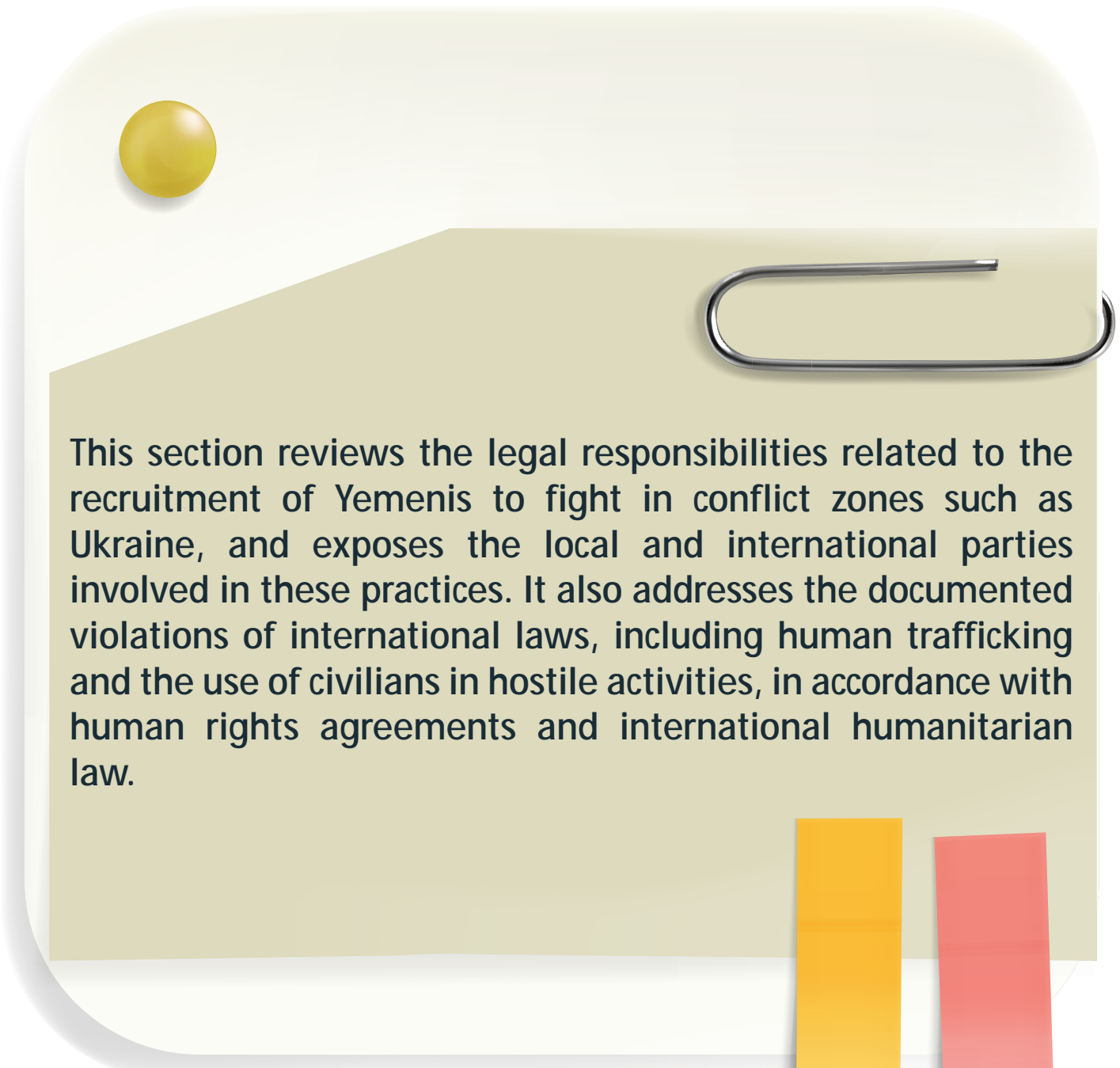


Section Six


Legal Responsibility for the Recruitment of Yemenis in International Conflicts:

Analysis of the Parties and Violations





This section reviews the legal responsibilities related to the recruitment of Yemenis to fight in conflict zones such as Ukraine, and exposes the local and international parties involved in these practices. It also addresses the documented violations of international laws, including human trafficking and the use of civilians in hostile activities, in accordance with human rights agreements and international humanitarian law.



Legal Responsibility and Key Figures Involved

The recruitment of Yemeni individuals and their deployment to conflict zones like Ukraine constitutes a grave violation of international standards related to the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law. These practices involve elements of individual criminal responsibility, and based on United Nations conventions and international protocols, such actions, including forced recruitment and deceit, fall under crimes that require legal accountability and judicial prosecution in both national and international courts. Notably, the Yemeni parties involved in the recruitment of mercenaries, which is prohibited by international law, include **Abdulwali Jabri and his associates**. Regarding the Russian parties involved, they may face charges of involvement in human trafficking under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Key Figures Involved



Abdulwali Jabri

“A member of the Yemeni Parliament in Sana'a from the 2003 term”

Jabri is a prominent figure within the Houthi group, whose influence extends beyond politics. During the war, he was appointed by the Houthis as the commander of Brigade 175 with the rank of brigadier general, playing a key role in military operations. He was sentenced to death in absentia by the military court in Ma'rib province, overseen by the Ministry of Justice in the internationally recognized government.

In 2022, Jabri established a company named Al-Jabri General Trading and Investment Company, based in Muscat, Oman. The company operates under Omani law, but it has faced numerous allegations, including smuggling weapons to the Houthi group and, more recently, being involved in recruiting Yemeni youth to fight alongside the Russian military in Ukraine. Jabri was appointed by the militia as a security supervisor in the al-Masraq area of Taiz, where he played a role in introducing the militia into the area. He later worked as a security supervisor in the Sabir district. This could explain why a large number of people from al-Masraq in Taiz were recruited to fight in Ukraine.

Key Figures Involved



**Mohammad Qasim
Mohammad
Mahyoub Al-Alyani**

From Taiz Governorate – Al-Ma'afir District, he previously worked as the director of the Al-Dhabab department. He is currently employed by Al-Jabri's office and resides in the Sultanate of Oman. Mohammad traveled with Abdulwali Al-Jabri to Russia on May 2024 ,24.

**Mohammad Mahyoub
Saif Al-Nasiri**

From Ibb Governorate, he works as a coordinator for Al-Jabri's company, facilitating the entry of recruits from the city of Al-Ghaydah in Al-Mahra Governorate, eastern Yemen, to Muscat, Oman.

**Hani Al-Zarqi
A representative of
Abdulwali Al-Jabri**

in Ibb Governorate, he is considered one of the most active recruiters. Currently residing in Russia, he serves as a liaison and translator between Al-Jabri and Russian parties.



**Dmitry
Russian National**

A mediator between Al-Jabri's company and the Russian consulate in Muscat, Oman. According to testimonies, he provides logistical support for transactions at the Russian consulate.

Legal Analysis of Violations in the Recruitment of Yemenis in International Conflicts

Incidents of luring Yemeni individuals into forced labor within armed conflict contexts constitute a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The key violations include:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Article 23 guarantees the right to freely chosen work, free from coercion. This article ensures that every individual has the right to work in an environment free from coercion or discrimination. Exploiting individuals to recruit them into conflicts, under the guise of employment or migration, is a direct violation of this right.
- **Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:** This article prohibits forced labor and exploitation, including recruitment through deceptive means. The documented incidents of recruitment of Yemenis violate this provision by involving deceptive practices to force individuals into conflict.
- **Geneva Convention IV (International Humanitarian Law):** The documented cases also violate international humanitarian law, particularly under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits cruel or inhumane treatment of protected individuals. This includes the prohibition of using civilians or protected persons in armed conflicts in any manner that endangers their lives or safety.
- The recruitment of Yemeni individuals into the Ukrainian conflict constitutes a violation of these principles and is classified as an unacceptable exploitation of human and economic vulnerability. Additionally, the Additional Protocol I (1977) criminalizes the recruitment of civilians or their use in combat through force or deception. These practices point to a potential breach of the United Nations protocols related to preventing human trafficking, which prohibit the transfer or exploitation of individuals under false promises or economic pressures.
- The reliance of recruitment networks on misleading promises of safe work environments with attractive salaries represents a systematic exploitation of individuals suffering from difficult economic conditions. These practices fall within the international definition of human trafficking, which includes recruiting people for dangerous purposes without informed consent.
- Documented testimonies indicate a recurring pattern of exploitation targeting Yemeni labor amid the worsening humanitarian situation in the country. Promises of stable jobs outside conflict zones often dissipate, leaving individuals under pressure to participate in combat or work under coercive conditions. The use of enticing and deceptive methods to target individuals suffering from poverty or economic vulnerability reflects systematic practices that violate basic human rights.



Recommendations

The "SAM" organization calls on the Yemeni government and the Sultanate of Oman to conduct an independent and comprehensive investigation into activities related to the recruitment of Yemeni individuals and to identify those responsible for these violations.

1. **Legal Action:** Local and international authorities must take strict legal measures to pursue recruitment networks and individuals involved.
2. **Protection of Affected Individuals:** Strengthen legal protection for affected individuals to ensure they are not exposed to further exploitation or retaliation.
3. **Community Awareness Programs:** Support community awareness programs to prevent individuals from being lured by false promises, and enhance local economic alternatives to protect individuals from falling into recruitment network traps.
4. **Legal and Psychological Support for Returning Recruits:** Provide legal and psychological support to returning recruits and ensure their rehabilitation.
5. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch widespread awareness campaigns about the dangers of human trafficking and forced recruitment.
6. **Psychological and Legal Support for Recruits:** Offer psychological and legal support for recruits and ensure their reintegration into their original environment.

To Human Rights Organizations:

1. **Enhance Legal and Psychological Support:** Strengthen legal and psychological support for returning recruits from conflict zones.
2. **Increase Awareness Campaigns:** Boost awareness campaigns against forced recruitment practices in conflict zones, and provide support for affected families.



Death Trade

How Yemenis Were Exploited to Fight in Ukraine