



SAM
Rights & Liberties



www.samrl.org

info@samrl.org

Aug 2025

Extrajudicial Execution

A Human Rights Report Documenting the Killing of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos and Violations Against His Family in Raymah



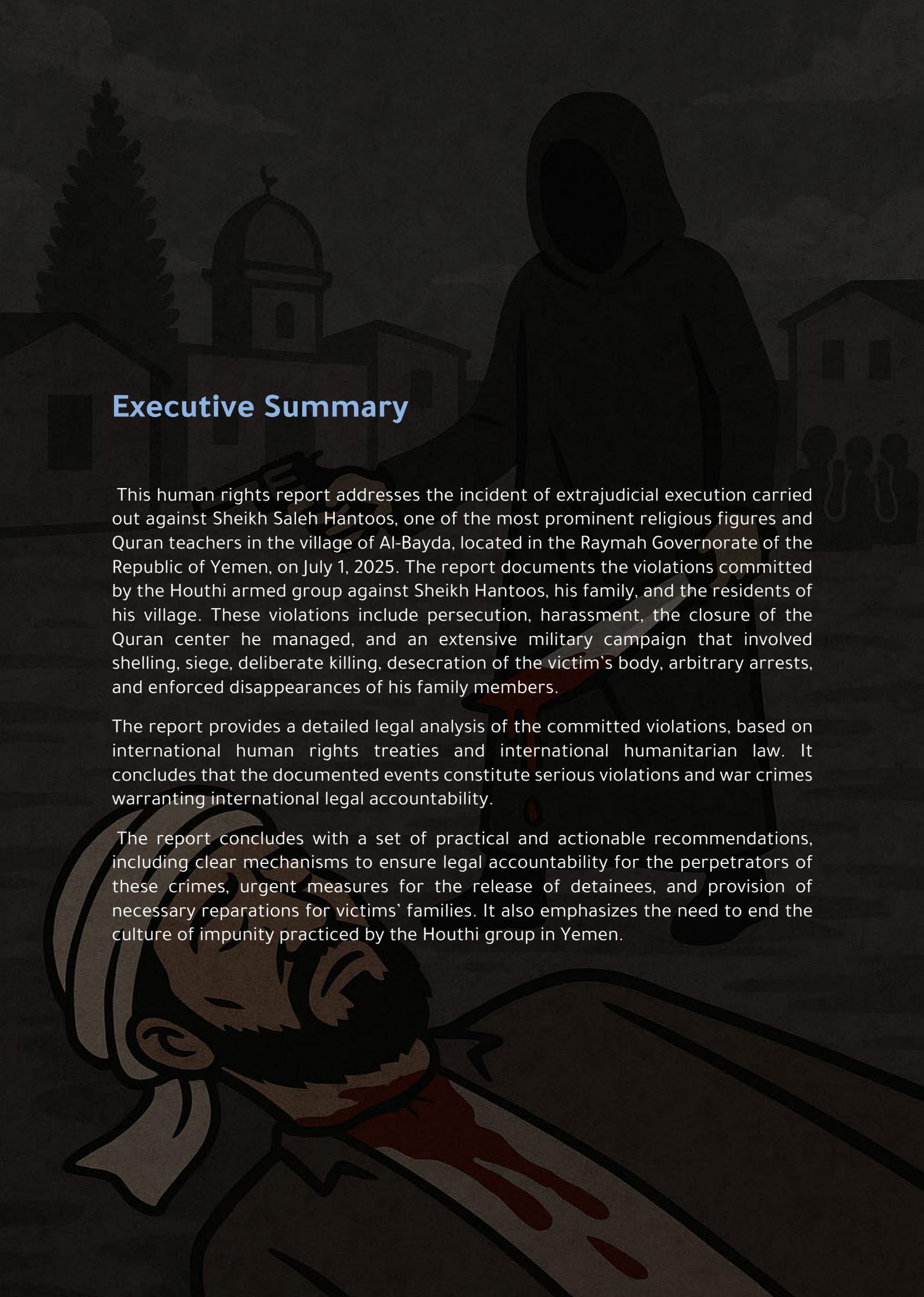
SAM
Rights & Liberties

About Us

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.





Executive Summary

This human rights report addresses the incident of extrajudicial execution carried out against Sheikh Saleh Hantoos, one of the most prominent religious figures and Quran teachers in the village of Al-Bayda, located in the Raymah Governorate of the Republic of Yemen, on July 1, 2025. The report documents the violations committed by the Houthi armed group against Sheikh Hantoos, his family, and the residents of his village. These violations include persecution, harassment, the closure of the Quran center he managed, and an extensive military campaign that involved shelling, siege, deliberate killing, desecration of the victim's body, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances of his family members.

The report provides a detailed legal analysis of the committed violations, based on international human rights treaties and international humanitarian law. It concludes that the documented events constitute serious violations and war crimes warranting international legal accountability.

The report concludes with a set of practical and actionable recommendations, including clear mechanisms to ensure legal accountability for the perpetrators of these crimes, urgent measures for the release of detainees, and provision of necessary reparations for victims' families. It also emphasizes the need to end the culture of impunity practiced by the Houthi group in Yemen.

Introduction

The rights to life, education, and freedom of belief form the cornerstone of the international human rights system. These are principles deeply rooted in international charters and treaties to which the Republic of Yemen is a signatory and has committed to implement. Nevertheless, these fundamental rights continue to be increasingly violated, especially in conflict zones witnessing a deterioration in human rights conditions, most notably in areas under the control of the Houthi armed group.

In this context, the killing of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos (70 years old) stands out. He was one of the most prominent religious and educational figures in Raymah Governorate. Sheikh Hantoos was a model of peaceful religious advocacy, dedicating his life to teaching the Quran and promoting community awareness, steering clear of political or partisan affiliations. For years, he maintained his educational activities independently, despite repeated attempts by the Houthi group to control and subordinate his efforts to their ideological agenda. Eyewitness testimonies, accounts from survivors of detention, and statements from Sheikh Hantoos's family members confirm that the military attack against him was not due to any political or militant activity. Rather, it stemmed from his persistent rejection of the Houthi-imposed religious and ideological narrative in local religious education.

From a legal standpoint, the incident constitutes an extrajudicial execution and a clear violation of the right to life, personal safety, freedom of belief and expression, and the right to education. It also represents a grave breach of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Charter.

This report aims to document the violations committed against Sheikh Saleh Hantoos and his educational and social environment, provide historical context, and present a clear legal analysis based on international standards to ensure accountability for those involved, deliver justice for the victims, and prevent the recurrence of such crimes in the future.

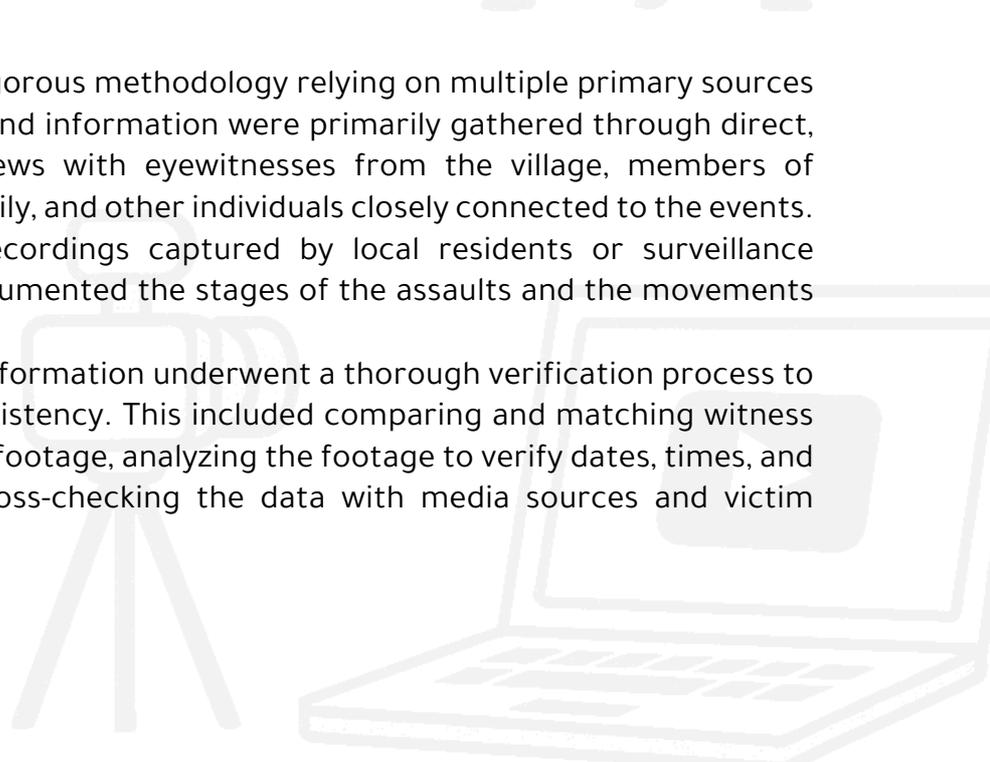
Additionally, this report serves as a contribution to highlighting the humanitarian and social dimensions of human rights violations in Yemen, drawing international attention to the importance of protecting civilians—especially those engaged in religious and educational work—and enhancing the capacity of local communities to resist violations targeting their lives and fundamental freedoms.



Methodology

The report is based on a rigorous methodology relying on multiple primary sources to ensure reliability. Data and information were primarily gathered through direct, audio-documented interviews with eyewitnesses from the village, members of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos's family, and other individuals closely connected to the events. It also relied on video recordings captured by local residents or surveillance cameras, which clearly documented the stages of the assaults and the movements of Houthi forces.

After data collection, the information underwent a thorough verification process to confirm accuracy and consistency. This included comparing and matching witness testimonies with the video footage, analyzing the footage to verify dates, times, and context of events, and cross-checking the data with media sources and victim testimonies.



Background

The killing of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos reflects the Houthi group's political manipulation and systematic exploitation of regional events to settle local scores and consolidate political and ideological control. The group used the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in 2025 as political and media cover to commit widespread crimes against those who oppose its political and sectarian agenda or reject its project in areas under its control.

The Houthis used these regional circumstances to legitimize attacks against their political, tribal, and social opponents, including Sheikh Saleh Hantoos, under false allegations concerning his stance on support for the Palestinian cause. This Houthi conduct follows a recurring pattern of violations against independent religious leaders and community figures who refuse to submit to its sectarian agenda. Similar incidents have occurred in other regions such as Ibb, Sana'a, and Hodeidah, where imams, Friday preachers, and Quran teachers who resisted the politicization of religious platforms or the introduction of sectarian discourse into mosques were targeted. This reinforces the hypothesis that Sheikh Saleh Hantoos was targeted as a local symbol of community resistance and a living example of opposition to the sectarian political ideology the Houthis seek to impose. Hesham Al-Maswari, in an [article](#) published on Belqees Net, notes that the Houthi group deliberately targets moderate religious and social figures, as their independence and strong community support base are seen as obstacles to the group's efforts to cement ideological and political control over local communities—especially in traditionally conservative and tribal areas like Raymah Governorate. Locally, Raymah Governorate, where the village of Al-Bayda is located, holds strategic importance in the Houthi calculations. The group seeks to solidify its dominance by eliminating religious and social powers opposing its project or those enjoying wide popular support and societal respect, such as Sheikh Saleh Hantoos. The scale of the military campaign reflects the perceived challenge Sheikh Hantoos posed to the group in the region.

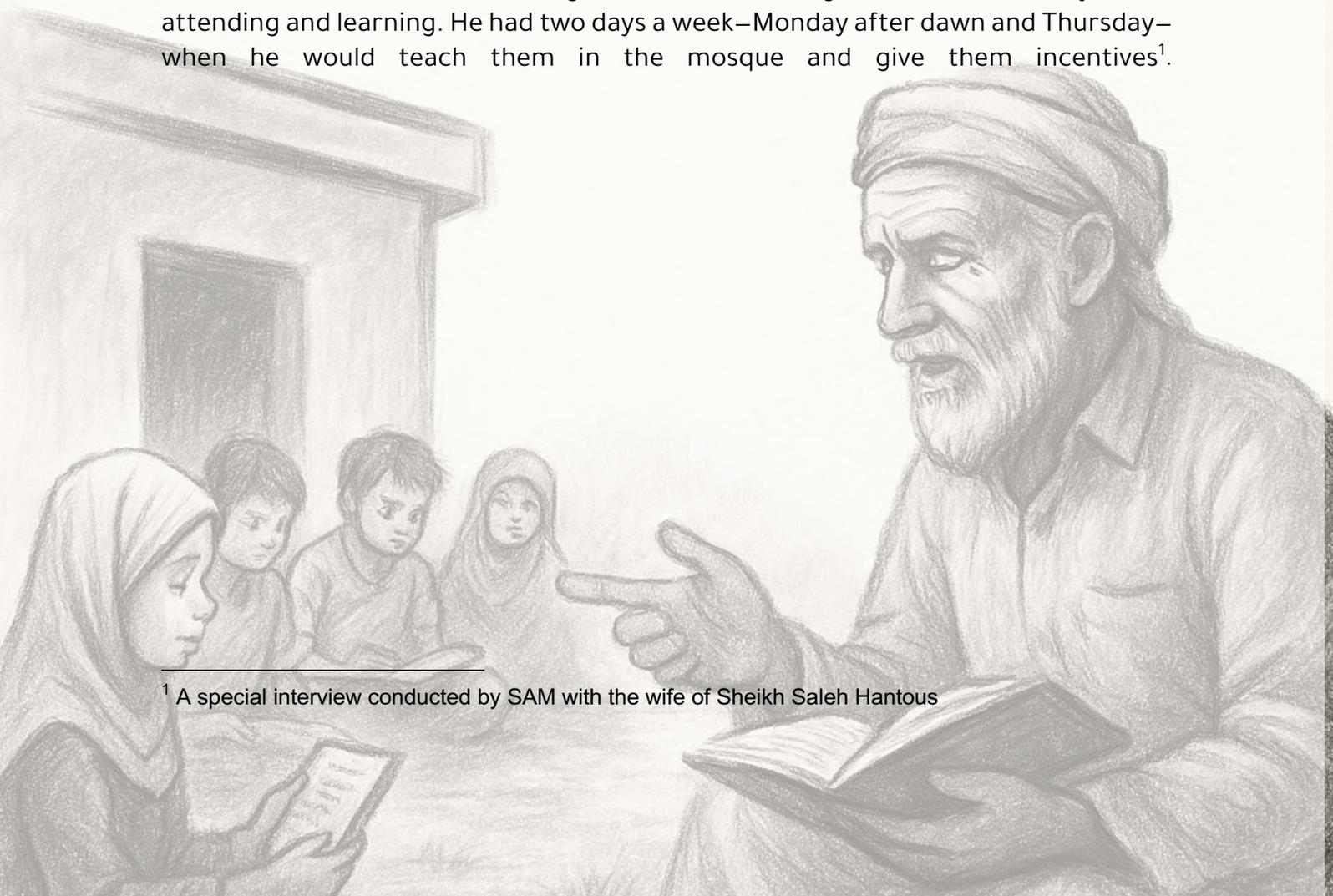
Regionally, the prolonged conflict in Yemen, in the absence of a decisive international stance—especially amid regional tensions and foreign interventions—has given the Houthi group room to escalate violations without fear of regional or international accountability. The international and regional preoccupation with events in Gaza and their ramifications has also diverted attention from the violations occurring in Yemen, allowing the Houthis to exploit these conditions to commit grave abuses.

In this context, the targeting of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos takes on special significance as it clearly illustrates the Houthi group's strategy to eliminate any form of religious or educational independence in areas under its control. It also represents part of a long series of violations that demand urgent international intervention to bring them to an end.

Sequence of Violations

Between 2020 and mid-2025, Sheikh Saleh Hantoos was subjected to a continuous and escalating series of violations carried out by the Houthis group against him, his family, and his local community. These actions aimed to force him to cease his peaceful educational activities and submit to the sectarian and ideological doctrine the group imposes on religious and educational institutions in the areas under its control.

In an exclusive interview with SAM, the Sheikh's wife stated that the Houthis' objections to Sheikh Saleh Hantoos began when they saw him devoting all his efforts to educating the younger generations. Their harassment and pursuit of him and his students increased; they tried to prevent students from attending his lessons and threatened their parents. The more he invested in education, the more intense their harassment became, which had begun the moment they entered the area. They would ask: "Why don't you teach in the official schools?" and "Why don't you get a job?" Sometimes they would say, "You're retired, so why are you still teaching?" He would reply: "I don't like sitting idle. I'm retired, and you took away my salary. It's okay—I'll teach without pay. The most important thing is that I teach and fill my time. I can't just sit around without teaching. I don't want this generation to grow up idle, to be out in the streets." He would gather young boys and girls, assign teachers for them, and encourage them with small gifts like 20 or 50 riyals for attending and learning. He had two days a week—Monday after dawn and Thursday—when he would teach them in the mosque and give them incentives¹.



¹ A special interview conducted by SAM with the wife of Sheikh Saleh Hantous

Below is a detailed and documented chronology of these violations:

- Beginning of Harassment: Education Treated as a Crime

Fatima Al-Maswari, wife of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos, confirmed in an exclusive interview with SAM that harassment had been ongoing since the Houthis entered the area but intensified in early 2020. Sheikh Saleh operated a Quranic institute with boarding facilities where students learned Quran, Arabic, ethics, principles, and manners. The Houthis began harassing and threatening the students and then their parents at home, asking: "Why is your son going there?" Some students had to attend in secret to avoid being seen. The Houthis then forcibly expelled the boarding students under the pretext that they did not approve of boarding schools, demanding their removal.

Sheikh Saleh refused to comply and told them, "I will not expel the students from the institute. Do what you will." The Houthis then arrived with armed convoys and expelled the students by force. The harassment did not stop there; they escalated matters by demanding to appoint preachers in the mosque. Sheikh Saleh responded, "The village is full of preachers... It's a small village—only me and some of my nephews are here." Despite this, they insisted and came with a crowd and nearly ten armed vehicles. Seeing this, Sheikh Saleh said, "Fine, I'll stay at home," and left the mosque to them. They gave sermons, chanted their slogan, and left².

- Pressure and Threats to Close the Quran Institute

In May 2021, the Houthi group began applying direct and indirect pressure on Sheikh Saleh by sending him Houthi ideological booklets known as "Al-Malazim" and ordering him to teach them in the village mosque. Sheikh Hantoos firmly rejected this, insisting on teaching only the Holy Quran³. Following his refusal, the Houthis initiated a series of repeated threats using local tribal leaders and village elders. These threats included direct warnings to Sheikh Saleh about the consequences of defying their orders. They also tried psychological intimidation by sending Houthi preachers to the village mosque accompanied by armed men in an effort to scare him into abandoning the mosque and the Quran institute⁴.

² An interview conducted by SAM with the wife of Sheikh Saleh Hantous

³ Testimony of one of the survivors of detention, who was an eyewitness to the events

⁴ An eyewitness who recounted the details of what happened to SAM

- **Storming and Closure of the Quran Institute**

The pressure reached its peak on March 30, 2022, when an armed Houthi group led by prominent local leaders—Mohammed Al-Tuwairi (Director of the Education Office in Raymah), Adel Al-Wahidi (Houthi leader), Nouman Murad, and Yahya Mutahar—stormed the Quran institute in the village of Al-Bayda by force and without any judicial warrant.

During the raid, approximately forty students were physically assaulted and forcibly removed. The institute was then shut down, and students' records and documents were destroyed. The building was later converted into a center for military and ideological mobilization for the benefit of the group⁵. In a statement issued by Sheikh Hantous's family, they reported that after the Houthis stormed the institute, they confiscated it, burned parts of it, destroyed all student certificates and documents, and turned it into a center for recruitment and indoctrination of children and teenagers with Houthi ideology⁶.

- **Looting of the Quran Institute and Burning of the Library**

About two weeks after the closure of the institute, on April 13, 2022, the armed Houthi group returned to the building and looted all its contents. This included an automated bakery, a library, carpets, and furniture, with the estimated value of the stolen items reaching around 120,000 USD. That same day, Houthi members took the library books outside into the building's courtyard and set them on fire—an act that constitutes a clear violation of the right to education and freedom of thought⁷.

Fatima Al-Maswari recounts: when they returned, they asked Sheikh Saleh to hand over the institute. He told them, "This building is not part of the Education Ministry. It's my life's work. While others built homes, I built this institute." Even his private home was just a single room divided for multiple purposes, with the rest used for guests. Despite this, they insisted on seizing the building. They broke the locks, looted the institute and its contents, seized and burned student documents and certificates, and took the mattresses and blankets. Sheikh Saleh said, "Let it go, maybe things will calm down."

She added: then they came again, demanding to give sermons. The Sheikh said: "You've already taken the mosques." They had taken a mosque he built under the village for people in the valley and another for a small group. They even took the annexes built for girls' education and turned them into dormitories and storage for their supplies. The Sheikh told them: "You've already taken them. Why insist

⁵ An eyewitness who insisted that his name not be mentioned

⁶ [Statement](#) issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

⁷ An eyewitness who insisted that his name not be mentioned

on preaching in my mosque? You've got the first and second mosques—preach there. Why this obstinance? I swear I cannot bear someone climbing my pulpit and insulting the Companions of the Prophet while I'm alive. I cannot listen to cursing the Prophet's Companions while I'm still living—or hear anyone question the Quran.”

He avoided engaging them in religious discussions because when they preached, they cursed, shouted, and raged. He couldn't stand it and preferred to stay home. On several occasions, they stormed the mosque by force and gave sermons. When they came, he didn't confront them—he stayed home and prayed, saying: “We want to avoid trouble; we don't want things to escalate to killing.” But their stubbornness and arrogance only increased⁸.

Despite all this, Sheikh Saleh continued teaching in the village mosque until 2024. During that time, he endured multiple forms of assault, harassment, and threats. The militia also launched more than four military campaigns over the past three years, preventing him from continuing his mission. He was eventually limited to a small circle of local students and another group of female students taught by his wife. Nonetheless, the Houthi militia still refused to allow him to teach even a single student the Book of God⁹.

- **Previous Assassination Attempt**

On September 2, 2023, an assassination attempt was carried out against Sheikh Saleh by an armed group of six Houthi members stationed on a hill overlooking the village. When the gunmen failed to directly target the Sheikh, they physically assaulted one of his grandsons. Despite the Sheikh submitting an official complaint through his lawyer to the Attorney General, the case was neither followed up nor investigated¹⁰.

- **Harassment and Threats to the Family**

Fatima Al-Masouri reports that the family was subjected to continuous threats and harassment. Last year (2024), the Sheikh's nephew, Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, went shopping like any ordinary person. On the last day of Ramadan, they tried to attack and capture him. The young man tried to escape, and they fired at him and his car, with two vehicles pursuing him. Out of extreme fear, he fled with the car despite the front tire being hit. “He drove it from the market to the house with a flat tire; anyone who saw him would have been alarmed by the speed of the car and the way the boy was driving like a madman because they terrified them, and the

⁸ An interview conducted by SAM with Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim

⁹ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

¹⁰ Testimony from one of the Sheikh's relatives

children fled the market.” They have not been able to go to the market since last year to buy essential goods such as flour and vegetables. She adds, “They harassed the boys to the extent that none of them could be sent, and they had to rely on motorcycle owners.”

Afterwards, problems and accusations began regarding honor and accusations against the boys, with the aim of fabricating cases against them to imprison them. Every one of the boys had a case fabricated against him. Despite this, they avoided them and kept their distance, and this was the situation every time¹¹.

The harassment continued throughout 2024 and 2025, as the Sheikh continued his educational activities in the mosque in a limited capacity with a number of village boys, despite the harassment and the siege of the village and the prevention of essential supplies such as domestic gas, which forced his wife to gather firewood and prepare food for the students to ensure the continuation of the educational circles¹².

In March 2025, Houthi security authorities requested that the Sheikh attend the governorate headquarters under the pretext of security reports against him, but he refused to go, insisting on his right to remain in his home and teach the Quran. Local mediation and delegations continued, trying to convince him to surrender or leave the area forcibly, which he strongly refused, affirming that anyone with a claim against him should resort to the judiciary.

- **The Houthi Campaign Against Sheikh Saleh Hantous**

In the final days of June 2025, Raymah Governorate, specifically Al-Salafiyah District, witnessed large-scale military movements by the armed Houthi group, aiming to prepare for a broad military operation targeting Al-Bayda village, and specifically the house of Sheikh Saleh Hantous. According to documented testimonies of eyewitnesses and members of the village, these military movements began escalating from June 28, 2025, and continued intensifying until the early hours of Tuesday, July 1, 2025¹³.

The number of forces amassed reached around 100 military vehicles¹⁴, brought in from other governorates such as Dhamar and Al-Hodeidah, indicating prior and well-organized high-level preparations within the Houthi group to carry out this military operation. These forces included members from the Special Security Forces, Public

¹¹ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of Sheikh Saleh, in a private conversation with SAM

¹² Testimony from one of the victim’s relatives

¹³ Testimonies from relatives of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, to SAM Organization

¹⁴ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

Security, forces affiliated with what is known as the “Fifth Military Region,” in addition to a special female security unit¹⁵.

These forces carried with them large quantities of medium and heavy weapons, such as heavy machine guns, RPGs, and snipers¹⁶, which “encircled the village from the previous night and imposed a complete siege, confirming the clear intent of these forces to use excessive force to achieve their goal of eliminating or arresting the Sheikh at any cost, regardless of the humanitarian or social consequences resulting from that.”

- **Siege and Assassination Attempt**

These forces imposed a tight security cordon on the village, cutting off all roads leading to it and closing the village entrances completely, preventing anyone from entering or leaving the village. Residents confirmed that Houthi elements clearly informed them that this siege would continue until Sheikh Saleh Hantous surrendered or was killed¹⁷.

This complete siege created a state of extreme fear among the residents, who were surprised by the unusually heavy military presence, with the Houthi armed elements openly threatening the residents that any attempt at resistance or lack of cooperation would be met with the use of force, which led many families to be forcibly displaced from their homes out of fear for their lives. According to the testimony of Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, the Houthis began gathering on Monday evening, with military vehicles stationed on the mountain. On the third morning (Tuesday), the Sheikh went out to the mosque, and during prayer, bullets rained down on him. A car arrived next to the house unnoticed, and two gunmen got out quickly heading toward the mosque, firing inside. Those who were inside the mosque fled, and the Sheikh withdrew to his house. Hearing the commotion, his wife went out to see what was happening, and saw the mosque full of armed men, and the village as well. She wondered: “Who is all this mobilization against? All these vehicles, these gunmen—who are they after? An old man of seventy, suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, and prostate problems, in poor health, unable to bear a conversation, yet they insist he must surrender himself.”¹⁸

A statement from the family of Sheikh Saleh confirms the attempted assassination of the Sheikh as he left the mosque after dawn prayer, as Houthi elements opened fire on him while chanting “Death to America,” and the Sheikh miraculously survived and rushed to his house, pursued by the Houthi elements¹⁹.

¹⁵ Testimony of one of the survivors of detention

¹⁶ An eyewitness who insisted that his name not be mentioned

¹⁷ Consistent testimonies from one of the survivors of detention and a local resident

¹⁸ Testimony of Fatima Al-Masouri to SAM Organization

¹⁹ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

- **Surrender or Shelling**

Simultaneously with the military movements, the Houthi group exerted great pressure on local dignitaries and social figures to convince Sheikh Saleh to surrender himself or leave the village. According to consistent testimonies from villagers and members of the Sheikh's family, a number of local figures, including the district director (Fares Rouba) and the governor (Fares Al-Habbari), visited the Sheikh's home in an attempt to force him to surrender himself or leave the village, but he strongly refused and clearly told them:

"If you have a case against me, go to the prosecution, and I will appoint a lawyer to defend me."

Fatima Al-Masouri says: The Sheikh was in poor health and could not withstand discussions. Nevertheless, they insisted that he surrender himself. There had been mediation efforts between Sheikh Saleh and the Houthis a week earlier. The head of intelligence, or "Muammar," called him to tell him that the governor was inviting him. Saleh replied: "By God, I will not attend anyone; I am in bad shape." The mediators insisted that he go to the governor. The Sheikh said to them: "The governor doesn't want anything from me; I am exhausted, I can't even tend to my own land." He could not even take care of his own crops; she (his wife) was doing this for him. His movement was limited to going from home to the mosque and from the mosque to home.

He asked them: "So, tell them what do they want from me... what case is against me?" They asked him to respond to the governor. He said: "I can't answer him, honestly my condition is so bad, I can't go, nor do I want to leave my house." They threatened him: "It is necessary that if you do not surrender yourself... we will shell your house." The Sheikh replied: "Go ahead and shell it." Even the mediators who pressured him, he rebuffed: "People, it doesn't matter to me. I am not someone who goes up and down, I am exhausted. I am no longer twenty years old to be running around, I am seventy years old, not for roaming or wandering, nor for threats."

The tension increased due to his refusal to leave. He asked them for a week or two, or even until the end of the month, and said to them: "These are sacred days, and after that, God willing, when I think, we'll see how to solve the issues, see what issues you have, and find solutions. But to shed my blood in the sacred month is not permissible; even the pagan Arabs used to respect this month and would not shed blood in it." But they refused and insisted: "No, if you do not surrender yourself today, meaning Tuesday, your house will be shelled." The Sheikh replied: "Shell it... go ahead... I am inside the house."

He told them: "Do whatever you want, do as you please... I will never surrender. If anyone has a case against me, let him refer it to the prosecution, and I will get a lawyer, and we can litigate as we please. Why are we in such a hurry... dialogue and solving problems require time, not in a day or a night; you must give me time to think and consult with the elders and the sheikhs." But they insisted that he surrender himself that very day or the house would be shelled. The Sheikh said: "Fine, you mean I am a martyr. Everyone, by God, will have their turn... 'I was eaten the day the white bull was eaten... and this is the fate of people."²⁰

Al-Masouri adds: Saleh told them: "I am not fighting anyone, God is between you and me... you have looted the school, looted the mosque, what more do you want after all this, what else remains, do you want this old man to come and surrender himself?" He told them: "By God, it is better for me to die in my house than to die at your hands." These were his last moments: "I will only surrender myself to my Creator, and I will not negotiate my religion with anyone no matter the pressure. I will not go out to anyone, and whoever starts the aggression, I will respond to him. I am inside my house; whoever assaults me, I will defend myself."

With him was his nephew Hamza, a small child, frightened and trembling; this was his first time witnessing such a confrontation. The Sheikh's wife said: "We see these confrontations in Gaza, but here in Yemen, we do not see this." The boy hid in a place by himself out of sheer fear²¹.

- **The Incident of Killing and Field Execution**

The attack began around nine-thirty or ten o'clock. They were firing shots, and the Sheikh was moving around, fighting and defending himself with his automatic rifle. Mediators arrived after noon and after Asr (afternoon). Saleh was wounded before Asr with minor injuries to his forehead. His wife put a bandage on his head, trembling with fear²².

The militia began shelling the house with RPGs and heavy and medium machine guns, despite knowing that his wife and her elderly mother (86 years old) were inside. The shelling continued from the morning until late at night, during which the Sheikh was killed on the roof of his house. His wife, Fatima Ghalib Al-Masouri, was also wounded, and the water tank on the roof was shelled. Food and water were prevented from entering, and the shelling continued for hours after the Sheikh was martyred, preventing his wife from reaching his body to confirm his death, which raises the possibility that he continued to bleed while alive for hours²³.

²⁰ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim, in a private conversation with SAM

²¹ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim, in a private conversation with SAM

²² Previous source

²³ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

The Sheikh's wife's mother was besieged outside. When the shooting started, she had been sitting outside negotiating with them since morning. "Imagine, since after the dawn prayer, she sat outside negotiating with them, telling them, 'Fear God... you are killing a man who did nothing... an old man... we are inside our house, we have not blocked any road.'" In the end, when the shelling began, they told a man from a neighboring village to take the old woman away. When he did, the shelling began frantically. The Sheikh's wife was worried for her mother, who remained outside until noon and afternoon without food, water, or access to the bathroom, and she was helpless and weak.

Things calmed down a little around four-thirty in the afternoon. The Sheikh's wife's mother moved with her chair to the front of the house. The Sheikh's wife quickly opened the door and brought her inside, changed her clothes, and gave her a little yogurt, as they had nothing else due to the siege. They were besieged inside the house with their cattle, chickens, and sheep. The animals were terrified, jumping from the impact: "They were jumping frantically from the shelling. By God, the cows were terrified, the sheep were terrified, the chickens inside the house were terrified—it was a state of panic."²⁴

After the Sheikh's wife's mother entered and ate, and about a quarter or half an hour before sunset, the mediators called again. They said to him, "Can we stop the fighting and take you with us to the governor?" The Sheikh set his condition: "My condition is that you stop the fighting, leave the village, and give me a week or two so I can calm down and clear my mind. Then we can enter into dialogue with the sheikhs and community elders and with the governor."

They refused his request and insisted: "Either you surrender yourself now, or the house will be shelled—since we are already shelling." Sheikh Saleh replied, "By God, I will not surrender myself unless you declare that you have wronged me. You have robbed me, looted the school, stolen my salary, stolen my wife's salary, expelled the students, done everything, and now we have reached the final stage—you want to take my head. Go ahead, take it."

About ten minutes before sunset, the Sheikh left the room. He told his wife, "Stay in the house. Do not leave. I will face them on the rooftop, face to face. I will not confront them in hiding—I will face them." Al-Masouri adds: They did not give him even a week to consult himself and calm down.

The shelling on them intensified. She and her mother could not leave their place. They were trapped in a small area between the room and the bathroom, while they were being fired upon with bullets, RPGs, and machine guns, as the attackers shouted: "God is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel." The whole village was deserted, and only she and her mother remained. Her phone ran out of charge, and she could not recharge it.

The Sheikh's wife felt that her husband had been martyred. She and her mother remained trapped in their home until morning.

²⁴ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim, in a private conversation with SAM

Some of her brothers called and told her they had contacted the commander of the Fifth Military Region to stop the attack and informed him that only the two of them were in the house. The commander replied that they claimed the house was full of fighters. The Sheikh's wife said: "By God, there is no one but my mother and I, and they are shelling the house, shouting 'Death to America, Death to Israel.' I said, 'Fine, mother, you are America and I am Israel, there is no one but us. America and Israel are not here, just you and me. One is America and the other I call Israel, and they are shooting at us and chanting Death to America, Death to Israel.'"

The shelling intensified until ten o'clock, then lessened a little. She was told then, "He has been martyred." She called her brother and told him her husband had been martyred. When he told her they claimed there was resistance, she replied: "They are lying, by God there is no resistance, it is only my mother and I trapped inside, there is no resistance." They returned to shell again, claiming there was resistance. This continued until midnight, then things calmed down a little, and she and her mother remained trembling with fear inside the house.

Only she and her mother were left. She smelled burning from the roof and heard digging behind the house. They were burning and firing shots, chanting "Death to America, Death to Israel," while there was no one in the house but the two of them. She waited in fear, thinking they might plant explosives in the house. She told her brother, who was negotiating with them, "There is no one alive. By God, it is over." They stopped for a while, then resumed firing. The last barrage was at three in the morning. The two of them remained in their place without moving, unable even to secretly enter the bathroom, because as soon as a light was turned on, a sniper would shoot at it. They remained in the darkness until dawn²⁵.

²⁵ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim, in a private conversation with SAM

Subsequent Violations

The Houthi forces did not stop at the crime of killing the Sheikh; rather, a series of subsequent violations followed, including:

Arbitrary Detention and Forced Disappearance: Houthi forces arrested 12 members of the Sheikh's family and his companions, including wounded individuals and children, without any judicial orders or clear charges. They were forcibly disappeared, exposing them to great danger, especially given previous incidents of torture and liquidation of detainees by the Houthis. The arrests included: Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, Hamza Saad Hantous, Suleiman Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, Anas Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, Asad Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, Bassam Abdulrahman Saad Hantous, Abdulmajid Yahya Hantous, Hamid Mansour Baqash, Ghamdan Ali Mohammed Hantous, Abdu Saleh Al-Haris, Osama Abdulrahman Saad Hantous (wounded), and Mulaṭif Mohammed Ghalib Al-Masouri (wounded)²⁶.

Looting and Theft: Armed elements stormed the Sheikh's house after his killing and looted and destroyed its contents, including personal documents and family property. The theft of limited personal weapons belonging to the Sheikh and his relatives was documented²⁷.

Violation of the Dignity of the Deceased: The body of the Sheikh was deliberately mistreated and humiliated, transported in a degrading manner, and a secret burial was imposed at night without respect for religious or social rituals. On the following morning, Wednesday, July 2, 2025, the Sheikh's body was taken in a humiliating manner by a military vehicle and transported to Al-Rubou' Hospital without notifying the family²⁸.

²⁶ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025 + Testimony from the victim's relatives

²⁷ Testimony of one of the Sheikh's relatives who survived detention

²⁸ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

Later that same day, the body was handed over to one of the Sheikh's relatives, Abdulmalik Hantous, in the Al-Rubou' market after Asr (afternoon), with Houthi members informing him that the burial must take place immediately without a funeral or public attendance, otherwise it would be confiscated (according to the testimony of one of the survivors of detention)²⁹.

Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, says: "My husband was lying a martyr on the roof of the house. My mother and I requested that they allow us to go up to cover his wounds with a blanket if he was injured. They refused. We asked to see him if he had been martyred. They also refused. They came and took his body as it was after Maghrib prayer, and did not allow us to see him, whether wounded or dead."³⁰

Despite the Sheikh's relatives announcing their intention to hold the funeral prayer the next morning, Thursday, July 3, 2025, Houthi forces imposed a secret burial of the body at midnight, preventing the village residents and his family from participating in the funeral, and threatening them with violence if they tried to document or photograph what was happening.

²⁹ An eyewitness who insisted that his name not be mentioned

³⁰ Fatima Al-Masouri, the wife of the victim, in a private conversation with SAM

Parallel Smear Campaign

After the Houthi group eliminated Sheikh Saleh Hantous, their [media](#) outlets and activists adopted a misleading narrative focused on justifying the attack by portraying Sheikh “Saleh Hantous” as a dangerous figure engaged in incitement activities, threatening the security and stability of the governorate, calling for chaos and rebellion, and opposing the state’s positions in support of the Palestinian cause—even alleging he adopted positions loyal to the “American-Zionist aggression,” according to their narrative.

Within the justifications presented by [Nasr Amer](#), the so-called head of the Houthi-affiliated Saba Agency, for the killing of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, there is a clear pattern of attempting to legitimize the Houthi campaign targeting Hantous. This is done primarily by employing the narrative of the “position on Gaza” as a main pretext for the measures taken, in addition to classifying the victim and anyone sympathizing with him as part of the “enemy” category.

He claimed that Sheikh Hantous had a “negative stance” toward what he called Yemen’s position in support of Gaza, that he “incited against this stance and recruited for the benefit of other parties.” It does not stop there; this narrative takes an even sharper turn—anyone objecting to the Houthis’ justifications is immediately classified as part of a directed campaign led by “Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated platforms,” “Qatari channels managed from Turkey,” and “Al Jazeera channel,” in addition to the “Emirati-Saudi aggression coalition.”

This direct linking of any sympathy with the victim to hostile agendas is aimed at delegitimizing any criticism of the operation, making the defense of Sheikh Hantous tantamount to siding with the enemies of the Palestinian cause. Thus, Gaza becomes a bargaining chip used to suppress any opposing internal voice, where any such voice is branded as an enemy to the just cause.

The Houthi group went further in [defaming](#) Sheikh Hantous, alleging that he received monthly payments from what they called the “aggressor forces” to carry out suspicious tasks, including recruiting students and using the mosque as a headquarters to plan sabotage activities. In addressing the attack on the Sheikh, Houthi media place full responsibility on Sheikh “Saleh Hantous” himself and adopt a misleading account justifying the Houthi attack as self-defense, which led to the victim’s death³¹.

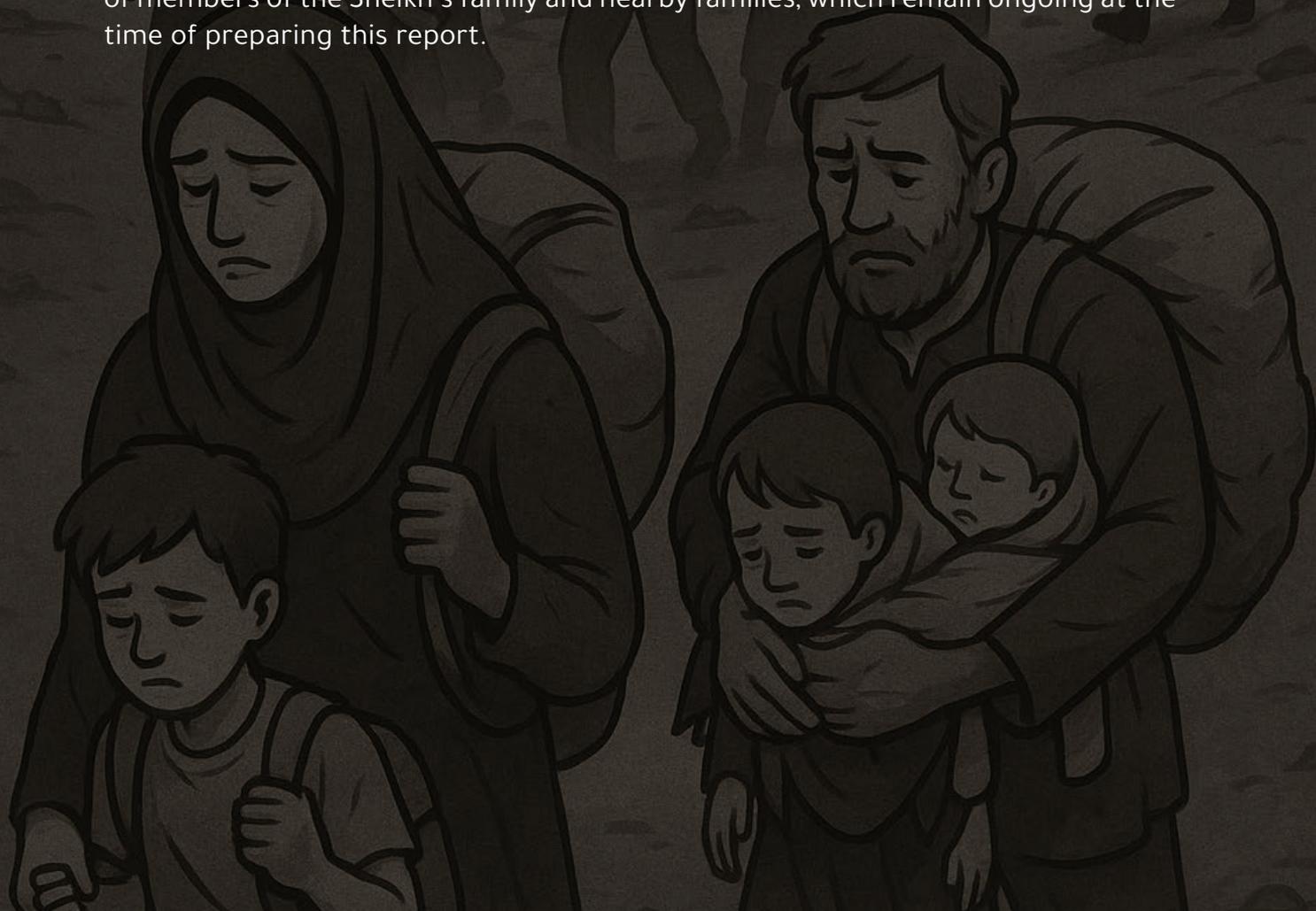
This narrative was preceded by a systematic media campaign by Houthi media outlets, aimed at demonizing Sheikh Saleh Hantous, tarnishing his reputation, and attributing unfounded security and political accusations to him. Statements from Houthi elements [documented](#) during the campaign likened Raymah Governorate and its people to “America and Israel,” and described the Sheikh and his followers as “mercenaries” in clear inciting media rhetoric, aimed at justifying the use of excessive force against him.

³¹ Statement issued by the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, dated July 14, 2025

Humanitarian and Social Repercussions

The assassination of Sheikh Saleh Hantous caused profound humanitarian and social repercussions within the local community in Raymah Governorate. The operation, along with the subsequent raids, looting, and arrests, created a state of panic and widespread fear among the residents, resulting in a large wave of displacement and forced migration, as dozens of families were compelled to leave their homes in search of safety. This wave of forced displacement placed an additional burden on the displaced families, who lost their economic and social resources, and their suffering was exacerbated by the lack of adequate humanitarian support.

Moreover, the violations committed against the Sheikh and his family had a deep psychological and social impact on the members of the local community, who lost confidence in the ability of local and legal institutions to provide them with protection. This led to social division and the breakdown of the social fabric that Sheikh Hantous had maintained through his educational and pedagogical role in the village. His assassination resulted in the closure of the Quranic school, the main educational center in the area, depriving dozens of students of the opportunity to learn and negatively impacting their educational and social future. These repercussions have doubled the humanitarian and social suffering, especially in the absence of any intervention from local or international humanitarian organizations. The crime and its aftermath created a humanitarian crisis characterized by shortages of basic necessities such as food, water, and medicine, as well as a loss of security, particularly with the continued forced disappearances of members of the Sheikh's family and nearby families, which remain ongoing at the time of preparing this report.



Legal Analysis

The execution of Sheikh Saleh Hantous constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Republic of Yemen is a party, the extrajudicial killing of the Sheikh is a clear and explicit violation of Article 6, which guarantees the right to life and prohibits its arbitrary deprivation. The use of excessive force against Sheikh Hantous and his family, despite the fact that they were civilians and posed no direct threat, constitutes a serious violation of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit targeting civilians during armed conflicts. This crime also amounts to a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as it involves intentional killing, the deliberate infliction of great suffering, and widespread destruction of property without military necessity.

Furthermore, the acts of forced disappearance and arbitrary detention that followed the killing of the Sheikh represent a flagrant violation of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which prohibits the forcible disappearance of persons and obliges the state to immediately disclose their whereabouts and ensure their physical and psychological safety.

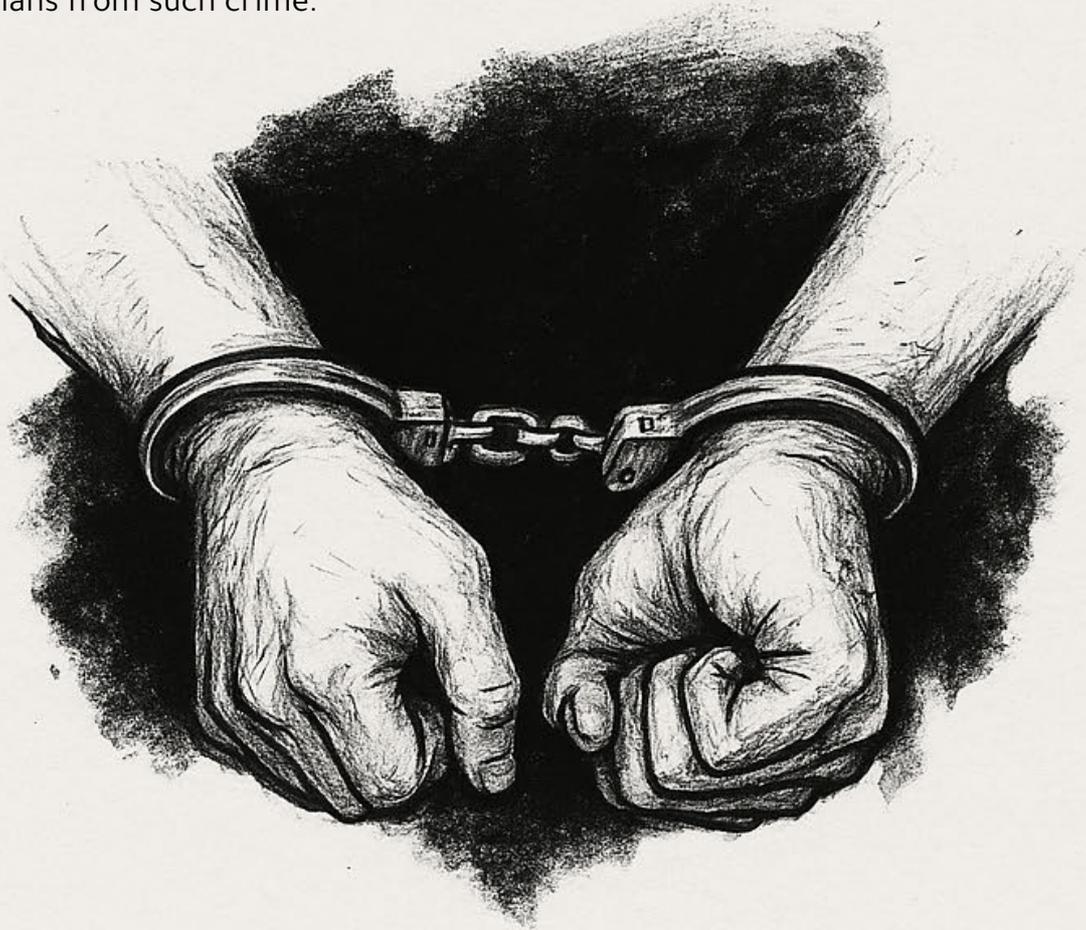
Thus, this crime and its repercussions fall under the direct responsibility of the Houthi leadership who planned and ordered these acts, requiring that they be held accountable and prosecuted in accordance with international and national law.



Conclusion

All the facts, testimonies, and evidence indicate that Sheikh Saleh Hantous was subjected to an extrajudicial execution by military and security formations affiliated with the Houthi group. The operation was carried out without judicial authorization, and involved excessive and disproportionate use of force, resulting in his deliberate and premeditated killing after a long series of persecutions, threats, looting, and deprivation of his rights to education, expression, and residence—in a heinous crime that constitutes a flagrant violation of numerous international conventions. The horrific crime that claimed the life of Sheikh Saleh Hantous, and the grave violations that followed, represent a glaring example of human rights and international law violations in Yemen. This incident reveals a dangerous pattern of the political use of violence by the Houthi group to eliminate its political and social opponents.

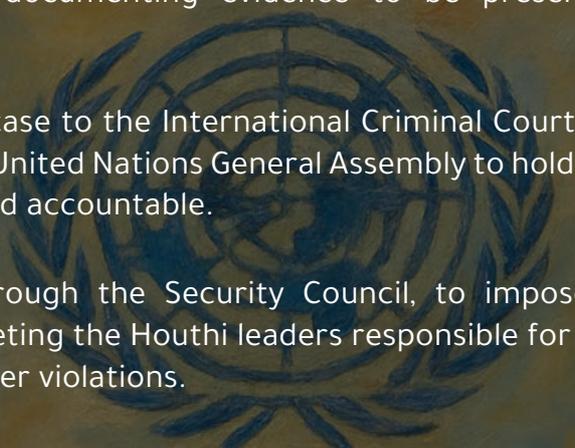
The absence of international and regional accountability has encouraged the Houthis to continue their violations, making urgent the need for immediate international intervention to put an end to these practices and protect Yemeni civilians from such crime.





Recommendations

To ensure justice is achieved and violations are deterred in the future, the report recommends the following:

- 
- 
- The formation of an independent international investigative committee under the auspices of the United Nations, tasked with collecting and professionally documenting evidence to be presented to international judicial bodies.
 - Referring the case to the International Criminal Court through the Security Council or the United Nations General Assembly to hold the Houthi leadership directly involved accountable.
 - Pressuring, through the Security Council, to impose strict international sanctions targeting the Houthi leaders responsible for issuing orders for the killings and other violations.
 - Calling on international and regional human rights organizations to launch a wide-ranging international and media campaign to ensure the immediate release of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons from among the Sheikh's relatives.
 - Obligating the Houthi group to pay urgent and comprehensive compensation to the family of Sheikh Saleh Hantous for the material and moral damages resulting from the crime, including restoring their dignity through an official apology recognizing the injustice suffered by Sheikh Saleh Hantous, and compensation for killing, displacement, destruction of property, and psychological harm, under the supervision of an independent international body to oversee the implementation mechanism and ensure justice.
 - Establishing an international mechanism to monitor and protect educational and civil institutions in conflict areas through international monitoring missions in coordination with local civil society organizations.
- 



Extrajudicial Execution

A Human Rights Report Documenting the Killing of Sheikh Saleh Hantoos and Violations
Against His Family in Raymah