



www.samrl.org

info@samrl.org

2025 Dec

No One Protects the Victims

A human rights report documenting the violations that accompanied the Hadramout events in December 2025.



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.



Executive Summary

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties team concludes, through this report, that the security and military developments witnessed in the governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahrah represent an advanced stage within a cumulative trajectory of the erosion of state authority and the expansion of the influence of armed formations operating outside the constitutional and legal framework, in a context characterized by multiple centers of power and the weakened effective jurisdiction of official institutions. The report presents these developments within their political and security context extending since 2017, tracing the emergence of parallel armed formations, the faltering of their integration pathways, and the repercussions of that on the structure of the state and the rule of law—particularly following the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council and its limited attempts to impose a minimum degree of unified command in an environment dominated by de facto authorities.

The report is based on a multi-source documentation methodology, which included direct interviews with victims and eyewitnesses through secure means, a review of official documents and statements issued by governmental entities and de facto authorities, and the analysis of open-source materials and video clips whose authenticity was verified in terms of time and location, in addition to consultation with experts in international humanitarian law and digital verification. At all stages of the work, confidentiality of sources was ensured, information was cross-checked, and cautious verification standards were applied, allowing for a realistic presentation of facts in light of the prevailing security and field constraints.

The report shows that the events occurred in a context of intersecting roles among several internal and external actors. Domestically, the incidents involved regular military forces affiliated with the internationally recognized government, alongside armed formations not effectively subject to the Ministries of Defense and Interior, including forces linked to the Southern Transitional Council, as well as local armed formations of a tribal character that emerged outside the state's legal structure. These formations carried out parallel security and military roles and imposed arrangements and effective authorities on the ground independent of official institutions. The report also addresses the role of external parties that provided military, security, or logistical support to some of these formations, and the legal issues this raises regarding the responsibility of entities that exercise effective control or contribute directly or indirectly to shifting the balance of power on the ground.

The report documents multiple patterns of violations accompanying the expansion of military deployment and the transfer of control in several areas of Hadramout and Al-Mahrah. These violations included attacks on regular military units, incidents of extrajudicial killing, arbitrary detention, and cruel or degrading treatment, in addition to widespread looting of public and private property, violations of the sanctity of homes, seizure of civilian facilities, and the imposition of de facto symbols and authorities. The report also documented large-scale forced displacement affecting hundreds of families, in a context marked by a sudden change in security control and the absence of protection guarantees, resulting in severe humanitarian impacts including loss of shelter and livelihoods and deterioration of health and psychological conditions, particularly among women, children, and the most vulnerable groups.



The report analyzes these incidents in light of the applicable legal reference framework, including the rules of international humanitarian law—particularly Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II—alongside international human rights law obligations and relevant national constitutional and legal references. The report does not reach final judicial characterizations; however, it indicates that some documented acts may raise individual or command criminal responsibility if their elements are established before competent judicial bodies, and may also raise international responsibility in the event that effective control or decisive contribution to the occurrence of violations is proven.

In light of the foregoing, the report underscores the need to take urgent measures, including opening independent, impartial, and effective investigations into all documented violations, ensuring the protection of victims and witnesses, and holding those responsible accountable in accordance with national and international standards. It also calls for halting any military or security support to armed formations operating outside state institutions, and for working to reunify military and security forces under an official command subject to oversight and accountability. The report stresses the necessity of immediate measures to protect civilians, ensure unhindered access to humanitarian assistance, address the situation of displaced families, and establish mechanisms for reparations and restoration of rights—including compensation and guarantees of non-repetition—in a manner that contributes to reducing impunity, restoring the minimum level of the rule of law, and rebuilding trust in public authority.



Introduction

This paper comes in the context of an escalation in security and military developments witnessed in eastern Yemen, particularly in the governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahrah, and the qualitative shifts it brought in patterns of control on the ground and the changing balance of influence outside the state's constitutional and legal frameworks. The report reviews the roots of these developments within a cumulative trajectory extending since 2017, as the failure of restructuring arrangements and the integration of armed formations, the multiplicity of chains of command, and the overlap of internal and external factors have contributed to weakening the effective jurisdiction of official institutions and eroding the rule of law.

The report focuses on monitoring the human rights and humanitarian repercussions of these shifts by documenting patterns of violations that accompanied military deployment and the transfer of control, including extrajudicial killing, arbitrary detention, looting, violations of the sanctity of homes, and the seizure of civilian facilities, alongside waves of forced displacement that left severe impacts on affected families, especially women, children, and the most vulnerable groups. The report also addresses the incitement campaigns accompanying the events and the risks they pose to social peace and to the safety of journalists and human rights defenders.

The report is based on a multi-source documentation methodology that combines direct testimonies, official documents and statements, and analysis of open sources and visual materials after verifying their authenticity in time and location, with strict regard for source confidentiality and standards of verification and cross-checking. In light of this, the report provides a legal reading of the facts within the framework of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and relevant national references, and concludes with a set of demands and recommendations aimed at protecting civilians, halting violations, activating accountability mechanisms, addressing the impacts of displacement, and providing reparations, in a manner that contributes to reducing impunity and restoring the minimum level of the rule of law.



Background of the Conflict

Information collected by the team from multiple sources—including direct testimonies, official documents, field reports, analysis of digital materials, and satellite imagery—indicates that the recent developments in the governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahrah constitute an extension of a long escalatory trajectory that began in 2017, the year the Southern Transitional Council was established on 11 May 2017. Since then, it began forming armed formations parallel to government forces, supported logistically, financially, and militarily by the United Arab Emirates. The absence of institutional linkage between these formations and the Ministries of Defense and Interior led to the emergence of a security structure outside the framework of the state, which gradually expanded over the subsequent years, particularly following the armed confrontations in Aden in August 2019 and the resulting effective control of the Southern Transitional Council over state institutions in the city. The team's review of materials available at the time confirms that external military intervention was a decisive factor in shifting the balance of power, which resulted in weakening the internationally recognized government's ability to exercise its effective authority in the interim capital.

Despite the signing of the Riyadh Agreement in November 2019, which included clear commitments to reorganize military and security forces under the leadership of state institutions, activate the role of official authorities, and unify efforts to confront terrorist organizations, the team's monitoring of the implementation process in the subsequent years shows persistent obstruction, particularly in applying the military and security provisions. Forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council continued to maintain an independent chain of command, and their units were not integrated into the structures of the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior within the specified timelines. Moreover, the joint committee established under Saudi supervision failed to compel the parties to implement the security plan and redeploy forces within Aden and neighboring governorates. This failure contributed to entrenching the reality of multiple armed power centers in the south and deepening the gradual erosion of state authority.

Within this context, the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council in April 2022 constituted an attempt to reassemble executive and military authorities within a single structure, after the fragmentation of state institutions had reached unprecedented levels and the proliferation of armed power centers had undermined government effectiveness. The Council was formed in an environment marked by the spread of armed formations operating outside the official framework, including forces allied with the Southern Transitional Council, the West Coast forces known as the "National Resistance" led by Tareq Saleh, and southern forces led by Abu Zara'a Al-Muharrami, all of which retained separate chains of command and varying degrees of external support. The team's assessments indicate that these formations exercised security and military functions parallel to state institutions, placing the Council before an extremely complex task: attempting

to impose a minimum level of unified command and control in an environment dominated by the logic of de facto authorities. Despite the broad mandate granted to it, the Council remained unable to integrate these forces into the structures of the Ministries of Defense and Interior or impose a unified military doctrine, leading to the continuation of security disorder and the erosion of the rule of law.

In this context, the team observed that a member of the Southern Transitional Council, who also serves as head of the Presidential Leadership Council, issued a series of security, military, and administrative decisions and appointments without reference to the Council or the government, reinforcing an escalating pattern of de facto authority. This led to political and media tensions within the Presidential Leadership Council and was directly reflected in the ability of executive institutions to operate coherently. These developments prompted renewed Saudi intervention in mid-2025, during which the parties were summoned to Riyadh and a legal committee was tasked with reviewing the legality of the issued decisions. However, the outcomes of this process—including the ratification of some of these decisions by the head of the Presidential Leadership Council—contributed to conferring a formal veneer of legitimacy on the expansion of the Southern Transitional Council's influence, rather than addressing the structural defect represented by the continued existence of armed formations outside the official framework.

Beginning in October 2025, the team documented a qualitative shift in the pattern of armed control in eastern Yemen, as formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council carried out extensive deployment operations in areas of Wadi Hadramout, including civilian and administrative centers. The data reviewed by the team indicate that these operations resulted in the displacement of army and security units affiliated with the government from multiple locations and the takeover of civilian facilities and official premises. These actions were accompanied by the removal of images of the President of the Presidential Leadership Council from government institutions and their replacement with symbols of the Southern Transitional Council, indicating the establishment of a parallel authority structure exercising sovereign functions outside the state's legal system. The Southern Transitional Council also issued decisions establishing a southern fatwa committee, adding a further identity-based and political dimension to the exercise of authority in areas under its control.

In Al-Mahrah Governorate, the team documented an increasing deployment of Southern Transitional Council units, accompanied by a clear decline in the ability of government authorities to exercise their jurisdiction and a rise in levels of community tension, particularly in areas of tribal sensitivity or near international borders. Preliminary assessments indicate that these shifts may lead to sustained demographic and security changes in two governorates that constitute a strategic lifeline for Yemen due to their coastal extension and land borders.

According to the team's analysis, these developments reflect a continued expansion of de facto authorities at the expense of the internationally recognized government, in direct contradiction with the text and spirit of the Riyadh Agreement and the parties' obligations under public international law, particularly with regard to the state's monopoly over the use of force and control of its military and security institutions. These developments also pose serious risks to the protection of civilians, increase the likelihood of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, weaken accountability mechanisms, and deepen the fragmentation of the state structure—factors that are likely to obstruct any credible path toward justice, reconciliation, or the rebuilding of trust in public authority.



Methodology

This report is based on a multi-source methodology that combines direct testimonies, official data, and open-source materials, in a manner consistent with human rights documentation standards and the SAM Organization's documentation methodology. The team conducted individual interviews with victims and eyewitnesses through secure communication means, including phone calls and encrypted applications, drawing on direct contact with families and individuals who possessed first-hand information regarding the incidents addressed in the report. At all stages of information gathering, the team ensured confidentiality, protected the identities of participants, and verified the consistency of their accounts with other available data.

In addition, the team reviewed official statements issued by government entities, local authorities, and de facto authorities, including administrative decisions, military statements, and media reports, using them to establish the chronology of events and to understand the institutional framework within which developments occurred. The team also relied on content published on social media platforms and video-sharing sites, analyzing video footage related to military deployment and the seizure of public facilities. The authenticity of these materials was verified through geolocation, visual and temporal indicators, and—where possible—direct communication with the original content creators to clarify the circumstances under which the materials were recorded.

The team further relied on information from experts in international humanitarian law, conflict analysis, and digital verification techniques, in addition to reviewing reports issued by local and international civil society organizations. All testimonies and materials were cross-checked to reach the highest possible level of accuracy, and information for which sufficient elements of verification were not available was excluded. Accordingly, the report is grounded in a coherent, multi-layered body of information that enables the presentation of an objective and realistic assessment of the nature of events and potential violations in the governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahrah.



Field Complexities

During its work, the investigation team faced a number of complex challenges that affected the scope, speed, and verification of information collection. Many victims and witnesses expressed clear reluctance to provide testimonies or share documents in their possession due to fear of retaliation, persecution, or stigmatization, particularly in light of the ongoing security fluidity, the multiplicity of armed actors, and the absence of effective protection guarantees. Some witnesses preferred to provide partial statements or conditioned their cooperation on non-disclosure of their identities, which limited the ability to expand direct verification or conduct in-depth interviews.

In addition, the team encountered difficulties in accessing primary information and official documents, whether due to restrictions on movement and access to certain affected areas, the closure or relocation of offices, or the absence of updated and publicly accessible official records. Challenges also emerged regarding varying levels of cooperation from relevant entities, delayed or incomplete responses, which necessitated reliance on alternative channels and the collection of information from indirect sources. These difficulties were compounded by the spread of contradictory information on social media platforms and the circulation of visual materials used outside their original temporal or geographic context, requiring additional effort to verify credibility and establish accurate timelines.

On the methodological and logistical levels, the team faced technical constraints related to communication quality and the difficulty of conducting direct field interviews in certain cases, in addition to challenges related to data protection and source safety. Working in a highly polarized environment also required the adoption of strict measures to avoid bias and ensure balance, while safeguarding the security of victims and witnesses. Despite these combined challenges, the investigation team sought to mitigate their impact by applying a multi-source methodology, comparing testimonies, relying on documentary evidence and open-source materials, and applying cautious verification standards, thereby ensuring the presentation of a coherent factual account that reflects reality as accurately as possible within the existing constraints.



Legal Reference Framework for the Assessment of Events and Violations

This report relies, in its assessment of events, on a comprehensive legal framework governing non-international armed conflicts, as stipulated in international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with reference to the relevant national constitutional and legal frameworks in Yemen. This framework includes, in particular, Common Article (3) of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocol II of 1977, and the customary rules of international humanitarian law, which impose binding obligations on all parties to the conflict, whether governmental forces or non-state armed groups. The report also takes into account the core international human rights treaties that remain applicable during armed conflicts, particularly with respect to the protection of the right to life, the prohibition of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, guarantees of personal liberty and security, and respect for fundamental judicial guarantees.

The report further draws on the rules governing state responsibility for internationally wrongful acts, including principles relating to the attribution of conduct to states in cases of effective control or the provision of decisive support to armed actors, as well as the principle of individual and command criminal responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law. In addition, the report considers the national legal framework regulating the use of force and the functions of the armed forces and security services as an additional reference for assessing the legality of acts committed on the ground. This multi-level reference framework is used to characterize the facts, analyze patterns of potential violations, and assess the extent to which different actors comply with their legal obligations, without prejudice to the jurisdiction of national or international judicial bodies empowered to issue final legal determinations.



Parties to the Conflict

The events in Hadramout involved an overlap of internal and external factors that contributed to reshaping the balance of power on the ground, with the emergence of armed formations not subject to state authority and the expansion of the influence of regionally supported actors. This interaction between local actors and external backers resulted in an unstable environment in which the risks of violations increased and the capacity of official institutions to protect civilians declined. The main internal Yemeni parties include:



First: Government Forces (First and Second Military Regions)

The First and Second Military Regions are [two](#) of Yemen's seven military regions. The headquarters of the First Military Region is located in the city of Seiyun and consists of seven combat units distributed between ground forces and border guards. The Second Military Region is headquartered in Mukalla and also includes Al-Mahrah Governorate, which borders Oman and is the second-largest Yemeni governorate by area. Both regions were established pursuant to Republican [Decree](#) No. (16) of 2013, issued by former President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, as part of what was termed the "restructuring" process.

Yemeni constitutional provisions stipulate that the armed forces constitute a national, regular institution through which the state monopolizes the use of force, and that they are subject to the leadership of the President of the Republic and the Minister of Defense. No entity is permitted to establish armed formations outside this framework. Accordingly, the First and Second Military Regions form part of the constitutional structure of the Yemeni armed forces, having been established and organized pursuant to applicable military laws and operating under the official command-and-control system. This legal framework grants their units full legitimacy in carrying out their mandate to defend the state and renders any attack against them a direct attack on one of the state's sovereign institutions under national law.

Under the Yemeni Armed Forces and Security Law, the units of both military regions are subject to the military service and discipline system and enjoy the status of "regular units." Their missions may not be suspended, nor may their existence be undermined, except by decisions issued by the supreme leadership. The law provides that the organization of the armed forces is the exclusive prerogative of the state and that any parallel or armed formation operating outside the general command constitutes an illegal formation. Attacks against regular forces or obstruction of their duties give rise to criminal characterizations, including armed rebellion, undermining state security, and attacking government forces while performing their duties—acts punishable under the chapter on crimes against state security in the Yemeni Crimes and Punishments Law.

From the perspective of international humanitarian law, the First and Second Military Regions are classified as "state armed forces" in a non-international armed conflict, a legal characterization that grants their members full status as lawful combatants while simultaneously subjecting them to the rules of military conduct set out in the Geneva Conventions and customary international law. Consequently, any attack by a non-state armed group against these forces, the killing of their members hors de combat, or the execution of detainees from among them constitutes a serious violation of Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions and may rise to the level of war crimes. This legal status also entails individual

criminal responsibility for commanders and perpetrators, as well as potential responsibility for any state exercising effective control over, or providing direct support to, such armed groups.

The reported alignment of units from the Second Military Region raises a legal question regarding their status under the Yemeni Constitution and the rules of international law. Yemeni constitutional provisions stipulate that the armed forces are the sole institution authorized to use armed force and represent the state in the military sphere, and that no armed formation may be created or have its allegiance transferred away from the state, pursuant to [Articles](#) (39-41) of the Constitution. Accordingly, the joining of regular units from the Second Military Region to the forces of the Southern Transitional Council constitutes a clear violation of constitutional provisions, represents a deviation from the legally established military chain of command, and falls within the crimes defined in Armed Forces Law No. 67 of 1991 and the Yemeni Crimes and Punishments Law as acts of military insubordination and rebellion that undermine state security.

This conduct also constitutes a flagrant violation of the [Riyadh Agreement](#) (2019), which obligated all parties to unify military forces under the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and integrate armed formations within a specified timeframe. From the perspective of international humanitarian law, the departure of regular forces from their legitimate command and their joining of a non-state armed group legally transfers them into the category of “non-state armed groups” subject to Common Article (3) of the [Geneva Conventions](#), thereby imposing direct obligations to protect civilians, prohibit the killing of the wounded or detainees, and refrain from acts that may constitute war crimes under the [Rome Statute](#) of the International Criminal Court. International responsibility may also arise for any party exercising “effective control” over, or providing direct support to, such forces, pursuant to the Draft Articles on [Responsibility of States](#) for Internationally Wrongful Acts. Consequently, the integration of regular forces into unlawful armed formations deprives them of their legal status as government forces, transforms them into an unlawful armed party, and exposes their commanders and members to national and international criminal accountability for any subsequent violations.



Second: Southern Transitional Council Forces

Information reviewed by the team indicates that the forces deployed in the southern and eastern governorates consist of Security Belt forces, Elite forces, Giants Brigades, and conflicting reports regarding the participation of National Resistance forces affiliated with Tareq Saleh. These are armed formations that carry out organized military and security functions but operate outside the constitutional and [legal structure](#) of the Yemeni state. These formations emerged during 2016-2017 and benefited from training, arming, and funding programs provided directly by the United Arab Emirates, which enhanced their operational independence and entrenched their affiliation with local leaderships within the Southern Transitional Council. Their chain of command, decision-making mechanisms, and patterns of force use all indicate that they are not subject to effective state control but instead operate as parallel forces exercising independent security and military authority in the governorates of Aden, Lahj, Al-Dhalea, and Abyan, with some extending their influence to Shabwa and the coastal city of Mokha.

The legal analysis conducted by the team shows that these formations are classified, under the Yemeni Constitution, as unlawful forces, as the Constitution—particularly the provisions governing the organization of the armed forces and security services—restricts the authority to establish military formations exclusively to the state and subjects the armed forces to the Minister of Defense and the President of the Republic. The Constitution also prohibits the creation of armed formations outside the state framework or the use of force in the name of public authority without legal authorization. Accordingly, any military force that does not effectively follow the Ministries of Defense or Interior and is not subject to the official chain of command constitutes a constitutional violation, and those who establish or support it may incur criminal responsibility under the Yemeni Crimes and Punishments Law (crimes against state security).

The Riyadh [Agreement](#) (2019) reinforces this constitutional characterization, as it obligated the parties to “unify military forces, number them, formally incorporate them into the Ministry of Defense, and deploy them in accordance with approved plans within sixty days of signing,” a binding contractual obligation. Failure to implement the integration process or the continued exercise of independent military functions constitutes a clear breach of the agreement, entrenches these formations as de facto authorities lacking legitimacy, and represents a political and legal violation that the parties had previously committed to remedy. Continued funding and support for these forces outside the state framework constitutes a direct breach of the agreement, exacerbates the fragmentation of military leadership, and weakens the state’s ability to exercise jurisdiction over its territory.

From an international perspective, these formations constitute non-state armed groups in a non-international armed conflict under Common Article (3) of the Geneva [Conventions](#) and [customary](#) international humanitarian law. They are

therefore directly bound to respect rules protecting civilians, avoid arbitrary detention, prohibit torture and ill-treatment, refrain from targeting civilian objects, and respect fundamental judicial guarantees. Information collected by the team regarding certain incidents indicates that members of these forces committed acts including unlawful detention, enforced disappearance, cruel or degrading treatment, excessive use of force, and the seizure of public and private property without legal basis. Under Yemeni law, these acts constitute serious crimes, some falling under crimes against personal liberty and others under crimes against public authority and property.

Under international humanitarian law, some of these violations—if their material and mental elements are established—may rise to the level of war crimes, particularly when committed in the context of an armed conflict, such as arbitrary deprivation of liberty, torture or inhuman treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, attacks against civilians, or the seizure of civilian facilities for military purposes.

If the responsibility of the leadership of these forces is established in terms of ordering, supervising, or failing to prevent these violations, their commanders may be held accountable under the principle of command responsibility, a principle recognized in the [Rome Statute](#) of the International Criminal Court and forming part of customary international law. International responsibility may also arise for the supporting state if it is proven that it exercised “effective control” or provided “direct guidance” to these forces, in accordance with the standards of the International Law Commission.

Conversely, the armed formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council cannot be considered forces fighting alongside the state, nor do they fall under the provisions governing “militias or volunteer corps forming part of the armed forces” set out in Article 4(A)(2) of the Third Geneva Convention of 1949. That provision requires cumulative elements, including subordination to a responsible command acting under state authority and adherence to an effective chain of command and discipline—conditions not met in the case of these formations, which retained independent leadership structures and conducted military and security operations without orders from the official military leadership or competent ministries and outside the state’s constitutional command-and-control system.

Customary international humanitarian law, particularly Rule (4) of the ICRC study, further affirms that state armed forces must be organized and subject to effective state control. This standard is reinforced by the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice regarding the concept of “effective control” as a condition for attributing the acts of armed groups to a state. In light of the Hadramout events, there are no indications that the state exercised effective control over these formations, precluding their characterization as auxiliary state forces and maintaining their classification as non-state armed groups subject to the minimum

obligations set forth in Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II of 1977.

Accordingly, the team concludes that these formations—constitutionally, contractually, and internationally—constitute unlawful forces operating outside the state system and represent one of the most significant sources of potential violations and manifestations of the fragmentation of Yemen’s security and defense institutions. This necessitates subjecting them to legal accountability mechanisms, implementing a comprehensive integration process in accordance with signed agreements, and putting an end to de facto authorities that negatively affect civilian protection and the rule of law.



Third: Hadramout Tribes Council Forces

The reviewed information indicates that the [Hadramout Tribes Council](#) was established in 2013 in a context of growing perceptions of marginalization and weak institutional presence of the state in the Valley and Desert areas, alongside the deterioration of basic services and declining trust in central authorities. This prompted a number of social forces to adopt demands related to expanding the scope of local administration and strengthening oversight of resources, reaching the point of supporting calls for self-governance under the slogan of the “Hadrami decision.” This development reflects a shift from scattered local protests to a more organized tribal-political framework seeking to redistribute authority within the governorate.

Over the past year, the alliance’s activity evolved from a civil advocacy framework into an armed structure operating outside state institutions. The alliance is headed by Sheikh Saleh bin Habrish, who holds the position of Deputy Governor of Hadramout for Desert Affairs. Al-Ka’ash Al-Sa’di stated to the SAM Organization—when asked about the alliance’s relationship with the internationally recognized government—(“The alliance’s recent position toward the legitimate authority, especially the President of the Presidential Council, the Prime Minister, and the current Governor of Hadramout, is one of appreciation and respect, because that position aligns with the aspirations of Hadrami citizens for the departure of those invading forces from Hadramout and their return to their previous positions, and for the sons of Hadramout to assume their own security and military affairs.”). The alliance subsequently worked to establish armed tribal gatherings (“matarih”) and checkpoints in plateau areas and along main roads, before moving to a more organized phase represented by opening recruitment, forming combat units under the name “Hadramout Protection Forces,” appointing field leaderships, and conducting military parades. Recruitment included local fighters, in addition to former officers and personnel from the Emirati-backed Hadrami Elite Forces and from the Second Military Region, giving these formations the features of a parallel security authority capable of imposing security arrangements on the ground independently of the state.

From a legal perspective, the establishment of these formations outside the state’s exclusive jurisdiction constitutes a clear violation of the [Yemeni Constitution](#) and the Armed Forces and Security Law, both of which restrict the creation and use of organized force exclusively to official institutions. These practices are classified as unlawful armed gatherings operating outside the legal chain of command and constitute one of the manifestations of de facto authorities. Under international humanitarian law, these forces fall within the category of non-state armed groups subject to Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions, thereby imposing direct obligations to protect civilians and prevent attacks against them, and to refrain from unlawful detention or seizure of property.

This also entails the potential emergence of individual criminal responsibility for their commanders and members when committing serious violations that may rise to war crimes under customary rules and the Rome Statute.



Fourth: External Parties

The Emirati military presence in Yemen began at the [request](#) of the Yemeni government and within the limited mandate granted by UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which was confined to supporting the legitimate government in confronting the Houthi group's rebellion. However, this mandate did not include establishing, financing, or administering armed formations operating outside state institutions. Despite the UAE's announcement that it had [ended](#) its military presence in Yemen, its involvement in forming, funding, and training local armed groups—such as the Security Belt forces, the Elite forces, the Southern Transitional Council, the Giants Brigades, and the National Resistance forces—created a parallel military structure that exceeds the original legal scope of the mandate and is linked to political and regional loyalties rather than to official institutions. This opens the door to legal accountability related to supporting non-state armed groups.

Subsequent developments—including airstrikes against Yemeni army forces in 2019 and support for the deployment of armed formations in Aden, Shabwa, and Socotra—demonstrate a shift in external support from logistical backing to direct influence on the balance of control on the ground. This prompted the legitimate government to [accuse](#) it, following the bombardment of government army forces at the gates of Aden in favor of Southern Transitional Council forces, of supporting southern secession. Under the rules of public international law relating to [non-intervention](#) and state responsibility, this type of conduct is unlawful when it results in undermining the authority of the internationally recognized government or enables armed groups to impose coercive control over government-held areas. This characterization is reinforced when such support leads to destabilization or weakens the state's legal jurisdiction over its territory.

In the context of the recent developments in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah, external support for armed formations acquired a direct impact on military operations that targeted regular units and led to the seizure of government facilities and the imposition of alternative symbols of authority. Specialized [reports](#) indicate the establishment of central operations rooms with the participation of Emirati officers, the use of combat and reconnaissance drones, and the issuance of mobilization orders to allied formations—elements that are closely relevant to the standards governing the responsibility of a supporting state, particularly where support constituted a decisive factor enabling armed groups to carry out attacks or alter effective control on the ground.

In this context, Emirati academic Abdulkhaleq Abdulla sparked wide controversy after publishing a [tweet](#) accompanied by an “infographic” with direct political and geographic implications, carrying a discourse that went beyond the bounds of opinion into explicit interference in Yemeni affairs. The accompanying content was not a neutral academic description; rather, it included a re-framing of the Yemeni

reality from an external perspective, touching upon territorial unity and national sovereignty and granting itself the right to determine what it does not possess.

This overt interference, issued by a figure perceived as close to decision-making circles in Abu Dhabi, cannot be separated from the field and political context. It provides a clear indication that the moves carried out by the Southern Transitional Council in Hadramout came within a framework of prior Emirati endorsement and support, manifested in parallel media discourse that prepares, paves the way for, and justifies these steps.



The First Military Region at the Heart of the Storm

During the period covered by this report, a media campaign of accusations emerged targeting the First Military Region in Hadramout Governorate, alleging its involvement in smuggling and storing large quantities of narcotic substances. These allegations were [promoted](#) through [media outlets](#) affiliated with the Southern Transitional [Council](#), including Aden Al-Mustaqilla TV channel, in addition to [activists](#), [media professionals](#), and [journalists](#) associated with it, within a highly sensitive political and security context. Upon reviewing the publicly circulated materials, it was not observed that these allegations were based on reliable evidence or verifiable official documents, as what was presented to the public opinion was limited to video clips and images claimed to show narcotic substances, without providing independent investigation reports, judicial seizure records, or statements issued by neutral security or judicial bodies establishing a link between the leadership of the First Military Region and these substances or its responsibility for them.

The published materials also did not include sufficient information regarding the time when the clips were recorded, the locations where they were filmed, the nature of the procedures followed in seizing the alleged substances, or which entity exercised effective control over those locations at the relevant time. This absence of essential documentation elements undermines the credibility of the circulated narrative and renders it closer to incomplete media allegations. It is also noted that the timing of the escalation of these accusations came after forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council took control of areas in Hadramout Governorate, raising questions about the use of media discourse in the context of a struggle for influence and the delegitimization of rival military actors, rather than resorting to established legal and institutional pathways for investigation and accountability.

During the same period, other accusations emerged alleging the involvement of the First Military Region in smuggling weapons to the Houthi group. These allegations were widely circulated following the military movements in Wadi and Desert Hadramout. In this context, statements were [attributed](#) to Aidarous Qassem Al-Zubaidi, President of the Southern Transitional Council and Vice President of the Presidential Leadership Council, during a meeting with Sultan Al-Barakani, Speaker of the House of Representatives, attended by Mohsen Al-Daari, Minister of Defense, Mahmoud Al-Subaihi, Advisor to the President of the Presidential Leadership Council for Defense and Security Affairs, and Major General Fadl Hassan, Commander of the Fourth Military Region. The statements referenced efforts to “cut off weapons smuggling lines to the Houthi militia,” without presenting public evidence or official documents proving the direct involvement of the leadership of the First Military Region in these allegations.

Ali Abdullah Al-Kathiri, Head of the National Assembly of the Southern Transitional Council, also [stated](#) during a broad meeting held in Seiyun that there were what he

described as “evidence” inside First Military Region camps confirming the practice of weapons smuggling. However, these statements remained within the realm of political and media discourse, without presenting such evidence to the public or subjecting it to an independent judicial investigation by a competent and neutral body. Within the same media context, Aden Al-Mustaqilla TV channel [statements](#) by a number of Southern Transitional Council officials, including Mansour Saleh, who linked the military operations in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah to efforts to cut off routes for smuggling weapons and drugs to the Houthis. Anwar Al-Tamimi, the official spokesperson of the Southern Transitional Council, also made [statements](#) to Al Arabiya channel, stating that the movements in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah aim to prevent the smuggling of weapons to the Houthi group. In addition, a number of activists and politicians expressed supportive positions for this narrative, including [Amr Al-Beidh](#), [Mahmoud Al-Yazidi](#), and [Nafi' bin Kulaib](#), where references were made to what was described as a “smuggling artery” and a “security necessity” to cut off supply lines, an approach reflecting a clear political stance rather than being grounded in documented investigation results or complete legal procedures.



Patterns of Violations

The takeover of Hadramout Governorate by forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council during December 2025 was accompanied by a wave of serious human rights violations, according to media and human rights reports and statements issued by official authorities. These violations included the killing and injury of civilians and security personnel, arbitrary arrests, and house raids, in addition to allegations of field executions, abuse of detainees, and the looting of public and private property. These practices created an atmosphere of fear and instability, caused widespread harm to the local community, and exacerbated the suffering of residents in the governorate, in the absence of any legal framework or national consensus that could justify such unilateral measures.

This expansion was also accompanied by the imposition of de facto authority over civilian institutions, including the removal of official state symbols and their replacement with new political references. In Al-Mahrah Governorate, tensions extended to border and strategic areas, with the spread of new armed checkpoints and restrictions on the movement of some residents, leading to widespread anxiety and a decline in perceptions of safety and stability. Taken together, these events represent a dangerous shift in patterns of control and the use of force, opening the door to violations affecting civilians' rights and the state's legal jurisdiction in both governorates.

Despite directives issued by the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, calling for the documentation of all human rights violations accompanying the unilateral measures in Hadramout Governorate, the opening of a comprehensive investigation, and ensuring accountability and the prevention of impunity, the Ministry of Human Rights did not address any incidents of violations during that period and remained silent regarding what occurred on the ground. This raises broad questions about the role of the Ministry and its legal and ethical responsibilities in monitoring violations and protecting victims, particularly in light of the multiplicity of testimonies and reports that spoke of serious abuses affecting citizens and their property.

Moreover, the absence of a clear position from the Ministry of Human Rights is inconsistent with Yemen's national and international obligations, undermines efforts aimed at providing redress to those affected, and sends a negative message of tolerance toward violations, rather than treating them as a national issue requiring transparency, serious investigation, and fair accountability.



Looting of Homes and the Displacement of Their Residents

Available information, supported by documents and preliminary testimonies, indicates that armed formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council carried out extensive deployment and raid operations in Wadi Hadramout and the city of Seiyun, characterized by the use of force outside any legal framework and with a direct impact on the safety of civilians and the jurisdiction of state institutions. These operations included entering governmental and military premises in Seiyun, including civilian offices affiliated with local authorities, seizing their contents, and restricting the movement of employees and guards. The raid also extended to the headquarters of the Executive Office of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah) in Seiyun, where guards were assaulted and contents were looted, in conduct bearing a clear political significance.

The operations also targeted the homes of government officials, including the home of the Minister of Interior and the home of the First Deputy Minister of Interior, in addition to raiding the homes of soldiers and officers from the First Military Region in neighborhoods near their command headquarters. These actions involved violations of the sanctity of homes, the terrorization of families, and the looting of private property. The attacks extended to civilian economic activity, as merchants in the Seiyun market were forced to open their shops under threat, after which those shops and the vendors' kiosks in the old market neighborhoods were looted in broad daylight. Weapons and ammunition depots in the military installations area in Wadi Hadramout were also opened and left unguarded, enabling unidentified groups to seize them, in a direct breach of the duty to maintain control over military materials.

Practices of a symbolic nature were also recorded, including lowering the national flag from official buildings in Seiyun and replacing it with secessionist flags, expressing the imposition of de facto authority. The Saudi delegation and the governor were also prevented from entering Wadi Hadramout and meeting community leaders, in violation of freedom of movement and in obstruction of the work of civilian authorities. This coincided with the spread of hostile rhetoric targeting the people of Hadramout with regional slurs, contributing to heightened community tension. In addition, documents recorded cases of attacks on private property, including the theft of sheep herds from families in the Al-Ghurf area of Seiyun.

The information received also includes documentation of a broad assault against residents of wooden houses and the Mareema camp in Seiyun, where the homes of displaced persons were raided and the property of approximately 450 families was looted, including homes, livestock, savings, and basic living tools. This reflects a multi-dimensional pattern of violations affecting the right to housing, property, and human dignity.

Given the nature and geographic spread of these acts within Seiyun and Wadi Hadramout, they fall under the prohibitions set out in Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions and customary rules prohibiting attacks on civilians and civilian property. They may also—where relevant legal elements are met—amount to war crimes related to looting, cruel treatment, violations of the sanctity of homes, and attacks against the civilian population. These incidents require the opening of an independent and effective investigation, ensuring accountability and the prevention of impunity, and adopting urgent protection measures for civilians in the affected areas.



Patterns of Violations

The field investigation team of the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties documented—based on field visits and the collection of direct and consistent testimonies—the occurrence of large-scale looting operations targeting no fewer than twenty-three to twenty-four homes, in addition to a number of commercial shops, in the Al-Masakin area of Al-Qatn city in Hadramout Governorate. These incidents took place during the period extending from approximately 9:00 a.m. until the afternoon hours on Wednesday in December 2025, following the entry of armed groups affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council into the city. Testimonies indicated that the targeted homes were old government housing units that had, for decades, been officially allocated to accommodate government employees from various Yemeni governorates pursuant to formal arrangements. According to victims' accounts, groups of armed men affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council, alongside armed civilians and other individuals, gathered near the homes and issued direct orders to residents to vacate immediately, forcing entire families to leave hastily without being able to take any of their belongings or basic necessities.

The testimonies collected by the team showed that some members of the Southern Transitional Council forces directly participated in the looting, while other armed elements deployed in military vehicles and armored units merely observed what was taking place without any effective intervention to stop the violations, despite the looting operations continuing for nearly ten consecutive hours and affecting multiple homes within the same neighborhood. Victims confirmed that the heavy presence of armed personnel, their weapons, and military vehicles created an environment that enabled the perpetrators to storm homes and loot their contents without fear of accountability. One victim stated that his wife called him while the house was being raided and looted, and that he instructed her to leave immediately for her own safety, noting that the value of the property looted from his home alone exceeded ten million Yemeni rials. When residents returned the following day, it became clear that some homes had been completely stripped of furniture, possessions, and basic means of living.

The team also documented cases of arbitrary detention accompanying the raid operations, including the detention of the son of one victim for several hours while attempting to leave the house with his family, in a context marked by fear and panic. These incidents resulted in the forced displacement of a number of families to neighboring governorates, particularly Marib, where the displaced families—whose average household size ranges between four and eight members—are living in harsh humanitarian conditions, including the lack of adequate shelter, shortages of food and clothing, inability to secure healthcare, and loss of sources of income. Victims unanimously stated that the looting and displacement occurred in a context of incitement to hatred against residents originating from northern governorates, coinciding with the entry of armed groups into the city, and contributed to creating an environment that allowed these violations to be committed without intervention to prevent them or hold perpetrators accountable. This constitutes a serious violation of civilian protection, the right to property, and the prohibition of forced displacement under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Second Testimony

One of the victims, identified as “Q. S.” (35 years old), the sole breadwinner of a family of eight members, reported that his home was subjected to an armed raid followed by large-scale looting that resulted in it being completely stripped of its contents, leaving nothing but the walls. According to his testimony, the looted property included household furniture, blankets, mattresses, fans, batteries, windows, doors, gas cylinders, cooking heaters, in addition to the breaking and destruction of locks. He also stated that his grocery shop, which constituted the family’s only source of income, was likewise completely looted, including three refrigerators, all merchandise, and the cash that had been inside. The victim estimated the direct financial losses at approximately two million Yemeni rials, in addition to accumulated debts ranging between two and a half and three million Yemeni rials, effectively resulting in the family’s total loss of its means of .livelihood

The victim further stated that, following these events, his family was forced to leave their home and live in a tent, under extremely harsh living conditions and severe deprivation of basic needs. Additional testimonies from the same area documented serious humanitarian and psychological impacts, particularly on women and children, manifested in acute psychological distress resulting from armed raids, loss of shelter, lack of a sense of safety, shortages of food and medicine, and the collapse of income sources. These incidents demonstrate a pattern of violations affecting the right to adequate housing, the right to property, and the right to an adequate standard of living, and may—within the context of a non-international armed conflict—constitute violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the prohibition of looting and unlawful seizure of property, and the resulting .obligations to protect civilians and provide reparations

Third Testimony

One of the victims, identified as “A. A. Z.,” a displaced person from the city of Sana’a, submitted a documented testimony to the field investigation team of the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties, stating that his home in the Al-Masakin area of Al-Qatn city was raided and looted in the context of the entry of forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council into the residential neighborhood on the morning of the incident. According to the testimony, the victim had been residing in that home with his family since their displacement to the area in 2019. At approximately 10:00 a.m., he received a phone call from an acquaintance informing him that armed forces had entered the neighborhood. He then moved to the main road and confirmed that those forces were advancing toward the residential area, prompting him to urgently evacuate his family and relocate them to the home of a nearby neighbor as a precautionary measure to protect them from potential risks, with the intention of returning later to retrieve basic necessities.

According to the same testimony, the victim later returned to his home to find that the door had been broken and that the house had been raided by armed elements affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council, along with armed civilians and other individuals. He reported that all household contents were completely looted, including furniture, clothing, electrical appliances, solar energy systems and batteries, and other household items, estimating the total value of the looted property at approximately 10,000 Saudi riyals. He confirmed that the looting was carried out collectively, with the presence of Southern Transitional Council forces at the scene, some of whom directly participated in seizing the property, while others took no measures to prevent the looting.

According to the testimony, the incident resulted in severe humanitarian consequences for the family, including the loss of safe shelter, exposure to acute psychological trauma, persistent fear, severe depression, and the inability to return to or reuse the home. These circumstances raise serious concerns regarding violations of the prohibition of looting and attacks on private property, as well as the failure of the controlling forces to fulfill their duty to protect civilians and their property, as required by international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Fourth Testimony

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties documented a detailed testimony from a displaced woman from the “Mareema” area in Hadramout Governorate, who had previously been displaced from Ibb Governorate due to the conflict. In her testimony, she reported that her family’s home and sources of livelihood were subjected to complete looting following their forced displacement from the area. According to the testimony, the looting included all essential household property, including electrical appliances and gas cylinders, in addition to material damage to the house itself, including the breaking of the main door. The witness also stated that a small grocery shop on which the family depended as its primary source of income was completely looted, in addition to the seizure of a small work vehicle used by one of her sons, which she estimated to be worth approximately 3,000 Saudi riyals. She further indicated that the head of the household suffers from a chronic respiratory illness (asthma), and that the loss of income sources prevented the family from securing necessary treatment or meeting basic needs, thereby exacerbating its economic and health vulnerability.

This testimony is consistent with a broader pattern of testimonies and information collected regarding systematic looting incidents targeting private property belonging to displaced families or families forced to leave their homes in the context of security tensions and shifts in control on the ground. Viewed collectively, this pattern demonstrates the direct impact of forced displacement on the living and economic conditions of affected families and reveals increasing risks to protected rights, including the right to adequate housing, livelihoods, and access to healthcare. These incidents also raise serious questions regarding the extent to which entities exercising effective control over the affected areas have complied with their obligations under international humanitarian law—particularly the prohibition of looting and the protection of civilian property—and under international human rights law with respect to ensuring human dignity, preventing cruel or inhuman treatment, and guaranteeing a minimum level of protection for civilians in the context of conflict.

Looting of Warehouses and Commercial Shops

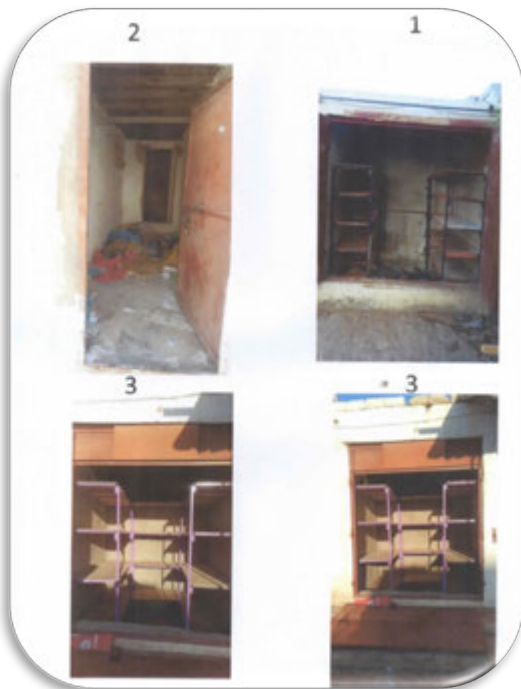
The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties received a set of documents from individuals who reported that their property and funds were subjected to looting. These documents included detailed inventory lists, photographs, and other supporting materials documenting the reported incidents. According to the available information, two retail outlets and four warehouses were looted. The owners confirmed that some of the shops contained entrusted goods belonging to third parties, which were also looted. They affirmed that the looting was carried out by elements affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council and individuals loyal to them, noting that everything inside the shops was taken, including doors, in the Sara area and the Seiyun market. The incidents were addressed within a documentation



framework aimed at presenting the facts as reported by their owners. Below are three documented incidents.

First Incident

The submitted documents, consisting of detailed accounting tables and documentary photographic materials, indicate that a commercial shop selling jambiyas and their accessories owned by the citizen "T. A." was subjected to large-scale looting on Wednesday, 23 December 2015. The attached inventory includes a detailed list of the looted property spread over several pages, encompassing dozens of types of jambiyas of various kinds (local and imported, decorated and plain), in addition to leather belts, sheaths, bags, clothing, and military and commercial supplies associated with the business. Each item was documented with the number of units, unit price, and total value for each entry.



The final summary page of the inventory shows that the total value of the looted property amounted to 1,220,235 Saudi riyals, a figure explicitly recorded at the end of the tables. Pages (2-6) of the document provide precise numerical details for dozens of items, including individual items valued at tens of thousands of Saudi riyals and others in large quantities ranging from dozens to hundreds of pieces, reflecting the volume of commercial stock that had been available inside the shop and its warehouses. The tables also indicate that the looting included goods displayed in the sales



hall as well as the contents of numbered storage warehouses, all of which were completely emptied as documented in the photographs.

The attached photographic materials support these numerical records, as images labeled “the shop before the looting” (pages 7-11) show display fronts filled with jambiyas and accessories, while subsequent images labeled “the shop after the looting” and “looted warehouses” (pages 12-14) show empty shelves, damaged doors, and completely emptied storage facilities. Pages (15-19) also include photographs taken during the looting itself, showing individuals transporting goods from inside the shop, the presence of vehicles and armed individuals in the market area, as well as civilian gatherings at the site, as visible in the recorded scenes.

Taken together, the data contained in the document, when read as a single package, demonstrate consistency between the detailed numerical inventories and their financial values on the one hand, and the visual evidence documenting the condition of the shop and warehouses before, during, and after the incident on the other. This illustrates the scale of material losses incurred by the commercial shop owned by Tawfiq Abdu Ali Abdulrahman, according to the figures, dates, and materials substantiated in the documents themselves.

Second Incident

The submitted documents show that a commercial shop and warehouse selling jambiyas and their accessories owned by the citizen “A. A.” were subjected to large-scale looting on Wednesday, 3 December 2025, according to the date recorded in the attached tables. The detailed inventory, spanning several pages, presents an extensive list of the property present inside the shop and warehouse at the time of the incident. This included dozens of types of jambiyas of various kinds, leather belts, sheaths, bags, clothing, and supplies related to the commercial activity. Each item was documented individually in terms of quantity, unit price, and total value, with sequential numbering of entries reaching 68 items, as shown in the photographed tables (pages 2-5).



The final summary page of the inventory indicates that the total value of the looted property amounted to 311,383 Saudi riyals, a figure explicitly recorded in the “total” field at the end of the tables. These pages also list precise numerical details, including items in large quantities and varying prices, as well as the inclusion of shop fixtures among the losses, such as the complete shop décor with lighting, a solar power system, and a surveillance camera, each listed with an independent monetary value.

The document includes a large set of attached photographs, categorized under clear headings such as “before the looting,” “shop before the looting,” “after the looting,” and “during the looting of shops” (pages 6-17). These images show the condition of the shop and warehouse prior to the incident, with shelves filled with jambiyas and accessories, contrasted with later images showing the complete emptying of the premises, bare shelves, and damage to certain facilities. Photographs taken during the incident show civilian gatherings, the presence of armed individuals, and the transfer of goods from inside shops to vehicles, as depicted in the recorded scenes.

The visual materials also demonstrate that the looting was not limited to a single shop but affected a number of shops in the same area, with documented scenes of markets after the incident showing open shops with emptied contents and a widespread presence of individuals in the market surroundings. The images show

clear correspondence between the numerical inventories listed in the tables in terms of the types of goods and the photographed reality of the shop and warehouse before and after the looting, reflecting the scale of material losses incurred by the commercial shop owned by Ibrahim Ali Al-Ateel, according to the data substantiated in the same document.

Third Incident

The submitted documents, supported by detailed accounting tables and photographic materials, indicate that a commercial shop selling jambiyas and their accessories owned by the citizen “A. S. M.” was subjected to large-scale looting on Wednesday, 23 December 2015, according to the date recorded on the cover page and the inventories. The detailed inventory, spanning several pages (pages 2-7), lists an extensive range of looted property, including dozens of types of jambiyas of various kinds, as well as leather belts, sheaths, bags, clothing, and military and commercial supplies associated with the business. Each item was documented



individually with the number of units, unit price, and total value per entry, with sequential numbering, reflecting the volume of stock present in the shop and warehouses at the time of the incident. The final summary page of the inventory shows that the total value of the looted property amounted to 1,220,235 Saudi riyals, a figure explicitly recorded in the total field.

The attached photographic materials support these numerical records, as images labeled “shop before the looting” (pages 8-10 and 12-13) show display fronts filled with jambiyas and accessories, while subsequent images labeled “shop after the looting” and “warehouse after the looting” (pages 11 and 14-16) show the complete emptying of the shop and warehouses, bare shelves, and damaged doors. Pages (17-20) also include photographs taken during the looting, showing the transfer of goods from inside the shops, the presence of armed individuals and vehicles in the market area, and civilian gatherings, as visible in the recorded scenes. Taken together, the data demonstrate consistency between the detailed numerical inventories and their financial values on the one hand, and the visual evidence documenting the condition of the shop and warehouses before, during, and after the incident on the other. This illustrates the scale of material losses incurred by the commercial shop owned by Adnan Saleh Mohammed Yahya Sanoun, according to the figures, dates, and content substantiated in the documents themselves.

All of these incidents are further reinforced by the attached images in the document, which show a clear comparison between the condition of the shops and warehouses before the looting—where goods appear organized and stacked on shelves—and their condition afterward, where near-total emptiness, damage to doors and facilities, and scattered contents are visible. The final pages of the document also include photographs taken during the looting, showing armed individuals and military or شبه-مilitary vehicles in the vicinity of the shops, as well as civilian gatherings engaged in loading and transporting goods. This may indicate that the looting was carried out openly, in the absence of effective protective or deterrent measures, or within a context of effective control by an armed force over the area at the time.

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties also reviewed an audio recording attributed to a merchant from Hadramout Governorate, containing an appeal for the return of goods reportedly looted from his warehouse during the period of security unrest. The recording refers to the seizure of various types of commercial materials by armed groups and enumerates the types of goods that were stored at the site at the time of the incident, within a context that documents repeated complaints of the loss of private property during those events.

If established, these incidents raise serious concerns regarding violations of the right to private property and the prohibition of pillage and looting, both of which are protected under international human rights law, particularly Article (17) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the explicit prohibition of pillage, looting, and attacks on civilian property set out in Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions in the context of non-international armed conflicts. This characterization gains particular weight given that these acts occurred following the deployment of forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council and their establishment of effective control over the area, accompanied by a state of security chaos and loss of force control, which contributed to creating an enabling environment for organized and repeated looting. The entity exercising effective control on the ground bears a clear legal obligation to take all feasible measures to prevent such violations, protect civilian property and livelihoods, ensure effective and independent investigations, hold those responsible accountable, and provide remedies and reparations to victims in accordance with relevant international standards.

Abductions and Arbitrary Arrests

During December 2025, forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council carried out a series of raids and arrest operations in the city of Seiyun in Hadramout Governorate. According to consistent local sources, these operations included raiding a house in the Mareema neighborhood belonging to an officer in the First Military Region, during which four individuals were arrested, including Abdullah Ali Al-Sharif, one of the escorts of the Deputy Minister of Interior, before they were taken to an unknown location. Sources also reported that, in the early hours of Tuesday, 16 December 2025, a large force raided the home of Abdulhakim Mahrous, the neighborhood elder of Al-Thawra neighborhood in Seiyun, involving large numbers of soldiers supported by military vehicles, in addition to a women's group that participated in searches inside the house, according to neighbors' and witnesses' accounts.

Reliable local sources reported that an armed group not affiliated with state institutions carried out, last Wednesday, 18 December 2025, stoppage operations against a number of civilians from Hadramout Governorate in the city of Al-Shihr. According to information that has been verified, the individuals subjected to these stoppages included: Mohammed Abdullah Ba'assal, Ali Saleh Al-Obaidi, Rashid Hamad Al-Qurzi, Salem Abdullah Al-Jari, Hussein Saleh Ba'alawi, Aboud Hassan Al-Aliyyi, Karama Hassan Al-Bukhayt, Nasser Ali Jaber, and Saeed Saad Al-Ajeeli. Available information indicates that these operations were carried out without presenting judicial warrants or clarifying the legal basis for detention, without announcing the places of detention of the individuals concerned, and without enabling their families to communicate with them.

Human rights sources also reported that one of these operations resulted in the arrest of four individuals—Rif'at Al-Dab'i, Nu'man Al-Zakri, Mukhtar Muraysi'a, and Awad Muraysi'a—who were all transferred to a detention facility designated for drug offenders. In a public statement posted by a human rights activist on the "X" platform, it was reported that Rif'at Al-Dab'i was arrested from his home in Seiyun without presenting an arrest warrant and without being formally charged. The activist Al-Dab'i stated to SAM, after our team contacted him: "My brother works as an accountant in the First Region, and our home was raided because he is from the northern governorates, and everything inside it was looted, so he moved to a friend's house. Now that house has been raided and he was arrested along with his friend, and we have not been able to contact him or know whom to contact." According to the same source, these arrests occurred in the context of a series of raids that Seiyun has witnessed since Southern Transitional Council forces took control of the city on 3 December 2025.

SAM learned that Southern Transitional Council forces arrested a number of individuals loyal to the Hadramout Council. The organization communicated with the spokesperson of the Hadramout alliance, Al-Ka'ash Al-Sa'eedi, who stated in a

testimony provided to the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties that there are a number of detainees who remain in detention in facilities affiliated with Security Support forces, following the military campaign carried out in Ghayl Bin Yamin District in Hadramout Governorate. According to the testimony, some of these individuals were detained inside health facilities while receiving treatment, while others were arrested from their homes or from public places while passing through, without any indication of judicial warrants or clear legal procedures justifying the detention operations.

The testimony added that the nature and context of these arrests created a state of tension and anxiety among local residents, given the continued presence of the forces exercising effective control on the ground and their exercise of security powers without declared judicial oversight. If established, these incidents raise serious concerns regarding arbitrary detention and violations of fundamental due process guarantees, including the right to liberty and personal security and the right not to be subjected to arrest without legal grounds, in accordance with relevant standards under international human rights law, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

If established, these incidents raise serious concerns regarding arbitrary deprivation of liberty in the absence of basic procedural safeguards set out in international human rights law, particularly the right to liberty and personal security, the requirement to inform detainees of the reasons for their arrest, and enabling them to challenge the legality of their detention before a competent judicial authority. When committed by non-state armed groups exercising effective control on the ground, such acts fall under prohibited patterns pursuant to Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions, which imposes an obligation to respect minimum humanitarian standards and ensure the protection of civilians from arbitrary detention or ill-treatment.

The manner in which these operations were carried out reveals additional risks, particularly in light of the execution of raids using military force in civilian areas, raising questions about compliance with the principles of necessity and proportionality in law enforcement. If individuals continue to be held in undisclosed locations or are not enabled to communicate with their families or lawyers, this may expose them to the risk of enforced disappearance, which is absolutely prohibited under international law and constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental guarantees afforded to persons deprived of their liberty.

Incitement

The investigation team of the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties stated that, over recent days, it monitored the growth of a broad digital campaign across social media platforms calling for the establishment of what is termed the “State of the Arab South,” coinciding with the expansion of deployments by armed formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council in a number of southern and eastern governorates. The team explained that pro-secession discourse did not appear as scattered individual posts, but rather—according to an analysis by the “[Eekad](#)” platform—took the form of coordinated narratives focused on three main axes: incitement against specific political actors, the restoration of what was described as “southern identity,” and linking current security and political developments to the necessity of secession as the “only solution.”

The team noted that the circulated discourse portrayed the South as a victim of “terrorism” and insecurity during the period of unity, and asserted that the “second independence” constitutes a necessary step to restore institutions and protect identity. Other accounts—some using pseudonymous southern names—called for public mobilization and pressure to declare an independent state. According to the data analysis published in Eekad’s report, engagement indicators revealed intensive activity by accounts described in the report as “fake,” which played a pivotal role in amplifying the secessionist discourse and digitally supporting it. Only 24% of the published content consisted of original posts, compared to 68% that came in the form of reposts, reinforcing the hypothesis of organized amplification aimed at portraying the campaign as if it reflected broad public opinion.

The SAM team indicated that the hashtags analyzed by Eekad and linked to calls for secession achieved wide reach and exceeded ten thousand interacting accounts, while total engagement surpassed fifty-one thousand interactions, with a notable focus on highlighting “southern forces,” and narratives of “liberation” and the “legitimacy of the southern decision.” The team affirmed that these indicators, when read together, reflect a coordinated digital process seeking to shape public perception regarding acceptance of Yemen’s division through the injection of political, identity-based, and security content supported by modern digital techniques and an abnormally inflated level of engagement.

The SAM team emphasized that such coordinated digital campaigns may effectively influence—under the current security conditions—the formation and direction of public opinion, and may create an environment that could be used to justify field or political changes without genuine societal participation. It stressed the need for cautious engagement with such campaigns and for assessing their impact on citizens’ rights to access and share information, the right to public participation, and the protection of the digital space from systematic disinformation. The team also underscored the importance of analyzing this discourse as part of a broader context encompassing field developments in the southern and eastern

governorates and their potential repercussions for social peace and community cohesion.

On the other hand, an inciting media discourse saturated with hatred against political opponents also emerged, characterized by a tone of direct threats targeting journalists and media actors in Hadramout. During that period, the organization monitored a number of tweets and posts that incited the targeting of journalists under the pretext of “rebellion in the plateau,” in reference to Wadi Hadramout. Among the journalists who were subjected to incitement campaigns or public threats were: Sabri bin Makhashen, Ali Bathawab, Badr Nasser Al-Mashjari, Muzahim Bajaber, and Al-Waleed Shamlān Al-Tamimi. SAM notes that these incitement campaigns clearly contradict obligations to protect human rights defenders and to ensure that journalists are not subjected to threats or violations due to their opinions or professional work.

At the outset of the events, an inciting religious discourse also [emerged](#), issued by some religious figures loyal to the Southern Transitional Council, including Abdullah Shu'ayfan, which took on a mobilizing character based on intimidation, religious categorization, and political projection. This discourse relied on direct descriptions that attached to opponents or objectors the label of “Khawarij,” and linked any political or social dissent against “those in authority” to dissent against “true Islam,” drawing on broad interpretations attributed to “the words of scholars.”

Despite the speaker's insistence on denying that he was engaging in takfir, his remarks included explicit threats of worldly and otherworldly punishment, insinuations about the use of force by the “state” against those classified as dissenters, as well as intensely inciting language invoking scenarios of violation, killing, and displacement, and linking political opponents to external tools and hostile organizations. This type of discourse does not merely justify exclusion; it creates a religious environment that legitimizes political violence and criminalizes dissent as religious deviation.

Within a broader context of restrictions and risks faced by human rights defenders and civil activists in Yemen, the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties documented an incitement and threat campaign targeting the Hadrami activist Yusra Al-Battati through social media platforms. This campaign consisted of messages and comments issued by accounts of unknown identity that included threats of physical liquidation. Al-Battati reported, in direct communication with the organization, that these threats were issued by fake accounts, and stated that she was accustomed to receiving such messages due to her opposing positions, considering—from her perspective—that they did not constitute an imminent threat so long as they did not come from official accounts or known individuals.

However, the organization's review of the content of interactions related to the monitored video clips showed the presence of a number of comments that explicitly called for identifying her location and going to her, raising serious concerns regarding incitement to violence and threats of assault, particularly in a context characterized by political and security polarization. If established, these incidents fall within prohibited patterns of intimidation under international human rights law, which imposes a positive obligation on authorities to protect human rights defenders and activists from threats and acts of retaliation and to ensure a safe environment enabling them to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression without fear of harm or persecution.



Victims and Humanitarian Impact

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties obtained a register containing detailed data on families displaced from Wadi Hadramout to Marib Governorate, documenting the forced displacement of approximately 374-375 families from various areas of the valley in the context of escalating security conditions and the expansion of military operations there. The available data indicate that the average family size is 5.6 individuals, with a clear variation ranging from small households composed of only two members to large families of up to 33 members. The current places of residence of these families are distributed across a number of overcrowded camps and shelter sites, most notably Al-Rawda Camp (19 families), Al-Suwaida in its two sections (a combined total of 33 families), Adhban Factory (17 families), and Al-Jufaynah Camp (13 families). Field data from these sites reveal severe fragility in infrastructure, shortages in basic services, limited access to healthcare, and an effective absence of protection guarantees, placing residents in living conditions that may compromise their physical safety and human dignity. The document also includes personal and procedural data regarding heads of households, family size, and shelter locations, allowing for the identification of a pattern of internal displacement of a forced nature directly linked to shifts in security control and heightened risks to civilians in their areas of origin.

From a legal perspective, the documented facts are consistent with the elements of the prohibition of forced displacement set out in Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions and Article (17) of Additional Protocol II, both of which prohibit the forced movement of civilian populations except for imperative security reasons related to the protection of civilians themselves or for overriding military reasons, accompanied by a strict obligation to ensure dignified conditions for the displaced. Where displacement occurs as a result of attacks on residential areas, direct threats of the use of force, or changes in effective control on the ground due to the deployment of armed formations operating outside the structure of the state, such displacement may amount to a pattern of forced displacement, thereby activating legal responsibilities on the part of the controlling actors—whether non-state armed groups or externally supported formations—to protect civilians, secure access to essential services, and refrain from acts or threats that compel civilians to leave their homes under fear or insecurity. In cases where displacement is causally linked to military operations or systematic threats, such practices may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and, where other elements are met, may rise to the level of war crimes related to the forcible displacement of civilians.

The data contained in the register show that a significant proportion of the displaced families include highly vulnerable groups, including households without a stable breadwinner, a large number of women and children, and individuals entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance. Sudden displacement resulted in widespread material and social losses, including the loss of livelihoods, the fragmentation of community ties, and forced separation from supportive social

environments, in addition to increasing indicators of psychological stress and emotional disorders, heightened risks of exploitation, arbitrary detention, and restricted access to healthcare and education. Living conditions in a number of shelter sites reflect situations that may fall below minimum humanitarian standards, given weak security measures, lack of privacy, and deteriorated infrastructure and services, rendering human dignity continuously at risk.

In addition, the document raises issues related to the responsibility of armed actors that exercised control over areas of origin, including formations that participated in military operations or imposed new security arrangements. Where patterns of military deployment, attacks on regular forces, or the establishment of parallel local authorities contributed directly or indirectly to creating an environment that drove civilians away, the principle of responsibility for causing civilian displacement becomes applicable. This requires a careful legal assessment in light of international humanitarian law and the Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, particularly where the element of external support is raised, which enhanced the capacities of armed formations and enabled them to alter control dynamics on the ground in a manner that resulted in large-scale displacement.

The displacement was [accompanied](#) by indirect violations of civilians' rights, manifested in disrupted access to basic services, interruptions in supply chains, and the sudden closure of vital infrastructure, such as airports, without prior notice. These measures deepened the isolation of populations, restricted freedom of movement, and affected their ability to access healthcare and livelihoods, particularly for the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly. Additional compounded suffering emerged at displacement sites, where arriving families face harsh conditions related to shortages of shelter, food, and essential items, amid enormous pressure on the limited resources of host communities. Acute psychosocial needs also surfaced as a result of trauma associated with forced displacement, loss of stability, and separation from traditional support networks. These conditions present a complex humanitarian picture, underscoring that the effects of violations do not end at the moment of the incident but extend into a prolonged trajectory of suffering and uncertainty.

In light of these findings, a number of priority obligations and measures emerge, including: providing immediate and effective protection for displaced families and ensuring that they are not subjected to any form of targeting or forced return to unsafe areas; establishing an independent monitoring and fact-finding mechanism to verify the direct causes of displacement and identify the responsible parties; ensuring unhindered access to humanitarian assistance, including emergency cash support programs and specialized health, psychological, and social services; addressing the root causes linked to the continuation of the conflict and restoring state institutions and the rule of law in affected areas; and developing a reparations framework where responsibility is established, including compensation, restitution

of rights, and guarantees of non-recurrence, in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

This document, with its documented preliminary data, represents an essential step in the process of documenting violations related to forced displacement in Wadi Hadramout. However, it remains in need of completion through a broader investigative methodology, including the collection of direct testimonies from victims and witnesses and an analysis of the security and political context in areas of origin and new areas of settlement. Such comprehensive work is a necessary condition for building a full understanding of the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of displacement and for formulating rights-based, political, and humanitarian responses capable of restoring a minimum level of safety and dignity for the affected population.



Legal Characterization of the Armed Action

With regard to the legal characterization of the attack itself, an attack carried out by non-state armed groups against regular government forces, or against other local armed groups, using significant military force, organized deployment, and with the aim of seizing control over civilian facilities or areas, constitutes—under international humanitarian law—an armed hostile act falling within the framework of a non-international armed conflict. Such operations cannot be legally characterized as internal security measures or law-enforcement actions, but rather as combat operations subject to strict obligations, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. In this context, crimes committed against soldiers who are hors de combat, as well as against civilians—including the killing of wounded persons, the execution of detainees, summary or field executions, attacks on civilians and their property, or acts of looting and intimidation—are classified, if proven, as serious violations of international humanitarian law and are expressly prohibited under Common Article (3) common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the relevant customary rules, and may amount to war crimes in the context of a non-international armed conflict.

With respect to the role of external actors, the provision of direct or indirect support to non-state armed groups in the context of a non-international armed conflict—whether through funding, arms transfers, training, logistical or intelligence support, or operational planning—raises legal issues concerning state responsibility under international law. This assessment takes into account documented precedents, including the airstrikes that targeted units of the Yemeni army in the city of Aden in August 2019, which were widely regarded as a significant indicator of the level of direct military support and intervention. According to the criterion of effective control, information indicating Emirati supervision of the operation—whether through the establishment of operational command rooms—engages the settled jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice, which holds that such support, if decisive in enabling the execution of operations, altering the balance of power, or facilitating the commission of violations, may, if established, lead to the attribution of international responsibility to the supporting party for internationally wrongful acts. States also bear an independent obligation not to provide any support that may contribute to the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law, an obligation that applies regardless of the legal characterization of the conflict or the identity of the actors carrying out operations on the ground.

Legal Responsibility

Pursuant to Republican [Decree](#) No. (16) of 2013, the First and Second Military Regions fall within the regular structure of the Yemeni Armed Forces and constitute part of the seven military regions subject to the constitutional authority and unified military command of the state. Statements issued by the General Staff of the internationally recognized government indicate that the units deployed in Wadi and Desert Hadramout were carrying out their legally mandated military duties within their jurisdiction and were operating as official government forces tasked with protecting security, implementing constitutional obligations, and preserving the unity and sovereignty of the state, within a chain of command through which the constitution vests exclusive authority over the use of force and decision-making in military and security affairs.

In contrast, the facts, as well as the [statement](#) of the General Staff of the internationally recognized government, indicate that the attack against these units was carried out by armed formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council, operating outside the constitutional and legal framework of the state and not subject to the Ministry of Defense or the regular military command. Yemeni law—including the Constitution, the Armed Forces Law, and the Crimes and Penalties Law—classifies any armed formation not established pursuant to an official legal act and not subject to the supreme command of the armed forces as an unlawful formation. Attacks against regular forces are categorized as crimes against state security and constitute armed rebellion threatening public order and the unity of the state, giving rise to criminal liability for the individuals and commanders who carried out or incited such acts.

According to what has been [documented](#) by official authorities, the attack resulted in fatalities and injuries among members of the military regions, as well as reports of missing persons, in addition to allegations of the execution of wounded persons and the killing of detainees following their capture. These acts—if confirmed—constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law, particularly Common Article (3) of the Geneva Conventions, which absolutely prohibits the killing of persons hors de combat, the execution of detainees, and attacks on the wounded. Such acts are considered grave violations that may rise to the level of war crimes and establish individual criminal responsibility under international standards, including the principle of command responsibility, which holds commanders accountable for crimes committed by their subordinates when they knew or should have known of such acts and failed to take the necessary measures to prevent them or punish those responsible.

The attack also occurred within a broader context of the expansion of non-state armed formations operating outside the framework of the state, reflecting an unlawful use of force that undermines local security and peace and imposes a reality contrary to the state's official authority in Hadramout Governorate. This situation

directly contravenes the obligations set forth in the Riyadh Agreement, which explicitly provided for the integration of all armed formations under the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the restructuring of forces within a unified institutional framework. The continued conduct of independent military operations by these formations constitutes a fundamental breach of the agreement and entrenches a de facto authority exercising military actions outside constitutional legitimacy.

From the perspective of international law, multiple layers of responsibility arise when serious violations of this nature occur, including individual criminal responsibility of perpetrators, potential responsibility of commanders who failed to prevent or punish violations, and the possible accountability of states or entities that provide effective support or exercise direct influence over these formations, based on the principle of state responsibility for internationally wrongful acts. This combined legal framework demonstrates that the formations involved in the attack operate outside national and international legitimacy and that the acts attributed to them require an independent and comprehensive investigation and the activation of accountability mechanisms to ensure that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity.

International humanitarian law also imposes a clear obligation on states not to provide support that may contribute to the commission of grave violations, such as the killing of wounded persons or detainees or attacks on state facilities. In light of reports of serious violations during the operations of control in Wadi Hadramout, assessing the causal link between the support provided and the violations committed becomes a fundamental step in determining international responsibility, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts.

Accordingly, any military or security support provided by the United Arab Emirates to formations affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council outside the framework of the Yemeni government and without clear legal authorization constitutes an unlawful act under international law, and may give rise to international responsibility if it is established that such support contributed to changing control by force or to the commission of violations. Obligations incumbent upon the supporting state include halting unlawful support, ensuring non-recurrence, and taking the necessary measures to provide reparations where the elements of legal responsibility are met.

Based on the information documented by the SAM team, and on the [statement](#) issued by the General Staff Command on 13 December 2025, the First Military Region and the Second Military Region are classified as regular formations affiliated with the Yemeni Ministry of Defense. They operate within the official chain of command and carry out their assigned duties in accordance with the constitutional and legal framework. According to the statement, members of the First Military Region were

performing their officially mandated duties at the time clashes occurred with armed groups affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council. This official characterization determines the legal nature of the presence of these forces in Hadramout as government forces tasked with security and defense responsibilities within their area of jurisdiction.

According to the information contained in the same statement, the events resulted in fatalities and injuries among members of the region, in addition to cases of missing personnel. Reports were also received alleging the execution of wounded individuals and the killing of detainees during the confrontations. If confirmed, these acts constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law, given their direct connection to the treatment of persons hors de combat and detained persons—acts that are expressly prohibited under customary international law and the relevant international conventions.

This statement constitutes one of the official sources clarifying the legal status of the First and Second Military Regions as regular government forces subject to the Ministry of Defense and operating within a defined chain of command. This status is distinct from armed formations that are not connected to the structure of the state, do not fall under its legal system, and are not subject to the rules of discipline and institutional jurisdiction applicable to regular armed forces.

In this context, the SAM team affirms that the legal status of the First and Second Military Regions is not subject to any ambiguity. Both regions are formally and directly subordinate to the Yemeni Ministry of Defense, and their units operate within the chain of command of the state's armed forces in accordance with the Constitution and the applicable military laws. The team relies in this regard on the statement issued by the General Staff Command, which mourned a number of officers and soldiers from the First Military Region who “fell while performing their national and constitutional duty in defense of themselves and their homeland” during armed attacks carried out by groups affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council in the Valley and Desert of Hadramout. According to the official statement, these attacks resulted in 32 martyrs and 45 wounded, in addition to officers and soldiers reported missing, as well as incidents involving the execution and killing of wounded persons and detainees, constituting a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and Yemeni law.

This official statement unequivocally demonstrates that the targeted military units were regular government forces performing constitutionally mandated duties, and that the attacks directed against them constitute assaults on the armed forces of a recognized state, rather than attacks on local formations or armed groups whose legal status is disputed. The statement further clarifies that the objective of these attacks—according to the official characterization—was to “undermine security and stability in Hadramout Governorate and impose a fait accompli that undermines the political process,” which reinforces the human rights assessment that these attacks

resulted in serious violations of human rights and of the rules protecting members of regular armed forces during armed conflicts.

Based on these findings, the SAM team concludes that the First and Second Military Regions, as integral components of the state's official military institutions, enjoy a clear legal status governed by the Yemeni Constitution and international law. Any attack against them or against their personnel therefore falls within the category of grave violations that require accountability and underscores the necessity of protecting regular armed forces while performing their duties, given their essential role in protecting civilians and maintaining regional stability.



International Reactions

The recent escalation in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah Governorates coincided with a wave of international reactions reflecting clear concern over the repercussions of developments on the ground for the peace process and the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Influential UN and international positions emphasized the priority of de-escalation, the rejection of unilateral measures and the imposition of faits accomplis by force, and the need to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law. They also underscored the importance of political dialogue and diplomacy as the sole path toward a solution, alongside continued support for Yemen's unity, security, and stability, within a framework of regional and international coordination aimed at preventing the expansion of tensions and avoiding further complication of the ongoing crisis.

United Nations

On 17 December 2025, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres [called on](#) all parties in Yemen to exercise restraint and de-escalate tensions following the advance of the Southern Transitional Council in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah. He affirmed that unilateral actions and the redrawing of maps by force would not pave the way for peace, and that the solution lies in dialogue and diplomacy. He further stressed that mediation efforts should include regional and international engagement in support of de-escalation.

In other [statements](#) during press briefings and official releases, the United Nations emphasized the necessity of protecting civilians and respecting international humanitarian law in all areas of Yemen, including Hadramout, stating that military escalation exacerbates civilian suffering and undermines humanitarian relief efforts (statements issued by the United Nations Office in Yemen).

United States of America

During a meeting between the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, and the U.S. Ambassador to discuss recent developments in Yemen—particularly in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah—the U.S. Embassy [welcomed](#) all efforts aimed at de-escalation, affirming that the United States continues to support the Yemeni government and the Presidential Leadership Council in strengthening Yemen's security and stability.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's Ambassador to Yemen, Abda Sharif, [expressed](#) her country's continued commitment to supporting Yemen through a series of intensive diplomatic engagements in December 2025. These meetings began on 9 December 2025, when the Ambassador met with President Rashad Al-Alimi to discuss shared concerns regarding recent developments in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah. During the meeting, the Ambassador welcomed all efforts aimed at de-escalation and reaffirmed that the United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the Yemeni government and the Presidential Leadership Council, as well as Yemen's security and stability.

On 15 December 2025, the Ambassador [held](#) what she described as a highly productive meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaea Al-Zandani. The meeting addressed the latest developments on the Yemeni scene and explored avenues for British support to the government, with both sides emphasizing the importance of joint efforts to enhance Yemen's security, stability, and prosperity.

The Ambassador concluded these engagements on 18 December 2025 with another discussion with Dr. Abdullah Al-Alimi. Both parties [reiterated](#) the paramount importance of Yemen's territorial unity, security, and stability, and the Ambassador renewed the United Kingdom's firm support for the Yemeni government.

China

On 11 December 2025, China, through the Chargé d'Affaires of its Embassy to Yemen, Shao Zhen, [reaffirmed](#) its firm and consistent position in support of the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Yemen. During a press conference held in Riyadh, China expressed its full support for all international efforts and the initiatives of the UN Special Envoy to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis through political dialogue. China clarified that its efforts focus on encouraging Yemeni parties to return to the negotiating table and strengthening dialogue as a means to ensure the security of the Yemeni people.

Conclusions

The findings presented in this report demonstrate that the events witnessed in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah do not constitute an isolated security incident, but rather represent an advanced stage in a cumulative process marked by the erosion of the effective authority of state institutions and the expansion of armed formations operating outside the constitutional and legal framework. This has unfolded within an environment characterized by multiple centers of power and a declining institutional capacity to enforce the rule of law. The prolonged failure of integration and restructuring processes, combined with varying degrees of external support, has contributed to entrenching a reality of de facto authorities capable of altering control dynamics by force and reproducing parallel security and political

arrangements that bypass the requirements of legitimacy and signed agreements, thereby reinforcing fragmentation instead of restoring unity of command.

At the core of this transformation, the report documents compounded patterns of violations accompanying the expansion of military deployment and the transfer of control. These violations include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, widespread looting, raids on homes and civilian facilities, the imposition of alternative symbols and authorities, and large-scale forced displacement affecting hundreds of families, with profound humanitarian consequences for women, children, and the most vulnerable groups. This pattern reveals that civilians have remained the most exposed to harm in the absence of effective protection guarantees, weak accountability mechanisms, and the retreat of official oversight roles, creating conditions conducive to the repetition of violations and deepening a sense of impunity.

The legal assessment of the events, based on the framework adopted in this report, confirms that many of the documented acts fall within the prohibitions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and raise the possibility of individual and command criminal responsibility if their elements are established before competent judicial bodies. They also give rise to potential responsibilities linked to support relationships or effective control where external assistance has played a decisive role in altering control on the ground or enabling violations. At the same time, the continued existence of armed formations outside state institutions undermines any credible path toward justice and reconciliation, erodes prospects for rebuilding trust in public authority, and renders protection the exception rather than the rule.

Accordingly, the report concludes that halting the deterioration of the situation in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah requires urgent measures that go beyond political statements. These measures must begin with independent, impartial, and effective investigations into all violations, the protection of victims and witnesses, and the guarantee of accountability in accordance with national and international standards, alongside the cessation of any security or military support to formations operating outside state institutions and serious efforts to unify forces under official leadership subject to oversight. Reparations, restitution of rights, compensation, and guarantees of non-repetition remain essential conditions for mitigating humanitarian harm and restoring dignity to victims, and for preventing the transformation of eastern Yemen into an open arena for the redrawing of influence by force—where civilians find neither protection nor justice.

Recommendations and Demands

First: To the Internationally Recognized Yemeni Authorities

- Open independent, effective, and impartial investigations into allegations of unlawful detention, looting, and violations committed against civilians, ensuring the accountability of those responsible.
- Restore the state's legal authority over security and military institutions and ensure that all armed formations are fully subject to the authority of the Ministries of Defense and Interior.
- Take urgent measures to protect civilians and their property, particularly in areas experiencing displacement and security tensions.
- Guarantee displaced persons' access to essential services, including healthcare and humanitarian assistance, without discrimination or obstruction.

Second: To Armed Formations Exercising Effective Control on the Ground

(Including Security Support Forces and forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council)

- Immediately cease all forms of arbitrary detention and refrain from carrying out arrests without lawful judicial warrants.
- Ensure respect for basic due process guarantees, including refraining from detaining civilians from hospitals, homes, or public places without legal justification.
- Release all arbitrarily detained individuals, or enable them to communicate with lawyers and family members, and ensure that they are treated humanely.
- Refrain from any acts of looting or unlawful seizure of private property and ensure the protection of civilian property.
- Cooperate with national and international judicial and oversight bodies and facilitate access to detention facilities.

Third: To the United Arab Emirates

- Cease any military, security, or intelligence support to armed formations operating outside the framework of the internationally recognized Yemeni government.
- Take concrete measures to ensure that any past or ongoing support is not used in the commission of serious violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law.
- Conduct an independent and transparent review of the nature of the support provided and its impact on the civilian population in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah.

- Fully cooperate with relevant national and international investigative mechanisms, including by providing requested information.

Fourth: To the International Community and the United Nations

- Strengthen monitoring of the human rights situation in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah, including by supporting the establishment or renewal of independent investigative mechanisms.
- Ensure accountability for those responsible for serious violations, including through appropriate international measures where necessary.
- Support efforts to protect displaced persons and ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.
- Condition any additional political, security, or financial support on a clear and verifiable commitment to respect human rights and the rule of law.

Fifth: To United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms

- Include the reported violations in Hadramout and Al-Mahrah in relevant periodic and thematic reports.
- Give priority to monitoring cases of arbitrary detention, forced displacement, and looting of property.
- Consider conducting field visits and collecting direct testimonies from victims and witnesses.
- Take appropriate follow-up measures to ensure accountability and protect the rights of victims, with a view to preventing impunity.





No One Protects the Victims

A human rights report documenting the violations that accompanied the Hadramout events in December 2025.