



# Yemen's West Coast Fishing Communities:

*Documenting Harm, Needs, and Priorities for Redress*



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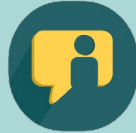


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التحالف اليمني لرصد  
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Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring  
Human Rights Violations



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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

|        |                                                                            |         |                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACHPR  | African Charter on Human and People's Rights                               | IHRL    | International Human Rights Law                                                                                                      |
| ACtHPR | African Court on Human and People's Rights                                 | IOM     | International Organization for Migration                                                                                            |
| APII   | Additional Protocol II of 1977                                             | IPC     | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification                                                                                       |
| CA3    | Common Article 3                                                           | IRG     | The internationally recognized government of Yemen                                                                                  |
| CAT    | Convention Against Torture                                                 | JIAT    | Joint Incidents Assessment Team                                                                                                     |
| CEDAW  | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women | MoU     | Memorandum of understanding                                                                                                         |
| CESCR  | Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights                          | NCIAVHR | National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations of Human Rights                                                               |
| CIL    | Customary International Law                                                | NIAC    | Non-International Armed Conflict                                                                                                    |
| CPED   | Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances  | NMAC    | National Mine Action Committee                                                                                                      |
| CRC    | Convention of the Rights of the Child                                      | NPA     | Norwegian People's Aid                                                                                                              |
| CRPD   | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities                      | NSAGs   | Non-state armed groups                                                                                                              |
| DRC    | Danish Refugee Council                                                     | OCHA    | United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs                                                                                      |
| EEZ    | Exclusive Economic Zone                                                    | P-ACHPR | Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights |
| ERW    | Explosive remnants of war                                                  | PCA     | Permanent Court of Arbitration                                                                                                      |
| ESCR   | Economic, social, and cultural rights                                      | PEY     | UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Yemen                                                                                       |
| HALO   | The Halo Trust                                                             | STC     | Southern Transitional Council                                                                                                       |
| HRC    | Human Rights Committee                                                     | UAE     | United Arab Emirates                                                                                                                |
| HRW    | Human Rights Watch                                                         | UNCLOS  | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea                                                                                     |
| IAC    | International Armed Conflict                                               | UNDP    | United Nations Development Programme                                                                                                |
| ICCPR  | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights                       | UNGEE   | UN Human Rights Council Group of Eminent Experts                                                                                    |
| ICESCR | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights             | UNHRC   | United Nations Human Rights Council                                                                                                 |
| IDMC   | Internal Displacement Monitoring Center                                    | UNMAS   | United Nations Mine Action Service                                                                                                  |
| IDPs   | Internally displaced persons                                               | UNMHA   | United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement                                                                            |
| IHL    | International Humanitarian Law                                             | YEMAC   | Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre                                                                                                  |

# I. Introduction

This report aims to highlight the needs of fishing communities in Yemen and their right to seek reparations for harms suffered as a result of internationally wrongful acts committed by multiple actors.<sup>1</sup> It addresses both the immediate and longer-term needs identified through interviews with victims from fishing communities along Yemen's west coast, drawing attention to their experiences of harm and the relevance of reparations as a response to those harms.

The protracted conflict in Yemen, prolonged economic crisis, and persistent insecurity, including as a result of patterns of conduct violating international law, have made fishing increasingly dangerous and prevented many fishermen from going to sea, thereby undermining livelihoods and access to food.<sup>2</sup> These impacts have contributed to displacement, food insecurity, and the erosion of traditional ways of life, with lasting consequences for the overall well-being of these communities.

Between 2015 and 2022, airstrikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition<sup>3</sup> repeatedly killed or injured fishermen and destroyed boats and critical infrastructure, including ports, landing sites, and processing facilities. Beyond the direct impact of the airstrikes, the resulting insecurity also

restricted access to fishing areas,<sup>4</sup> forcing many fishermen to relocate in search of safety and further undermining their livelihoods.<sup>5</sup>

The widespread presence of landmines and sea mines laid mostly by the Houthi non-state armed group pose ongoing threats both while fishermen are at sea and when they attempt to reach fishing areas via roads affected by mines.<sup>6</sup> Years of hostilities along the west coast, particularly in southern al-Hudaydah,<sup>7</sup> have left the region severely contaminated with mines, in addition to other explosive remnants of war (ERW). Even during the period of reduced hostilities following the 2022 truce, civilian casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance have continued to be reported on a nearly weekly basis.<sup>8</sup>

In parallel with the armed conflict, and extending back to the period before its outbreak, Yemeni fishermen have been subjected to systematic yet under-documented arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and abduction at sea by Eritrean forces.<sup>9</sup> These detentions have often been accompanied by other serious violations, including torture and ill-treatment, inadequate access to clean water and food, confiscation of boats and fishing equipment, and forced labor. Since the outbreak

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1 This report focuses on the actions and responsibility of Saudi Arabia, the IRG, the Houthis and Eritrea. Other actors, including UAE-backed Tariq Saleh forces as non-state armed group controlling the west coast, may also bear responsibility for violations of fishing rights. Based on the information obtained through interviews for this report, however, those potential responsibilities are not examined here but would require further inquiry.

2 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019); UNOCHA, "Yemen: Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2024" (2024).

3 Yemen Data Project. Saudi Coalition airwar 2015-2022.

4 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019).

5 "Developing Yemen's Fishing Industry," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2020); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen," US Mission to Yemen (2024).

6 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019).

7 UN Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA); Sam Ali, "Death From Beneath: Landmines in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2022).

8 ACLED Data, West Coast Yemen (2023).

9 Other parties, including the Saudi-led coalition, the Houthis, the Giants Brigade, and the National Resistance/Tariq Saleh's Forces have separately been implicated in the arbitrary arrests and detentions of fishermen. The experiences documented in this report, however, primarily concern detention by Eritrean forces, as reported by 33 of the 36 fishermen interviewed.

of the conflict, such incidents have reportedly increased,<sup>10</sup> while fishermen have received minimal protection from either the internationally recognized government of Yemen (IRG) or the the Houthis in areas under their control.

More recently, the escalation of hostilities in the Red Sea since October 2023, following Houthi attacks on maritime targets in the Red Sea in response to the Israeli military's conduct in Gaza,<sup>11</sup> and Israeli, US, and UK military strikes in Yemen throughout 2024 and 2025,<sup>12</sup> has further exacerbated the already precarious conditions facing fishing communities.<sup>13</sup>

These patterns of harm and resulting displacement have been compounded by broader challenges, including the economic and food crisis, generalized insecurity, reductions in humanitarian assistance, overfishing,<sup>14</sup> high prices, fuel shortages,<sup>15</sup> restrictions on access to fishing zones,<sup>16</sup> climate change,<sup>17</sup> impact of bottom trawling by fishing companies,<sup>18</sup> natural disasters, and pollution from oil spills,<sup>19</sup> as well as by violations of international law by other actors beyond those addressed in this report. While this report acknowledges the cumulative impact of these factors, it does not seek to address each in detail.

Rather, this report seeks to support access to reparations and other forms of justice by establishing an

initial factual basis to inform future reparations-related efforts. It documents harms experienced by victims, including both direct and indirect harm, and highlights their expressed needs and preferences in relation to redress. Although avenues for reparations for victims of international law violations in Yemen are currently absent, documenting harms and identifying victims' needs at this stage remains essential. Such documentation can serve as a foundational step toward broader, future documentation efforts, reparations processes, and related claims.<sup>20</sup>

By strengthening understanding of the patterns of harm affecting fishermen and members of fishing communities, this report aims to support more informed engagement by the IRG, the Houthis, members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, Eritrea, and the international community, particularly in relation to the allocation of appropriate human, technical, and financial resources for reparations programs and other forms of meaningful redress.<sup>21</sup> This initial mapping may also serve as a valuable reference in engaging with other relevant stakeholders in Yemen, including civil society organizations and national and international actors involved in documentation, accountability, and transitional justice processes. Encouraging approaches that center victims' rights to seek reparations would strengthen these efforts and underscore the importance of addressing the needs of those affected.

10 See e.g., "A plethora of abuses in the heart of the sea. Violations by the Eritrean Naval forces on Yemeni fishermen in the Red Sea," Mwatana for Human Rights (2023) ([A Plethora of Abuses](#)).

11 Luca Nevola "Q&A: Why Are Yemen's Houthis Attacking Ships in the Red Sea? Analysis of Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and their implications on regional escalation," ACLED (2024).

12 ACLED Data, West Coast Yemen (2023) ; Luca Nevola "Yemen: US airstrikes on Yemen signal shift in strategy against the Houthis – Expert Comment," ACLED (2025).

13 Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) [Country profile Yemen](#) ('the ongoing escalation in the Red Sea and the wider region is exacerbating insecurity in the country and endangering the flow of essential food, fuel, and other imports, as well as threatening livelihoods such as fishing and infrastructure'); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen," US Mission to Yemen (2024).

14 Mohamed Rageh, "A precarious livelihood in Yemen... Hodeidah fishermen caught in the nets of mines and diesel traders," *The New Arab* (2021) ('the war has devastated the marine environment and wiped out the areas designated for Yemeni fishermen. Not only have their fishing grounds become isolated and dangerous, but what remains of the fishing grounds has also been encroached upon by fishing vessels from other countries.').

15 Zeyad Sulaihi, "Yemen. Fishing in the middle of a war" NRC (2021); The World Bank [Program on Sustainable Fishery Development in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden \(SFISH\)](#) (P178143) (2021), para. 17; Mohamed Rageh, "A precarious livelihood in Yemen... Hodeidah fishermen caught in the nets of mines and diesel traders," *The New Arab* (2021).

16 See e.g., Interviewee No. 100180A, 20 October 2025; See also Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019).

17 Fisheries and the right to food in the context of climate change. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhr. [UN Doc. A/HRC/55/49](#) (2024) ('Moreover, among food systems, small-scale fisheries are some of the most vulnerable to climate change.'). [Republic of Yemen. Third National Submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (2018). It identifies its coastal zone (the coastal Tihama plain) as one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change.

18 The Sector Network Rural Development Africa, [Fisheries – A Key Lever for Change in Yemen](#) (2025).

19 Zeyad Sulaihi, "Yemen. Fishing in the middle of a war" NRC (2021) ('A polluted marine environment has destroyed the artisanal fishing sector and displaced thousands of fishermen along with their families.').

20 GRC Reparations Guide. A Framework for Documenting, Investigating, Advocating for, and Seeking Reparations for Starvation-Related Crimes and Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights Violations (2025) ([GRC Reparations Guide](#)).

21 See also, "Opening Space for Transitional Justice in Yemen" ICTJ (2025), p. 3.

# II. Methodology

This report was prepared jointly by Global Rights Compliance, Musaala Organization for Human Rights, the Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (Ras'd Coalition), and SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties. The findings presented in this report are based on open-source research conducted between October 2024 and December 2025, and field research carried out between May and October 2025. The research followed, and where appropriate adapted, the Reparations Research Framework developed by GRC in its *Reparations Guide: A Framework for Documenting, Investigating, Advocating for, and Seeking Reparations for Starvation-Related Crimes and Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights Violations*.<sup>22</sup>

The study employed two primary research methods: qualitative interviews with victims, witnesses, and experts, and open-source research, including desk-based literature and document review. The qualitative interviews were conducted by the local partner organizations, with GRC providing ongoing technical and methodological support throughout implementation. Fieldwork took place primarily in southern al-Hudaydah, Taizz, and Lahj. Interviews of displaced persons from Houthis-controlled areas were conducted in Lahj and Aden.

In preparation for this report, field teams conducted 84 interviews with primary sources, including direct victims and survivors, family members of victims, experts, and other relevant stakeholders, using trauma-informed practices. This effort involved visits to relevant locations and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and to examine incident sites and document alleged violations.

Interviewees were asked to describe the incidents causing harm, responsible parties where known, and the nature and extent of the harms suffered. Interviews also explored whether any assistance or reparations had been received including, if received, the form such measures took and how they were delivered. In addition, participants were asked about their perceptions of justice and their preferred forms of reparations in relation to the harms endured. All interviews were conducted in Arabic and no financial or other incentives were provided to participants.

Researchers operated under the supervision of legal analysts, to whom they reported regularly. The legal analysts provided guidance on emerging findings and areas requiring further inquiry. In parallel, joint analytical sessions were conducted online involving all project partners. The interviews were further contextualized and corroborated through open-source research.

## Documentation limitations

The investigation into patterns of conduct and harms impacting fishermen along Yemen's west coast was conducted under challenging conditions. Persistent tensions in the western coastal regions constrained the movement of field monitors. As a result, access to some affected communities was limited, which in turn reduced opportunities to collect testimonies.

In light of hostilities in the Red Sea and the risk of arbitrary detention of civil society personnel, the project team assessed that conducting in-person

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<sup>22</sup> Section 3 of GRC *Reparations Guide* provides guidance on the practical steps practitioners can take to conduct reparations research, in particular within the context of starvation and starvation-related violations (ESCR), but also more broadly. The main purpose of reparations is to acknowledge and repair the harm caused to victims by an internationally wrongful act or omission. This research aimed at documenting the commission of internationally wrongful acts, identifying the main responsible actors and the victims affected, assessing the nature and extent of harms suffered by direct and indirect victims (physical, material, and moral harm), and assessing the victims' needs and preferences for reparations and other forms of justice.

interviews in Houthi-controlled areas of Al Hudaydah governorate would pose unacceptable risks. Documentation in this governorate therefore relied primarily on interviews with displaced witnesses and victims who had relocated to comparatively safer areas.

Landmine hazards further complicated fieldwork, particularly in high-risk locations such as the Dhubab district of Taizz governorate, which remains heavily contaminated. The absence of maps or warning signs created ongoing safety concerns for the team during their visits.

Difficult transportation options, unsafe road conditions, and limited communication networks further impeded researchers' ability to remain in certain areas for extended periods, at times reducing opportunities for engagement with affected communities.

Obtaining reliable data in Yemen is challenging due to the prevalence of partial or biased information, often originating from parties to the conflict.

In addition, many fishermen and their families expressed reluctance to share information due to fears of retaliation or persecution, complicating the collection of testimonies. Cultural and social sensitivities also shaped the research process,

with some fishermen hesitant to discuss personal or family matters, requiring additional time and trust-building. In this context, prevailing cultural norms limited the collection of statements from women, resulting in a gender imbalance in the information gathered.

Finally, the investigation was hindered by a lack of available data and official statistics from relevant authorities. Repeated requests to state-level IRG authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for information about patterns of conduct impacting fishermen and resultant harms yielded no results. Weak archival practices and the effective collapse of state institutions have led to an absence of official records regarding these patterns of conduct and resulting harms. The lack of medical and legal documentation to corroborate accounts has further complicated the process, as victims often prioritized meeting their own immediate needs over the preservation of evidence, particularly in the absence of any credible redress or accountability processes.

# III. Background and context



*Fishermen in the Al- Khawkhah area unload their catch after a fishing trip in the Red Sea. Photo taken on July 19, 2025*

## 3.1. The importance of small-scale fisheries for Yemen

Small-scale fishers tend to be firmly rooted in local communities, traditions and values, and as such provide food and livelihoods for entire communities across generations.<sup>23</sup>

The fishing sector is a cornerstone of Yemen's economy, underpinned in deep-rooted fishing traditions. It plays a critical role in poverty reduction and national development, accounting for approximately 15% of total exports and providing employment, income, and food security for coastal communities.<sup>24</sup> Predominantly composed of small-scale enterprises, the sector supports the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people. A 2020 UNDP study estimated that the Yemeni fishing industry sustains approximately 667,000 individuals, highlighting its vital importance to both the national economy and community resilience.<sup>25</sup>

Yemen's coastline extends approximately 2,520 km and its rich marine resources provide essential livelihoods and nutrition for coastal popula-

<sup>23</sup> Fisheries and the right to food in the context of climate change. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhr. *UN Doc. A/HRC/55/49* (2024).

<sup>24</sup> UNDP, *Fishery Value Chain. A Market Study with Potential COVID-19 Impact Analysis. Supporting Resilient Livelihoods and Food Security in Yemen: A Joint Programme* (2020), p. 2; UNDP, *Fish Value Chain Analysis, Ash Shihr District, Hadramaut, Yemen* (2022), p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

tions.<sup>26</sup> Economic activity along the coast is largely centered on small-scale, artisanal fisheries, which form the backbone of local livelihoods.<sup>27</sup> Fishing is primarily undertaken by individual households operating small vessels with modest engines, ranging from canoes to fiberglass boats, while medium-sized fishing vessels are typically crewed by around a dozen fishers.<sup>28</sup>

The majority of residents on the coast rely on fishing to satisfy their household food consumption and income needs.<sup>29</sup> Fish consumption constitutes a crucial component of household diets, and small-scale fisheries play an essential role in maintaining food and nutrient security for the local population.<sup>30</sup> This reliance is particularly significant in contexts of humanitarian crisis, such as the one currently facing Yemen.<sup>31</sup>

Before the conflict, the fisheries sector contributed 3 per cent to Yemen's GDP and was ranked as the second most important sector of the Yemeni economy.<sup>32</sup> Today, despite the challenges and harms caused by the conflict, it remains the main source of food security and livelihood across coastal areas.<sup>33</sup>

## 3.2. The conflict in Yemen

In 2014, the Houthi (Ansar Allah) non-state armed group seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa. Then-President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi fled to Aden in the country's south and then to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In late 2014, the Houthis expanded

into other areas, including al-Hudaydah Governorate and the western coast.<sup>34</sup>

In March 2015, a Saudi Arabia/UAE-led coalition launched a military intervention against the Houthi armed group, including carrying out a devastating aerial campaign.<sup>35</sup> In the eleven years since, the conflict has escalated, de-escalated, and changed, involving a wide range of players both inside and outside Yemen. Fighting has triggered a devastating humanitarian crisis characterized by widespread hunger, disease outbreaks, and the displacement of millions.

Although a UN-mediated truce in April 2022 led to a temporary de-escalation in hostilities between the Houthi armed group, the IRG, the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition, and Coalition-aligned groups, fighting has persisted.

Since 2023, the Houthis have shifted their focus toward the Red Sea, carrying out frequent attacks on commercial shipping and on Israel. Both the United States and Israel have carried out air strikes on Houthi-controlled territory.<sup>36</sup>

In 2025, fighting between Saudi and UAE-backed groups in Yemen broke out, with Saudi Arabia carrying out limited airstrikes in the country's east, and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council, which had served as the de facto authority in Aden and much of the south for the last ten years, ceding authority to the Saudi-backed IRG.<sup>37</sup>

26 World Bank Group, New World Bank Project Will Support Sustainable Fisheries in Yemen (2022); *The World Bank Program on Sustainable Fishery Development in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (SFISH) (P178143) (2021)*; UNDP, *Fishery Value Chain. A Market Study with Potential COVID-19 Impact Analysis. Supporting Resilient Livelihoods and Food Security in Yemen: A Joint Programme (2020)*, p.18.

27 Fisheries and the right to food in the context of climate change. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhr. *UN Doc. A/HRC/55/49* (2024) ('Small-scale fishers: There is no singular definition of a small-scale fisher. Similar terms include artisanal fishers or fisherfolk. Small-scale fishers typically involve fishing households who use small-scale fishing vessels. They depend on small amounts of capital and energy, usually in the form of family, household or cooperative labour, and fish close to shore with short stints into the body of water. What counts as small, however, is very context specific for each country and covers a wide range of sizes globally.').

28 FAO, *Report on the workshop for the revision of the national livelihood zones map (Government of Yemen) (2024)*, p. 26; UNDP, *Fishery Value Chain. A Market Study with Potential COVID-19 Impact Analysis. Supporting Resilient Livelihoods and Food Security in Yemen: A Joint Programme (2020)*.

29 FAO, *Report on the Workshop for the Revision of the National Livelihood Zones Map (Government of Yemen) (2024)*, p.26

30 UNDP, *Project document Yemen. Sustainable Fisheries Development (SFISH) in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (2022)*, p. 4 ('Fish is a key staple of the Yemeni diet, particularly of the coastal communities and food represents 60 to 70 percent of poor households' consumption expenditures.'). Fisheries and the right to food in the context of climate change. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhr. *UN Doc. A/HRC/55/49* (2024).

31 UNDP, *Project document Yemen. Sustainable Fisheries Development (SFISH) in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (2022)*.

32 World Bank Group, *Sustainable Fisheries for Yemen's Resilience (2025)*; UNDP, *Sustaining Yemen's fisheries: A collaborative effort (2024)*.

33 *The World Bank Program on Sustainable Fishery Development in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (SFISH) (P178143) (2021)*, para. 18.

34 Global Conflict Tracker, Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in Yemen and the Red Sea (2025)*; Yemen Data Project. *Saudi Coalition airwar 2015-2022*.

35 Jeremy M. Sharp, "Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention," Congressional Research Service (2017) ('The coalition included Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Senegal. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition also relies on local Yemeni forces to carry out most ground operations. These allied units comprise a mix of Yemeni army units, tribal forces, Islamist militias, and southern separatists opposed to Houthi rule'); Yemen Data Project. *Saudi Coalition airwar 2015-2022*.

36 ACLED Data. *Yemen Conflict*. Detailed coverage of the Yemen conflict, including events, actors, and fatality methodology (2025); Global Conflict Tracker. Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in Yemen and the Red Sea (2026)*.

37 Patrick Wintour, "Southern separatists in Yemen report Saudi airstrikes near positions," *The Guardian* (2025); Philip Loft, "Yemen in 2025: Changing balance of power in the south," House of Commons library (2026); Yemeni southern separatists in Riyadh announce disputed disbanding of STC, *Al Jazeera* (2026).



*A citizen buys fish from a fisherman in the Al-Jashah area of Al-Khawkhah district. The photo was taken on March 3, 2024.*

### 3.3. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen

The conflict in Yemen has generated one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises.<sup>38</sup> Prolonged hostilities have devastated livelihoods and severely constrained access to food.<sup>39</sup> According to OCHA, over 19 million people in Yemen were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2025, an increase of 1.3 million people compared to the previous year.<sup>40</sup>

The disruption of livelihoods is one of the drivers of acute food insecurity in Yemen.<sup>41</sup> Acute food insecurity has escalated to unprecedented levels, with the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) indicating that acute food insecurity and malnutrition continued to deteriorate in 2025.<sup>42</sup> Coastal western governorates relevant to this study are classified as facing IPC Phase 3 ('Crisis') and Phase 4 ('Emergency') levels of food insecurity, with pro-

jections for 2026 indicating further deterioration.<sup>43</sup>

The conflict, combined with economic decline, degradation of basic services, and rising food and fuel prices, has intensified humanitarian needs across all sectors of Yemeni society. Significant reductions in donor funding have further constrained emergency food assistance and livelihood support, increasing vulnerability among already at-risk populations.<sup>44</sup>

Yemeni fishermen and fishing communities have been particularly affected by the conflict. The conflict has severely undermined fishing-based livelihoods, which previously supported hundreds of thousands of people along Yemen's coast.<sup>45</sup> According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 70 per cent of small-scale fishers in Yemen have been affected by the conflict.<sup>46</sup>

Since 2014, fishing communities along the west coast of Yemen have faced extensive disruption

38 UNFPA, Yemen.

39 UNDP, Project Document Yemen, Sustainable Fisheries Development (SFISH) in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, (2022).

40 OCHA, Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 (2025).

41 UNDP, Project Document Yemen, Sustainable Fisheries Development (SFISH) in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, (2022).

42 ERCC, Yemen - Famine (DG ECHO, IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification) (ECHO Daily Flash of 1 July 2025).

43 IPC. Yemen (GoY): Acute Food Insecurity Situation for May - August 2025 and Projection for September 2025 - February 2026 (partial analysis).

44 *Ibid*; "Amnesty International warns of devastating consequences as abrupt U.S. Foreign Aid cuts threaten human rights globally" Amnesty International (2025).

45 Starvation makers, p. 177; Ammar Mohammed Al-Fareh, "The Impact of the War in Yemen on Artisanal Fishing of the Red Sea," LSE Middle East Centre (2018), p. 5.

46 UNDP Supports Yemen's Fishery Communities to Rebuild Livelihoods and Local Economy. (2022); FAO, Severe Food Insecurity Widespread in Yemen," Food and Agriculture Organization (2016).

to their traditional livelihoods.<sup>47</sup> Ports have closed and landing sites, processing and storage facilities, boats and other essential fishing equipment have been damaged or destroyed.<sup>48</sup> Direct attacks on fishing vessels and related infrastructure have resulted in fatalities and injuries among fishermen,<sup>49</sup> undermining both livelihoods and a critical source of food for coastal communities.<sup>50</sup>

Effects of the conflict have also disrupted the fishing supply chain. Electricity disruptions have impaired ice production and cold storage, resulting in reduced product quality and losses. Rising fuel prices have constrained fishing operations and undermined transportation and distribution networks.<sup>51</sup> In addition, insecurity in the Red Sea has restricted fishermen's access to fishing grounds, forcing many to remain close to shore or abandon fishing altogether due to safety concerns.<sup>52</sup>

Broader economic impacts of the conflict have further strained coastal fishing communities. Reduced purchasing power has led to declining demand for fish products. The weakening of the IRG's Ministry of Fish Wealth has further limited regulatory oversight and sectoral support.<sup>53</sup> Many fishermen have been forced to relocate to safer areas, contributing to reduced production and further undermining the sustainability of fishing livelihoods.<sup>54</sup> These challenges are compounded by additional stressors, including climate change, illegal fishing practices, marine pollution from oil spills,<sup>55</sup> and

the recent escalation of hostilities in the Red Sea, which has included, once again, the deployment of warships along Yemen's coast, along with renewed airstrikes.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.4. Escalation of hostilities in the Red Sea

The escalation and militarization of the Red Sea have further intensified the challenges faced by Yemeni fishermen, particularly along the western coast.

Since late-2023, attacks by Houthi forces on international shipping transiting the Red Sea have increased markedly.<sup>57</sup> In November 2023, the group designated vessels associated with Israel as military targets, and in December expanded this designation to include ships bound for Israel,<sup>58</sup> bringing hostilities closer to Yemen's coastline.<sup>59</sup> The Houthis' escalatory steps in the Red Sea have, in turn, prompted strikes by Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom.<sup>60</sup> In 2024, for example, the United States launched *Operation Prosperity Guardian*, a multinational initiative described as aiming to protect international shipping and deter further attacks in the Red Sea.<sup>61</sup> Subsequent military strikes in 2024 and 2025, by both Israel and the United States, have targeted sites in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, including west-

47 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, *UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1*, (2019), para. 756 ('the fishing community on the western coast of Yemen has been severely impacted by the conflict and people's livelihoods have been considerably affected.').

48 UNDP, *Fish Value Chain Analysis, Ash Shihr District, Hadramaout, Yemen* (2022), p. 18; Press Release. World Bank Group. *New World Bank Project Will Support Sustainable Fisheries in Yemen* (2022); Moosa Elayah, "Fishing during war? The impact of war on Yemeni fisheries," *Doha Institute for Graduate Studies* (2019).

49 *Starvation makers*, p. 177; HRW Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Yemen Review of Yemen's periodic report for the 67<sup>th</sup> Pre-Session, September 2020.

50 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019); *Starvation makers*, p. 177.

51 "Developing Yemen Fishing Industry," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2020).

52 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019).

53 "Developing Yemen Fishing Industry," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2020); *Starvation makers*, p. 177.

54 *Ibid*; For more information about displacement see below Displacement as a result of multiple harmful patterns of conduct.

55 Mittal, H.V.R., Langodan, S., Zhan, P. et al. "Hazard assessment of oil spills along the main shipping lane in the Red Sea," *Sci Rep* 11, 17078 (2021); Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, "From Navigational Disruptors to Ecocriminals: The Environmental Impact of the Houthi Anti-Shipping Campaign in the Red Sea," *Arab Gulf States Institute* (2025); Hisham Nagi "FSO Safer potential marine disaster: Yemen's environment worst nightmare," *Arab Reform Initiative* (2022).

56 "Calming the Red Sea's Turbulent Waters," *Middle East Report N°248*, International Crisis Group (2025).

57 Luca Nevola "Q&A: Why Are Yemen's Houthis Attacking Ships in the Red Sea? Analysis of Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and their implications on regional escalation," *ACLEED* (2024); Tawfeek Al-Ganad, "The Bride of the Red Sea: A Century of Transformation in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025).

58 *ACLEED. Conflict Watchlist 2024 | Yemen and the Red Sea: Rising Tensions Threaten Peace Process and International Security* (2024).

59 Luca Nevola "Q&A: Why Are Yemen's Houthis Attacking Ships in the Red Sea? Analysis of Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and their implications on regional escalation," *ACLEED* (2024); For more information on events associated with attacks carried out by the Houthis in the Red Sea in response to the Israel-Gaza conflict see *ACLEED Red Sea Attacks: Interactive Map*.

60 Tawfeek Al-Ganad, "The Bride of the Red Sea: A Century of Transformation in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025) ('Since October 7, 2023, Hudaydah has been targeted by airstrikes from the United States, Britain, and Israel, which have destroyed key pillars of its economic power, particularly the ports of Hudaydah, Ras Issa, and Al-Salif').

61 April 2024- US DoS- *Securing the Red Sea: A Global Response* (2024); US DoS Statement from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Ensuring Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea (2023).

ern Al-Hudaydah governorate and the Ras Isa area.<sup>62</sup>

The resulting escalation of military activity has disrupted shipping lanes<sup>63</sup> and restricted access to fishing grounds, limiting fishermen's ability to move safely at sea. Heightened insecurity at sea has forced thousands of fishermen, especially those from Al-Hudaydah governorate, to suspend fishing activities or relocate away from coastal areas, while placing those who continue to fish at increased risk and undermining their livelihoods and access to food.<sup>64</sup> These developments have directly affected fishing livelihoods, local food security, and the availability of fish in local markets,<sup>65</sup> while also contributing to displacement among fishing communities as hostilities intensified.<sup>66</sup>

These developments have compounded the challenges fishermen already faced as a result of the protracted armed conflict.<sup>67</sup> According to the US Embassy in Yemen, some 10,000 fishermen in western Al-Hudaydah governorate have been unable to work as usual.<sup>68</sup> Increased insecurity at sea has also heightened the risk of fishermen being caught in hostilities, forcing many to avoid deeper waters and further reducing catches.<sup>69</sup>

Fishermen interviewed for this report described growing fear and uncertainty at sea. One fisherman from Al Khawkhah explained that since the start of Houthi operations against commercial ships, incidents involving the disappearance of fishing boats and their crews had increased. He stated that fishermen feared being mistaken for Houthi vessels by military forces operating in the area.<sup>70</sup>

Despite these grave risks, some fishermen reported continuing to venture out to sea in an effort to survive. On 29 February 2024, according to six

people interviewed for the present report,<sup>71</sup> seven Yemeni fishermen set out from Mokha towards the commercial vessel *Rubymar*,<sup>72</sup> which had been attacked on 18 February 2024 by Houthi forces and was at risk of sinking. As in other cases, they sought to salvage materials or scrap metal before the ship went under. Later that day, an airstrike reportedly struck the stern of the vessel, killing two fishermen including a child. The surviving fishermen stated that they did not hear aircraft prior to the strike but observed a white drone overhead immediately afterward. Due to security constraints and limited public information, it has not been possible to gather further details regarding this incident or to determine responsibility.

62 ACLED, Yemen Conflict Monitor: Regional Profile. West Coast Yemen; Lucas Nevola, "A Red Sea hall of mirrors: US and Houthi statements vs. actions," ACLED (2025); Tawfeek Al-Ganad, "The Bride of the Red Sea: A Century of Transformation in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025).

63 Luca Nevola "Q&A: Why Are Yemen's Houthis Attacking Ships in the Red Sea? Analysis of Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and their implications on regional escalation," ACLED (2024).

64 "The Environment, Red Sea Conflict Threatens Environmental Catastrophe. The Yemen Review, Quarterly: January-March 2024," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2024); Tawfeek Al-Ganad, "The Bride of the Red Sea: A Century of Transformation in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen" Share America (2024); "Calming the Red Sea's Turbulent Waters," Middle East Report N°248, International Crisis Group (2025).

65 Houthi Attacks Devastate Yemen's Fishermen, US Embassy Yemen (2024); FAO, Red Sea shipping disruptions likely to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen (2024); "Yemeni fishermen bleed money in Red Sea 'death trap'," *The New Arab* (2024); FAO - Special Technical Paper - Potential Impacts of Red Sea Crisis Escalation on Food Insecurity in Yemen (2024); Abdullah Ali, "Red Sea attacks depriving Yemeni fishermen of their livelihood," *The National News* (2024); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen" *Share America* (2024).

66 "Yemeni Fishermen: The First Victims to the Sea Militarization," *Almushahid* (2024); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen," US Mission to Yemen (2024); FAO, Red Sea shipping disruptions likely to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen - new FAO report warns (2024).

67 March 2024 - UNSC (SC/15625)- Concentric Circles of Escalation, Risky Military Adventurism in Red Sea Could Spark New War Cycle in Yemen, Special Envoy Warns, Urging Maximum Restraint. ('Attacks against vessels could directly and indirectly impact the livelihoods of thousands of people in coastal communities that rely on fishing for survival').

68 Houthi Attacks Devastate Yemen's Fishermen, US Embassy Yemen (2024).

69 Ibid; FAO Red Sea shipping disruptions likely to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen (2024).

70 Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025.

71 Interviewee No. 100127A, 27 July 2025; Interviewee No. 100128A, 27 July 2025.

72 "Rubymar ship attacked by Houthi rebels finally sinks in Red Sea," *The Guardian* (2024); "U.S. Warns of Environmental Damage if Vessel Struck by Houthis Sinks," *The New York Times* (2024).

# IV. Patterns of conduct harming fishing communities



*A picture of the ship Rubymar, which was targeted by the Houthis in the Red Sea, taken on March 7, 2024*

This section provides a factual overview of key documented patterns of conduct harming fishermen and fishing communities along Yemen's west coast. It considers, in particular, the impact of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition attacks and airstrikes, the laying of landmines and sea mines attributed to the Houthis, and patterns of detentions and enforced disappearances at sea implicating Eritrean forces.<sup>73</sup> It further assesses how such conduct undermines the rights of fishermen and fishing communities, particularly in relation to livelihoods and access to food, while situating these harms within the broader humanitarian and conflict context.

<sup>73</sup> This focus does not imply that other actors bear no responsibility for violations in Yemen. In particular, UAE-backed Tariq Saleh forces as the non-state armed group exercising control over parts of the west coast may also be responsible for breaches of fishing rights and related harms. Based on the information obtained through interviews conducted for this report, however, those potential responsibilities are not examined here and would require further, targeted inquiry.

## 4.1. Saudi/UAE-led coalition airstrikes

In the course of this study, the investigation team conducted 25 interviews with victims and witnesses of airstrikes, including fishermen and their spouses, who shared their experiences, the harms they suffered as a result of a variety of coalition attacks on fishermen, fishing boats and fishing infrastructure, and their priorities and preferences for reparations. Many of those interviewed were internally displaced and provided insight into the profound impact of airstrikes on their forced displacement. The testimonies illustrate how coalition airstrikes translated into concrete harm for fishermen and their families along Yemen's west coast. In addition to this testimonial-based evidence, the team conducted a desk review of documentation and reports regarding coalition airstrikes impacting fishing communities.

### 4.1.1. Coalition airstrikes impacting fishing communities

Between 2015 and 2022, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition conducted large-scale military operations in Yemen, predominantly through air strikes. This included attacks on Yemeni fishing boats and critical fishing infrastructure.<sup>74</sup> Some of these attacks resulted in deaths and injuries among fishermen,

as well as the destruction of civilian property, as documented by UN mechanisms and human rights organizations.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to fishing boats, damage and destruction caused by Saudi/UAE-led coalition attacks reportedly extended to fishing-related facilities, such as ice factories, refrigeration and energy facilities, as well as fuel depots used by fishermen in various areas between Al Hudaydah and Al Mokha.<sup>76</sup> The destruction of these facilities deprived fishermen of the essential means to preserve and market their catch.<sup>77</sup> Further, the insecurity associated with these attacks prevented fishermen from accessing the sea,<sup>78</sup> and displaced members of fishing communities to comparatively safer areas.<sup>79</sup>

Between 2015 and 2022, the Yemen Data Project<sup>80</sup> recorded more than 54 air raids by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition<sup>81</sup> involving fishermen, fishing boats, or fishing facilities.<sup>82</sup> Collectively, these airstrikes inflicted extensive harm on civilians and had devastating consequences for fishing communities, depriving families of primary income earners and severely undermining access to food and livelihoods along Yemen's coast.<sup>83</sup>

UN mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Council Group of Eminent Experts (UNGEE)<sup>84</sup> and the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Yemen (PEY),<sup>85</sup> human rights organizations,<sup>86</sup> and humanitarian organizations,<sup>87</sup> and media outlets<sup>88</sup> have documented or reported on airstrikes and

74 Sam Ali, "The Woeful Plight of Yemen's IDPs: A Tale of Two Towns - The Yemen Review, January-March 2025," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025).

75 See e.g., UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/48/20 (2021), para. 21; Mwatana and Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic Yale Law School, "Returned to Zero. The Case for Reparations to Civilians in Yemen" (2022) ('Returned to Zero'), p. 74; Starvation makers, pp. 176-195, 371-372; "In Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen, No Refuge on Land or Sea," *The New York Times* (2022); "Yemen: Coalition Warships Attack Fishing Boats. 47 Yemeni Fishermen Killed, Dozens Detained Since 2018," HRW (2019); "Yemen fishermen face starvation at home or death at sea," *Al Jazeera* (2018); Saudi-led Coalition: Overview of Saudi-led Coalition's involvement and impact in the Yemen conflict, including leadership and historical context. ACLED, November 20, 2023, <https://acleddata.com/profile/saudi-led-coalition>.

76 Ammar Mohammed Al-Fareh, "The Impact of the War in Yemen on Artisanal Fishing of the Red Sea," LSE Middle East Centre (2018).

77 "Bombed into famine: how Saudi air campaign targets Yemen's food supplies," *The Guardian* (2017).

78 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How fishing communities are fighting back," NRC (2019); HRW Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Yemen. Review of Yemen's periodic report for the 67<sup>th</sup> Pre-Session, September 2020.

79 "Developing Yemen's Fishing Industry," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2020); "Houthi attacks devastate Yemen's fishermen," US Mission to Yemen (2024); Starvation makers, p. 183, p. 203.

80 Yemen Data Project, Saudi Coalition airwar 2015-2022.

81 The Coalition includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Morocco (until 2019), Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Qatar (until 2017) Bahrain and Senegal. The military coalition was backed by western nations, including the United States and the United Kingdom.

82 Yemen Data Project, Saudi Coalition airwar 2015-2022.

83 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/48/20 (2021), para. 34; A/HRC/45/CRP.7, paras 117-12; See also, HRW Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Yemen. Review of Yemen's periodic report for the 67<sup>th</sup> Pre-Session, September 2020.

84 *Ibid.*, para. 21; "Saudi-led Coalition: Overview of Saudi-led Coalition's involvement and impact in the Yemen conflict, including leadership and historical context," ACLED (2023).

85 PEY, Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, UN Doc. S/2020/326 (2020).

86 See e.g., "False exonerations Examining the Findings and Conclusions of the Joint Incidents Assessment Team JIAT Affiliated with the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition," Mwatana, Pax (2023); *Returned to Zero*; Starvation makers; "Yemen: Coalition Warships Attack Fishing Boats. 47 Yemeni Fishermen Killed, Dozens Detained Since 2018," HRW (2019).

87 See e.g., "Missiles and Food: Yemen's man-made food security crisis," Oxfam (2017).

88 "In Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen, No Refuge on Land or Sea," *The New York Times* (2022); "Yemen fishermen face starvation at home or death at sea" *Al Jazeera* (2018).

other attacks by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition impacting artisanal fishing boats and fishing-related infrastructure.

In 2019, the UNGEE reported on the effects of coalition airstrikes on Yemeni fishing communities, examining 11 incidents involving fishermen. These 11 attacks resulted in 43 fatalities, 49 injuries, and 19 individuals reported missing. The Group further noted that, following its investigation, an additional eight airstrikes on fishing boats had occurred off the coast of Al Hudaydah, leading to the deaths of at least 17 more fishermen.<sup>89</sup>

By 2019, HRW had documented that the Coalition naval forces were involved in attacks on Yemeni fishing boats, resulting in the deaths of at least 47 fishermen, including seven children, since 2018.<sup>90</sup> HRW noted that these figures did not represent a comprehensive record of coalition attacks on fishermen, and that the actual number of incidents was likely significantly higher, including due to the challenges in documenting attacks at sea.<sup>91</sup>

### *4.1.2. Harms caused by coalition airstrikes to fishing communities*

Rather than detail individual Saudi/UAE-led coalition attacks on fishing communities, which have been examined and reported on by UN mechanisms and human rights organizations, the report focuses on the consequences of some of these attacks for fishermen and fishing communities along Yemen's west coast.

Victims and their relatives consistently described the financial burden caused by the destruction of boats and fishing equipment, including nets and engines. Several interviewees explained that resuming fishing would require replacing essential equipment at considerable cost. One fisherman explained that returning to fishing would at least require replacing a boat, engine, and nets, costing 'no less than 30,000 Saudi Riyals' (approximately \$8,000 USD).<sup>92</sup> Another fisherman noted that prices for fishing equipment had increased during the years of conflict, with replacement costs reaching up to 110,000 Saudi Riyals (approximately \$29,300 USD).<sup>93</sup>

These losses have been particularly difficult to absorb given the already dire economic situation on Yemen's west coast. In some cases, the losses compounded earlier harms. One interviewee described selling his family's last remaining assets to replace a boat that had previously been taken at sea by Eritreans. He explained that this replacement boat was then rendered useless in an airstrike: 'Our new boat was hit by shrapnel in an airstrike, causing several holes. When I heard about the repair cost, I was devastated. The bill was exorbitant, and we had nothing left to sell to pay for it. I abandoned my boat at sea and never returned.'<sup>94</sup>

Many fishermen described struggling to find viable ways to earn a living after losing their boats and fishing equipment. Some were forced to rent boats or fishing gear at high costs, leaving them with limited income, while others sought daily wage working with other boat owners or in a different field, experiencing a sharp decline in income. Several interviewees explained that fishing was the only profession they knew and that they lacked skills for alternative work. As one displaced fisherman stated, 'I can't change my profession. I leave my family because there are no fish, and I go to Hadhramaut or other areas. I don't have a stable income throughout the year. But even if it's not enough, this is work I love.'<sup>95</sup> Fishermen also described indirect financial losses linked to displacement, the need for medical services, and other costs associated with the aftermath of airstrikes.<sup>96</sup>

Those interviewed also described psychological effects following airstrikes. The wife of one fisherman shared that she and her husband had become increasingly nervous and anxious after the attack, and stated that her husband now lives in isolation, having lost trust in everyone around him.<sup>97</sup> Survivors described persistent distress linked to memories of the attacks. One fisherman who survived an airstrike spoke of the anguish and lasting impact of witnessing his uncle's death, explaining that he has been unable to return to the sea due to recurring memories of the bombing and its immediate aftermath, including his inability to save his uncle.<sup>98</sup>

89 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1, para. 756.

90 "Yemen: Coalition Warships Attack Fishing Boats. 47 Yemeni Fishermen Killed, Dozens Detained Since 2018," HRW (2019).

91 "Yemen: Coalition Warships Attack Fishing Boats. 47 Yemeni Fishermen Killed, Dozens Detained Since 2018," HRW (2019).

92 Interviewee No. 100118A, 30 June 2025.

93 Interviewee No. 100122A, 26 June 2025.

94 Interviewee No. 100159A, 3 September 2025.

95 Interviewee No. 100137A, 5 August 2025.

96 See *Displacement as a result of multiple harmful patterns of conduct*.

97 Interviewee No. 100182A, 8 October 2025.

98 Interviewee No. 100122A, 26 June 2025.



Fishermen in the Al- Khawkhah area unload their catch after a fishing trip in the Red Sea. Photo taken on July 19, 2025

### 4.1.3. Reparations preferences expressed by airstrike victims

Testimonies collected during the documentation process indicate that many members of the fishing community had limited awareness of their rights under international law or of available avenues to seek redress.<sup>99</sup>

In 2016, the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition created the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) to ‘investigate combat operations that unlawfully affected civilians’ and ‘provide a mechanism for accountability, redress, prosecution and reparation consistent with standards of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.’<sup>100</sup> Concerns have been raised regarding the independence of the JIAT and its compliance with international accountability standards.<sup>101</sup>

Since 2016, JIAT has issued some statements regarding coalition attacks on fisherman. For example, JIAT addressed allegations concerning a Coalition Forces attack on a fishing boat on August 21, 2018, which resulted in the detention of 12 individuals.<sup>102</sup> According to a report by HRW, Coalition Naval Forces attacked a boat off the Eritrean coast, killing seven fishermen and detaining the remaining 12, several of whom suffered injuries.<sup>103</sup> JIAT concluded that Coalition Forces had acted based on credible threats posed by Houthi forces against ships and oil tankers in the Red Sea, and that the Coalition’s actions complied with their engagement protocols. JIAT reported finding no evidence of torture.<sup>104</sup>

JIAT has repeatedly recommended that the Coalition provide assistance to victims of airstrikes.<sup>105</sup> In 2018, the Coalition and IRG created “The Joint Committee to Grant Voluntary Humanitarian Assistance to Those Harmed in Yemen” (Joint Commit-

99 E.g., Interviewee No. 100159A, 3 September 2025 (‘I do not know what remedy or reparations really mean, and I am not aware of my rights or how to get compensation for the harm I suffered.’).

100 National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21. Yemen, Universal Periodic Review (Forty-sixth session, 29 April-10 May 2024) A/HRC/WG.6/46/YEM/1 (2024), para. 55; For more information see *Returned to Zero*, p. 83; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 887-897.

101 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 888-893; *Returned to Zero*, p. 84; “Hiding Behind the Coalition, Failure to Credibly Investigate and Provide Redress for Unlawful Attacks in Yemen” HRW (2018); *Starvation makers*, pp. 336-337; UNGEE, Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc A/HRC/39/43 (2018), para. 104 (‘In 2016, the coalition established the Joint Incidents Assessment Team to investigate allegations of unlawful coalition attacks. It would appear, however, that the Team lacks independence, its public findings contain insufficient details and that there is no mechanism to ensure implementation of its recommendations.’).

102 Statement issued by the JIAT. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/2045275>.

103 “Yemen: Coalition Warships Attack Fishing Boats. 47 Yemeni Fishermen Killed, Dozens Detained Since 2018,” HRW (2019).

104 Statement issued by the JIAT. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/2045275>.

105 *Returned to Zero*, p. 83.

tee) tasked with distributing aid to victims of Coalition airstrikes in Yemen.<sup>106</sup> This mechanism has reportedly provided ‘voluntary’ payments to a very limited and unclear number of civilian victims.<sup>107</sup>

None of the 25 people interviewed for this report who had been harmed by Saudi/UAE-led coalition airstrikes reported having been contacted by JIAT or having received any form of amends or reparation. Some described uncertainty about whether any mechanisms existed to receive complaints or provide reparations.

One fisherman, originally from Al Hudaydah, now displaced, explained that after witnessing multiple airstrikes including one in which he lost his boat, he had been unable to pursue any form of redress, stating: *‘I haven’t been able to claim my rights or receive reparations for the harm done to me. Where do I complain?’* He added, *‘I haven’t heard of any mechanisms established by the state or the armed group, nor how complaints are received.’* He further noted that discussions about reparations felt difficult in the absence of an end to the ongoing harm, emphasizing the need for attacks at sea to cease before meaningful redress could be trusted.<sup>108</sup>

A recurring theme in the testimonies provided by fishermen and their families harmed by Saudi/UAE-led coalition airstrikes was the desire to restore livelihoods and living conditions to the extent possible. Many fishermen expressed a preference for measures that would enable them to resume their lives as they were before the harms occurred, including a safe return to their villages and access to basic fishing equipment. As one interviewee explained, *‘It’s important that we get our lives back before the violation occurred, that we are allowed a safe return to our village, and that we are provided with even basic fishing equipment. This will help us rebuild our homes and secure food.’*<sup>109</sup>

Financial compensation was the most frequently cited form of reparation among those interviewed. Fishermen described compensation as essential to addressing material losses and enabling recovery. One interviewee explained that monetary compensation was preferred because it would provide flexibility to meet immediate needs and rebuild livelihoods, stating that such compensation would help them recover from the damage suffered.<sup>110</sup>

Beyond material redress, interviewees also emphasized the importance of recognition and accountability. Several fishermen called for acknowledgment of the harm they had endured and for those responsible to be held to account. As one fisherman said, *‘We demand that the Saudi-led coalition acknowledge this crime and tell us why they did this to a populated village full of children and women. We also demand compensation for the material and psychological damage we have suffered.’*<sup>111</sup>

Some fishermen also called for other forms of reparation addressing psychological harm and collective memory. These included requests for the establishment of institutions to support their mental health recovery as well as symbolic measures. One interviewee suggested the creation of a memorial at a fish landing port to commemorate fishermen who had been killed in vain, reflecting a desire for public recognition of their suffering.<sup>112</sup>

106 *Returned to Zero*, p. 83; “Yemenis affected by coalition military operations receive aid,” *Arab News* (2018).

107 *Returned to Zero*, pp. 85–95.

108 Interviewee No. 100162A, 26 August 2025.

109 Interviewee No. 100162A, 26 August 2025.

110 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025.

111 Interviewee No. 100171A, 15 September 2025.

112 Interviewee No. 100162A, 26 August 2025.



*Image of the mine, showing the thorns placed around it by the locals. Photo by Ammar.*

## 4.2. Mine laying by the Houthi armed group along Yemen's west coast

In the course of this study, the investigation team interviewed nine fishermen who were victims or witnesses of landmine and sea mine incidents. The team also engaged with experts and IDPs, who provided insights into the profound impact of landmines on their displacement and the ongoing obstacles these mines pose to safe returns.

In addition to this testimonial-based evidence, the team conducted an extensive open source research regarding the laying and detonation of landmines and naval (sea) mines.

### 4.2.1. Landmines and naval (sea) mines impacting fishing communities

Mines and ERW have plagued Yemen for decades, with successive phases of conflict contributing to extensive contamination. Yemen ranks third among the countries most affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war.<sup>113</sup> According to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS),<sup>114</sup> large areas of the country remain heavily contaminated by landmines and sea mines (also referred to as 'naval mines').<sup>115</sup> There have also been reports of the use of water-borne improvised explosive devices.<sup>116</sup>

Landmines and sea mines pose threats to the lives and livelihoods of fishermen along Yemen's western

<sup>113</sup> UNOPS, Supporting humanitarian mine action in Yemen (2024); UNDRR, *Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*. **Explosive Ordnance** ('explosive remnants of war are unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance that are left by a party to an armed conflict following the cessation of warfare.'): "Yemen's Environmental Crisis: The Forgotten Fallout of an Enduring Conflict," Arab Reform Initiative (2023) ('Since the outbreak of political tensions and conflicts in the early 1960s, mine planting has become widespread in central regions in Yemen. After the country ratified the Ottawa Convention – which prohibits the manufacture, import, and laying of mines and explosive devices – Yemen became the first Arab country to eliminate anti-personnel mines, successfully destroying its stockpile. However, the escalation of political unrest in 2011 and the armed conflict in 2015 led to the indiscriminate planting of various mines in 17 governorates, often without military necessity.').

<sup>114</sup> Established in 1997, the UNMAS works to eliminate the threat posed by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices by coordinating United Nations mine action, leading operational responses at the country level, and in support of peace operations, as well as through the development of standards, policies and norms.

<sup>115</sup> "Mine Action Cannot Wait," UNMAS. *Annual Report 2023*, p. 100.

<sup>116</sup> Elsa Buchanan, "Project Masam discovers 'Yemen's largest ever waterborne bomb' in strategic Bab al Mandab," Medium. Project Massam (2024); Luca Nevola "Q&A: Why Are Yemen's Houthis Attacking Ships in the Red Sea? Analysis of Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and their implications on regional escalation," ACLED (2024); "Water Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (WBIED)," Solace Global (2018).

coast and can contribute to food insecurity.<sup>117</sup> Landmines placed along coastal roads restrict access to fishing areas<sup>118</sup> and impede the return of displaced families.<sup>119</sup> Sea mines can damage or destroy fishing boats when they detonate at sea.<sup>120</sup> The presence of both land and sea mines has deterred fishing activities, creating life-threatening conditions that have led some fishermen to abandon their livelihoods due to fear of injury or death.<sup>121</sup>

During the current armed conflict, warring parties in Yemen have deployed a range of explosive devices, including antipersonnel landmines, anti-vehicle mines, improvised explosive devices, and sea mines.<sup>122</sup> According to the latest Yemen Mine Action Review,<sup>123</sup> the governorates most affected by explosive ordnance include Al Hudaydah, Al Bayda, Al Dhale, Hajjah, Marib, Saada, Shabwa, and Taizz.<sup>124</sup> Contamination is particularly acute along Yemen's west coast where mines were reportedly laid by the Houthis to slow the advance of pro-IRG Yemeni and Saudi-led coalition forces toward the strategic

port of Al Hudaydah.<sup>125</sup> Al-Hudaydah governorate is consistently identified as among the most heavily contaminated areas in the country.<sup>126</sup>

Given the widespread landmine and explosive remnant contamination in Yemen, and the break in time between when a mine is laid and when it detonates, it can be extremely difficult to link a particular instance of harm to a particular warring party. However, experts have repeatedly indicated that the Houthi armed group has laid landmines extensively in Yemen, and human rights groups have found the Houthis to have been responsible for the vast majority of recorded landmine incidents.<sup>127</sup>

Since at least 2015, large swathes of territory have been discovered littered with landmines and unexploded ERW following Houthi withdrawals from the areas.<sup>128</sup> Available reporting indicates that many of these devices were laid without marking, mapping, or adequate warning to civilians.<sup>129</sup> Landmine contamination has been documented in several gover-

117 HRW. *World Report 2024. Yemen*; Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. *2025-Yemen-Art7Report-for2024* ("The impact of the ongoing conflict and the landmine chaos in Yemen is subject to the injuries and killing of civilians in large numbers due to the contaminated regions with Anti-personnel, Anti-Tank Mines, and other war remnants."); Sam Ali, "The Woeful Plight of Yemen's IDPs: A Tale of Two Towns - The Yemen Review, January-March 2025" Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025) ("Farming and fishing have long been important livelihoods for residents of the Tihama. But the threat posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance not only continues to hamper families' efforts to return home but also their ability to support and sustain themselves."); UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014. UN Doc A/HRC/45/6 (2020), para. 52. ("The Group found that the use of mines has exacerbated food insecurity. In 2018 a sea mine explosion killed three fishers from Ghowaireq village, Tuhayta' District, Hudaydah. Landmines have prevented fishers from reaching coastal areas to fish, in particular in Hudaydah, where mines riddle coastal roads and instil fear. This has affected the availability and market price of fish. The presence of landmines has also made many farmers afraid to farm their lands, or herd or graze their livestock. The deployment of mines has made struggling fishing and rural communities even poorer."); "In Yemen .. Mines continue hunting innocent lives," Project Masam (2021); "A fisherman was killed by a Houthi marine mine explosion in the Red Sea," Project Masam (2020).

118 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014. UN Doc A/HRC/45/6 (2020), para. 52. ("Landmines have prevented fishers from reaching coastal areas to fish, in particular in Hudaydah, where mines riddle coastal roads and instil fear. This has affected the availability and market price of fish.")

119 Sam Ali, "The Woeful Plight of Yemen's IDPs: A Tale of Two Towns - The Yemen Review, January-March 2025," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025).

120 "Made in Yemen: How Houthis' use of sea mines affects fishing communities," Project Masam, Medium (2022).

121 Statement by Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights "We have documented numerous incidents of naval mine explosions near the shores of the Red Sea, whether off Al-Mukha, Dhubab, or the Gulf of Aden. This entire area witnessed military operations between 2015 and 2018, and there were multiple incidents of mines detonating. It is only natural that such incidents would have an impact and would prevent access to the sea."; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/45/CRP.7 (2020), para.122; "Marwan Youssef Taleb's story" Project Masam (2022).

122 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019); "Yemen: Houthi Landmines Claim Lives, Livelihoods Cease Use of Banned Mines; Accelerate Demining Operations" HRW (2024); Starvation makers, p. 275; Adel Dashela, "The Calamity of Landmines in Yemen" Sada (2022); HRW. Yemen: Houthi Landmines Kill Civilians, Block Aid (2019); HRW Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Yemen. Review of Yemen's periodic report for the 67<sup>th</sup> Pre-Session (2020); Taylor Rogoway, "Naval mines are a growing threat Near the Mandeb Strait" The Drive (2017); United Nations Yemen Common Country Analysis (CCA) Yemen. November 2021 ("Landmines and Explosive Ordinance Landmines continue to pose significant threats to the Yemeni population. The Ansar Allah forces have planted antipersonnel mines, improvised explosive devices (IED), and anti-vehicle mines primarily along the western coast of Yemen, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians, and hindered aid to reach their targets. Landmines placed in farmlands, villages and roads also prevent the daily movement of civilians to fetch water and grow their crops. Landmines and naval mines also poses significant threat to livestock and fishing opportunities, thus worsening the already dire level of food insecurity."); See also *International legal framework, violations and reparative obligations, the Houthi non-state armed group*.

123 Mine Action Review is an independent research and monitoring endeavour to promote implementation of survey and clearance obligations laid down in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

124 For more information on the impact of landmines in Yemen, with a particular focus on Al Dhubab District, Taiz Governorate see *Starvation makers*, p. 274.

125 Mine Action Review. Yemen. *Clearing the mines 2024*; Sam Ali, "Death From Beneath: Landmines in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2022).

126 Mine Action Review. Yemen. *Clearing the mines 2024*; Sam Ali, "Death From Beneath: Landmines in Hudaydah," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2022); Sam Ali, "The Woeful Plight of Yemen's IDPs: A Tale of Two Towns - The Yemen Review, January-March 2025," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (2025).

127 "Fields of Death. Civilian victims of landmine incidents 2016-2024," Mwatana (2024) ("Fields of death"), p. 28.

128 "Land mines will be hidden killer in Yemen decades after war" AP News (2018); Letter dated 22 January 2016 from the PEY established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 (2014) addressed to the President of the Security Council UN Security Council S/2016/73, para.127.

129 *Starvation makers*, p. 283; *Returned to Zero*, p.110.

norates along Yemen's western coast and adjacent areas, such as Taizz, Al Hudaydah, and Lahj,<sup>130</sup> directly affecting fishing communities and their ability to access coastal roads, villages, and fishing sites.<sup>131</sup>

As explained by Faris Al Hemyari, journalist and Chief Executive Officer of the Yemeni Observatory for Landmines Victims, civilians continue to be killed and injured by mine explosions in coastal areas and along the shoreline, which remain *'heavily contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance'* from earlier phases of the conflict. He noted that many of these areas served as frontlines and battlefields during 2017 and that full clearance and demining operations have yet to be completed. He said that *'along the entire coastal strip there are landmines and naval mines that the Houthis have laid or deployed'* particularly near the islands and traditional fishing zones. He further stated that *'these areas have now become off-limits, and many fishermen have lost their livelihoods and sources of income due to contamination from the naval mines laid by the Houthis.'*

The use of landmines by Houthi forces has been widely documented by international and Yemeni organizations.<sup>132</sup> However, after more than a de-

cade of conflict marked by extensive mine use, the full extent of contamination remains unknown, and precise figures for the number of mines laid since 2014 are unavailable.<sup>133</sup> Assessing the overall scale of landmine contamination remains challenging due to ongoing insecurity, limited access, and the absence of comprehensive mapping.<sup>134</sup> While verification is challenging, some estimates suggest that Houthi forces may have deployed over a million landmines since the onset of the conflict.<sup>135</sup>

Houthis have reportedly used landmines to reinforce frontlines, impede the advance of opposing forces, and to secure defensive positions upon retreat.<sup>136</sup> Their deployment intensified following the Houthis' takeover of the capital, Sanaa, in 2014<sup>137</sup> and continued through successive phases of the conflict until the UN-mediated truce announced in April 2022.<sup>138</sup> Reports indicated that the Houthis placed anti-personnel mines in residential neighborhoods, public roads, and around schools, mosques, homes and agricultural land, creating long-term risks for civilians.<sup>139</sup>

In addition to landmines, the deployment of naval mines<sup>140</sup> along Yemen's western coastline has been reported as posing a significant threat to ci-

130 *Starvation makers*, p. 276; AP Mine Ban Convention. *Art.7 Report Yemen for 2023*; Adel Dashela, "The Calamity of Landmines in Yemen" *Sada* (2022).

131 E.g., Interviewee No. 100106A, 28 June 2025; Interviewee No. 100143A, 7 October 2025; Interviewee No. 100152A, 17 July 2025.

132 *Landmine Monitor 2023*. International Campaign to Ban Landmines Yemen is reported to have large contamination by antipersonnel landmines (20–99km<sup>2</sup>); ACLED recorded at least 267 civilian fatalities in 140 reported incidents attributed to Houthi-planted mines and IEDs from 2016 until 20219. See Andrea Carboni, "How Houthi-planted mines are killing civilians in Yemen," ACLED (2019); UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\* (2019), para. 579; "Houthis' naval mines threaten Red Sea security, commerce," *Al Fassel news* (2024) ('Sea mines have killed dozens of Yemeni fishermen.').

133 *Landmine Monitor 2023*, International Campaign to Ban Landmines; Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, *2025-Yemen-Art7Report-for2024*; Faris Al Hemyari Journalist and Chief Executive Officer of the Yemeni Observatory for Landmines Victims ('There are no real numbers regarding the catastrophe that occurred in the West Coast region regarding mine planting'); "The Final Number of Landmines in Yemen remains unclear," Project Masam (2018); "Project Masam clears 529,951 landmines and explosive threats in Yemen," Project Masam has announced that its demining teams have now located and cleared 529,951 explosive devices across Yemen's liberated areas since operations began in July 2018, according to the latest weekly project report covering activities up to 26 December 2025).

134 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, *2025-Yemen-Art7Report-for2024*; Mine Action Review. Yemen. *Clearing the mines 2023* ('Yemen remains without a credible estimate of mine contamination. YEMAC-IRG continued to implement a baseline survey to assess mine and other explosive ordnance contamination but survey capacity was extremely limited and progress slow. YEMAC-DFA did not report on the progress of survey in 2023. It previously identified suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) amounting to nearly 1,200km<sup>2</sup> but the basis for this estimate and survey methods applied were unclear').

135 Andrea Carboni, "How Houthi-planted mines are killing civilians in Yemen," ACLED (2019); "Land mines will be hidden killer in Yemen decades after war," AP (2018).

136 "Migratory Mines. An additional danger to the lives of civilians," Mwatana (2024); *Fields of Death*, p. 32.

137 *Mine Action Review. Yemen*. ('Civil war between the Saudi-backed IRG based in Aden and Iranian-supported Houthis in Sana'a massively increased the scale and complexity of explosive ordnance contamination, including conventional and improvised mines, and split YEMAC.').

138 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/17 (2019), para. 45 ('The Group of Experts .. confirmed civilian casualties from anti-personnel landmines verified as having been emplaced by Houthi fighters in incidents it investigated in Aden, Al-Hudaydah, Lahij and Taizz governorates.'). Adel Dashela, "The Calamity of Landmines in Yemen" *Sada* (2022).

139 Letter dated 2 November 2023 from the PEY addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2023/833 (2023), para. 118; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/17 (2019), para. 45; HRW, World Report 2024, Yemen; For the types of mines and IEDs use in Yemen see Conflict Armament Research, *Mines and IEDs employed by Houthi Forces on Yemen's West Coast* (2018).

140 Naval mines are low-cost, self-contained explosive devices that can offer tactical advantages in maritime conflict, but which pose serious risks to civilian population and commercial shipping.

vilian populations, with particular consequences for artisanal fishermen,<sup>141</sup> as well as to commercial shipping.<sup>142</sup> Naval mines are water-borne low-cost, self-contained explosive devices that pose serious risks when deployed in areas used by fishermen and other civilians. These devices have included Iranian-manufactured moored contact mines,<sup>143</sup> well as improvised naval mines locally fabricated from gas cylinders and oil drums.<sup>144</sup> Mines can drift from their original deployment locations, continuing to pose risks long after being laid.<sup>145</sup>

While the precise number of naval mines deployed remains unclear, media and other reporting suggest that the Houthis may have deployed hundreds of naval mines in the Red Sea since the start of the conflict in 2014.<sup>146</sup> Naval mines have been reported in coastal waters near Al Mokha, Al-Hudaydah, Midi, and Bab al-Mandab,<sup>147</sup> as well as around strategic islands including Kamaran, the Hanish archipelago, and Buklan.<sup>148</sup> Mines are reportedly deployed in clusters at depths ranging from two to sixteen meters, sometimes moored and sometimes allowed to drift, with seasonal monsoon currents contributing to the hazard by spreading floating mines far beyond the initial sowing areas.<sup>149</sup>

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141 “Made in Yemen: How Houthis’ use of sea mines affects fishing communities,” Project Masam, Medium (2022); “Yemeni fishermen bleed money in Red Sea ‘death trap,’” *The New Arab* (2024) (“Sea mines had been deployed in coastal areas in Al-Hodeidah, killing fishermen over the past years”); “US warns of underwater mines planted by Houthis in Bab al-Mandeb,” *Al Arabiya* (2017); “The Arab Coalition detects a naval mine planted by the Houthis in order to threaten navigation in the southern Red Sea,” Project Masam (2020) (“The Arab Coalition detects a naval mine planted by the Houthis in order to threaten navigation in the southern Red Sea”); Project Masam. Full speech at EOIC in Geneva: Project Masam MD Ousama Al-gosaibi urges international community to step up at (2024) (“While Masam teams do not engage with any sea mines offshore, we have been giving support to YEMAC when dealing with naval mines that have washed ashore. These mines continue to disrupt international trade, but they also impact fishing communities, who are doubly impacted by this curse: nowhere is safe, on land or in the water. Earlier this year, one of our teams was sent to investigate an empty fishing boat that was found drifting along the coast of Bab Al-Mandab and brought back to shore by villagers. Inside the boat, our team discovered Yemen’s largest ever waterborne bomb which consisted of approximately 25kg of C4 explosives and at least 50kg of TNT, as well as 25 20L petrol containers. We safely removed the components and demolished the IED.”).

142 “Naval Mines and International Humanitarian Law,” Geneva Call (2019).

143 Open-source reporting and Yemeni/coalition analyses highlight Iran’s role in arming, training, and enabling Houthi maritime capabilities; “Houthis’ naval mines threaten Red Sea security, commerce” *Al-Fassel* (2024); Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024).

144 The Houthis have publicly displayed multiple families of mines (Mersad, Karrar (1–3), Asif (2–4), Shawadh, Thaqib, Awais, Mujahid, al-Naziat) and admitted to producing certain types domestically. March 2021 and September 2023 displays initially revealed 11 models and later a further six models, indicating substantial stocks and a maturing local production base “Houthis’ naval mines threaten Red Sea security, commerce,” *Al-Fassel* (2024); Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024).

145 See e.g., Shaul Shay, “The Houthi maritime threats in the Red Sea basin,” Research Institute for European and American Studies (2017); “US warns of underwater mines planted by Houthis” *Memo* (2017); Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024).

146 Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024); “Made in Yemen: How Houthis’ use of sea mines affects fishing communities,” Project Masam, Medium (2022).

147 “Experts: Naval mines remain a threat to global security if Hodeidah is not liberated,” Project Masam (2020); Shaul Shay, “The Houthi maritime threats in the Red Sea basin,” Research Institute for European and American Studies (2017), p. 8.

148 Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024); “Experts: Naval mines remain a threat to global security if Hodeidah is not liberated,” Project Masam (2020); Shaul Shay, “The Houthi maritime threats in the Red Sea basin,” Research Institute for European and American Studies (2017), p.8; “Houthis’ naval mines threaten Red Sea security, commerce,” *Al-Fassel* (2024).

149 USINOPACOM J06/SJA TACAID SERIES. *Naval Mine Warfare* (2023); Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, “If the Gaza War Continues, Will the Houthis Mine the Gateways to the Red Sea?,” Stimson (2024).



*Ahmed Nahari had his leg amputated during displacement by a landmine planted by the Houthis in a remote area east of Al-Khawkhah. Ahmed works at sea on a fishing boat, but he lost his job and became disabled.*

## 4.2.2 Harms caused by Houthi mine laying to fishing communities

Mine laying, attributed primarily to Houthi forces, has caused serious harm, including deaths, injuries, and restricted access to livelihoods and essential resources, to fishing communities along the western coast.<sup>150</sup> Their presence has limited fishermen's ability to reach fishing sites, markets, and sources of food and water, while ongoing detonations have created persistent risks.<sup>151</sup> Landmine contamination has also prevented aid from reaching vulnerable communities,<sup>152</sup> and restricted the ability to reach essential services such as healthcare and education.<sup>153</sup> Reports indicate that Houthi-laid sea mines in the Red Sea have also threatened the lives and livelihoods of fishermen.<sup>154</sup> These

mines can also damage marine ecosystems, resulting in a decline in fish populations that fishermen depend on for their livelihoods.<sup>155</sup>

Landmines have caused death, serious injuries and permanent disabilities among fishermen during the conflict.<sup>156</sup> A 48 year old fisherman told the investigative team that he was displaced along with his family in 2017 to the Al-Ardi area of Dhubab District in Taizz Governorate. While fishing for squid with his cousin and another friend near Al-Ardi Mountain, he stepped on an anti-personnel landmine, which detonated. The explosion resulted in the amputation of his right leg below the knee and caused shrapnel injuries to his left leg. He spent approximately one month in hospital for initial treatment before returning to his home in Al-Ardi. One month

<sup>150</sup> Handicap International. Issue brief Yemen 2020. Explosive Weapons, Contamination, and Risk Education in Yemen ("Sea mines laid along Yemen's Red sea coast pose substantive risk to fishermen and civilian boats."); "A precarious livelihood in Yemen... Hodeidah fishermen in mine nets and diesel traders," *Alaraby* (2021); UNMAS Director remarks to the press at Sana'a airport 8 December 2022.

<sup>151</sup> *Fields of Death*, p. 21; "Coastal mines are tightening the noose around fishermen," Project Masam (2018); "Exceeding one million and without maps... Houthi mines claim civilian lives in Yemen," *Independent Arabia* (2019).

<sup>152</sup> "Yemen: Houthi Landmines Kill Civilians, Block Aid," HRW (2019).

<sup>153</sup> *Fields of Death*, pp. 34-35 ('Accessing essential services such as healthcare and education becomes exceedingly difficult for the population. This situation creates a cascade of negative impacts, notably depriving residents, especially children, of educational services and preventing access to necessary healthcare for all, including pregnant women').

<sup>154</sup> Andrea Carboni, "How Houthi-planted mines are killing civilians in Yemen," ACLED (2019).

<sup>155</sup> "Calming the Red Sea's Turbulent Waters," Middle East Report N°248, International Crisis Group (2025) ('In addition, the Houthis' use of mines to attack ships continues to pose a grave threat to the Red Sea's unique underwater fish farms off the Yemeni coast.');

<sup>156</sup> "Yemen's Environmental Crisis: The Forgotten Consequences of a Lasting Conflict," Arab Reform Initiative (2022); "A precarious livelihood in Yemen... Hodeidah fishermen in mine nets and diesel traders," *Alaraby* (2021).

<sup>157</sup> YEMAC, Mine Risk Education; Project Massam. Project Masam Team 19 clears 43,000sqm of land along Yemen's Bab al-Mandab coast (2024) ('The leader of Team 19 also highlighted the significant toll that landmines have taken on local Yemeni fishermen, who have sustained numerous injuries while fishing along the coast.');

<sup>158</sup> Issue brief Yemen 2020. Explosive Weapons, Contamination, and Risk Education in Yemen, Handicap International (2020).

later, he required further medical care in Aden, where he spent an additional month in hospital.

Reflecting on the impact of his injury, he said:

*I have become disabled and unable to support my family. I have incurred significant medical expenses, even for the initial first aid I received, and had to pay for my medications out of pocket. Fishing is the only profession I've known since childhood, but now, even if I wanted to return, I would be unable to work effectively due to my disability. I am no longer the same person I once was.*

The fisherman said he has not received any financial or material assistance since the incident.<sup>157</sup>

Sea mines have also resulted in deaths and injuries among fishermen. Their presence has rendered fishing activities extremely dangerous as sea mines can become entangled in fishing nets or drift ashore, exposing fishermen to sudden detonations. These risks have led to fatal accidents,<sup>158</sup> and have deterred many fishermen from operating at sea due to fear for their safety.<sup>159</sup> Documented cases illustrate these risks. For example, in October 2025, three Yemeni fishermen from the same family were reportedly killed by a sea mine explosion at Mahab Al-Reeh beach in Kamaran Island in Al-Hudaydah Governorate.<sup>160</sup>

Where the person killed or injured by land or sea mines is the primary breadwinner, such harm has direct economic consequences for entire families, affecting their ability to meet basic needs, including food, shelter, education, and healthcare.<sup>161</sup> Funeral expenses associated with deaths, as well as the prolonged medical treatment and rehabilitation often required by injuries, have generated additional costs and compounded economic strain on affected families.

A fisherman was injured by a landmine explosion while traveling along the main road between Al-Mukha and Al-Khawkhah. He remained in a coma for 22 days following the incident. He reported

shrapnel injuries to his abdomen and pelvis, and described ongoing physical limitations following surgery: *'The doctor told me not to lift anything heavy... Even if I try to lift more than 10 bricks, the pain gets worse and affects me.'* He explained that these injuries have prevented him from engaging in heavy labor and significantly reduced his family's income. As a result, his children have stopped attending school because the family cannot afford basic supplies such as notebooks and pens. *'I cannot provide for my family and all our money is spent just on food and drink. I truly wish I could send my children to school, and it pains me to see them unable to get an education.'*<sup>162</sup>

Sea mine and landmine explosions have caused extensive damage to fishing boats and equipment, forcing fishermen to bear the costs of repair or replacement. For many households that depend primarily on fishing income, the loss or damage of a boat or gear can immediately disrupt livelihoods and reduce access to food and other basic necessities.

A 33-year-old fisherman and farmer from Al Mukha described being injured in 2023 when he triggered a landmine while attempting to push a boat into the sea. The explosion caused injuries to both hands and his leg and damaged the boat. He reported ongoing physical pain and psychological distress, stating, *'the injuries in my leg still hurt, even after all the treatment.'* He further explained that he spent 300,000 Yemeni riyals (Approximately 1250 USD) to repair the damaged boat and was unable to work for four months following the incident.<sup>163</sup>

The effects of landmines and sea mines extend beyond physical and material loss, impacting the psychological well-being of victims and their families. Survivors interviewed described ongoing fear, anxiety, and emotional distress following mine-related incidents. Some reported feelings of diminished self-worth and uncertainty about their ability to resume their previous livelihoods, particularly where injury resulted in long-term economic hardship.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Interviewee No. 100106A, 28 June 2025.

<sup>158</sup> Musaala. Joint statements Justice4Yemen Pact. *The Landmine crisis in Yemen* (2024); Al -Mushahid, *The war has compounded the suffering of fishermen along Yemen's west coast* (2019); "Houthis' naval mines threaten Red Sea security, commerce," Al-Fassel (2024); Recurrent discoveries and destructions of mines (175 reported destroyed by late 2020 and numerous Sadaf mines found subsequently) underscore the ongoing contamination of artisanal fishing grounds-(*"6 marine mines planted by the Houthis were found in the Red Sea,"* Project Masam (2020)).

<sup>159</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seventy-third session Summary record of the 14th meeting Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 February 2023, E/C.12/2023/SR.14.

<sup>160</sup> Facebook post, Hodeidah Governorate Media Office; Yemen future web; Facebook post. First Deputy Governor of Hodeidah, Walid al-Qudaimi.

<sup>161</sup> *Fields of Death*, p. 32.

<sup>162</sup> Interviewee No. 100154A, 28 September 2025.

<sup>163</sup> Interviewee No. 100153A, 5 July 2025.

<sup>164</sup> YEMAC. Mine Risk Education; *Fields of Death*, pp. 30-32; "Yemen war: Deadly landmines blight the lives of children on western coast," *Middle East Eye* (2021); "World Health Day: the far-reaching physical and psychological effects of landmines in Yemen," Project Massam (2023).

In addition to injury and material loss, landmine contamination on roads and in coastal areas, as well as sea mines in surrounding waters, have severely restricted fishermen's access to viable fishing zones.<sup>165</sup> Fear of detonation has limited fishing activity and reduced catches, further undermining livelihoods.<sup>166</sup> The UNGEE has expressed concern regarding the impact of sea mine explosions on fishing boats and the deterrent effect of mines on food-gathering activities, contributing to heightened food insecurity.<sup>167</sup> Explosions have also resulted in damage to marine ecosystems, affecting fish populations and other marine resources on which coastal communities depend.<sup>168</sup>

Landmine and sea mine contamination has contributed to displacement among fishing communities along Yemen's western coast by rendering residential areas, access roads, and coastal zones unsafe. Mines, as well as wider contamination from explosive remnants of war, has forced some fishermen to abandon their livelihoods or relocate to safer locations<sup>169</sup> and has posed risks along displacement routes.<sup>170</sup> It has also created significant obstacles to return, as homes and surrounding areas remain affected by unexploded devices.<sup>171</sup>

A fisherman who is internally displaced and originally from Al Khawkhah, expressed uncertainty about when he and his family will be able to return home, stating, *'even if we could go back, our houses remain surrounded by landmines, and there is a severe lack of food security and livelihoods due to ongoing attacks on fishermen.'*<sup>172</sup>

These effects on freedom of movement and return continue even during periods of reduced hostilities.<sup>173</sup> Following the withdrawal of Saudi/UAE-led

coalition forces from Hudaydah city in November 2021, UNMAS recorded an increase in landmine and ERW incidents linked to the return of previously displaced civilians to the city.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, after the UN-mediated truce on April 2, 2022, civilians attempting to return to their villages encountered landmines and explosive remnants left by the warring parties.<sup>175</sup> One displaced resident described families being killed or injured upon returning to homes and roads that had been booby-trapped with explosive devices, including improvised devices concealed within everyday objects such as children's toys and tree trunks.

165 Statement by Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the NCIHVHR, 'We have documented numerous incidents of naval mine explosions near the shores of the Red Sea, whether off Al-Mukha, Dhubab, or the Gulf of Aden. This entire area witnessed military operations between 2015 and 2018, and there were multiple incidents of mines detonating. It is only natural that such incidents would have an impact and would prevent access to the sea.'

166 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc A/HRC/45/6 (2020), para. 52; "Mines ..Houthi handcuffs shackling Yemeni home restoration process" Project Masam (2020); Fields of Death, p. 32; "Marwan Youssef Taleb's story" Project Masam (2022); "Fears take hold of Yemen Red Sea Coast civilians already reeling from presence of mines and IEDs as tensions escalate," Project Masam (2024).

167 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/45/CRP.7 (2020), para. 122.

168 Statement by Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the NCIHVHR; See also Project Masam. *When the earth becomes a casualty: How landmines devastate Yemen's environment.* Medium. (2025).

169 "The Landmine Crisis in Yemen," Musaala (2024).

170 A 37 years old fishermen IDP originally from Al Hudaydah stated 'The journey was dangerous because of landmines planted by the Houthis.'

171 "Manual Mine Clearance intervention in Yemen" DRC (2024); IOM, *Life Becomes More Comfortable for Families Displaced on Yemen's West Coast* (2023); "Yemen: Houthi Landmines Claim Lives, Livelihoods Cease Use of Banned Mines; Accelerate Demining Operations" HRW (2024); Fields of Death, p. 36.

172 Interviewee No. 100134A, 26 July 2025.

173 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, 23 March 2023, para. 49 ('The Committee expresses concern about the high incidence of people, particularly children, being killed or maimed by landmines and unexploded ordnance.'). Landmine Monitor 2023. International Campaign to Ban Landmines; Adel Dashela, "The Calamity of Landmines in Yemen" Sada (2022); ('Yemen has been plagued by landmines for decades as a result of repeated political and military conflicts that have provoked instability.').

174 UNMAS, Programmes. Yemen; "Yemen: Civilian casualties halved since the start of the truce," NRC (2022).

175 Fields of Death; "The UN-Mediated Truce in Yemen: Impacts of the First Two Months," ACLED (2022); OCHA. Yemen Humanitarian Update - Issue 10/ October 2022.



A demining engineer from the MASAM project is clearing landmines in a remote area east of Al-Khawkhah. The photo was taken on August 12, 2023.

### 4.2.3 Reparations preferences expressed by mine victims

Reflecting the continuing risks described above, the fishermen affected by mines and interviewed for this study consistently identified the removal of explosive devices and prevention of further contamination as their most urgent priorities. Many emphasized the need for clearance of roads, residential areas, and coastal access points, describing ongoing fear as they continue to lose loved ones and livestock to these hazards.

Several interviewees expressed frustration at the perceived absence of effective assistance mechanisms to clear and identify contaminated areas to help mitigate and prevent harm. A fisherman from Dhubab, described the normalization of risk in daily life: *'We have tried to adapt to their presence as an unavoidable risk, but we continue to lose loved ones and livestock.'* He expressed hope that local authorities and specialized demining organizations would support clearance efforts and noted the lack of assistance available to affected families, noting

*'there is no official, private, or charitable concern for the victims' families in our area.'* He also called for accountability for those responsible for planting landmines in the area.<sup>176</sup>

While the Houthi armed group has not engaged in, nor supported, mine clearance efforts in areas outside of their control, multiple local and international organizations are engaged in or supporting demining activities in Yemen. The Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC), operating under the National Mine Action Committee (NMAC), is the organization responsible for coordinating and implementing mine action projects across the country.<sup>177</sup> Following the fragmentation of state institutions during the conflict, however, YEMAC has operated in parallel structures, commonly referred to as YEMAC-DFA (north) and YEMAC-IRG (south).<sup>178</sup> International operators conducting or supporting emergency mine clearance – primarily in areas under the control of the IRG – include Project Masam (a Saudi-funded de-mining project from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center),<sup>179</sup> the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Humanitarian disarmament and Peacebuilding

<sup>176</sup> Interviewee No. 100130A, 14 August 2025.

<sup>177</sup> "Departure of the Devil: Landmines and Livelihoods in Yemen. The Yemen Mine Action Centre," GICHD (2006) ("The National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) was established in June 1998 to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine-action strategy. Furthermore, the YEMAC was established in January 1999 as the implementing body of the NMAC with the primary responsibility of coordinating all mine-action activities in the country.').

<sup>178</sup> Mine Action Review. Yemen.

<sup>179</sup> Project Masam.

Sector,<sup>180</sup> the Halo Trust (HALO),<sup>181</sup> and the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).<sup>182</sup> UNMAS provides strategic and technical advice on mine action, including support to the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA).<sup>183</sup>

Mine clearance in Yemen remains a slow and complex process that exceeds current national capacity. Available reporting indicates that mine action efforts have largely focused on emergency, life-saving interventions and civilian infrastructure, rather than systematic or comprehensive clearance.<sup>184</sup> YEMAC has reported progress in clearing mines in some government-controlled areas of Al-Hudaydah governorate. However, clearance efforts in Houthi-controlled areas have faced significant access and operational constraints. Reporting indicates that the Houthis have actively obstructed mine-clearing efforts, preventing YEMAC from operating in their territories and denying them access to information regarding mine emplacement including maps.<sup>185</sup> Environmental factors, including shifting terrain and coastal currents, further complicate clearance efforts.<sup>186</sup>

These operations have also been affected by funding limitations. In 2023, the cessation of funding through UNDP significantly reduced YEMAC-IRG activities,<sup>187</sup> including reductions in personnel, suspension of survey and clearance operations, and a shift toward responding primarily to emergency call-outs.<sup>188</sup> Some organizations have also raised concerns regarding adherence to international mine action standards in certain contexts, citing reports of unsafe clearance practices.<sup>189</sup> These concerns underscore the importance of sustained technical oversight, adequate funding, and compliance with established international mine action norms.

In 2024, two international demining organizations

signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with YEMAC-DFA (north) to conduct activities in areas under Houthi control, potentially expanding access for clearance operations.<sup>190</sup>

Despite ongoing clearance initiatives, significant contamination persists along Yemen's western coast. The continuing presence of landmines and sea mines not only poses immediate risks to life, livelihood and access to food but also illustrates the structural and long-term nature of the harm suffered by fishing communities. Addressing this contamination is therefore not solely a matter of humanitarian response, but also forms part of the broader obligations relating to protection, remediation, and reparative measures for affected civilians.

In addition to guarantees of non-repetition through mine clearance, fishermen frequently identified financial compensation as a priority. Interviewees reported losses related to medical expenses, lost income, damage to boats and equipment and long-term disability. Many indicated that the provision of fishing boats and engines would enable them to restore their livelihoods and regain a measure of independence.

A fisherman and farmer from Al-Mukha District who was injured in a landmine explosion in October 2017 stated:

*I hope the mines are removed and that people stop planting them, so we can walk safely. I don't know who to ask, and I have no knowledge about how to seek redress and justice. I hope to get a boat and engine, so I can work and earn a living.*<sup>191</sup>

Victims also emphasized the need for medical and psychological support. A fisherman injured in a landmine explosion in 2023, expressed the need for

180 DRC, Video: DRC Manual Mine Clearance intervention in Yemen (2024).

181 The HALO Trust (HALO).

182 Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

183 Mine Action Review. Yemen; UNMAS also records landmines and ERW incidents on a weekly basis and publishes monthly updates; UNMHA mandate ends in March 2026.

184 Mine Action Review. Yemen. Clearing the mines 2023.

185 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/45/CRP.7 (2020), para. 125.

186 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019).

187 Mine Action Review. Yemen; Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction 2024-Yemen-Art7Report-for2023, p. 11.

188 Mine Action Review. Yemen. Clearing the mines 2024; Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction 2024-Yemen-Art7Report-for2023.

189 Fields of Death, p. 23 ('In many monitored cases, demining personnel allowed civilians, including crowds of children, to stand just meters away from active demining operations. They moved and handled mines without removing detonators and carried out their work without protective equipment, such as blast helmets or bulletproof vests.'). HRW Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Yemen. Review of Yemen's periodic report for the 67<sup>th</sup> Pre-Session September 2020 ('Demining efforts suffer from poor coordination, misinformation, and inadequate training, and do not comply with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)').

190 Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and DRC. Mine Action Review. Yemen.

191 Interviewee No. 100152A, 17 July 2025.

financial compensation, further surgery to remove residual shrapnel from his abdomen, and a fishing boat with an engine to help him earn a living. He also highlighted the importance of psychological support to cope with the trauma of the incident and its aftermath.<sup>192</sup>

For those who have been forcibly displaced, mine clearance was described as essential to any safe and dignified return. Displaced fishermen emphasized that the continued presence of landmines in their homes, villages, and surrounding waters as well as ongoing conflict prevents their return and obstructs restoration of their livelihoods. As one displaced fisherman originally from al-Hudaydah stated: *‘We want the Houthis to leave, and for the cities and the sea to be cleared of mines.’*<sup>193</sup>

A fisherman displaced from Al Jarrahi District in Al Hudaydah Governorate to the Al Ribat IDP camp in Lahj Governorate, expressed a similar view: *‘We hope the mines will be cleared from our village, that Houthi forces will leave, and that we receive psychological and financial support.’*<sup>194</sup>

In addition to mine clearance and compensation, several interviewees described acute material hardship. While not always articulated explicitly as a reparations claim, interview observations and testimony indicated that prolonged economic disruption and displacement have left some families struggling to meet basic nutritional needs, which in turn affects recovery, health, and overall well-being.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Interviewee No. 100153A, 5 July 2025.

<sup>193</sup> Interviewee No. 100115A, 19 July 2025.

<sup>194</sup> Interviewee No. 100118A, 30 June 2025.

<sup>195</sup> Interview Notes, Interviewee No. 100154A, 28 September 2025.



*Fishing boats at the fishermen's harbor in the Yakhtal area of Al-Mukha district. The photo was taken on July 9, 2025.*

### 4.3. Detentions and abductions at sea by Eritrea

During the course of this research, the field team conducted interviews with 36 fishermen who had been detained while fishing and 10 wives of fishermen who had been detained. Among the 36 fishermen interviewed for report, 33 alleged detention by Eritrean naval forces.<sup>196</sup> Some interviewees reported being arbitrarily detained multiple times.<sup>197</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Interceptions and arrests at sea impacting fishing communities

Yemeni fishermen operating in the Red Sea report ongoing insecurity and conduct affecting their liberty, safety, and livelihoods. Testimonies collected for this report describe patterns of arbitrary arrest, detention, and enforced disappearance at sea, as well as damage, destruction, and confiscation of their boats and fishing equipment, forced labor, and torture and ill-treatment by Eritrean naval forces.

While a significant proportion of interviewees at-

tributed their detention to Eritrean naval forces, other actors have also been implicated in arrests and detentions of fishermen, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the Houthis, the National Resistance/Tariq Saleh's Forces, and the Giants Brigade. This report places particular emphasis on allegations involving Eritrean forces because the majority of former detainees interviewed reported having been detained by them. The recurring nature of these allegations, combined with the relatively limited international documentation of such incidents, warrants focused examination.

Reports of arrests and detentions of Yemeni fishermen by Eritrean forces predate the current armed conflict in Yemen.<sup>198</sup> However, interviews and local officials indicated that the frequency of such incidents appears to have increased following the escalation of hostilities in Yemen in late 2014 and the resulting instability in the area.<sup>199</sup> Abdul Hakeem Mohammed Qaed Mahdi, director of the fish landing center in Al-Mokha (Taizz), identified arrests as one of the main challenges affecting fishermen and their families.<sup>200</sup>

Despite local reporting on arrests of Yemeni fishermen at sea,<sup>201</sup> international attention to these al-

<sup>196</sup> The other three fishermen reported being detained by either Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the Houthis, or the Giants Brigade.

<sup>197</sup> Five of 33 fishermen detained by Eritrean naval forces reported being detained more than once.

<sup>198</sup> Peter Dutton, "Case concerning Sovereignty and Maritime Delimitation (Eritrea v. Yemen)," U.S.-Asia Law Institute. New York University School of Law. Maritime Dispute Resolution Project. ("The Eritrean Navy has arrested and detained hundreds of Yemeni fishermen in the years since the Permanent Court of Arbitration awards from 1998 and 1999."), pp. 11-12.

<sup>199</sup> A Plethora of Abuses; Notably, in September 2025, Saudi Arabia, UK, US, and other countries have launched an International Partnership to Strengthen Yemen's Maritime Security. The partnership focuses on combating smuggling, piracy, and human trafficking in Yemen's vital waterways. Republic of Yemen. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. [International Partnership Launched to Enhance Yemen's Maritime Security \(2025\)](#).

<sup>200</sup> Interviewee No. 100150A, 15 July 2025.

<sup>201</sup> E.g., "Al-Mashhad publishes new details about the fishermen's case," *Al-Mashhad* (2022); "Eritrean authorities release 72 Yemeni fishermen after weeks of detention," *Almasdar Online* (2024); "Yemen: Eritrea releases 53 fishermen days after detaining them and confiscating their boats," *Yemen Future* (2025); "Yemeni fishermen caught in Eritrean nets," *Khuyut* (2021); "Eritrea arrests and kills Yemeni fishermen and confiscates their boats," *Yemen Media Center* (2019).

legations has been limited.<sup>202</sup> Testimonies collected for this study describe recurring interception and detention of fishermen while working in the Red Sea. However, the overall number of fishermen detained remains unclear.<sup>203</sup>

Testimonies collected for this report describe recurring incidents in which Eritrean naval forces pursued and intercepted Yemeni fishermen operating in the Red Sea. Interviewees reported that, after being intercepted, they were harassed, mistreated, and arbitrarily detained, along with those with them, in some cases including children.<sup>204</sup>

Many Yemeni fishermen said they were fishing within Yemeni territorial waters<sup>205</sup> at the time they were pursued and then arbitrarily detained by Eritrean naval forces, sometimes for long periods of time.<sup>206</sup> The IRG has publicly accused the Eritrean government of attacking Yemeni fishermen in Yemeni waters and has called for their release and the cessation of attacks.<sup>207</sup>

Others, however, including 15 of the 33 fishermen formerly detained by Eritrea and interviewed for this report, said they were detained while fishing in Eritrean territorial waters.<sup>208</sup> Several interviewees explained that declining fish stocks along the Yemeni coast had pushed fishermen to operate farther from traditional fishing grounds. They described dredging activities and the destruction or erosion of coral reefs as contributing to the de-

pletion of fish stocks in their traditional fishing grounds in Yemeni territorial waters.<sup>209</sup>

As one fisherman stated:

“There’s nothing left to catch here because of the large trawlers and how they’ve damaged the coral reefs in our fishing grounds. For a long time, these trawlers would come into our sea, no one would stop them. We don’t even know who they belong to... Now, our whole sea has no coral reefs left; it’s all just sand. The fish don’t stay here anymore; they just pass through.”<sup>210</sup>

Similarly, Hashim Mohammed Ahmed Al-Rifae, head of Al-Ziyadi Cooperative Association and the Chief of the fishermen in Al-Mukha District, stated:

“Yemeni fishermen go to Eritrea because, here, the sea has been overfished by Chinese, Egyptian, and Korean companies. They did industrial fishing with bottom trawling, which destroyed the coral reefs. This left no grazing areas for our fish, so they go to Eritrean waters because there are coral reefs there.”<sup>211</sup>

202 HRW. *World Report 2014: Eritrea* (“The Yemeni Foreign Ministry complained that Eritrea seized Yemeni fishing vessels in international waters and detained their crews. In October, Eritrea released 81 Yemeni fishermen held for 18 months without trial; Yemen claims another 519 remain jailed.”); The US Department of State- 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Yemen 2022 quoted SAM: ‘According to a report published by SAM, on the morning of May 1, 10 fishermen from the al-Rabsa neighborhood, al-Hawk District, al-Hudaydah Governorate, went out for a fishing trip. After their boat broke down at five o’clock in the evening, Naval Forces – under the command of Major General Yahya Salah – arrested the fishermen and took them to an unknown destination. There was no update as to the fishermen’s status or location at year’s end’; “Eritrea frees 37 Yemen fishermen,” *Middle East Monitor* (2018).

203 According to sources affiliated with the Houthis, over seven thousand incidents of abduction of Yemeni fishermen have been recorded since 2015. Ministry of Fisheries: More than seven thousand kidnapping crimes recorded against Yemeni fishermen (2023). <https://www.ansarollah.com.ye/archives/607548>

204 Some testimonies recount detention of children as young as six, eight, or ten years old. E.g., Interviewee No. 100164A, 5 August 2025; Interviewee No. 100113A, 15 June 2025.

205 Yemen’s territorial waters extend up to 12 nautical miles from its baseline (Fisheries Jurisdiction (United Kingdom v. Iceland), Merits, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1974, p. 3). Beyond this, the country has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending up to 200 nautical miles, where it has sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage natural resources, including fishing (UNCLOS, Article 57).

206 E.g., Interviewee No. 100105A, 26 May 2025; Interviewee No. 100111A, May 2025, Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025; See also, Ali Mayas, “Continuous Eritrean Naval Incursion into Yemeni Territorial Waters,” Khuyut (2024) (“These forces actively pursue Yemeni fishermen with boats and warships, opening fire on them, detaining them arbitrarily, forcibly disappearing them for extended periods, and subjecting them to torture”); Wahb Al-Din Awadi, “Yemeni fishermen caught in Eritrean nets,” Khuyut (2021).

207 Wahb Al-Din Awadi, “Yemeni fishermen caught in Eritrean nets,” Khuyut (2021); “Eritrea frees 37 Yemen fishermen,” *Middle east monitor* (2018); Facebook post, Fahd Salim Kafain – Minister of Fisheries, 19 June 2020; Facebook post, Fahd Salim Kafain – Minister of Fisheries, 4 June 2020; Al-Masdar Online. Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, 21 January 2024. According to the Foreign Minister the fishermen’s file is always present at any Yemeni-Eritrean meeting, and the number of those released during 2023 reached about 850 fishermen.

208 To fish in Eritrean waters, a permit must be issued by Eritrea, as stated by experts and witnesses interviewed. According to the Director of the Fishing Landing Center in Al Mukha and according to a member of the coast guard, Yemeni fishermen are required to pay exorbitant fees of up to \$3,000 per month. This represents a significant increase from the previous rate of \$2,000 and is a stark contrast to the less than \$400 charged before the conflict. This inflated cost renders obtaining a license extremely difficult, if not impossible, for traditional fishermen, creating yet another barrier to their right to a sufficient livelihood and access to food sources. (Interviewee No. 100150A, 15 July 2025); Interviewee No. 100177A, 2 October 2025.). Some of those interviewed indicated that the number of traditional fishermen holding these permits is very limited and they are mostly large boat owners. Even when permits are granted, there is still a risk of detention, as these documents do not provide adequate protections.

209 Wahb Al-Din Awadi, “Yemeni fishermen caught in Eritrean nets,” Khuyut (2021); “Developing Yemen Fishing Industry,” Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies (2020) (“In the last decade, the sector witnessed major increasing environmental challenges, such as the destruction of coral reefs, pollution, climate change impacts and weather events such as cyclones, all of which have almost certainly impacted Yemen’s fish stocks”).

210 Interviewee No. 100138A, 3 September 2025.

211 Interviewee No. 100149A, 4 July 2025.

### 4.3.2 Harms caused by detentions at sea to fishing communities

These detentions caused multiple and different forms of harms, including direct physical harm to fishermen during the interception and subsequent detention, unlawful deprivation of liberty, damage to and seizure of property, and psychological harm to fishermen and their families.

Interviewees described physical harm, including in some cases deaths, as well as psychological harm occurring during or in connection with detention. As a fisherman from Al Mokha stated:

*“We were subjected to beatings and torture with sticks and iron chains, as well as being pelted with stones. I still bear the marks of beating and torture on my back and legs, and I continue to suffer from nerve damage due to arterial tearing. To this day, I feel humiliated.”<sup>212</sup>*

In multiple cases, fishermen reported that Eritrean forces threatened and used force during the interception. One fisherman, who said he and other members of his crew were in international waters when intercepted, said:

*“They pointed their weapons at us, forcing us to halt our fishing. Without warning, they began to brutally beat us with thick sticks and the stocks of their rifles, targeting our heads and various parts of our bodies. The assault lasted for more than an hour, during which I lost consciousness. After this violent attack, they transferred us and our boat to the Eritrean region of Terma.”<sup>213</sup>*

After the interception, interviewees said that Eritrean naval forces abducted them and transported them to Eritrean islands or formal and informal detention sites in Eritrea, where they were held for periods ranging from days to months and even years in some cases. The testimonies collected cited several detention locations in Eritrea, including Asmara, Assab, Fatma, Halib, Massawa, Tarma/Tarmah/Terma/Ras Terma/Ras Derma, and Tiyo.

Former detainees consistently reported that they were not informed of the reasons for their arrest

<sup>212</sup> Interviewee No. 100114A, 27 June 2025.

<sup>213</sup> Interviewee No. 100108A, 2 July 2025.

<sup>214</sup> Interviewee No. 100138A, 3 September 2025.

<sup>215</sup> Interviewee No. 100131A, 20 August 2025 (“They never allowed us to contact our families, even though we asked many times. Our families had no idea what happened to us. They did not know if we had drowned, if our engine had failed (because our engine was old and used to break down often).”)

<sup>216</sup> See also, *A Plethora of Abuses*.

<sup>217</sup> E.g., Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025; See also *ibid*.

or detention and were not questioned about any alleged conduct that might justify their confinement. They stated that no formal charges were communicated to them, that they were denied access to legal counsel, and that they were not brought before a judicial authority. According to their accounts, detainees were not afforded an opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention and were given no indication of its expected duration.

A 38-year-old victim recounted:

*“They claim that we are trespassing on Eritrean territory, even though we are actually within Yemeni territorial waters. If you try to tell them that you are in Yemeni waters, they immediately respond with violence and torture... They did not question or interrogate us at all. There is no investigation.”<sup>214</sup>*

Furthermore, in the 33 cases involving Eritrea documented for this study, none of the detentions were disclosed to family members, and the fishermen's phones were confiscated, preventing them from contacting anyone.<sup>215</sup>

Regardless of where and how the fishermen were arrested, interviewees reported facing abuse during their time in detention. Most reported that they did not have access to adequate food and clean water during their time in detention, and that the facilities were overcrowded, unsanitary and unfit for habitation. All said they were forced to perform hard labor. Some fishermen reported being imprisoned incommunicado, subjected to torture and deprived of adequate food and water.<sup>216</sup> In some instances, interviewees alleged that other fishermen that were detained with them had been killed or had died while in detention.<sup>217</sup>

Most fishermen interviewed said they did not have access to adequate food or clean water while in detention. One fisherman from Al-Mokha recounted, ‘Each person received two pieces of bani, but the bread was rotten and unsanitary, often containing worms and insects.’

He described the water as filthy and contaminated by the greasy substance that coats fish scales, among other things:

*You could only drink it by covering your mouth with your shirt and trying to filter it that way, a makeshift effort to make it barely drinkable amidst the dirt, grit, small worms, and other debris. Sometimes, it was impossible to drink at all, and we even ended up getting sick from it.*<sup>218</sup>

Another fisherman who had been detained for 19 days stated, *‘The water they provided was filthy, and the food was equally unhygienic. This severely impacted my health. My kidneys stopped functioning properly due to the contaminated water and my body became swollen as a result.’*<sup>219</sup>

All former detainees interviewed reported being forced to perform hard labor during their detention,<sup>220</sup> and some believed this was the primary reason for their detention in Eritrea, as their release coincided with the completion of the work.<sup>221</sup> One fisherman recounted how they were made to work from 6 to 6, *‘as if we were their slaves’*.<sup>222</sup> Another one, who was detained for 29 days, described his experience:

*Every day was filled with backbreaking labor – stone work, concrete mixing, and construction. We were even required to carry their larger boats to shore, dig a spot for them, lift them off the ground, and then clean them under the threat of violence. We had to scrape off the barnacles that had accumulated from being at sea.*<sup>223</sup>

Detention facilities were described as overcrowded, unsanitary, and unfit for habitation. One former detainee described a facility in Tarma/Tarmah/Terma/Ras Terma/Ras Derma: *‘We spent one night in prison, which was entirely unfit for human habitation. It was an enclosure with four walls, a small portion of which was roofed with straw and wood. There were no mattresses, forcing us to sit on the dirt.’*<sup>224</sup>

Released fishermen also explained that Eritrean forces did not provide those who were injured or ill with adequate medical care during their deten-

tion.<sup>225</sup> One former detainee recounted being held alongside a fisherman suffering from kidney complications and blood in his urine. According to his account, although the detainee was eventually transferred to a hospital in Tiyo, he died en route. Interviewees further stated that requests to repatriate his body to Yemen were refused.<sup>226</sup>

Many of those interviewed reported material losses resulting from the damage, destruction, or confiscation of boats and equipment, as well as prolonged loss of income during detention periods and following release. During interceptions, Eritrean forces often seized the fishing boats and equipment of the fishermen.<sup>227</sup> In every testimony collected for this report, fishing boats and equipment were reported as confiscated and never returned, even after the owners’ were released.

Without the capital required to replace these assets, fishermen are often unable to resume fishing.<sup>228</sup> These losses significantly undermine fishermen’s ability to sustain their livelihoods and meet their families’ basic needs, often forcing them to transition from being boat owners to daily-wage laborers, reducing their income and exacerbating the economic challenges that they and their families were already facing. Losing their main (and often sole) source of income directly undermines household food security, with interviewees reporting ongoing difficulty securing sufficient daily meals.

One released fisherman described the long-term consequences:

*Financially, I am in a dire state because my money, equipment, and boat were confiscated. I have nothing left to feed my family. Now, I work with others for a small amount that is barely enough to provide daily sustenance for myself and my family. [...] My father borrowed from acquaintances to feed my siblings at home. [...] The loan remains unpaid to this day.*<sup>229</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Interviewee No. 100164A, 5 August 2025.

<sup>219</sup> Interviewee No. 100113A, 15 June 2025.

<sup>220</sup> E.g., Interviewee No. 100162A, 26 August 2025 and Interviewee No. 100166A, 8 September 2025.

<sup>221</sup> E.g., Interviewee No. 100113A, 15 June 2025.

<sup>222</sup> Interviewee No. 100125A, 27 July 2025.

<sup>223</sup> Interviewee No. 100164A, 5 August 2025.

<sup>224</sup> Interviewee No. 100107A, 3 July 2025.

<sup>225</sup> Interviewee No. 100109A, 25 May 2025 (‘No proper medical treatment was available—any illness, regardless of its nature, was treated with painkillers.’); Interviewee No. 100114A, 27 June 2025 (‘No medical care of any sort was provided throughout the duration of our detention’).

<sup>226</sup> Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025.

<sup>227</sup> See e.g., A Plethora of Abuses.

<sup>228</sup> The journey of no return, Arij (2018).

<sup>229</sup> Interviewee No. 100112A, 25 June 2025.

For some families, losing their boats was a significant factor triggering their displacement, as fishermen relocated in search of alternative income opportunities.<sup>230</sup>

A 40-year-old fishermen from Al Mokha, stated:

*My boat and money were taken, and my financial situation has deteriorated; prices are no longer what they once were, and I cannot maintain my standard of living as I did at the outset of my career. Since they began seizing our boats and trawling, we are unable to find fish. I used to support six people—my parents and siblings, who were at the time six, seven, eight, nine, and twelve years old. The consequences have been reduced spending, inadequate nutrition, hunger, and the loss of peace of mind.*<sup>231</sup>

The physical, psychological, and socio-economic impacts of detention at sea extend beyond the individual fishermen to their families and broader communities. Abductions and arbitrary detentions at sea significantly disrupt livelihoods, depriving households of their primary or sole income earners.<sup>232</sup> During periods of detention, whether lasting days, months, or in some cases years, fishermen are unable to work, resulting in significant and sustained loss of income. Meanwhile, the affected families suffer acute financial hardship during these periods, with immediate consequences for food security.

With no formal compensation or structured support mechanisms available, households resort to difficult coping strategies, including reducing food intake, withdrawing children from school, selling personal belongings such as gold and livestock, and accumulating significant debt. Women and girls often assume additional economic responsibilities to compensate for lost income.<sup>233</sup>

One fisherman explained:

*My family sold gold worth one and a half million Yemeni riyals. They also borrowed 750,000 Yemeni riyals from traders and relatives during my abduction because they could not afford basic necessities.*<sup>234</sup>

Wives of detained fishermen described severe psychological strain while attempting to sustain their families. The wife of the released fisherman quoted above shared her perspective:

*I could not provide the basic needs for my family and his father's family. Both families depended completely on him. It was also very difficult for me to afford medicine and baby formula. All members of both families became ill from stress, especially the children. I had to keep borrowing money, food, and medicine, until they finally closed my account with them. So I decided to sell my gold for one and a half million Yemeni riyals. I continued to provide for the needs of both families. After my husband was released from detention and returned to us, he found that I had sold my gold and was in debt for 750,000 Yemeni riyals.*<sup>235</sup>

Beyond the prolonged dependency, debt, reduced consumption and displacement, many formerly detained fishermen described significant physical and psychological consequences arising from their detention. Interviewees reported injuries sustained during arrest and detention, ongoing pain, and lasting trauma.

A fisherman recounted:

*I will never forget the beatings, the humiliation, or the sight of my friend, the navigator, screaming in agony before succumbing to his injuries months later. How can I forget? How can I lead a normal life after all of this? I developed a phobia that kept me from even looking at the sea, the very thing I depended on for my livelihood.*<sup>236</sup>

230 Interviewee No. 100134A, 26 July 2025 ('They looted my father's boat, the fuel barrels, and all our fishing equipment. This was our second shock. For this reason, my father and I and our family decided to flee and were displaced to Aden on 20 June 2019'); For more information on displacement see below [Displacement as a result of multiple harmful patterns of conduct](#).

231 Interviewee No. 100111A, May 2025.

232 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\* (2019).

233 See "Houthi Announce Killing of Yemeni Fisherman by Eritrean Forces," Yemen Monitor (2024); A Barran Press report revealed that many coastal families lost their sole breadwinner due to arrest or boat confiscation, forcing women into marginal jobs to secure daily food in the absence of any formal compensation or support programs; [International standards on enforced or involuntary disappearances Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#). ('The serious economic hardships affecting victims of enforced disappearances and their relatives are most often borne by women.').

234 Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025.

235 Interviewee No. 100121A, 3 July 2025.

236 Interviewee No. 100108A, 2 July 2025.

Similarly, a fisherman detained for two months in 2024 stated: *‘I couldn’t leave my home for a week because of the trauma, torture, violations, and ill-treatment I experienced.’*<sup>237</sup>

Interviewees further indicated that the risk of detention deters other fishermen from operating in certain areas of the Red Sea, thereby limiting access to fishing grounds, reducing income, and contributing to decreased fish supply within coastal communities.<sup>238</sup>

### 4.3.3 Reparation preferences expressed by detention victims

Fishermen interviewed for this report consistently expressed a sense of abandonment by authorities responsible for their protection. They described a lack of meaningful engagement by Yemeni authorities and an absence of accessible mechanisms to address conduct creating harm to fishermen by Eritrean forces.

Although Yemen and Eritrea have a formal agreement regarding cases of detention of each other’s nationals at sea, the system does not appear to work effectively in practice. According to the *MoU between the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen for Cooperation in the Areas of Maritime Fishing, Trade, Investment, and Transportation (1994)*, when authorities of one State detain fishermen from the other, they are required to promptly notify the relevant authorities of the detainees’ names, the vessels involved, the property seized, and the reasons and date of detention.<sup>239</sup> However, based on the information and testimonies collected for this report, there is no indication that this notification protocol is implemented in practice. Interviewees reported that family members were not informed of the detention or whereabouts of their relatives. In the documented cases, relatives usually assumed the fishermen had been detained when they did not return. They learned of detentions mainly through informal channels, such as other fishermen or community networks.<sup>240</sup>

Relatedly, and based on the interviews conducted, there appears to be no official process or mechanism available to facilitate the release of detained

Yemeni fishermen. In some cases, releases were reportedly facilitated through mediation by the Eritrean ambassador in Yemen.<sup>241</sup> More commonly, however, interviewees described reliance on informal networks, personal connections, and tribal mediation.<sup>242</sup>

This absence of an accessible and structured process leaves families without clear guidance on how to seek the release of their loved ones. Some families reported seeking assistance through Yemeni businessmen or intermediaries with connections in Eritrea. One fisherman stated that his release, along with that of others detained with him, was secured through a ransom paid by a Yemeni business intermediary from Al-Mukha who negotiated with Eritrean authorities. Upon release, the fishermen were received by the Head of Al-Ziyadi Cooperative Association and the Chief of Fishermen in Al-Mukha District, and several prominent community leaders and officials in Al Mukha.<sup>243</sup>

In the absence of a formal release mechanism or state-led mediation process, community-based actors have played a central role in responding to detentions. The Chief of Fishermen in Al-Mukha District described the role of local associations:

*“The association’s role is to help find missing fishermen at sea and to work on releasing those detained in Eritrea. Every day we search for them, sometimes finding them alive, sometimes dead. Some have died, and some have been detained in Eritrea where their possessions are confiscated. Others call us from Eritrea asking us to come for them. I need a big boat to bring our people back.*

Similarly, Abdul Hakeem Mohammed Qaed Mahdi, Director of the Fish Landing Center in Al-Mukha, explained that some fishermen turn to personal or tribal mediation to recover their boats and engines: *‘Not everyone does this, but some prefer to resolve the issue with the help of a local sheikh, often offering money or gifts to reclaim their property.’*

While reports of detention can be submitted by family members or friends to the fisheries corporation, local authorities, the chief fishermen’s rep-

<sup>237</sup> Interviewee No. 100110A, June 2025.

<sup>238</sup> During the interviews, fishermen expressed that their detentions impact not only on individuals and their families but also the broader community, particularly regarding the supply of fish to the local market. This situation leads to decreased production levels and increased prices.

<sup>239</sup> *MoU between the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen for Cooperation in the Areas of Maritime Fishing, Trade, Investment, and Transportation (1994)*, para. 5.

<sup>240</sup> E.g., Interviewee No. 100116A, 19 July 2025; Interviewee No. 100121A, 3 July 2025; Interviewee No. 100140A, 20 August 2025; Interviewee No. 100151A, 16 October 2025.

<sup>241</sup> The field team made multiple attempts to interview members of the IRG, including the ambassador to Eritrea, in order to gather additional information on this issue. These efforts were unsuccessful and no further information was obtained as a result.

<sup>242</sup> E.g., Interviewee No. 100125A, 27 July 2025; Interviewee No. 100131A, 20 August 2025.

<sup>243</sup> Interviewee No. 100125A, 27 July 2025; Interviewee No. 100131A, 20 August 2025.

representative, or the fishermen's agent, interviewees indicated that these mechanisms do not provide a predictable or reliable pathway to securing release. Most former detainees interviewed said they were uncertain how their release was arranged.<sup>244</sup>

In addition to the lack of clear procedures to facilitate release, fishermen interviewed also raised the lack of pathways to securing redress for harms they suffered as a result of their detention. The absence of legal redress, the failure to investigate and prosecute those responsible for conduct in violation of applicable law, and the lack of reparations has deepened feelings of frustration and eroded trust in public institutions.

As one 25-year-old fisherman explained:

*I wish I could ask for compensation but the government does not raise these issues with us. They do not care about this matter because there is no office or department to receive complaints from fishermen detained in Eritrea. Even the fishermen's associations do not care about what happened to us. We have not seen them make any demands on our behalf.*<sup>245</sup>

Across interviews, preferences for reparations reflected a few consistent priorities: financial or in-kind compensation for their material losses, acknowledgment of the harm caused, accountability, and structural guarantees of non-repetition.

Many fishermen emphasized the need for financial compensation at least sufficient to replace confiscated boats, engines and fishing equipment. For them, monetary compensation was not only abstract redress but a means of restoring their capacity to earn a livelihood and provide food for their families. One fisherman from Al Mokha articulated his preference for either the replacement of his boat, engine, and all other fishing equipment confiscated by Eritrean authorities, or alternatively, the provision of a monetary sum equivalent to the value of his losses, so that he may acquire new fishing tools and resume his work as before.<sup>246</sup> Another interviewee stated: 'I prefer they pay it in one lump sum. That would help me return with a boat to earn a living.'<sup>247</sup>

Others expressed preference for in-kind compensation, particularly the direct provision of boats and equipment. A fisherman from Al Mokha explained: 'The best option would be to receive a fiberglass boat, an engine, and all the necessary equipment. If I were given those, it would be far more valuable than money – better than anything else.'<sup>248</sup>

Beyond compensation, many fishermen emphasized the need for acknowledgment and clarity regarding the violations they endured. Several expressed frustration at the absence of any official explanation or recognition of wrongdoing. As one fisherman stated: 'We want to know why these violations happened against us.'<sup>249</sup> For these victims, justice included not only financial redress but also transparency and recognition of the harm inflicted upon them.

Fishermen also consistently called for legal accountability for the arbitrary detentions, mistreatment, and seizure of their property. They stressed the importance of formal acknowledgment of wrongdoing and for those responsible to face legal consequences. A fisherman, who was previously detained, expressed his hope that proceedings would be initiated to address the detention of Yemeni fishermen in Eritrea and all crimes committed against fishermen in this context.

Interviewees also emphasized the need for systemic reform and preventive measures. Several fishermen linked reparations to broader regulation of the fishing sector, including stronger protection of territorial waters and action against destructive trawling practices that deplete fish stocks and damage coral reefs. As one fisherman noted: 'If trawling is stopped, the fish will return and remain in Yemeni waters, and I will have no need to go elsewhere.'<sup>250</sup>

Others stressed the need for systemic changes that would prevent future detentions. An interviewee described: 'It is important for us to see changes in the system to guarantee our protection, stop violations, and hold those who cause such harm accountable, so it does not happen to us again.'<sup>251</sup> Similarly, another fisherman expressed a desire for negotiated fishing permits or protective agreements that would reduce exposure to arrest and violence at sea, while acknowledging skepticism

244 E.g., Interviewee No. 100139A, 20 August 2025.

245 Interviewee No. 100120A, 3 July 2025.

246 Interviewee No. 100114A, 27 June 2025.

247 Interviewee No. 100115A, 19 July 2025.

248 Interviewee No. 100138A, 3 September 2025.

249 Interviewee No. 100159A, 3 September 2025.

250 Interviewee No. 100112A, 25 June 2025.

251 Interviewee No. 100159A, 3 September 2025.

ticism that such protection would materialize.<sup>252</sup>

For displaced fishermen, restoration of their previous lives, including safe return to their communities and an end to ongoing violations, was a central concern. As one interviewee stated: *‘What matters most is returning to our previous life and our area and addressing the damages we have faced by stopping the ongoing attacks and revealing the truth from those responsible for this harm.’*<sup>253</sup>

Overall, fishermen emphasized that reparations must extend beyond financial compensation. They called for formal acknowledgment of their suffering, restoration of livelihoods, psychological support, and guarantees that similar violations will not recur. For many, justice was understood not only as compensation for past harm, but as the restoration of dignity, protection at sea, and the ability to sustain their families without fear.

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<sup>252</sup> Interviewee No. 100138A, 3 September 2025.

<sup>253</sup> Interviewee No. 100159A, 3 September 2025.

# V. Displacement as a result of multiple harmful patterns of conduct



*Children playing in front of student tents at the Al-Yabli camp in Al-Khawkhah. The photo was taken on February 6, 2023.*

This section provides a concise factual overview of displacement as an overarching harm resulting from multiple actors' harmful patterns of conduct and the broader conflict-related insecurity affecting fishing communities along Yemen's west coast. The investigation team interviewed 21 fishermen and their family members who were displaced from Al Hudaydah Governorate to Aden<sup>254</sup> and Lahj. The section documents the drivers that triggered their flight, the immediate and longer-term harms experienced during displacement, the everyday challenges they face as IDPs, and their expressed needs and preferences for reparations.

By centering testimony from displaced fishing families, the section demonstrates how these intersecting patterns of conduct have produced durable harms that require targeted reparative responses.

<sup>254</sup> IOM, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Yemen* (2025) ('Cities like Aden have seen their populations double as they become a refuge for those fleeing the intense fighting in regions such as Hudaydah and Taizz').

## 5.1. Displacement impacting fishing communities

Many Yemeni fishermen and their families have been displaced from coastal communities along Yemen's west coast due to the patterns of conduct outlined in this report, as well as ongoing conflict-related insecurity that has undermined their livelihoods, access to food, and safety.<sup>255</sup> Entire fishing communities have relocated to southern and eastern governorates<sup>256</sup> in search of protection and alternate means of survival.<sup>257</sup>

Yemen continues to experience one of the largest internal displacement crises globally, with approximately 4.8 million people internally displaced.<sup>258</sup> In 2018, UNHCR identified the west coast of Yemen as one of the primary areas from where people had been displaced, reflecting the sustained impact of hostilities and related insecurity in the area.<sup>259</sup>

The drivers of displacement among fishing communities are cumulative and interconnected. Many interviewees reported experiencing or witnessing multiple serious incidents and patterns of conduct that forced them to leave their homes and communities. These included airstrikes attributed to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, landmines and sea mines laid by Houthi forces, arrests and confiscation of boats by Eritrean naval forces, and, more recently, heightened insecurity linked to the escalation of hostilities in the Red Sea.<sup>260</sup>

For example, the team interviewed a fisherman originally from a coastal village in Al-Khawkhah District (Al Hudaydah) who had been living with his family in an IDP camp in Aden since 2016. The fisherman experienced multiple harmful incidents that ultimately compelled him and his family to leave their home. In 2014, he was detained and beaten by Eritrean naval forces, and his boat and fishing equipment were seized, leaving him dependent on working on other people's boats at a significantly reduced income. The situation worsened on June 7,

2015, when he witnessed an Apache helicopter, allegedly affiliated with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, strike near Zuqar Island, killing his cousins and others with whom he was working. On March 15, 2016, his boat was destroyed in an attack at the fishing port in Al Hudaydah, which also killed fellow fishermen from his hometown.

After enduring these events, and facing the continued threat of landmines planted by Houthi forces, this fisherman, like many others, made the difficult decision to leave his home. Unable to continue fishing and provide for his family, he sold his wife's gold and remaining food supplies before relocating with his family to Aden governorate. Nearly a decade later, he and his family live in a makeshift camp for IDPs. They have never been able to return home.<sup>261</sup>

As fishermen felt forced to leave their homes and communities, some borrowed money to purchase basic food supplies, sold their boats or fishing equipment, or sold their wives' jewelry to cover transportation costs, which were often excessive and even exploitative, they said.<sup>262</sup> During interviews conducted in Aden and Lahj governorates, internally displaced fishing families described the fear and uncertainty that accompanied their journeys. 'We were displaced into the unknown,'<sup>263</sup> a fisherman expressed. Several spoke of anxiety about airstrikes, landmines along the road, and interrogations at checkpoints.

As one fisherman recounted:

*I decided to leave my home, knowing this journey would be fraught with unknown risks: possible airstrikes, harm from the Houthis, or encountering landmines on the road. I borrowed money from a relative to purchase basic food supplies for my family's journey to safety. Travel costs were exorbitant, bus drivers charged as much as 120,000 riyals or more, exploiting our vulnerability without regard for our circumstances.<sup>264</sup>*

255 "Developing Yemen Fishing Industry," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (2020).

256 Houthi Attacks Devastate Yemen's Fishermen, US Embassy Yemen (2024).

257 E.g., Interviewee No. 100118A, 30 June 2025; Interviewee No. 100135A, 28 June 2025.

258 OCHA, Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 (2025).

259 UNHCR, Thousands flee amid fresh violence in Yemen (2018).

260 According to witness expert Interviewee No. 100180A, 20 October 2025, 'the recent escalation of hostilities in the Red Sea has affected fishermen's livelihoods, their ability to fish, and their access to food. Significantly, in the West Coast, this has limited the practice of fishing activities in the Red Sea. There has been disruption due to airstrikes on the West Coast since 01 January. This caused a halt in fishing activities because the strikes place fishermen in danger. This has caused displacement to increase following these events. In general, displacement from the West Coast reached more than 3,000 families or more within the year.'

261 Interviewee No. 100137A, 5 August 2025.

262 E.g., Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025 stated 'I gathered some money, sold some belongings and a piece of my wife's gold, and took only clothes, some food for the journey, and a sack of flour'; Another fisherman, explained that they had to sell their fishing boat and leave their home behinds with all its belongings. Interviewee No. 100134A, 26 July 2025.

263 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025.

264 Interviewee No. 100118A, 30 June 2025.

A 40-year-old mother of seven and wife of a fisherman from Al Hudaydah similarly described the dangers of displacement:

*The displacement journey was fraught with danger. My cousin was on a public bus transporting passengers fleeing the area. The bus was bombed by the Coalition at a security checkpoint where the Houthi group was demanding ID cards. The Coalition aircraft bombed at that very moment. Because of this, I was in a state of fear and terror that we would be bombed like them. At the checkpoints, they made us sit and wait for hours to be interrogated. You feel as if you are not from this country. There was fear, exhaustion, hunger, and fatigue.*<sup>265</sup>

As these testimonies reflect, displacement among fishing communities is rarely the result of a single incident, but rather the cumulative effect of insecurity, loss of livelihoods, repeated exposure to violence, and the destruction or confiscation of essential fishing assets. For many families, departure from their coastal communities represented a last resort after their ability to fish, earn income, and access food had been systematically undermined. Many displaced fishermen reported being unable to resume fishing in their new locations. Barriers included the previous loss or confiscation of their boats and fishing equipment, difficulty obtaining fishing licenses, unfamiliarity with the new sea environment, security concerns about leaving their families alone in the camps, and resistance or lack of acceptance from established local fishing communities. As a result, most interviewees stated that they had been compelled to abandon fishing altogether and seek alternative forms of work.<sup>266</sup>

For many, fishing is the only profession they have ever known and transitioning to unfamiliar employment has been both economically and psychologically difficult. Several described struggling to secure consistent work, acquire new skills, or earn enough to cover food needs and other basic household expenses. One displaced fisherman explained:

*Displacement is the biggest challenge. Not being able to continue our fishing activities is a challenge, especially since I had to change jobs at this age. I had worked as a fisherman since I was*

*young, and now I have had to learn to ride a motorcycle after much difficulty, with the high costs and not having a stable income that is enough for us. Yes, displacement has affected us. We can no longer fish because there are no boats or equipment—they were left behind at home and I cannot buy new ones here.*<sup>267</sup>

## 5.2. Additional harms during displacement for fishing communities

In addition to the harms directly resulting from the patterns of conduct described above, displacement compounded existing vulnerabilities, disrupted social networks, increased indebtedness, and further impaired the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR), including the rights to food, work, housing, and an adequate standard of living, for members of fishing communities. While displaced, fishing households often find themselves among the most socio-economically fragile communities in Yemen, facing deteriorating living conditions and limited opportunities to restore their livelihoods.<sup>268</sup>

One displaced fisherman described the stark transformation in his family's circumstances: *'Our lives changed from living in luxury and providing all the family's needs to poverty and difficulty in living and providing a stable, secure life, and our lives became full of fear of the future and misery.'*<sup>269</sup>

Although some families received limited humanitarian assistance upon arrival to IDP camps, interviewees reported that the support was insufficient and often short-term. Over time, they faced many challenges, including overcrowded camps with inadequate housing, loss of fishing livelihoods, limited employment opportunities, rising food prices, and limited access to essential services. Several described resorting to negative coping strategies, such as skipping meals and withdrawing children from school to ease financial strain.<sup>270</sup>

While settling in new locations can provide fishing families with a degree of security, it has also introduced new forms of insecurity and deprivation, particularly in relation to housing and living condi-

265 Interviewee No. 100182A, 8 October 2025.

266 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025 ('I started the journey of searching for work; it was difficult for me, but I adapted to the new situation, and now I work, but not as a fisherman.').

267 Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025.

268 Houthis Attacks Devastate Yemen's Fishermen, US Embassy Yemen (2024).

269 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025.

270 IDMC, Country profile: Yemen.

tions. Some of the families interviewed were residing in IDP camps, while others who had the means opted to rent houses outside the camps due to overcrowding. Interviewees described dire housing conditions, including living in makeshift shelters constructed from tarpaulin and palm fronds, and lacking basic amenities such as running water, sanitation, windows, or doors.<sup>271</sup> As noted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Yemen, the housing available in IDP camps and for relocated communities in Yemen often suffers from severe deficiencies, including unreliable access to clean water, inadequate sanitation facilities, and limited water and electricity. These conditions heighten health risks and complicate food storage and preparation, contributing to malnutrition and preventable disease.<sup>272</sup>

One displaced fisherman explained: *‘I left the camp and rented a house due to the overcrowding there. Although I face sanitation issues in my new place, it’s still an improvement over the crowding in the camp.’* He described further that the house lacks doors and windows, allowing rainwater to seep in during storms. He added that the heat is unbearable, and there are no means to alleviate the discomfort.<sup>273</sup>

The wife of another displaced fisherman described similar conditions:

*We live in tents, wooden shelters, and for some, tarpaulins, while others rely on tree leaves for roofing. These shelters are unsafe. Rainwater seeps inside, and the heat is extreme, especially in summer, as we have no electricity. Recently, they installed rain covers to help protect us, but our lives remain unsafe. When the windy season comes, dust covers us, and strong winds tear away the tarpaulin roofs.*<sup>274</sup>

Beyond material hardship, displacement has intensified psychological distress and social fragmentation. In their new location, many displaced fishermen’s families reported a profound loss of cultural identity and a breakdown of community cohesion.

Their social lives have changed radically due to family separation, differences in customs and dialects, and an overwhelming sense of isolation from both the fishing profession and the larger host community. Some expressed feeling like strangers in their own country, while others recounted feeling treated like outsiders and discriminated against by the local residents.<sup>275</sup>

One fisherman stated: *‘As an IDP from the North, particularly from Al Hudaydah Governorate, I fear being targeted or arbitrarily detained during the widespread security campaigns. Therefore, I prefer to stay close to the camp and the surrounding area, so I can be near my family if anything happens.’*<sup>276</sup> Another expressed concern for his daughters *‘I do not feel safe; I feel like a stranger and I am not comfortable. I worry about my daughters because they are girls and our house has no doors, which makes me feel insecure.’*<sup>277</sup>

For some families, displacement has also intersected with pre-existing forms of marginalization. Members of the Muhamasheen community, who have historically faced caste-based discrimination,<sup>278</sup> reported experiencing layered vulnerability as both displaced persons and members of a stigmatized minority. One fisherman, a father and breadwinner of the household, explained that they are often referred to as *‘khadim’* (a derogatory term used for dark-skinned Muhamasheen people) and how the situation of black people in their communities is dire, especially for those who are also displaced. This dual identity of being both displaced and marginalized has intensified their struggle for rights and acceptance.<sup>279</sup>

Forced displacement has had a significant impact on food security. Fishing families described constant anxiety about securing sufficient food and income, with many reporting a deterioration in both the quality and diversity of their diets. One interviewee stated: *‘We face tremendous challenges. There is no real support for people like us, and we continue to struggle daily to secure food.’*<sup>280</sup>

271 Field monitors described the challenging housing conditions faced by internally displaced fishermen they interviewed. For instance, one family resides in a newly constructed house made of palm fronds situated in an empty area of Luhum. The most pressing issue is the lack of sanitation; the only facility available is a hole in the ground. The landowner has permitted them to stay but forbids any construction. Interviewee No. 100115A, 19 July 2025.

272 IOM, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Yemen* (2025).

273 Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025.

274 Interviewee No. 100181A, 8 October 2025.

275 Interviewee No. 100115A, 19 July 2025 (‘There is stigma. All you hear is, ‘You are an IDP, you are from Al Hudaydah,’ as if we are not human. I do not feel any bonds. On the contrary, I feel fear. I live in isolation in a separate tent.’).

276 Interviewee No. 100118A, 30 June 2025.

277 Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025.

278 ‘Muhamasheen Yemen,’ Minority Rights Group (2018); ‘Yemen Displacement in Taizz and Al Hudaydah,’ ACAPS (2018), p. 6.

279 Interviewee No. 100135A, 28 June 2025.

280 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025.

Before displacement, fishing enabled families to maintain relatively diverse and protein-rich diets. Interviewees described regularly consuming fish or shrimp when catches were good, supplemented by millet, milk, clarified butter, honey, fresh fruits and vegetables and occasional meat or chicken. Fresh seafood was widely accessible in coastal areas. Following displacement, however, diets narrowed significantly. Fishermen described relying increasingly on wheat, rice, vegetables, flatbread (locally known as roti), and beans, with fish becoming an occasional rather than a regular part of meals due to high market prices.<sup>281</sup>

Some interviewees described adopting coping strategies including adults limiting their food consumption to prioritize children, as many face malnutrition. *‘Sometimes I go without eating so my children can eat. Naturally, my children suffer as well – dizziness and malnutrition are common among displaced children. Most of the people I know struggle with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.’*<sup>282</sup>

According to UNHCR, over 2.5 million children in Yemen are not enrolled in school or not attending. Many have been forced to abandon their education to support their families at a very young age.<sup>283</sup> Displacement has further exacerbated these challenges, particularly for children with disabilities, and those belonging to marginalized communities.<sup>284</sup>

Some fishing families currently in IDP camps explained that, in some camps, there are no schools. In other cases, families are unable to afford school fees, uniforms, transportation, or learning materials. As one fisherman explained: *‘We face difficulties in education. Although my children are school-aged, none of them are studying. All my children are girls and before displacement, they used to study, but now the school is too far and I cannot afford the school fees, uniforms, or school supplies.’*<sup>285</sup>

Internal displacement has had significant consequences not only for livelihoods and access to food, housing, and education but also for physical and

mental health.<sup>286</sup> Some displaced women, wives of fishermen, described the burdens they carry in displacement, their losses, and the burdens of responsibility they now carry, along with their fears and trauma. One woman reported that she had attempted suicide, illustrating the severity of the distress experienced. Interviewees described facing isolation and a lack of support to process loss and grief.

### 5.3. Lack of reparation as a barrier to return

Conflict, harmful patterns of conduct during conflict, and subsequent displacement has undermined the livelihoods and future prospects of fishing communities along Yemen’s western coast, particularly in Al Hudaydah governorate, from which all displaced interviewees originated. Many displaced individuals expressed despair and uncertainty about their futures and those of their families, particularly regarding their children’s education and long-term opportunities.<sup>287</sup>

As one fisherman stated: *‘No one knows what we have been through, what has happened to us, or the injustice we have suffered.’*<sup>288</sup>

Another explained:

*‘The authorities have not taken any steps to ensure safe return. Honestly, I do not know about any such effort, and I do not feel safe to go back now. [...] There may be some efforts, but our homes have been destroyed and we have lost so much. No one has compensated us, and no one has been held accountable for the harm we suffered. We need compensation and for those who caused us harm to be held responsible.’*<sup>289</sup>

Although many fishermen and their families retain strong emotional ties to their homes and coastal communities, interviewees also reflected a preference to remain in their current locations due to relatively improved security conditions.

281 Interviewee No. 100135A, 28 June 2025.

282 Interviewee No. 100182A, 8 October 2025.

283 USA UNHCR. *Yemen Crisis Explained* (2025).

284 “Yemen Displacement in Taizz and Al Hudaydah,” ACAPS (2018), p. 6.

285 Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025.

286 Interviewee No. 100137A, 5 August 2025 (‘Yes, displacement—especially the war—has affected our health. I am anxious and suffer from interrupted sleep, my wife has psychological illness, and my father developed high blood pressure. Our youngest child suffers from malnutrition. At the start of our displacement, my wife was affected by the overcrowding in the camp; she would shout and have conflicts with everyone, and there was a lack of sanitation. In the rented house, we do not have enough water and only get it every two or three days. Sanitation is not as bad as in the camp, but it is still a challenge. Diseases used to spread in the camp, but here we mostly deal with mosquitoes.’).

287 Interviewee No. 100137A, 5 August 2025 (‘Displacement has affected our future prospects; we have lost our livelihoods, and it has taken a toll on our mental health. There is no real security for the future’); Interviewee No. 100135A, 28 June 2025 (‘There is no future, especially as my children are unable to get an education, which affects their future as well. There is no steady, real income or a home to return to one day’).

288 Interviewee No. 100135A, 28 June 2025.

289 Interviewee No. 100160A, 30 May 2025.



Fishermen unload their catch from the Red Sea in the Al-Qataba area of Al-Khawkhah. Photo taken on May 16, 2025.

Many nevertheless expressed a wish to eventually return home if certain conditions were met, but emphasized that those conditions were not currently in place. They identified several obstacles preventing their return to Al Hudaydah, including the absence of livelihood opportunities, persistent food insecurity, and landmine contamination. They also cited ongoing insecurity at sea, including the presence of naval mines and risks of attack.

Even if returning were theoretically possible, interviewees expressed considerable reluctance to return due to prevailing conditions in their home villages. Many had lost their homes and, even if their homes remained standing, they said, the areas were heavily mined and under Houthi control, and they would still face attacks and the presence of naval mines at sea. Resuming fishing activities as a means of living seemed unfeasible. Ultimately, the ongoing war remained the primary barrier to their return; until it ended, going back was simply not an option.

One fisherman explained, ‘Even if return were possible, I could not go back. Our village is heavily mined, remains under Houthi control, and the sea is still subjected to attacks by the Coalition and naval mines laid by the Houthi group. It is impossible to resume our fishing activities as a means of living under these conditions.’<sup>290</sup>

Another added:

“It is not clear how we could go back while attacks at sea continue, mines remain in our villages, and livelihood opportunities have almost disappeared. Up to this day, it is still impossible to make a living. Being on the Red Sea coast is dangerous, you go out fishing but you might not come back.”<sup>291</sup>

To facilitate their return, interviewees emphasized the need to stop ongoing attacks and hostilities, especially airstrikes, and to clear their villages of landmines and the sea of mines planted by the Houthis. They also called for protection from detentions by Eritrean forces. Several detainees further proposed measures to prevent future harm, including strengthened protective measures for fishermen, the establishment of a complaints mechanism, and restoration of fishing cooperatives.

For example, a mother and wife from a displaced fishing family expressed:

“I believe that if there were a responsible government and a genuine Fishermen’s Association, the fishing community would receive real support. This would entail protection from Eritrean forces, assis-

290 Interviewee No. 100104A, 25 May 2025.

291 Interviewee No. 100137A, 5 August 2025.

*tance for harmed fishermen, an end to ongoing attacks, proper attention to our concerns, and aid for food and livelihoods.*<sup>292</sup>

All interviewees highlighted the importance of receiving reparations to rebuild their homes and acquire boats and equipment. *'It is crucial for us to receive reparations, especially in the form of a boat that would enable us to restore our livelihoods, or at least food assistance,'* noted one fisherman.<sup>293</sup>

Additionally, some of those interviewed expressed a need for medical and psychological care, formal apologies from those responsible for their suffering, and accountability for past wrongs. Supporting their children's return to school was repeatedly identified as a priority, with some stressing the importance of honoring the memory of fishermen who lost their lives. As one man explained, *'My wife and I need care. If we receive support, our health will improve, and our anxiety and distress will diminish. Both of us have even contemplated suicide. This assistance would help her return to her former self, as there has been little help during our displacement.'*<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Interviewee No. 100160A, 30 May 2025.

<sup>293</sup> Interviewee No. 100134A, 26 July 2025.

<sup>294</sup> Interviewee No. 100132A, 20 July 2025.

# VI. International legal framework

*This section provides an overview of the right to reparations under international law, the forms such reparations may take, and the applicable international standards governing them. It also describes the international legal obligations of key actors responsible for patterns of conduct harming the fishing community in Yemen outlined in this report, with particular emphasis on ESCR, including the rights to food and to livelihood.*

## 6.1. The individual right to reparations

Violations of international law give rise to a duty to provide effective remedies, including reparations.<sup>295</sup> Reparations are substantive measures that seek to redress the harms caused by violations by formally recognizing the occurrence of the wrongdoing and taking the necessary steps to repair, as much as possible, the harms caused to victims.<sup>296</sup>

The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005) (UN Guiding Principles), while not legally binding, reflect a strong consensus amongst states on the individual right to reparation and recognize

the right of victims to obtain full and effective reparations.<sup>297</sup> The principles stress that victims are entitled to adequate, effective, and prompt reparation which should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered.<sup>298</sup>

Reparations can cover a wide range of measures, which may include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.<sup>299</sup> Reparations should be adequate, prompt, effective, and proportionate to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered. They should also be full, comprehensive, transformative, and include recognition of harm and responsibility.<sup>300</sup> The appropriate form(s) of reparation to be awarded should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and consider the socio-economic and legal context in which violations occurred, the nature and extent of the harm caused,<sup>301</sup> and the rights, needs and views of the victims.<sup>302</sup>

295 UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005) ('UN Basic Principles').

296 UN Basic Principles; T. van Boven, 'The United Nations UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law', pp. 2-3. (T. van Boven, 'The United Nations UN Basic Principles and Guidelines'); . van Boven, 'Victims' rights to a remedy and reparation: the United Nations principles and guidelines', Ferstman et al. (eds.), *Reparations for Victims of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes*, p.21, Koninklijke Brill NV (2009) ('Victims' rights to a remedy and reparation: the United Nations principles and guidelines') pp. 32-34; GRC Reparations Guide.

297 T. van Boven, 'Victims' rights to a remedy and reparation: the United Nations principles and guidelines,' p. 21.

298 UN Basic Principles, Principle 15: Adequate, effective and prompt reparation is intended to promote justice by redressing gross violations of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law. Reparation should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered.

299 UN Basic Principles; For detailed information about the different forms of reparations measures see GRC Reparations Guide Part 2: Forms and standards for reparations.

300 UN Basic Principles; GRC Reparations Guide, p. 22.

301 *Yakye Axa Indigenous Community v. Paraguay, Judgment*, para. 182 ('Reparations 'consist of measures that tend to make the effects of the violations committed disappear. Their nature and their amount depend on the damage caused, both at the pecuniary and the non-pecuniary levels').

302 UNSG 'Guidance Note Conflict Related Sexual violence', p. 15; GRC Reparations Guide Part 2: Forms and standards for reparations, Standards for assessing reparations.

International human rights law (IHRL) establishes the right of victims to obtain reparation when their rights have been violated.<sup>303</sup> This right is reflected in binding international human rights instruments relevant to the conduct described in the present report. For example, Article 2(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Eritrea and Yemen are parties, provides that ‘any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy’.

The Human Rights Committee (HRC)<sup>304</sup> has clarified that this obligation requires States Parties to ensure reparation for individuals whose Covenant rights have been violated:<sup>305</sup> ‘Without reparation to individuals whose Covenant rights have been violated, the obligation to provide effective remedy ... is not discharged’. Articles 9(5) and 14(6) of the ICCPR further recognize a right to compensation in cases of unlawful arrest, detention, and conviction.<sup>306</sup> The right to reparation is also reflected in other relevant international instruments such as Article 14 of the Convention Against Torture (CAT), which has been ratified by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Eritrea and Yemen,<sup>307</sup> and Article 39 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which has been ratified by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Eritrea, and Yemen.<sup>308</sup>

Reparations should also be provided for ESCR violations, including the rights to food and livelihood described in this report. For instance, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

(CESCR), which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), has reiterated in its General Comments that effective remedies must be made available to rights-holders by states parties to the ICESCR.<sup>309</sup>

Under IHRL, states are legally bound to provide an effective remedy, including reparations, to the individual whose protected rights have been violated,<sup>310</sup> including their ESCR.<sup>311</sup> Where domestic remedies are unavailable or ineffective, international human rights instruments recognize the right of victims to seek reparation before regional and international justice avenues.<sup>312</sup>

The obligation to provide reparations is also enshrined in a number of regional human rights instruments including the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), which has been ratified by Eritrea, and its additional protocol establishing the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACtHPR), which has not been ratified by Eritrea.<sup>313</sup> The Arab Charter on Human Rights, which was ratified by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Yemen, explicitly articulates the right to compensation for certain rights violations.<sup>314</sup>

Some regional human rights systems also provide avenues where individual victims of international human rights violations can seek reparations for the harm they have suffered, including in Europe,

303 GRC Reparations Guide; UDHR, Article 8 affirms the right to an effective remedy for violations of human rights. This includes the right to seek and obtain reparation for harm suffered; Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, adopted by General Assembly Resolution 40/34 (1985); UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (1989), Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/65, Principle 20; UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women UN Doc. G.A. res. 48/104 (1993); UN Basic Principles; Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/17 and Add.1) (2005); Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity, UN Doc E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1 (2005) (‘UN Principles on Impunity’).

304 The Human Rights Committee (HRC) is a quasi-judicial body of eighteen independent international expert members who meet three times a year in Geneva or in New York. Further updated information on the work of the HRC can be found on the official web page of OHCHR at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr>

305 HRC, General Comment No. 31, para. 16.

306 ICCPR, Articles 2, 9(5), 14(6).

307 CAT, Article 14 (‘Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation’). The Committee against Torture was established pursuant Article 17 of the CAT and it has given further interpretation to the concept of reparations. See for example, Committee Against Torture, General Comment No. 3, UN Doc. CAT/C/GC/3 (2012) (‘CAT General Comment No. 3’).

308 CRC, Article 39.

309 E.g., CESCR, General Comment No. 9, paras 2-3; CESCR, General Comment No. 12, paras 32-35; CESCR, General Comment No.14, para. 59; CESCR General Comment No. 15, paras 55 (‘All victims of violations of the right to water should be entitled to adequate reparation, including restitution, compensation, satisfaction or guarantees of non-repetition’); For more information about the CESCR see GRC Reparations Guide, Part 3: A framework for reparation research, Avenues for seeking redress, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

310 See e.g., ICCPR, Article 2(3); ECHR, Article 13; ACHR, Article 2, 25; HRC, General Comment No. 31.

311 All these regional treaties offer protection of ESCR violations to varying degrees. For an overview see ESCR-net. Regional Systems.

312 ICCPR Optional Protocol I, Articles 1-2; ECHR, Articles 34-35; ACHR, Articles 44-47; ACHPR, Articles 55-56; See Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, A/69/518, 2014, para. 14.

313 ACHPR, Article 7(1)(a); Protocol to the ACHR on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (P-ACHPR), Article 27 (1).

314 League of Arab States, Arab Charter on Human Rights, (1994), Article 16 (‘Arab Charter’) (‘No person can be tried twice for the same crime. Anyone against whom such a measure is taken has the right to challenge its legality and request his release. Anyone who is the victim of an illegal arrest or detention has the right to compensation’).

the Americas and Africa. The ACtHPR<sup>315</sup> has clarified that states have a duty to provide reparation to victims and has developed a rich body of jurisprudence on the matter.<sup>316</sup> Other regions, however, including large parts of the Middle East, lack a regional human rights court to which individuals can bring claims.

Multiple IHL instruments applicable to international armed conflicts recognize the obligation of States to provide reparation for IHL violations.<sup>317</sup> Traditionally, IHL treaty provisions were interpreted as giving rise to obligations between States. However, this area of the law has slowly developed towards recognizing the rights of individuals.<sup>318</sup>

While IHL instruments applicable to non-international armed conflicts do not mention reparation, Rule 150 of the ICRC's customary IHL handbook notes that, in both international armed conflicts (IACs) and non international armed conflicts (NIACs), 'A State responsible for violations of international humanitarian law is required to make full reparation for the loss or injury caused.'<sup>319</sup> For NIACs, the rule cites wider rules of international law, including those on state responsibility, and obligations as defined in IHRL.

Other treaties applicable to NIACs also outline state obligations to provide for victims. Article 6 of the

Ottawa Treaty, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty, which Yemen has ratified, states that 'Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, as well as the social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine awareness programs.' Furthermore, non-binding international instruments like the UN Guiding Principles,<sup>320</sup> and State practice,<sup>321</sup> indicate that reparations are owed for violations of IHL.

In the context of Yemen, UN bodies,<sup>322</sup> along with local Yemeni NGOs and international organizations,<sup>323</sup> have highlighted the importance of victims' needs for justice and redress. For example, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that '[i]nternational human rights law and international humanitarian law include obligations to investigate violations to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice and to provide victims with full and effective reparation.'<sup>324</sup> The UNGEE has also emphasized that victims of international law violations have the right to reparations: 'Given the gravity of the human rights situation in Yemen, a comprehensive approach to accountability is required for the realization of the rights to truth and adequate, effective and prompt reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Such processes contribute to the fight against impunity, the reinstatement of the rule of law and, ultimately, reconciliation.'<sup>325</sup> The PEY has called for the creation of an independent interna-

315 *Konate v. Burkina Faso*, Application No. 004/2013, *Judgment on Reparations*, 3 June 2016, para. 15.a ('A state found liable of an internationally wrongful act is required to make full reparation for the damage caused.'). *Zongo v. Burkina Faso*, Application No. 013/2011, *Judgment on Reparations*, 5 June 2015, para. 20.

316 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, , A/69/518, 2014, para. 17; Note that the Charter and League of Arab States currently lack any enforcement mechanisms. For more information on this matter see International Commission of Jurists 'The Arab Court of Human Rights: A Flawed Statute for an Ineffective Court' and M. Amin Al-Midani 'The Enforcement Mechanisms of the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Need for an Arab Court of Human Rights'.

317 The Hague Convention IV of 1907 respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (HC IV), Article 3 ('[a] belligerent party which violates the provisions of the said Regulations shall, if the case demands, be liable to pay compensation. It shall be responsible for all acts committed by persons forming part of its armed forces.')(HC IV); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of IACs of 1977 (AP I), Article 91 states that parties to a conflict shall be 'liable to pay compensation' for violations of the Geneva Conventions and AP I.

318 Salmón E, Pérez-León-Acevedo J-P, "Reparation for victims of serious violations of international humanitarian law: New developments." *International Review of the Red Cross* (2022); Theodor Meron, "The Humanization of Humanitarian Law," (*American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 94, No. 2, 2000); L. Moffett "Reparation Options for the War in Ukraine" (2022) Queen's University Belfast, p.9 ('it is unclear to whom the obligation to reparations is owed, individuals are not mentioned so it is difficult to argue that an individual right exists for IHL violations.')(L. Moffett 'Reparation Options for the War in Ukraine'); P. Gaeta, "Are Victims of Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Entitled to Compensation?" in O. BenNaftali (ed.), *International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law*, (OUP 2011), 305-327, p. 308. ('Gaeta 2011').

319 ICRC, *IHL Database*, Rule 150 ('A State responsible for violations of international humanitarian law is required to make full reparation for the loss or injury caused.'). Salmón E, Pérez-León-Acevedo J-P, "Reparation for victims of serious violations of international humanitarian law: New developments," *International Review of the Red Cross*. IRRC No. 919 (2022).

320 UN Basic Principles, Principle 15.

321 E.g., The Ethiopia and Eritrea Commission was tasked with awarding compensation for violations of international humanitarian law; On 14 November 2022, the UNGA adopted a Resolution recognizing that Russia 'must bear the legal consequences of all of its internationally wrongful acts, including making reparation for the injury, including any damage, caused by such acts.' UNGA A/RES/ES-11/5 (2022).

322 E.g., UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014 (2021), UN Doc. A/HRC/48/20 ('The Group also recommends avenues to ensure accountability and secure truth, justice and reparations for victims').

323 "Opening Space for Transitional Justice in Yemen" ICTJ (2025), pp. 62-63; *Returned to Zero*; "Global reparations study on opportunities for reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, Yemen," Global Survivors Fund (2025); In 2022, 36 Yemeni civil society organisations launched a Declaration for Justice and Reconciliation, setting out their demands for achieving a just, inclusive and sustainable peace in Yemen. Among their demands they included redress and reparations. The *Yemen Declaration for Justice and Reconciliation* (2022); SAM, Abductees' mothers Association, Justice4Yemen Pact, DT Institute. *Yemeni Perspectives on Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding* (2025).

324 HRC, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN. Doc A/HRC/36/33 (2017), para. 79.

325 UNGEE. Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc A/HRC/39/43 (2018), para. 102 ; See also UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 868 ('Victims of human rights violations are entitled to effective and prompt reparations, including compensation and guarantees of non-repetition.'). UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/45/CRP.7 (2020), para. 363 ('The Group has also stressed the need to realise victims' rights to an effective remedy (including reparations)').

tional accountability mechanism for IHL and IHRL violations perpetrated by all parties and to provide redress to the victims.<sup>326</sup>

## 6.1.2 Non-state armed groups obligations

### 6.1.1 A State obligation

IHRL establishes obligations on States to ensure, secure or guarantee the effective enjoyment of human rights to all within their jurisdiction.<sup>327</sup> These obligations include the duty to prevent, investigate and remedy human rights violations through adequate legal and procedural measures.<sup>328</sup> In the context of Yemen, the UNGEE has affirmed that States bear responsibility to provide full reparations to victims for loss or injury resulting from violations attributable to them.<sup>329</sup>

As discussed in further detail below, the IRG is obligated to provide reparations for harms resulting from internationally wrongful acts attributable to it. It also bears responsibilities to take reasonable measures to facilitate and ensure access to remedies for harms caused by other states operating within its territory, even where those acts are not directly attributable to the State.<sup>330</sup>

Other State actors, such as members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and Eritrea, to the extent that conduct attributable to them has resulted in violations of international law affecting fishermen and fishing communities in Yemen, may likewise incur obligations to provide reparation for resulting harm.<sup>331</sup>

The obligation to provide reparations for IHL and IHRL violations is not limited to States. While the UN Basic Principles generally envisage reparations being provided by States, reparations can also be owed and provided by individuals and non-State armed groups (NSAGs).<sup>332</sup> International practice increasingly recognizes that NSAGs exercising effective territorial control may bear responsibility, including a duty to provide reparations, for serious violations of international law attributable to them.<sup>333</sup>

The UN Basic Principles address the issue of responsibility beyond States. Principle 15 provides that where ‘a person, a legal person, or other entity is found liable for reparation for a victim, such party should provide reparation to the victim or compensate the state if the state has already provided reparation to the victim’; Principle 3.c provides that a State should provide equal and effective access to justice, ‘irrespective of who may ultimately be the bearer of responsibility for the violation’. UN bodies, truth commissions, commissions of inquiry, and other mechanisms have similarly underscored that non-State actors may bear responsibility for internationally wrongful acts and the harm arising from them.<sup>334</sup>

As described in further detail below, the Houthi armed group, which exercises effective control over parts of Yemen and performs State-like functions, has been implicated in conduct that may amount to

326 PEY, ‘Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 (2014)’ S/2023/833 (2023), para. 191(q).

327 The Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Gross Human Rights Violations. A Practitioners’ Guide Revised Edition, International Commission of Jurist, 2018, p. 19. (ICJ ‘A Practitioners’ Guide’).

328 ICJ ‘A Practitioners’ Guide’, p. 21; E.g., in the case of *Velásquez Rodríguez*, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights held that ‘(As a consequence of this obligation, the States must prevent, investigate and punish any violation of the rights recognized by the Convention and, moreover, if possible attempt to restore the right violated and provide compensation as warranted for damages resulting from the violation.)’ Case *Velásquez-Rodríguez v. Honduras*, Judgment (Reparations and Costs), 21 July 1989, para. 166 (*‘Velásquez-Rodríguez v. Honduras, Reparations’*).

329 The UNGEE has stated that ‘Victims of human rights violations are entitled to effective and prompt reparations, including compensation and guarantees of non-repetition. Similarly, a State responsible for violation of international humanitarian law is required to make full reparations for the loss or injury caused.’ UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 868.

330 *Returned to Zero*, p.104.

331 UN Basic Principles; *Returned to Zero*, p. 104.

332 UN Basic Principles, Principle 15 (‘In accordance with its domestic laws and international legal obligations, a State shall provide reparation to victims for acts or omissions which can be attributed to the State and constitute gross violations of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law. In cases where a person, a legal person, or other entity is found liable for reparation to a victim, such party should provide reparation to the victim or compensate the State if the State has already provided reparation to the victim.’).

333 ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 150 and Rule 139 applicable in both IACs and NIACs stipulates that ‘[e]ach party to the conflict must respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law’; *Returned to Zero*, p.13; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 868; Luke Moffett, ‘Reparations by Non-State Armed Groups,’ Armed Groups and International Law (2019).

334 See e.g., UN General Assembly A/RES/70/169 (2016), para.6; Promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (2019), UN Doc. A/ HRC/42/45, para. 95; Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification, Guatemala Memory of Silence: Conclusions and Recommendations, 1999, p. 49 para. 3 and p. 52 para. 23; Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Witness to Truth, Vol. 2, 2004, Ch. 3, p. 182 paras. 429–432 and p. 198 para. 518; Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, UN Doc. A/ HRC/22/59, 5 February 2013, para. 177(d); Luke Moffett, ‘Beyond attribution: responsibility of armed non-State actors for reparations in Northern Ireland, Colombia and Uganda’, Noemi Gal-Or, Cedric Ryngaert and Math Noortmann (eds.), Responsibilities of the Non-State Actor in Armed Conflict and the Market Place: Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Findings, Brill (2015), pp. 323–346; For more on the reparation legal framework applicable to NSAGs, see GRC *Reparations Guide*. Part 3: A framework for reparation research, Responsible Parties.

violations under international law, inflicting significant harm on civilians in Yemen.<sup>335</sup> Where such conduct is established and attributable, principles of responsibility would require the provision of appropriate forms of reparation to affected individuals.<sup>336</sup>

Other non-State actors in Yemen,<sup>337</sup> exercising effective control over parts of Yemen and performing State-like functions to the extent that conduct attributable to them has resulted in violations of international law affecting fishermen and fishing communities in Yemen, may likewise incur obligations to provide reparation for resulting harm.<sup>338</sup>

## 6.2. Violations and reparative obligations

### 6.2.1 Saudi Arabia

This subsection explores Saudi Arabia's international obligations concerning the patterns of conduct outlined above regarding [Saudi/UAE-led coalition airstrikes](#) with a particular emphasis on Saudi Arabia's international humanitarian law (IHL) obligations related to patterns of conduct that have harmed fishermen and fishing communities along Yemen's west coast. It focuses specifically on IHL obligations in regards Saudi/UAE-led Coalition airstrikes that destroyed their boats, fishing facilities and resulted in injuries and fatalities.<sup>339</sup>

In 2015, the Saudi/UAE-led coalition intervened alongside the IRG amid a NIAC between the IRG and the Houthis.<sup>340</sup> The NIAC in Yemen is regulated by Article 3 Common to the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocol II (AP II), all of which Yemen has ratified, as well as customary

international law (CIL). Saudi/UAE-led coalition member states supporting the IRG have acted as "co-belligerents" in the conflict with the Houthis, and are therefore obligated to comply with these norms.<sup>341</sup>

Saudi Arabia has ratified the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols I and II, recognizing these treaties as fundamental to IHL, particularly regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict.<sup>342</sup> Saudi Arabia is obligated to uphold their provisions, which includes protecting civilians and ensuring humanitarian principles and standards.

In addition to IHL, states are still bound to apply IHRL, with some limitations, during armed conflict.<sup>343</sup> Saudi Arabia is party to some relevant IHRL treaties such as the CAT and the Arab Charter on Human Rights.<sup>344</sup> Saudi Arabia is also not a party to the ICESCR or to ICCPR. Nevertheless, it remains bound by the CIL obligations reflected in the two covenants. In particular, Saudi Arabia (as well as the UAE and other States that intervened in the conflict) is bound to comply with its obligations under CIL, including with respect to the right to food and the right to life and livelihood while operating in Yemen.<sup>345</sup> Furthermore, as a foreign state invited to operate in Yemen by the State's invitation, Saudi Arabia is bound by the IHRL commitments of the host State.<sup>346</sup>

Throughout the conflict in Yemen, it has been widely reported that Saudi Arabia and other members of the coalition have been responsible for numerous serious IHL violations and gross human rights abuses, including indiscriminate and disproportionate airstrikes and enforced disap-

335 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1](#) (2019).

336 *Ibid.*, para. 868; [Returned to Zero](#), p.131; Special Procedures [Letter to Mr. Hisham Sharaf](#) (2023).

337 Other non-state actors with presence in Yemen's West Coast include the National Resistance/Tariq Saleh's Forces, and the Giants Brigade.

338 [UN Basic Principles](#).

339 For a detailed legal analysis of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen, particularly regarding fishing boats, refer to [Starvation Makers](#).

340 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\\*](#) (2019), para. 44.

341 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\\*](#) (2019), pp.12-13; All coalition members have ratified the four Geneva Conventions and both Additional Protocols.

342 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Standing Committee on International Humanitarian Law. Office of the Chair. [Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts](#).

343 [ICCPR](#), Article 4; ICJ. Advisory Opinion. Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, 8 July 1996, ICJ Reports 1996, para. 25; ICJ. Advisory Opinion. Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, 9 July 2004, ICJ Reports 2004, para. 106; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\\*](#) (2019), para. 55.

344 CAT Article 12 and Article 13 of the Arab Charter obligate Saudi Arabia to investigate and redress any acts of torture alleged to have been committed within its jurisdiction.

345 For detailed analysis see [Starvation makers](#), p. 197 and pp.119-120.

346 Yemen is a party to the [ICESCR](#) and [ICCPR](#); [Starvation Makers](#), pp. 230-231; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1\\*](#) (2019), para. 85.

pearances, leading to significant civilian harm.<sup>347</sup>

Depending on the specific circumstances of each particular Saudi/UAE-led Coalition airstrike on fishermen and fishing boats and fishing infrastructure, these attacks could involve various violations of IHL and IHRL. This includes possible violations of Common Article 3 (CA 3), Article 13(2) of AP II and various fundamental rules of CIHL,<sup>348</sup> including distinction,<sup>349</sup> proportionality<sup>350</sup> and precaution.<sup>351</sup> In certain cases, Saudi/UAE-led Coalition airstrikes on fishing boats and fishing equipment could also amount to violations of the prohibition on attacking and destroying OIS under Article 14 of AP II and Rule 54 of CIHL.<sup>352</sup> Targeting of fishermen or fishing boats could constitute a violation of the prohibition of actions aimed at spreading terror among the civilian population.<sup>353</sup> Finally, as a result of the airstrikes on artisanal fishing in Yemen, the member states of the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition may have violated the right to life of the fishermen killed in the attacks.<sup>354</sup> Additionally, their rights to food (incl. right to adequate food, right to be free from hunger), along with their rights to livelihood,<sup>355</sup> work,<sup>356</sup> health,<sup>357</sup> and property<sup>358</sup> among others may have been violated as a result of these attacks.

States have an obligation to repair their IHL violations, and international human rights law recognizes a state obligation to ensure access to effective remedies, including reparations, for individuals whose rights have been violated.<sup>359</sup>

## 6.2.2 The Houthi non-state armed group<sup>360</sup>

This subsection sets out the international legal obligations applicable to the Houthi non-state armed group in relation to the patterns of conduct described above related to [Mine laying by the Houthi armed group along Yemen's west coast](#). It focuses in particular on obligations arising under IHL concerning the use of landmines and sea mines affecting fishing communities along Yemen's western coast, as well as obligations under IHRL, particularly with respect to ESCR, in areas under their control.

The Houthis operate as the *de facto* authority in parts of Yemeni territory where they exercise state-like functions.<sup>361</sup> The group controls Sana'a and the northwestern provinces of Yemen, governing more than 70% of the country's population.<sup>362</sup> This orga-

347 [Returned to Zero](#), p. 73; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, ) [UN Doc A/HRC/39/43\\*](#), (2018) ("The Group of Experts has reasonable grounds to believe that the Governments of Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are responsible for human rights violations, including unlawful deprivation of the right to life, arbitrary detention, rape, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and child recruitment, and serious violations of freedom of expression and economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to health").

348 [Starvation Makers](#), p. 228; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, [UN Doc. A/HRC/45/CRP.7](#) (2020), p. 2.

349 One of the fundamental principles of IHL is the distinction between combatants and civilians. Saudi Arabia must ensure that its military operations are directed exclusively against legitimate military targets, thereby safeguarding civilian lives and property.

350 The principle of proportionality mandates that any military action must avoid causing excessive civilian harm in relation to the anticipated military advantage. This principle is designed to minimize civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

351 Saudi forces are required to take all feasible precautions to avoid or minimize civilian casualties and damage. This includes verifying targets and selecting means and methods of warfare that are less likely to inflict harm on civilians.

352 [Starvation Makers](#), pp. 202-203; [APII](#), Article 14; ICRC, IHL Database, [Rule 54](#); Additionally, such attacks may also amount to the act of starvation if they have the effect to starve the civilian population ([APII](#), Article 14).

353 [APII](#), Article 13; ICRC, IHL Database, [Rule 2](#); [Starvation makers](#), p. 229.

354 [Starvation Makers](#), pp. 230-231; [UDHR](#), Article 3; [Arab Charter on Human Rights](#), Article 5; HRC, [General comment No. 36 on article 6: right to life](#).

355 Not recognized explicitly but part of [UDHR](#), Art. 25, [ICESCR](#), Arts. 6, 11 and [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) New York, 18 December 1979. United Nations General Assembly resolution 34/180 ('[CEDAW](#)'), Article 14(h); The Special Rapporteur on the right to food emphasizes that the right to livelihood is linked to the wider right to food. Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2019) [A/HRC/40/56](#); See also [GRC Reparations Guide](#), pp.115-116.

356 [ICESCR](#), Articles 6 and 11; UN Economic and Social Council, [CESCR General Comment No. 18: The Right to Work](#), [UN Doc. E/C.12/GC/18](#) (2006).

357 [ICESCR](#), Article 12; OHCHR, [Fact Sheet No. 31. The Right to Health](#) ; CERD, Article 5(e)(iv); [CEDAW](#), Articles 11.1(f), 12; [CRC](#), Article 24; [CESCR](#), [General Comment No. 14. The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health](#) (Art. 12).

358 [UDHR](#), Article 17; [ICESCR](#), Article 11; [Starvation makers](#), pp. 230-231.

359 See above: [The individual right to reparations A State obligation](#).

360 Although the group refers to itself as Ansar Allah, meaning 'Supporters of God,' for the purposes of this study, we have chosen to use the term 'Houthis'. This section is not intended to be comprehensive due to significant security challenges in areas controlled by the Houthis, which hindered a thorough field investigation. The instability has restricted access to regions under their control on the West Coast, preventing a complete assessment of the situation. Consequently, the findings of this report do not reflect all violations committed by the Houthi group and their impact the fishing community. The present report focuses on the violations committed in the use of landmines and sea mines.

361 UNSC, Final report of the PEY, UN Doc. S/2018/594, (2018), p. 10; "[Entrenched Power: The Houthi System of Governance](#)," Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies (2022); "Who are the Houthis and why is the US targeting them?," BBC (2025).

362 ACLED data. Actor profile: [Houthis](#).

nized non-state armed group,<sup>363</sup> with a clear chain of command,<sup>364</sup> possesses the capacity to conduct sustained military operations and to exercise effective control over territory and civilian populations within areas under their authority.<sup>365</sup>

The conflict between the Houthis and the armed forces of the IRG qualifies as a NIAC between a non-State armed group and a State Party.<sup>366</sup> As a party to the NIAC in Yemen, the Houthis are bound by applicable IHL,<sup>367</sup> including CA 3 of the four Geneva Conventions,<sup>368</sup> APII,<sup>369</sup> and CIL.<sup>370</sup> In parallel, it is widely recognized in international practice that NSAGs exercising effective control over territory and population, and possessing the capacity to do so, may be subject to certain human rights obligations.<sup>371</sup>

Under CIL, the use of landmines is not prohibited *per se*, but is subject to strict limitations.<sup>372</sup> In particular, *‘when landmines are used, particular care must be taken to minimize their indiscriminate effects.’*<sup>373</sup> Customary rules require, where feasible, the recording of mine placement<sup>374</sup> and prohibit the abandonment of landmines.<sup>375</sup> More generally, CIL also prohibits the use of indiscriminate weapons<sup>376</sup> and the launch of indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilians’ objects,<sup>377</sup> and requires compliance with the principles of distinction,<sup>378</sup> proportionality,<sup>379</sup> and the obligation to take all feasible precautions in attack.<sup>380</sup> These rules remain applicable to the use of landmines in a NIAC.<sup>381</sup>

Additionally, while only states may become parties to international treaties,<sup>382</sup> the Houthis have posi-

363 Nadwa Al-Dawsari, “Armed Groups in Context: The Houthis – From Local Insurgency to Regional (Non-State) Powerhouse Shaping Middle East Dynamics” *Armed Groups and International Law* (2025).

364 *Ibid*; *Returned to Zero*, p. 131.

365 *Returned to Zero*, p. 131.

366 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019).

367 Geneva Academy-RULAC. *Non-International Armed Conflicts in Yemen* (updated 2022).

368 Today it is accepted that common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 is binding on NSAGs. IHL – Databases ICRC. Commentary of 2016. Article 3 – Conflicts not of an international character. Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949; Andrew Clapham, “The Rights and Responsibilities of Armed Non-State Actors: The Legal Landscape & Issues Surrounding Engagement” (2012).

369 AP II, Article 1.1. NSAGs are bound by AP II where the non-State armed group is under responsible command, territorial control, and the capacity to sustain military operations to implement this Protocol. The Houthis meet the threshold criteria for the applicability of AP II.

370 Customary IHL applies to both States and NSAGs party to a NIAC; ICRC Customary International Law. *Who is bound by Customary International Law?*; *Starvation Makers*, p. 258; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 49.

371 Jean Marie Henckaerts & Cornelius Wiesener, “Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Armed Groups: An Assessment Based on Recent Practice,” *International Humanitarian Law and Non-State Actors: Debates, Law and Practice*, Springer (2020); Jessica Burniske, Naz K. Modirzadeh and Dustin A. Lewis, *Armed Non-State Actors and International Human Rights Law: An Analysis of the Practice of the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly*, Harvard School of Law Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (2017); *Joint Statement by Independent United Nations Human Rights Experts on Human Rights Responsibilities of Armed non-State Actors* (2021) (‘at a minimum, armed non-State actors exercising either governmentlike functions or de facto control over territory and population must respect and protect the human rights of individuals and groups’); The UNGEE on Yemen has identified violations of IHL and IHRL by Ansar Allah and has urged the group to abide by their obligations under these areas of law. UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/48/20, (2021), para. 86.

372 Despite the wide number of ratifications of the Mine Ban Treaty in relation to anti-personnel mines, the ICRC currently does not consider the use of landmines to be prohibited under customary international law due to the level of continued use of such mines by non-Party states. States such as China, Russian Federation and the United States have not ratified the Convention. ICRC. IHL Database. Rule 81.

373 The restriction applies in relation to anti-personnel mines to States which have not yet adopted a total ban on their use; ICRC. IHL Database. Rule 81; This particular care esteems from rules codified in Protocol II to the Convention on certain Conventional Weapons. Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Article 7; [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule81#Fn\\_769AE14A\\_00002](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule81#Fn_769AE14A_00002) The protocol has been amended to be applicable also in times of non-international armed conflict.

374 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 82. Recording the placement of Mines.

375 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 83. Removal or Neutralization of Landmines (‘At the end of active hostilities, a party to the conflict which has used landmines must remove or otherwise render them harmless to civilians, or facilitate their removal’); Mine Ban Treaty, Article 5.

376 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 71. The use of weapons which are by nature indiscriminate is prohibited.

377 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 11. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited.

378 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 1; ICRC IHL Database. Rule 7; The principle of distinction mandates that ‘the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.’

379 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 14. Proportionality in attack. Launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is prohibited.

380 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 15. Principle of precautions in attack.

381 ICRC, IHL Database. Rule 81.

382 The use of antipersonnel mines nowadays is primarily associated with NSAGs, which cannot formally express their commitment to a ban on mines by signing and ratifying the Ottawa Cory Kuklick and Zach Wall. *Non-state Actors and Mine Action: Complications and Solutions*. Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (2010), p-5.

tioned themselves<sup>383</sup> as bound, at least normatively, by the obligations reflected in the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention or Mine Ban Treaty), which prohibits the use of anti-personnel mines.<sup>384</sup> This is not withstanding the absence of a formal Deed of Commitment.<sup>385</sup>

The use of naval mines is also regulated under international law.<sup>386</sup> The 1907 Hague Convention VIII on the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines<sup>387</sup> governs the deployment of naval mines, and its core provisions are widely recognized as reflecting CIL.<sup>388</sup> These rules require, *inter alia*, that free floating mines<sup>389</sup>, prohibited unless directed against a military objective, must deactivate shortly after being deployed if they're no longer under control,<sup>390</sup> and anchored mines must become harmless if they break free.<sup>391</sup> The San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea which codifies the CIL rules on naval warfare, also reflects these rules,<sup>392</sup> and further provides that the placement of armed mines or the arming of pre-laid mines must be recorded<sup>393</sup> and also notified unless those mines can only detonate exclusively against vessels that are military objectives.<sup>394</sup>

The use of naval mines is further restricted by gen-

eral IHL customary international law principles, including the principle of distinction and the right of innocent passage under the law of the sea.<sup>395</sup> The principle of distinction requires that the warring parties distinguish between legitimate military objectives.<sup>396</sup> The right of innocent passage, enshrined in Article 17 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), safeguards civilian vessels traversing territorial waters, as long as they do so in a manner that does not endanger the peace or security of the coastal state.<sup>397</sup>

With respect to IHRL, there is an increasing acceptance that at least the NSAGs which are 'exercising either government-like functions or *de facto* control over territory and population must respect and protect the human rights of individuals and groups'.<sup>398</sup> UN experts have concluded that the Houthis, as the *de facto* authorities and a party to the NIAC in Yemen, are bound by both IHL and IHRL in areas under their control and have engaged with the group concerning allegations of human rights violations.<sup>399</sup>

Similar to states, NSAGs exercising effective control over territory and population are generally required to respect human rights by refraining from conduct that abuses these rights, and to protect human rights by taking reasonable measures to prevent harm to the civilian population under

383 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 209 and 343. ('In May 2019 *de facto* authorities confirmed to the Group of Experts that the Houthis used anti-vehicle mines, but denied the use of anti-personnel mines, referring to their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention ratified by Yemen'); *Fields of Death*, p. 22.

384 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, September 1997 <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/UNTS/Volume%202056/v2056.pdf>; ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law Databases*. The 1996 Mine Ban Treaty, ratified by Yemen in 1998, lays down the framework for ending use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines.

385 Efforts to promote the principles of the Mine Ban Treaty among armed non-state actors (NSAGs) have gained traction in recent years, with the NGO Geneva Call leading the way. Since 2000, Geneva Call has focused on engaging NSAGs to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law, starting with a total ban on antipersonnel mines. This initiative includes the development of a *Deed of Commitment*, which armed groups can sign to pledge to cease the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines.

386 See also "Naval Mines and International Humanitarian Law," Geneva Call (2019).

387 Convention (VIII) relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. The Hague, 18 October 1907. ICRC. *IHL Database*.

388 "International Law Applicable to Naval Mines," Chatham House (2014).

389 The Convention stipulates that unanchored mines may not be laid, 'except when they are so constructed as to become harmless one hour at most after the person who laid them ceases to control them'. (Article I(a), Hague VIII).

390 The San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea, 12 June 1994, para. 82: It is forbidden to use free-floating mines unless: (a) they are directed against a military objective; and (b) they become harmless within an hour after loss of control over them; "Naval Mines and International Humanitarian Law," Geneva Call (2019).

391 Convention (VIII) relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. The Hague, 18 October 1907. ICRC. *IHL Database*. Article 1.

392 San Remo Manual.

393 *Ibid*, Article 4.

394 *Ibid*, Article 83.

395 The principle of distinction prohibits attacks that are directed at civilians or non-combatants. It requires that combatants must always differentiate between military and civilian targets. Indiscriminate attacks that fail to make this distinction are unlawful; Article 17 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) codifies the right of innocent passage. It protects civilian ships passing through territorial waters, provided they do so in a way that does not threaten the peace or security of the coastal state.

396 "International Law Applicable to Naval Mines," Chatham House (2014).

397 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

398 OHCHR. Joint Statement by Independent United Nations Human Rights Experts on Human Rights Responsibilities of Armed Non-State actors (2021); HRC, Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on armed non-state actors: the protection of the right to life, (2020), A/HRC/38/44, para.10.

399 Special Procedures letter to Ansar Allah (2020), Annex.

their control, including by third parties.<sup>400</sup> Where such groups have displaced state authorities and exercise government-like functions, international practice increasingly recognises that they may also be required, at a minimum, to fulfill certain human rights obligations, particularly minimum core obligations, including facilitating access to basic human rights.<sup>401</sup> The precise scope of these human rights obligations remains the subject of ongoing legal debate, particularly in relation to areas no longer under the group's control, including territories where landmines previously laid by the Houthis remain present. However, at a minimum, this framework implies that the Houthis are bound to a certain extent by international human rights law in areas where it exercises *de facto* control or state-like functions.<sup>402</sup>

As described in this report, the Houthis have laid mines extensively and in a widespread manner across Yemen since the start of the conflict, including antipersonnel landmines and sea mines. The presence of landmines and sea mines have led to fatalities and injuries among fishermen, and the damage and destruction of fishing boats and infrastructure. Their presence has also disrupted fishermen's livelihoods and limited their access to food.

On the basis of the IHL legal framework set out above, the use of landmines and sea mines in Yemen by the Houthis amount to violations of IHL principles.<sup>403</sup> It may also violate the IHL prohibitions on direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and on violence aimed at spreading terror among the civilian population.<sup>404</sup>

Moreover, the Houthis, may have violated their IHRL responsibilities in areas under their territorial control and where they operate as the *de facto* authority.<sup>405</sup> The use of landmines and naval mines in Yemen may contravene several IHRL provisions, including the right to life,<sup>406</sup> the right to food,<sup>407</sup> the right to livelihoods,<sup>408</sup> and the right to freedom of movement.<sup>409</sup>

An emerging principle in international law asserts that NSAGs exercising control over territory and committing internationally wrongful acts bear the responsibility to provide reparations to those harmed.<sup>410</sup>

### 6.2.3 Eritrea

This subsection sets out Eritrea's international obligations and responsibilities in relation to the patterns of conduct described in [Detentions and abductions at sea by Eritrea](#), including arbitrary deprivations of liberty, enforced disappearances, and detention-related abuses including torture, ill-treatment, and forced labor of Yemeni fishermen. It also outlines the applicable legal framework concerning the transboundary and extraterritorial human rights implications of these practices, particularly their impact on livelihoods and access to food for fishing communities in Yemen.

400 T. Rodenhäuser, "Organizing Rebellion: Non-State Armed Groups Under International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law, and International Criminal Law" (2018), p. 149; T. Rodenhäuser, "The legal protection of persons living under the control of non-State armed groups," ICRC (2020).

401 S. Hutter, "Starvation in Armed Conflicts: An Analysis Based on the Right to Food" *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 723 (2019), p. 750.

402 Joint Statement by Independent United Nations Human Rights Experts on Human Rights Responsibilities of Armed Non-State Actors, UN Special Procedures, (2021) ('at a minimum, armed non-State actors exercising either government-like functions or *de facto* control over territory and population must respect and protect the human rights of individuals and groups.'). For detailed legal analysis see ICRC. T. Rodenhäuser, *The legal protection of persons living under the control of non-State armed groups* (2020).

403 ICRC. IHL Database. Rules 1, 7, 11, 15, 71, 81, 82, 83; Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Article 7; San Remo Manual, p.276; HRW. *Yemen. Events of 2023* ('Houthi forces have not shared any maps with mine removal authorities, violating their obligations under the Mine Convention'); UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 209 ('The Group of Experts has reasonable grounds to believe that the Houthi-Saleh fighters used anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines in violation of international humanitarian law, notably in the way the mines were placed in unmarked locations frequented by civilians, with no warning, which rendered their use indiscriminate.'). UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014. UN Doc A/HRC/45/6 (2020), para. 39; ACLED. *How Houthi-planted mines are killing civilians in Yemen. Analysis on the impact of Houthi-planted mines in Yemen, affecting civilians and economic activities* (2019).

404 AP II, Article 13; ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 2.

405 *Starvation Makers*, p. 258; Special Rapporteur NSA Right to Life Report, 7-12.; Joint Statement by Independent United Nations Human Rights Experts on Human Rights Responsibilities of Armed Non-State Actors, UN Special Procedures (2021); Henckaerts, Jean-Marie & Wiesener, Cornelius, "Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Armed Groups: An Assessment Based on Recent Practice" *International Humanitarian Law and Non-State Actors: Debates, Law and Practice*, Springer (2020); Tilman Rodenhäuser, "The legal protection of persons living under the control of non-State armed groups," ICRC, No. 915 (2022).

406 UDHR, Article 3; ICCPR, Article 6 Right to life.

407 UDHR, Article 25; ICESCR, Article 11 Right to food.

408 UDHR, Article 25; ICESCR, Articles 6, 11; CEDAW, Article 14(h) Right to livelihoods.

409 UDHR, Article 13; ICCPR, Article 12.

410 See [Non-state armed groups obligations](#).

Artisanal fishermen have the right to operate in the territorial waters of both Yemen and Eritrea. Binding rules by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) rulings in 1998<sup>411</sup> and 1999<sup>412</sup> established sovereignty over a group of islands in the Red Sea, defined the maritime boundary between Eritrea and Yemen, and addressed the issue of traditional fishing practices between the two coastal nations. In its 1998 decision, the PCA explicitly acknowledged the traditional fishing rights of Eritrea's and Yemen's fishermen in the territorial sea surrounding the Yemeni islands:<sup>413</sup>

*'In the exercise of its sovereignty over these islands, Yemen shall ensure that the traditional fishing regime of free access and enjoyment for the fishermen of both Eritrea and Yemen shall be preserved for the benefit of the lives and livelihoods of this poor and industrious order of men.'*<sup>414</sup>

Both States requested clarification of the extent of the traditional fishing rights awarded by the tribunal. In its 1999 decision, the PCA clarified that the traditional or artisanal fishing rights extend to all waters throughout the region as a whole, including a right of access to sell fish in each side's ports.

This includes the right of access by Yemeni fishermen to the waters and islands of Eritrea.<sup>415</sup> These rights extend only to traditional artisanal fisheries practices.<sup>416</sup> However, as of today, Eritrea continues to dispute the meaning of the Tribunal's award of artisanal fishing rights. Eritrea rejects the portion of the tribunal's ruling that Yemen's fishing rights extend to its territorial sea.<sup>417</sup>

Under international law, Eritrea is bound by international human rights obligations that apply in full force within its own territory. Eritrea is a party to a number of major human rights treaties relevant to the violations described in the present report, including the ICCPR, the CAT, the CERD, the CRC, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>418</sup> the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the ACHPR. Eritrea is also bound by CIL.<sup>419</sup>

The prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of liberty is enshrined in multiple human rights instruments binding on Eritrea, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>420</sup> the ICCPR,<sup>421</sup> the ACHPR,<sup>422</sup> and the CRC.<sup>423</sup> The prohibition applies in both times of peace and armed con-

411 PCA Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the first stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Territorial Sovereignty and Scope of the Dispute), Decision of 9 October 1998, United Nations.

412 PCA Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the second stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Maritime Delimitation), Decision of 17 December 1999, United Nations.

413 PCA Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the first stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Territorial Sovereignty and Scope of the Dispute), Decision of 9 October 1998, United Nations, pp. 329-330, para. 526; PCA Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the second stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Maritime Delimitation), Decision of 17 December 1999, United Nations, p. 361, para. 109; Yemen and Eritrea had reached a MoU to regulate fishing between the two countries, permitting fishermen from both nations to operate in each other's territorial waters 'provided that the fishermen of the two countries be enumerated and that they be granted official licenses to engage in the occupation of fishing specifying the locations where they will be received and may market their products'. Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen For Cooperation in the Areas of Maritime Fishing, Trade, Investment, and Transportation (1994) ('Both the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen shall permit fishermen who are citizens of the two States, without limiting their numbers, and who carry cards to engage in the occupation of fishing, to fish in the territorial waters of the two States, the contiguous zone and the Exclusive Economic Zone of the two countries in the Red Sea (with the exception of the internal waters), provided that the fishermen of the two countries be enumerated and that they be granted official licenses to engage in the occupation of fishing specifying the locations where they will be received and may market their products in Appendix No. 1). Moreover, the two countries established the Joint Yemeni-Eritrean Committee for Bilateral Cooperation (Treaty Establishing the Joint Yemeni-Eritrean Committee for Bilateral Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Government of the State of Eritrea (1988)); See also Peter Dutton, *Eritrea v. Yemen, A Case Summary for the Maritime Dispute Resolution Project*, U.S.-Asia Law Institute. New York University School Of Law.

414 PCA Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the first stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Territorial Sovereignty and Scope of the Dispute), Decision of 9 October 1998, United Nations, para. 526.

415 Award of the Arbitral Tribunal in the second stage of the proceedings between Eritrea and Yemen (Maritime Delimitation), Decision of 17 December 1999, RIAA, Vol. XXII, p. 361, para. 109 ('The traditional fishing regime is not limited to the territorial waters of specified islands; nor are its limits to be drawn by reference to claimed past patterns of fishing. [...] The traditional fishing regime operates throughout those waters beyond the territorial waters of each of the Parties, and also in their territorial waters and ports, to the extent and in the manner specified in paragraph 107).

416 Peter Dutton, *Eritrea v. Yemen, A Case Summary for the Maritime Dispute Resolution Project*, U.S.-Asia Law Institute. New York University School Of Law, p. 9.

417 Peter Dutton, *Eritrea v. Yemen, A Case Summary for the Maritime Dispute Resolution Project*, U.S.-Asia Law Institute. New York University School Of Law, p.11-12.

418 CEDAW.

419 UN Treaty Body Database. *Ratification Status Eritrea*.

420 UDHR, Article 9.

421 ICCPR, Articles 9 and 14; Eritrea *ratified* the ICCPR in 2002.

422 ACHPR, Article 6; Eritrea has been a State Party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights since 14 January 1999. Eritrea has not ratified so far any of the five Protocols to the ACHPR.

423 CRC, Article 37.b.

flict,<sup>424</sup> and is widely recognized as a norm of *jus cogens*, from which no derogation is permitted.<sup>425</sup>

International law also prohibits enforced disappearance.<sup>426</sup> The 2006 Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances (CPED) defines enforced disappearance as: *‘the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law’*.<sup>427</sup> Enforced disappearance is a continuing violation that begins with the victim’s deprivation of liberty and persists for as long as the fate or whereabouts of the person remain unknown.<sup>428</sup>

Eritrea is not a party to the CPED. However, the prohibition of enforced disappearance is recognized as part of CIL,<sup>429</sup> and therefore Eritrea is bound by it. Moreover, as a result of its ratification of the ICCPR, Eritrea is bound by obligations not violate various civil and political rights related to enforced disappearances, such as the violation of the

right to life,<sup>430</sup> as well as the prohibition of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.<sup>431</sup> Enforced disappearance also infringes a number of ESCR of the detained fishermen and their dependents.

International law establishes minimum conditions for the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. Article 10 of the ICCPR requires that “[a]ll persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.”<sup>432</sup> Torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are prohibited under CIL<sup>433</sup> and are expressly prohibited by the CAT.<sup>434</sup> Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment are also explicitly prohibited under Article 5 of the ACHPR, which is binding on Eritrea.<sup>435</sup> International human rights law further prohibits slavery, servitude, and forced labor,<sup>436</sup> obligations binding on Eritrea through the ICCPR,<sup>437</sup> ICESCR,<sup>438</sup> and relevant ILO standards.<sup>439</sup>

Eritrea, as a party to the ICESCR since 2001 and to the ACHPR, has obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil ESCR within its territory, including the right to adequate food<sup>440</sup> and livelihood.<sup>441</sup> These rights are also reflected in other treaties bind-

424 ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 99.

425 Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Deliberation No. 10. Reparations for arbitrary deprivation of liberty. A/HRC/45/16 (Annex I), para. 4; Deliberation No. 9 Concerning the definition and scope of arbitrary deprivation of liberty under customary international law (2012); International Law Commission. Draft conclusions on identification and legal consequences of peremptory norms of general international law (*jus cogens*) 2022. Conclusion 2 Definition of a peremptory norm of general international law (*jus cogens*): ‘A peremptory norm of general international law (*jus cogens*) is a norm accepted and recognized by the international community of States as a whole as a norm from which no derogation is permitted and which can be modified only by a subsequent norm of general international law having the same character.’

426 ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 98.

427 CPED, Article 2.

428 *Ibid*; The Committee and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances issued a joint statement affirming that ‘[t]here is no time limit, no matter how short, for an enforced disappearance to occur. Every minute counts when a person is placed outside the protection of the law’ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2016/08/every-minute-counts-un-experts-raise-alarm-over-short-term-enforced>

429 ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 98.

430 ICCPR, Article 6.1; HRC, General comment No. 36 on article 6: right to life, para. 58.

431 ICCPR, Article 7; OHCHR web. International standards on enforced or involuntary disappearances

Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

432 ICCPR, Article 10; The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners set the minimum acceptable threshold for treating detainees.

433 ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 90.

434 Eritrea is a State party of the CAT since 2014. This Convention defines torture as ‘any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind’. On the other hand, cruel or inhuman treatment involves either a less severe form of pain or suffering, or the absence of the purposive element of “torture”.

435 ACHPR, Article 5 (‘Every individual shall have the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition of his legal status. All forms of exploitation and degradation of man, particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited.’); Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Africa (the Robben Island Guidelines) (2002); General Comment No. 3 on the ACHPR on the Right to Life (Article 4).

436 ICESCR, Articles 7 and 10.3; ICCPR, Article 8; CRC, Article 32.

437 ICCPR, Article 8.

438 ICESCR, Article 6.

439 ILO Standards: Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), 1930; Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105) (1975).

440 ICESCR, Article 11.2.

441 ICESCR, Article 11.1.

ing Eritrea, including CEDAW<sup>442</sup> and the CRC.<sup>443</sup>

Generally, international treaties bind state parties within their own borders, as established by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.<sup>444</sup> However, international jurisprudence and treaty body practice is increasingly recognizing that states may incur human rights obligations where their conduct has effects beyond their borders.<sup>445</sup> Human rights monitoring bodies have identified various models for the application of extraterritorial jurisdiction: the personal model (control over individuals), the spatial model (control over territory), and the cause-and-effect model (actions impacting individuals outside the state).<sup>446</sup>

The CESCR has indicated that the ICESCR may extend beyond state borders in certain circumstances, suggesting that states could be bound by treaty obligations when acting extraterritorially.<sup>447</sup> In addition, the Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights articulate the view that states have obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill ESCR where their actions or omissions foreseeably affect the enjoyment of these rights abroad, while acknowledging that extraterritorial application remains an exception to the general territorial rule.

Insofar as it lacks legal justification and due process, the conduct of Eritrean forces acting against Yemeni fisherman at sea violates the prohibition

of arbitrary deprivation of liberty.<sup>448</sup> At the time of their arrest, the interviewed Yemeni fishermen were neither informed of the reasons for their detention, nor made aware of any charges against them. Additionally, they were not promptly brought before a judge, which denied them the opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, violating Article 9.2 of the ICCPR. Further, regardless of where these detentions took place,<sup>449</sup> according to the traditional fishing practices acknowledged in the binding rulings of the PCA from 1998 and 1999, Yemeni fishermen have the right to fish not only in Yemeni territorial waters and international waters but also in Eritrean territorial waters.

Most of the documented cases of fishermen detained by Eritrean forces may also amount to enforced disappearances under IHRL, as the fishermen were placed outside the law and their detention was not communicated.<sup>450</sup>

Moreover, as identified throughout this report, there is strong evidence that numerous IHRL violations may have been committed against Yemeni fishermen while in detention by Eritrean forces. In the case of the detention sites, evidence points at potential forced labor and physical and mental violence in detention facilities.<sup>451</sup> Eritrea may have violated various civil and political rights, such as the right to life<sup>452</sup> as well as the prohibition of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment,

442 CEDAW, Art. 14(h).

443 CRC, Article 4.

444 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, Article 29.

445 The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has affirmed that the ICCPR applies to actions taken by a state outside its territory, and it has acknowledged that obligations related to economic, social, and cultural rights can sometimes apply extraterritorially as well. ICJ, Advisory Opinion Concerning Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, para. 111; Fons Coomans, "The Extraterritorial Scope of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Work of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," Human Rights Law Review, Oxford University Press (2011), <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r26506.pdf>, p. 5; Nicolás Carrillo Santarelli, Paula roa, and Francesco Seatz, "The Scope of the Extraterritorial Obligation to Respect in the Inter-American Human Rights System: An Approach Fully Consistent with the Demands of the Recognition of the Dignity of All Human Beings," SYBIL (2023); Allard K., "All of Us Are in ConstAnt HUnger" Ethiopia's Responsibility for Starvation in Tigray Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School June (2023), ft. 655.

446 The Routledge handbook on extraterritorial human rights obligations / edited by Mark Gibney, Gamze Erdem Türkelli, Markus Krajewski and Wouter Vandenhole (2022). Chapter 10. Enforcement of extraterritorial human rights obligations in the African human rights system Anne Oloo and Wouter Vandenhole, pp.140-150.

447 Fons Coomans, "The Extraterritorial Scope of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Work of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," Human Rights Law Review. Oxford University Press (2011), p. 4; E.g., the Committee's General Comment on the right to water emphasizes that states should not impede another state's ability to guarantee access to water, which may involve actions like diverting watercourses. CESCR General Comment No. 15; CESCR, General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food, para. 32 ("States parties should take steps to respect the enjoyment of the right to food in other countries, to protect that right, to facilitate access to food and to provide the necessary aid when required."); CESCR, General Comment No 14, para. 40.

448 UDHR, Article 9; ICCPR, Articles 9 and 14; ACHPR, Article 6; CRC, Article, 37.b.

449 It is important to note that establishing the precise locations of the arrests is challenging for several reasons. First, many Yemeni fishermen operate small-scale, artisanal boats that often lack advanced navigation technology such as GPS. These vessels typically rely on traditional fishing methods and local knowledge of the sea, making it difficult to pinpoint their precise location at the time of an incident. This, coupled with the changing tides and weather conditions, can further complicate the ability to determine exact coordinates. Fishermen may move frequently in response to fish availability, making it hard to trace their movements accurately.

450 CPED, Article 2; In 2022, the Working Group on enforced disappearances reviewed state practice and *opinio juris* related to enforced disappearances and affirmed that the definition contained in the Declaration is today part of customary law (at 72). <https://www.ejiltalk.org/three-legal-questions-arising-from-reported-practices-of-enforced-disappearance-in-russian-occupied-ukrainian-territories/>

451 These abuses occur within military facilities in Eritrea, particularly in the Marsa Fatima area and on Ras Terma/Ras Derma and Harmal; See also "31 Yemeni Fishermen Return to Hodeidah After Eritrean Kidnapping and Torture," Barran press (2024); "Yemeni fishermen return to Hodeida after ten days of Eritrean detention," Yemen press agency, (2024).

452 ICCPR, Article 6.1; HRC, General comment No. 36 on article 6: right to life, para. 58.

<sup>453</sup> the prohibition of forced labor,<sup>454</sup> and others.<sup>455</sup>

Eritrea may have also violated its obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill ESCR such as the right to food and right to livelihoods of those fishermen detained in Eritrea.<sup>456</sup> These illegal and arbitrary arrests and detentions also seem to have caused significant transboundary harm to Yemeni fishermen and fishing communities, restricting their access to vital fishing grounds. Adopting a harm-based, transboundary harm or causal approach to the extraterritorial application of human rights, it could be argued that Eritrea may be violating its ESCR obligations by harming Yemeni fishermen who are prevented from going out at sea to access food and pursue their livelihoods, as well as for the harm of those who depend financially on the detained fishermen.<sup>457</sup>

International law recognizes the obligation of Eritrea to provide reparations in case of a violation of international law.<sup>458</sup>

## 6.2.4 The Internationally Recognized Government ('IRG') of Yemen

This subsection sets out the international obligations of the IRG of Yemen in relation to the patterns of conduct described in [Patterns of conduct harming fishing communities](#), with a specific focus on its obligations under international human rights law, including to respect, protect and fulfill the ESCR of fishermen and fishing communities along Yemen's western coast. While international humanitarian law is also applicable,<sup>459</sup> this section focuses on the IRG's obligations to uphold international human rights standards, including in relation to the rights to food and livelihood.<sup>460</sup>

The IRG exercises varying degrees of authority across Yemeni territory.<sup>461</sup> In areas where it lacks effective control, its ability to protect and fulfill the human rights of the population is constrained.<sup>462</sup> Nevertheless, under international human rights law, the IRG retains obligations as the IRG, including duties to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights, subject to the limits imposed by the factual circumstances on the ground.<sup>463</sup>

<sup>453</sup> ICCPR, Article 7.

<sup>454</sup> [Forced Labour Convention](#), Article 1; [ICCPR](#), Article 8(3); [European Convention on Human Rights](#), Article 4(2); [American Convention on Human Rights](#), Article 6(2); [ACHPR](#), Article 15 (right to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions).

<sup>455</sup> OHCHR web. [International standards on enforced or involuntary disappearances](#); [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#).

<sup>456</sup> [ICESCR](#), Article 11; [ACHPR](#), Article 15.

<sup>457</sup> The extraterritorial duty to respect human rights, grounded in an impact-based approach, is particularly well-developed in the Inter-American human rights system. See e.g.; Advisory opinion OC-23/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on The Environment and Human Rights I/A Court H.R., 2017, paras 95, 101-103). In it, the Court held that: "[T]he jurisdiction of a State is not limited to its territorial space (para. 74). The word 'jurisdiction,' for the purposes of the human rights obligations under the American Convention as well as extraterritorial conducts may encompass a State's activities that cause effects outside its territory [...] States also have the obligation to avoid any transboundary environmental damage that can affect the human rights of individuals outside their territory. For the purposes of the American Convention, when transboundary damage occurs that effects treaty-based rights, it is understood that the persons whose rights have been violated are under the jurisdiction of the State of origin, if there is a causal link between the act that originated in its territory and the infringement of the human rights of persons outside its territory [...]; See also, Nicolás Carrillo-Santarelli and Paula A. Roa-Sánchez, "The Impact- or Causality-Based Extraterritorial Obligation to Respect Human Rights: A Consistent and Humane Approach of the InterAmerican Human Rights System." *Extraterritorial Obligation To Respect Human Rights*, (2020).

<sup>458</sup> See above [The individual right to reparations](#).

<sup>459</sup> The IRG is obligated to comply with IHL as a party to the NIAC in Yemen. This compliance encompasses the responsibility to protect civilians, ensure humane treatment of all individuals, and refrain from committing acts that constitute war crimes. Yemen has ratified the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and is also a party to the 1977 AP II applicable to non-international armed conflicts.

<https://www.rulac.org/browse/conflicts/non-international-armed-conflicts-in-yemen#collapse4accord>

<sup>460</sup> [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen\\* E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, \(2023\)](#) ("The Committee recalls that the applicability of international humanitarian law does not preclude the application of international human rights law, including the Covenant, which operates independently, and, in this regard, refers to paragraph 106 of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in which the Court stated that "the protection offered by human rights conventions does not cease in case of armed conflict"), para. 6.

<sup>461</sup> In the West Coast of Yemen, the joint forces, commanded by Presidential Leadership Council member Tariq Saleh and based in the expanding town of al-Mukha, control the southern portion of the coastline, while the Houthis maintain de facto control over the northern half, extending down to al-Tuhayta in southern al-Hudaydah; The Joint Forces, formerly known as National Resistance, consist of three armed militias: the Guards of the Republic, the Southern Giants Brigades, and the Tihama Resistance. They were formed in July 2019 with support from the UAE. <https://acleddata.com/profile/joint-forces-west-coast>

<sup>462</sup> [Returned to Zero](#), p. 104.

<sup>463</sup> [Starvation Makers](#), p. 233 and Part F, Section 3.3; [CESCR Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen\\* E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, \(2023\)](#) ("The Committee recognizes that the armed conflict hampers effective control by the State party over parts of its territory and that it is thus not in a position to ensure the full implementation of Covenant rights. It reminds the State party, however, that human rights obligations extend throughout the country and that it is the responsibility of the State to protect all persons within its territory without discrimination. To that effect, the State party must endeavour, as far as possible, to fulfil its obligations under the Covenant by resorting to all means compatible with international law"), para. 5; [GRC Reparations Guide](#), p. 109.

Yemen is a party to major human rights treaties of relevance to the violations described in the present report, including the ICCPR, the CERD, as well as the CEDAW, and the CRPD.<sup>464</sup> The ICESCR, ratified by Yemen in 1987, obliges the IRG to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights within its territory.<sup>465</sup> Yemen is also bound by CIL.<sup>466</sup>

By ratifying the ICESCR, Yemen has formally recognized its legal duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights, including the right to food, of every person within its jurisdiction. The right to food includes both the right to adequate food<sup>467</sup> and the fundamental right to be free from hunger.<sup>468</sup>

The obligation to respect requires the IRG to refrain from interfering, directly or indirectly, with the enjoyment of ESCR. The obligation to protect requires the IRG to actively safeguard individuals from abuses of these rights by third parties, whether state or non-state actors, including by preventing, investigating and providing redress for such abuses.<sup>469</sup> The obligation to fulfill requires the IRG to take all appropriate measures (e.g., legislative (in particular), judicial, budgetary, administrative and others as appropriate) to ensure that every person can fully realize their rights.<sup>470</sup> Under international law, the obligation to fulfil ESCR is subject to the principle of progressive realization and must be

pursued to the maximum of available resources.<sup>471</sup> However, this does not absolve states of immediate obligations, including the duty to take concrete steps towards realization, to avoid retrogressive measures, and to ensure at least the minimum core content of ESCR,<sup>472</sup> even when a state's resources are scarce.<sup>473</sup>

The right to adequate food is realized when every person has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or the means for its procurement.<sup>474</sup> It includes the fundamental right to be free from hunger and forms part of the broader right to an adequate standard of living under the ICESCR.<sup>475</sup>

Livelihoods can be defined as the means by which individuals and households secure access to the resources necessary for their immediate and long-term survival.<sup>476</sup> The right to livelihood is closely linked to the rights to life,<sup>477</sup> work,<sup>478</sup> and an adequate standard of living,<sup>479</sup> as well as to the rights to food and health.<sup>480</sup>

Yemen is a party to the Ottawa Convention.<sup>481</sup> Under Article 5 of the Convention, Yemen has undertaken to destroy all anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible and to identify, mark, monitor, and protect mined

464 See [Yemen Treaty Ratification Status](#).

465 Yemen acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on February 9, 1987; CESCR General Comment No. 3: The Nature of States Parties' Obligations; CESCR Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen\* E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, (2023), para. 73.

466 Yemen is not yet a party to the CPED, the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR; the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW; the Optional Protocol to the CAT; and the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a submissions procedure. Yemen has not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which was signed in 2000. CESCR. Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen\* E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, (2023), para. 73.

467 ICESCR, Article 11.1 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food'; CESCR, [General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food](#), para. 1.

468 ICESCR, Article 11.1.

469 OHCHR, [Frequently Asked Questions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). Fact Sheet No.°33, pp. 11-12, 27-32.

470 CESCR, [General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food](#); It is important to note that the obligation to fulfil may be discharged through international assistance and cooperation.

471 ICESCR, Article 2; Maastricht Guidelines on Violations of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ('Maastricht Guidelines on ESCR'), principle 8; CESCR General Comment No. 3: The Nature of States Parties' Obligations, para. 4; Maastricht Guidelines on ESCR, principle 9.

472 CESCR. [General comment No. 3: The nature of States parties' obligations](#).

473 Submission to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, And Cultural Rights - Mwatana: [The Yemeni government has failed to protect the rights of its citizens](#) (2023).

474 CESCR, General Comment 12 (1999); See also UN Economic and Social Council, 'The Right to Food Report by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Mr. Jean Ziegler, Submitted in Accordance with Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2000/10', UN Doc. E/CN.4/2001/53 (2001), para. 14.

475 For more information on the right to food see GRC Starvation App – Law on Starvation – IHRL Framework Starvation and ESC Rights and in the [GRC Reparations Guide](#).

476 Livelihoods can be defined as 'the means by which households obtain and maintain access to the resources necessary to ensure their immediate and long-term survival. These essential resources can be categorized into six categories: (i) physical, (ii) natural, (ii) human, (iv) financial, (v) social, and (vi) political. Households use these assets to increase their ability to withstand shocks and to manage risks that threaten their well-being.' [Livelihoods & Conflict](#), USAID, 2005.

477 *Olga Tellis & Ors v Bombay Municipal Council* (1985) 2 Supp SCR 51.

478 ICESCR, Article 6; [European Social Charter](#), Article 4; [Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), Article 7.

479 ICESCR, Article 11; [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), Article 25; CEDAW, Article 14.h.

480 ICESCR, Article 11.1 and 12.

481 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, September 1997 ('Ottawa Convention'); ICRC, [International Humanitarian law Databases](#)

areas.<sup>482</sup> Yemen has been granted an extension to its mine clearance deadline, currently set for March 2028.<sup>483</sup>

In areas under its effective control, it is the State that bears responsibility for mine clearance and for taking measures to protect civilians from the indiscriminate effects of landmines.<sup>484</sup> Under international human rights law, failure to take reasonable measures to address known mine contamination may implicate obligations relating to ESCR.<sup>485</sup>

Based on the information outlined in this report, the IRG has fallen short of its legal obligation to protect Yemeni fishermen and the broader fishing community from abuses committed by other actors, including states and non-state entities such as Eritrea, the Houthis, and Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, to date, the IRG appears to have not taken sufficient measures to ensure the safety and well-being of Yemeni fishermen or to pursue accountability for violations against them. This inaction jeopardizes the human rights of both fishermen and the wider fishing community.

For decades, Eritrea has committed significant abuses against fishermen with impunity, yet the IRG seems not to have taken meaningful or sufficient action to safeguard this community from arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and other detention-related violations such as torture, ill-treatment and forced labor, despite the harms caused and their severe impact on the livelihoods of fishermen and their access to food. Moreover, there is insufficient protection against Eritrean actions, and safeguards for fishermen when they are detained and their rights violated. As one example: No official, efficient and well-functioning process allows fishermen and their families to report disappearances or seek government assistance in cases

of arbitrary detention or family members that go missing at sea. Additionally, effective diplomatic efforts to exert pressure on Eritrea and prevent these detentions and violations are not evident.<sup>486</sup>

Under IHRL, the failure to remove landmines may also amount to a violation of the obligations to protect and fulfil the human rights of the fishing community. Failing to remove landmines to shield the population from their indiscriminate effects may constitute a violation of the rights to food, water, life, work, health, and property.<sup>487</sup>

The IRG has failed to safeguard Yemeni fishermen from attacks by the Saudi-led coalition, potentially violating its human rights obligations to respect and protect.<sup>488</sup> Given its involvement in Coalition military operations, it may have in some cases also been involved in violations of international law.

The IRG has immediate obligations regarding the realization of ESCR, which include taking concrete actions and implementing policies aimed at realizing ESCR,<sup>489</sup> such as creating legal frameworks, allocating resources, and establishing programs that support access to rights, as well as the prohibition of adopting retrogressive measures.<sup>490</sup> The IRG must also ensure that all individuals can access their rights without discrimination.<sup>491</sup>

Regardless of resource or other constraints, the IRG has a duty to ensure at least the ‘minimum essential level’ of ESCR, which includes guaranteeing access to basic necessities such as food, water, and housing.<sup>492</sup> In order for the IRG to be able to attribute its failure to meet its core obligations to a lack of available resources, it must demonstrate that every effort has been made to use all resources that are at its disposal in an effort to satisfy, as a matter of priority, those core obligations.<sup>493</sup> If the IRG claims it is unable to carry out its ESCR obligations for reasons beyond its control, it

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482 *Ibid.*

483 The Annual Article 7 Report of the Republic of Yemen for the time period from 1st of January 2024 to 31st December 2024 to the Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. (2025) [https://www.apmineban-convention.org/fileadmin/\\_APMBC-DOCUMENTS/Art7Reports/2025-Yemen-Art7Report-for2024.pdf](https://www.apmineban-convention.org/fileadmin/_APMBC-DOCUMENTS/Art7Reports/2025-Yemen-Art7Report-for2024.pdf) ; In 2024 Yemen submitted an updated work plan for the implementation of its Article 5 obligations.

484 *Ottawa Convention*.

485 *Starvation Makers*, p. 320.

486 The field team made multiple attempts to interview members of the IRG, including the ambassador to Eritrea, in order to obtain additional information on this issue. These requests did not receive a response, and no further information was provided.

487 *Starvation makers*, p. 320.

488 *Returned to Zero*, p.77; *Starvation makers*, p. 233.

489 CESCR, General Comment No. 3.

490 CESCR, General Comment No. 3, para. 9 ‘any deliberately retrogressive measures’ with regard to the obligation to achieve progressively the full realisation of the rights, established in Article 2 (1) ICESCR, ‘would require the most careful consideration and would need to be fully justified by reference to the totality of the rights provided for in the Covenant and in the context of the full use of the maximum available resources.’

491 ICESCR, Article 2. 2.

492 CESCR, General Comment No. 3.

493 CESCR, General Comment No. 3; UN, Limburg Principles, para. 25, CESCR, *An evaluation of the obligation to take steps to the “maximum of available resources” under an optional protocol to the covenant statement*. (2007), para. 6.

has the burden of proving that this is the case.<sup>494</sup> It must also demonstrate “it has unsuccessfully sought to obtain international support to ensure the availability and accessibility of the necessary food”.<sup>495</sup>

In addition to its immediate obligations, the IRG also has an obligation to take positive steps to ensure the progressive realization of socioeconomic rights, including access to food and means to ensure livelihoods. The IRG is required to make deliberate efforts toward achieving these goals by using maximum available resources at its disposal to progressively fulfill these rights, taking into account its economic capacity and social context.<sup>496</sup>

In 2023, while acknowledging the difficulties faced by Yemen owing to the ongoing conflict, the CESCR expressed concern about the limited extent to which domestic resources were being mobilized for the realization of ESCR, particularly with respect to social services, such as health, education and social protection services.<sup>497</sup>

International law recognizes the obligation of states to ensure access to effective remedies and reparations for individuals whose rights have been violated within their jurisdiction, irrespective of whether the viola-

tions were committed directly by state agents or by other actors.<sup>498</sup>

According to the obligation to protect, the IRG is required to implement appropriate measures to protect fishermen and members of the fishing community from abuses by other states or non-state actors operating within its borders, including members of the Saudi-led coalition, Eritrea (when they enter Yemeni territorial waters) and the Houthis.<sup>499</sup> This includes conducting comprehensive inquiries and establishing adequate safeguards to ensure that actions in Yemen adhere to human rights standards.<sup>500</sup> Yemen also cannot aid or assist other states, including members of the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition, where such support contributes to violations of international law.<sup>501</sup>

IHRL requires states to ensure thorough and credible investigations into alleged human rights violations<sup>502</sup> and to establish robust mechanisms for accountability and redress.<sup>503</sup> This obligation forms part of the broader duty to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights.

In this context, the IRG established the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations of Human Rights (NCIAVHR) in September 2012 to investigate violations of IHL and IHRL related to the conflict in

494 Maastricht Guidelines on ESCR, Guideline 13 (‘In determining which actions or omissions amount to a violation of an economic, social or cultural right, it is important to distinguish the inability from the unwillingness of a State to comply with its treaty obligations. A State claiming that it is unable to carry out its obligation for reasons beyond its control has the burden of proving that this is the case. A temporary closure of an educational institution due to an earthquake, for instance, would be a circumstance beyond the control of the State, while the elimination of a social security scheme without an adequate replacement programme could be an example of unwillingness by the State to fulfil its obligations.’).

495 CESCR, General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food, para.17; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 115; CESCR, An evaluation of the obligation to take steps to the “maximum of available resources” under an optional protocol to the covenant statement (2007).

496 Article 2. 1 ICESCR, establishes that states parties in order to fulfil their obligations have to take steps, individually and through international co-operation, to the “maximum of [their] available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures. Article 2 ICESCR; UN, “Limburg Principles”, para. 21. The Limburg Principles on the Implementation of the ICESCR states that ‘to achieve progressively the full realisation of the rights’ requires states parties to move as expeditiously as possible towards the realisation of the rights. Under no circumstances shall this be interpreted as implying for states the right to defer indefinitely efforts to ensure full realisation. On the contrary all states parties have the obligation to begin immediately to take steps to fulfill their obligations under the Covenant’; CESCR, General Comment No.12 on the right to adequate food, para. 6.

497 CESCR. Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Yemen\* E/C.12/YEM/CO/3, 23 March 2023, para. 21; (‘Recalling its general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States parties’ obligations, the Committee recommends that the State party allocate the budgetary resources required for the implementation of the Covenant rights by mobilizing national resources to that end, particularly for social services, and by seeking, where necessary, international assistance and cooperation. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure that budget formulation and implementation are carried out in a transparent and participatory manner and guarantee the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by all sectors of the population, in particular the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups and individuals.’).

498 See above, The individual right to reparations A State obligation.

499 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 81; Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Human Rights Obligations of Armed Non-State Actors: An Exploration of the Practice of the UN Human Rights Council, Academy In-Brief No. 7, (2016), p. 15; Starvation makers, p. 320; CESCR, General Comment 12, Right to adequate food, para. 15 (‘The obligation to protect requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food.’).

500 UNHRC, Submission No. 319/1988, *García v. Ecuador*, Views adopted on 5 Nov. 1991, paras 5.1 and 5.2.

501 Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, Articles 16 and 20; Mwatana Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Yemen 4th Cycle, 46th Session (2023).

502 UN Basic Principles, para. 4 (‘In cases of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law constituting crimes under international law, States have the duty to investigate and, if there is sufficient evidence, the duty to submit to prosecution the person allegedly responsible for the violations and, if found guilty, the duty to punish her or him. Moreover, in these cases, States should, in accordance with international law, cooperate with one another and assist international judicial organs competent in the investigation and prosecution of these violations.’); UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), para. 871.

503 Submission to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, And Cultural Rights - Mwatana: The Yemeni government has failed to protect the rights of its citizens (2023); Returned to Zero, p. 84; In relation to Yemen, the UN Security Council has stressed the need for “comprehensive, independent, and impartial investigations in line with international standards into alleged human rights violations and abuses [...] to ensure complete accountability. UNSC, Resolution 2140 (2014), S/RES/2140(2014); UNSC, Resolution 2201 (2015), S/RES/2201(2015).

Yemen.<sup>504</sup> Since then, the NCIHVHR has issued reports on violations during the ongoing conflict, calling for reparations from the IRG and compensation from the Coalition. However, the Commission does not possess enforcement powers and its recommendations have routinely been ignored by all parties, including the IRG.<sup>505</sup>

Cases investigated by the NCIHVHR are to be referred to the national judiciary to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and for victims to seek reparations.<sup>506</sup> Concerns have been raised regarding whether the NCIHVHR meets international standards relating to transparency, impartiality, credibility and effectiveness.<sup>507</sup>

The NCIHVHR has monitored and documented multiple incidents involving fishermen being killed, injured, or kidnapped,<sup>508</sup> as well as incidents related to mines affecting these communities.<sup>509</sup> In its annual reports, it has identified several cases in which boats were struck, resulting in casualties among fishermen.<sup>510</sup> However, these cases do not appear to have resulted in completed judicial processes leading to accountability or reparations.<sup>511</sup>

Violations against fishermen form a core part of the Commission's mandate and were identified early as priorities. These violations are associated with the conduct of hostilities, including artillery strikes, air-strikes, and the use of sea mines and other explosive devices. The NCIHVHR has also documented cases involving fishermen detained by Eritrean forces. The NCIHVHR began monitoring and documenting incidents affecting fishermen from the outset of its field investigations in January 2016. Nevertheless, while communities have consistently called for support to enable fishermen to fish, as well as for intervention to clear mines and for protection of fishing zones from violence, *'to this day, there has been no action that genuinely indicates that they have obtained such redress.'*<sup>512</sup>

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504 Amendment of Presidential Decree No. 140 of 22 September 2012; NCIHVHR [website](#); According to Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the NCIHVHR, the Committee also investigates violations of IHRL even if not related to the ongoing conflict.

505 For further details and analysis, see the NCIHVHR's reports, [Returned to Zero](#), p. 82 and [Starvation makers](#), pp. 334-336; UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 874-901.

506 HRC, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1\* Yemen, 8 November 2018, para. 43.

507 UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 879-885.

508 See all periodic reports of the NCIHVHR [here](#).

509 According to Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the NCIHVHR. 'We have documented numerous incidents of naval mine explosions near the shores of the Red Sea, whether off Al-Mukha, Dhubab, or the Gulf of Aden. This entire area witnessed military operations between 2015 and 2018, and there were multiple incidents of mines detonating. It is only natural that such incidents would have an impact and would prevent access to the sea.'; According to this interviewee, the NCIHVHR also has case files on fishermen's arrests by Eritrean forces.

510 For example, the NCIHVHR reported on an incident where an airstrike in 2015 resulted in the destruction of the fishing boat and the killing of three people who were on it. The Commission concluded that the entity responsible for this violation is the air force of the Arab Coalition to Support the Legitimacy in Yemen. According to the report, the Commission had contacted and made inquiries to the command of the Coalition forces regarding this incident. At the time when the report was written the Commission hadn't received any response. [Sixth Report on The work of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights \(NCIHVHR\) in Yemen For 1/8/2018 to 31/1/2019](#), p. 15; The Commission documented the airstrike targeting Al Qataba port in the Al Khawkhah District of Hodeidah Governorate in 2016, resulting in the deaths of two fishermen and injuries to one, along with the destruction of two boats anchored in the port. The Commission concluded that the parties responsible for this violation were the legitimate government forces and the Arab Coalition, which controlled the airspace over the Republic of Yemen since the initiation of Decisive Storm Operations in 2015. [Ninth Periodic Report on the Works of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights August 1, 2020 – July 1, 2021](#), p. 36.

511 Statement by Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025, member of the NCIHVHR.

512 Interviewee No. 100183A, 28 December 2025.

# VII. Conclusion



*Fishing boats at the fishermen's harbor in the Yakhtal area of Mucha. Photo taken on July 9, 2025*

Various parties to the conflict in Yemen, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the IRG and the Houthis, as well as other actors, such as Eritrea, have been implicated in conduct that may amount to violations of IHRL and IHL, in some cases rising to the level of serious or grave breaches. As documented in this report, fishermen and fishing communities along Yemen's west coast have been repeatedly deprived of their lives, liberty, health, livelihoods, and access to food.

Attacks on fishing boats and infrastructure, the explosion and threat of landmines and sea mines, the arbitrary and abusive detention of fishermen, and the sustained failure to respect, protect and fulfill

the ESC rights of fishermen and fishing communities, have caused long-lasting physical, psychological, and socioeconomic damage. Many have died or been injured. Many more have been displaced, lost their livelihoods and access to food, and been unable repair or rebuild.

Despite the severity and scale of these harms, no reparations have been provided. In 84 interviews conducted for this report, there was no indication that any responsible party had provided compensation or redress to affected members of the fishing community. While mechanisms have been established to investigate and address civilian harm during the Yemeni conflict,<sup>513</sup> a 2022 assessment

<sup>513</sup> UNGEE, Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1 (2019), paras 874-901.

found them insufficient, limited in scope, lacking in transparency, and incapable of conducting genuine investigations.<sup>514</sup> None have aligned with the UN Guiding Principles on reparations.<sup>515</sup> Those interviewed described a deep sense of abandonment – by authorities, by local fishermen’s associations, and by the mechanisms nominally designed to protect them.

Addressing this gap requires more than *ad hoc* assistance. Immediate measures such as cash support and psychosocial care are necessary but insufficient. What is missing is a coordinated national framework to prevent further violations, preserve evidence, and provide accessible pathways to reparation from all responsible actors. Without this, individual recovery is undermined and the resilience of Yemen’s traditional fisheries sector, and the food security of coastal communities, remains critically weakened.

The preferences expressed by affected fishermen themselves are clear. They seek restitution for destroyed or confiscated boats and equipment, and financial compensation sufficient to restore their livelihoods and living conditions. They want the physical and mental health consequences of their experiences to be addressed. They call for those responsible to face investigation and prosecution, so that similar abuses do not recur. They also look towards better regulation of fishing waters to protect against violent and destructive foreign vessels, and to educational opportunities for their children. Some have called memorialization of those who died. These are not abstract demands, they reflect the concrete realities of communities that have been failed at every level. And underlying all of them is a more fundamental appeal: an end to the conflict itself, without which no form of redress can take lasting hold.

The harms documented in this report span both conflict- and non-conflict-related conduct and have entrenched poverty and marginalization across Yemen’s coastal communities. All involved parties carry obligations under international law. Preventing further harm, acknowledging what has occurred, and ensuring genuine access to accountability and reparations are not optional steps – they are legal and moral imperatives. Continued documentation, monitoring, and engagement with affected communities remain essential to building the evidentiary basis for accountability and to ensuring that victims’ rights to truth, justice, and reparations are upheld.

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514 *Returned to Zero*, pp.12-15, 82-95; “Global Reparations Study on opportunities for reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, Yemen (2025),” Global Survivors Fund, p. 45.

515 *Returned to Zero*, p. 84; Kristine Beckerle and Ali Jameel “The Urgency of Reparations for Civilians in Yemen,” Just security (2022).



Read the StoryMap here:  
The Forgotten Fishermen  
of Yemen's West Coast

