

Joint Statement

On International
Children Day:
Justice for Yemen
Children must be
included in peace talks.

20 November

#Justice4YemeniChildren
#Justice4Yemen

November 20th marks International Children’s Day. This day serves as a poignant reminder that we must take a resolute stand to defend, promote, and celebrate the rights of Yemeni children. We, the undersigned, call on the parties to the conflict in Yemen and the international community to work towards securing justice for Yemeni children and enabling them to lead dignified lives, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Yemen is a signatory.

The children of Yemen have endured nine painful years of conflict. [No party to the conflict can claim to have clean hands](#). The Saudi and UAE-led coalition, Ansar Allah (also known as the Houthis), the internationally recognized Yemeni government, the Southern Transitional Council, the UAE-backed Joint Forces, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula are all responsible for perpetrating violations against children.

In 2023, perpetrators in Yemen continued to commit human rights violations against children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, including indiscriminate ground attacks, drone attacks, sniper attacks, the use of landmines, sexual violence, recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the denial of humanitarian aid—abuses that are among those the UN has deemed “[the six grave violations against children](#).” The conflict has also left [11 million children](#) in need of humanitarian assistance.

Research conducted by of the [Watch for Human Rights \(Watch4HR\)](#) and [Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations \(YCMHRV\)](#), verified 250 cases of grave human rights violations against children documented during the period from January to September 2023. The violations included child recruitment (85 cases); killing and maiming (75 cases); attacks on schools and hospitals (45 cases); kidnapping (24 cases); sexual violence (14 cases); and obstructing access to humanitarian aid (7cases). The victims included internally displaced individuals and Muhamasheen (a marginalized ethnic group in Yemen). The vast majority of the victims (79%) were boys. Most of the violations were perpetrated by the Houthis (84%), while 14% were perpetrated by the Yemeni government and the Southern Transitional Council, and 2% were perpetrated by unidentified officials.

The UN Secretary-General’s [2022 report on children and armed conflict](#) also documented 1,596 grave violations against children in Yemen, including child recruitment, killing and maiming, sexual violence, kidnapping, attacks on schools and hospitals, and obstruction of humanitarian aid.

The children of Yemen are having their futures stolen as parties to the conflict launch attacks on infrastructure and education. Over two million children are unable to attend school, as nearly 3,000 schools have been destroyed or repurposed for military use and the Red Cross reports that a fifth of schools have been closed. Ansar Allah has also used schools, mosques, and summer camps to recruit children to join their forces. Although the United Nations has signed action plans with [Ansar Allah](#) and the [Yemeni government](#) to end their recruitment and use of children in their armed forces, both Ansar Allah and forces allied with the Yemeni government continue to recruit children, according to the research conducted by the Yemeni civil society organizations.

Violations against Yemen's children have persisted in the absence of an international accountability mechanism that could deter parties to the conflict from abuses.

Yemeni civil society organizations eagerly anticipate a peace agreement, and hope that all parties, including the Yemeni government, will participate and fulfill their historical responsibilities to protect children and what remains of their homeland. However, for the current negotiations to be effective in establishing a lasting peace in Yemen, these talks must be inclusive of civil society, and should ensure that transitional justice and accountability are central to the discussion.

The undersigned organizations make the following recommendations:

- 01** Parties to the conflict should immediately end all violations against children, including killing and maiming, child recruitment, sexual violence, abductions, and obstruction of access to humanitarian aid. They should refrain from attacks on and military use of hospitals and educational facilities.
- 02** Parties to the conflict, the UN, and the international community should prioritize the protection of children in the ongoing peace talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis to ensure justice and accountability.
- 03** The UN and the international community should end impunity for violations perpetrated by the warring parties, engage local civil society organizations and victims of human rights violations, and advocate for the establishment of an international investigative team to investigate, collect evidence of, and monitor all human rights violations in Yemen, including grave violations against children, to ensure accountability.

04 The UN and the Yemeni government should develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that all children not currently enrolled in school are enrolled, particularly marginalized and vulnerable children, and that the protection and rehabilitation of schools is prioritized.

05 Parties to the conflict should end all child recruitment, demobilize children who are participating in the conflict, and ensure their reintegration through protection programs. They should also facilitate access for civil society and protection agencies to all military and security sites to monitor the conditions of children in detention, and the release of children and their return to their families.

06 The Yemeni government should work on harmonizing national laws with international agreements, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

Signatories:

- 1- Watch for Human Rights (Watch4HR)
- 2- The Yemen Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV)
- 3- DT Institute
- 4- Human Rights Watch (hrw)
- 5- Justice4Yemen Pact
- 6- Musaala organization for human rights
- 7- The Arab Network for Child Rights "MANARA"
- 8- Defense for children international – Yemen
- 9- Egyptian foundation for advancement of the childhood conditions- DCI-Egypt
- 10- Egyptian Coalition for Child Rights
- 11- Association Mautanienne Pour la Santé de la Mere et de l'Enfant /DCIMauritanie
- 12- Woman and Child Development Center
- 13- Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children
- 14- Woman peace

- 15 - Improve Your Society Organization
- 16 - Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism
- 17 - Washington center for Yemeni studies
- 18 - Basma foundation for child development and woman
- 19 - Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory
- 20 - Enqath Foundation for Development
- 21 - OMD-Y
- 22 - Alafdal Foundation for Development
- 23 - Al-Mamoun Developmental Foundation
- 24 - Istetla for Polling and Advisory
- 25 - Relief and Development Peer Foundation (RDP)
- 26 - Fina Khair Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Works
- 27 - Alakhar for Peace and development center
- 28 - Salam For Yemen
- 29 - I am for my country foundation
- 30 - Tomorrow Foundation for Sustainable and Humanitarian Relief (TFSD)
- 31 - Green Land for Development & Rights
- 32 - Abs development organizations for woman and child (ADO)
- 33 - Forall Foundation
- 34 - Sada Foundation for Building and Development
- 35 - Rawahel Foundation for Development
- 36 - Alamal Women's and Sociocultural Foundation
- 37 - SAM for Rights and Liberties
- 38 - Marib Dam Foundaion for Social Development
- 39 - Abductees' Mothers Association
- 40 - CCYRC Freedoms and Rights Monitor
- 41 - Reserved
- 42 - Reserved
- 43 - Reserved