

## Rape Crimes Stories against Yemen's Children in Armed Conflict,

### Tragedies and Violations increase due to silence!





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### **Yemen**

The conflicts in Yemen have created a wide space for practicing the violations against children in all their forms, especially those that society imposes silence on under the pretext of customs and traditions!

Sexual abuse is one of the six grave violations against children and the most serious, given its horrific consequences, which affect the child, his family and the society as a whole, which increases because of keeping silent!

With deep sorrow, the mother of victim, Qaid ( pseudonym ) - who lives in Marib governorate - said, " My son was raped twice by members in the private security.", then she kept silence with tears in her eyes.

The mother used to take her son into work with her, and the perpetrator used to ask the 12-year-old boy to go with him to help in bring some items to his home. One day, he went with him to the farm and in the next day, he came back home with a most terrifying feeling and without explaining what was up.

As his mental and physical condition worsened, the mother had to go to the hospital to carry out the necessary tests to later find out that her child had been raped by the man who was taking him for helping!

The mother was unable to file a judicial complaint because of the received death threats from the perpetrator after confronting him.

A few months later, two persons, one is civilian and the other is military, again raped the child, this led the mother to file a complaint to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), as a result of which the child and one of the perpetrators (civilian) were imprisoned!

"My son is imprisoned up to date, because he's a victim!", The mother thus expressed her anger and surprise at the authorities' reaction to her complaint against the perpetrators.

#### **( Violation... and Houses-ruining!)**

In Taiz City as well, it was not much different. When the five-year-old child Moosa (pseudonym) moved between his home and his grandmother's house in a residential building, he was pulled into an apartment and raped by a person whom his father is a military leader.!

The victim's father in Taiz also filed a complaint to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), as a result of which the perpetrator were imprisoned for only a month and released by an effort mediation of a powerful man in the city.

This incident led to family problems, especially for the mother of the child victim, who spoke in tears "I got divorced and deprived of my child because of this rape incident, despite the court's decision on custody of me". Due to the suspension of the custody case by a military mediation from the child's father and his friend, who refused to sign the court's decision on custody of the child (according to her), in addition to the waiver of the case by the victim's father for 3 million Yemeni Riyals, which the mother refused to accept, the result being her divorce and her child being robbed.

#### **(The absence of real figures)**

Due to the absence of accurate statistics on the victims of sexual abuse in Yemen, terrifying facts stand out for us on the situation of children and their unknown future in Yemen. This is because of the silence policy on such crimes by the victims' families due to the nature of the society, its narrow view of the victims of rape and because of the fear for the victims from the social stigma that will pursue them everywhere.

In December 2022, UNICEF stated that 49 children in Yemen had been subjected to conflict-related sexual violence, including 29 boys and 18 girls "since the beginning of the Yemen-conflict in 2015, but it was not an accurate statistic of the reasons cited above.

(International and Yemeni laws obliged to protect children from sexual abuse)

Yemen has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it remains one of the world's worst countries for the protection of children. According to UNICEF, in August 2004 it ratified the Optional Protocol on the Recruitment and Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and Sexual Exploitation. Yemen also ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Transactions in 1991.

Under Yemeni law, according to article 269 of the Yemeni Code of Offences and Penalties, "whenever the legal limit is lost for some of the established reasons, anyone who commits rape against any male or female person without his consent shall be liable to a term of up to seven years' imprisonment."

"The penalty shall be detention for a period of not less than two years and not more than ten years if the offence is committed by two or more persons or if the offender is a supervisor, protector, upbringing, custody or treatment of the victim or the victim is seriously injured in his or her own body or health or the victim is pregnant by the offence", according to the same article of the Criminal and Penal Code.

Also according to the same law: "The penalty shall be detention for a period of not less than three years and not more than fifteen years if the victim has not attained the age of fourteen years or has caused the victim to commit suicide."

### **(How do we protect our children?!)**

In the role-absence of the State Apparatus responsible for law-enforcement, cases of children rape remain forgotten issues that are increasing by silence and poor laws imposing deterrent penalties on perpetrators of such crimes because of the gaps, in addition to the social stigma (shame) that persecutes victims and turns them into defendants.

It is therefore necessary to work expeditiously, starting with raising awareness and educating parents of the importance of reporting, and of the laws criminalizing such violations and punishing them in order to counter the spread of such crimes, advocate for victims' causes and provide them with support in all its forms to turn from victims to survivors.

The future of future generations remains precarious and abused in the context of persistent armed conflicts and broad social silence.

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