

Joint statement on the Occasion of World Press Freedom Day

The past ten years have witnessed a dangerous and catastrophic media situation, in which systematic repressive practices against journalists have increased, most notably killing, arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture, among other violations. The perpetrators of these violations who are too the warring parties, consider the media to be their greatest enemy.

The form and magnitude of these violations made journalists and media professionals pay a high price for practicing their profession and reporting events. On the other hand, the perpetrators have impunity. Even worse, the circle of targeting journalists has expanded to reach their families as a means of pressure on the journalists in order to silence their voices, and to narrow the space for freedom of opinion and expression.

Since May 3 is the World Press Freedom Day, it is a reminder of the need to respect press freedom, assess the state of press freedom and talk about the arbitrary practices targeting journalists due to their profession.

It is an important occasion to draw attention to the extent of the suffering experienced by Yemeni journalists in all areas under the control of the parties to the conflict. All target journalists but with a variety of scale, leading the journalistic work to a state of deterioration, according to the annual report of the [2023 Media Freedoms Monitor](#), which reflects on human rights and public freedoms in the country.

The undersigned organizations renew their call to the international community and international human rights organizations to intensify their efforts in Yemen to hold perpetrators of violations against journalists accountable, prevent impunity, and establish the foundations of legal accountability to ensure freedom for journalists to carry out their profession.

- Over the past ten years, violations and arbitrary practices against journalists have increased dramatically, and most of these violations go unpunished. The total

number of violations, specifically from the beginning of 2015 until April 2024, has reached 2,536 violations, including 54 cases of killing journalists.

- The reasons for the criminals' impunity are largely due to the limited role of the international community which extensively focuses on political aspects and ignores other aspects. This is done to satisfy the parties to the conflict. Accordingly, the current interaction has increased the number of violations without fear of punishment, in addition to the lack of local political will, the weakness of the judiciary in Yemen, and the absence of effective measures against perpetrators of crimes and human rights violations.

- Six journalists have still been languishing in the prisons of the Houthi group, the Yemeni government, and al-Qaeda. Some of them have been imprisoned for more than eight years due to their media activities.

-The parties to the conflict continue to file lawsuits against journalists and try them in unspecialized courts. The courts specialized in hearing such cases are the press and publication courts as stated in the Yemeni Law No. (25) of 1990. By doing so, they try to silence and intimidate journalists from criticising or opposing the de facto authority. This is what happened with journalist Ahmed Maher, who has been detained in Aden for more than a year and has not received a fair trial, according to the report of the [Justice Charter Coalition for Yemen](#). The report includes ten local organizations concerned with human rights freedoms, and the unfair trials of journalist Nabil Al-Sadawi detained in Sana'a, and despite the end of his sentence, the Houthi group still refuses to release him.

- Yemeni women journalists - despite their limited number - have not been spared from systematic targeting by various methods that varied between brutal killings, arrests, verbal and physical assaults, not to mention blackmailing, bullying, dishonoring and discrediting them through various electronic and media platforms. As a result, many female journalists have experienced a difficult psychological and humanitarian situation, and it significantly hindered female journalists from practicing their work freely or stopping it. In turn, it encourages the parties to persist in violations and abuses against female journalists without fear of the repercussions.

- [Yemen remains one of the most dangerous countries in the Western Arab countries and the Middle East for freedoms of opinion and expression and the safety of](#)

[journalists after Syria](#), as it has the largest number of missing journalists or hostages. Yemen's ranking in the index of press freedoms has slipped to low ranks in the world, according to the 2023 Reporters Without Borders report in which Yemen ranked 168 out of 180 countries. Indeed, these violations and practices have hampered the dissemination of accurate information and limited the opportunities for Yemeni society to obtain real information about what is going on. What is worse, the phenomenon of misinformation and information produced by the parties to the conflict has spread and divided the country more. In this atmosphere, a journalist is not allowed to criticise the authority, leading to limit journalism freedom and making journalists' work uneasy to publish facts lest they be punished.

- In addition to the previous violations of killing, arrest and torture, a number of journalists are still forcibly disappeared. The latest incident was the enforced disappearance of journalist Nasih Shaker on November 19, 2023, without any charge. After he arrived in Aden, his whereabouts became a puzzle. Although the security authorities in Aden denied knowing any information about Shaker, it is not the first time that the security authorities in Aden have arrested and forcibly disappeared a journalist before it turns out otherwise. It previously happened with journalist Ahmed Maher.

- Journalist Waheed Al-Sufi is still forcibly disappeared in the prisons of the Houthis group. He was arrested in a street in Sana'a on April 6, 2015, and nothing is known about him until today. Journalist Mohammed Al-Maqri, a Mukalla-based reporter for Yemen Today TV, has been forcibly disappeared since October 12, 2015. He was kidnapped by armed men affiliated with Al-Qaeda during the organization's takeover of the city in Hadramout. Later, the city was retaken by forces of the Yemeni government in 2016, but nothing is known about him until today.

- With reference to the previous violations, we emphasize that there are great challenges facing journalists in Yemen while performing their journalistic work. The severe conditions have made them suffer from many psychological and physical pressures as a result of repeated violations and psychological trauma while practicing their journalistic work and covering news and current events in Yemen.

- The undersigned organizations condemn and reject the harassment and oppressive practices to which journalists in Yemen are subjected, and demand that journalists be granted more freedom, protection and immunity to enable them to perform their duties to the fullest.

- We also emphasize that the arbitrary, varied violations practiced against journalists and workers in Yemen constitute a serious violation of human rights and the rules of international humanitarian law, especially the Geneva Convention ([Article 79 of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention](#)) and the second paragraph of Article 9 of the International Covenant.

- We also commend the role of a number of journalists and media organizations that have achieved successes during the recent period in light of a difficult security situation and the clear and direct targeting of journalists through killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, and trials in incompetent courts with the aim of terrorizing journalists and depriving them from a way to practice their journalistic work.

Therefore, we:

- We call for the immediate release of detained journalists, whether in Houthi prisons or Yemeni government prisons.

- We call on the security authorities in both Sana'a and Aden to reveal the fate of journalists Waheed al-Sufi and Nasih Shaker.

- We urge an immediate and serious investigation to find practical and effective mechanisms to decisively end impunity for crimes committed against journalists.

- We call for activating all protection tools and strengthening legal frameworks to confront this situation, protect journalists and freedom of expression, provide justice for victims of violations, and to secure a safe environment for freedoms of opinion and expression in accordance with international and national human rights laws and standards.

- We call on all international organizations to visit Yemeni prisons and meet with journalists to obtain a clear picture of their situation.

- We call for pressure on the Houthi group to stop the ongoing violations against journalists and media organizations operating under its control.

- We demand pressure on the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which is currently part of the Yemeni government, to cease all illegal practices that restrict the movement of journalists and return the seized press institutions. It is known that the Ministry of Information is the legal body authorized to take various media measures.

- We call for pressure on the official authorities in Marib and Hadramawt governorates to remove restrictions related to freedom of journalistic activity and civic work in the governorate and to stop persecution.
- We urge the need for consolidated efforts among journalists themselves, mainly in order to defend their causes, away from being restricted to political affiliations.
- We call on all warring parties in Yemen to halt prosecuting journalists in criminal courts and limit their prosecution to courts specialized in publishing cases.

The signatories:

1. Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC)
2. Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory (YMFO)
3. European Arab Center for Human Rights and International Law
4. SAM Organization for Rights and Freedoms
5. Rights Radar for Human Rights
6. Abductees' Mothers Association
7. American Center for Justice (ACJ)
8. Yemen Future Foundation for Culutre and Media Development
9. Defense Foundation for Rights and Freedom
10. Yemen Women Journalists Network
11. TO BE Foundation For Rights & Freedoms
12. Cultural Media Center
13. Dameer Foundation For Human Rights
14. Mansa Foundation for Media And Development Studies
15. Media village for development and Information
16. Mirrors Media For Development Center MDC
17. Qarar foundation for Media and Development
18. Yeni Yemen Media Foundation
19. Wujud Foundation for Human Security
20. Musawah Organization For Rights and Freedoms
21. Monitoring Journalist Network
22. Wujoh Foundation for Media and Development
23. Watch for Human Rights (Watch4HR)
24. Rescue foundaton for development
25. Al-Amal Women's and Sociocultural Foundation
26. Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children (CSWC)
27. Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism

- 28.The Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (Rasd Coalition)
- 29.Marib Dam Foundation for Social Development (MDF)
- 30.Musaala Organization for Human Rights
- 31.Bahth Foundation for Development and Human Rights
- 32.Abjad Center for Studies and Development
- 33.Albelaad center for studies and media
- 34.League of Women for Peace
- 35.ALK arama - Geneva
- 36.Center of my Right for Support the Rights and Freedoms
- 37.Dialogue and Development Forum
- 38.Human Rights Information and Training Center
- 39.Yemeni Journalists Association - Istanbul
- 40.Sent from myMail for Android