

## WE Want to See Our Children in School



Mothers of child soldiers in Yemen.. We want to see our children in schools. !

(Realistic stories of children soldiering in Yemen)

At her iron door, Naif's mother (pseudonym) is sitting in the cross-legged position and in her hands a photo of her son wearing a school uniform and holding his school bag. With faded eyes filled with anxiety , she sometimes gazes on the photo and other times staring at the children passing by her, as if she is waiting her child coming back home!

Because of the war in the Yemeni city of Marib between Ansar Allah (Al-Houthi) and internationally recognized Yemeni government forces, Naif moved with his mother and brothers to a safe place in the city center, but he joined in

an armed group that took him to the frontlines to engage in combat.

"They lured and enticed him with a sum of one thousand Saudi Riyals." That is how his mother summarized the reasons for her child leaving school , his soldiering and his joining the fighting. And she also assured that his son was a diligent student at school who is aspiring to obtain a scholarship to study engineering abroad. Naif, who is still a recruit today, his mother is dreaming about him as he is coming back to home and school away from arms and fighting language.

### Enticements and exploitation

Armed groups use different methods to lure and recruit children for combat. Many children are lured in several cities controlled by Ansar Allah (Al-Houthi) through cultural courses that last for two weeks, followed by month-long military courses.

Afterwards, they are sent to the frontlines to fight after receiving a monthly salary of 30,000 Saudi riyals per recruit, along with daily meals and Qat allowances, to ensure their endurance in the frontlines for a longer period of time.

(Source of information: The mother of one of the recruited children - she refused to declare about his name and story out of fear for his life- and she simply expressed her only wish for her child to return alive to his books and school.)

In other cities and areas, armed groups exploit the deteriorating economic conditions of people and entice their children with monthly salaries ranging from 30,000 to 100,000 Saudi riyals, which has led many children to take up arms and enlist in order to improve their livelihoods.

### When the recruited children return!

Mazin is a child (pseudonym) from Lahij city, he was recruited by one of his relatives, who enticed him with money after knowing about the extremely poor economic situation of his family, the child's separated mother was persuaded to accept her son recruitment after she was

refusing that idea at the beginning, she was also reassured that her son would work in a security point specifically for levies, and there would be no danger to him.

The child's uncle continued in trying to convince his mother of the seriousness of the child's work and his carrying of weapons until she retreated and forced the child to leave work at the security point and return to school.

His mother says, "My child is physically and psychologically exhausted because of staying up for long hours at the security point, as well as the fear and terror he lived in during his recruitment", He desperately needs psychological support to return to his school in good health.

### **Childhood in numbers**

According to a report issued by the United Nations on January 5, 2023, it has been verified that 105 children (103 boys and 2 girls) were recruited and used in combat, with some of them not exceeding the age of ten. Where 77 children were recruited by the Houthis, 12 children by the Security Belt forces, 10 children by the Shabwani Elite forces, 4 children by the Yemeni Armed Forces, 1 child by the Giants Brigades, and 1 child by unidentified perpetrators. And 33 children were used in combat.

Furthermore, the United Nations has verified the recruitment and use of 93 boys in previous years. The United Nations has also expressed concern over receiving reports of the Houthis organizing summer camps for children where children are receiving military activities.

As stated in a recent statement issued by Watch for Human Rights and RASD Coalition on the occasion of World Children's Day on

November 20, 2023, it was mentioned that 250 cases of serious human rights violations against children have been documented from January to September 2023, and these violations included the recruitment of 85 children, which is a serious indicator of the worsening of grave violations against children's rights.

### **Protection mechanisms**

International law criminalizes the recruitment or use of children in armed conflicts. Recruiting children under the age of 15 or using them to participate in combat operations is considered a war crime.

Yemeni child rights law stipulates that children should not be directly involved in war and prohibits the recruitment of anyone under the age of eighteen.

The primary responsibility for protecting children lies with their families, who should prevent their involvement in conflict and emphasize for them the importance of education. Following that, other responsibilities include economically empowering the families of victims to prevent them from re-engaging in combat and leave education..