

Political Executions in Yemen: The Necessity to Change the Laws and Reform the Judicial Authority

A joint human rights statement on the need to abolish death penalty provisions in cases of a political nature in Yemeni laws

We, the undersigned, call on the Yemeni government and all relevant authorities to abolish the provisions of political executions included in Yemeni laws, which have contributed to the exploitation of the judiciary to settle political scores and carry out death sentences against opponents, particularly by the Ansar Allah movement (known as the Houthis).

The increasing evidence indicates that the judiciary in Yemen has been politicized and exploited by the Houthi group to issue death sentences against political opponents. This situation reflects the absence of justice and the grave violation of human rights.

A comprehensive legal study titled "Political Executions in Yemen" was conducted by the SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties, a member of the Justice Charter Alliance for Yemen, on this issue. The study has revealed the lack of independence of the judiciary, as well as the vague provisions related to political executions in Yemeni laws, which are being used as a repressive tool against political opponents. These legal provisions are unclear and lack strict legal standards, enabling their arbitrary use.

According to the available statistics, the SAM organization reported that the number of death sentences issued was around 550, with the majority being against political opponents. The most recent case was the issuance of a decision to execute a political figure on June 1, 2024. This alarming number reflects the urgent need to review and amend the applicable laws.

According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Yemen has ratified, the death penalty is an exceptional measure that should only be imposed for the most serious crimes, with strict legal safeguards in place. Article 6 of the Covenant states that "the right to life is an inherent right of every human being. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their life."

The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims to abolish the death penalty, stipulates that State Parties are obliged to take all necessary measures to abolish the death penalty within their jurisdiction.

The statement calls for the necessity to suspend the application of the specified provisions in this statement until a suitable environment is provided to review them in accordance with human rights, and to work on forming an independent legal committee to prepare new legislation that aligns with human rights and ensures the protection of individuals from being subjected to death sentences due to their political beliefs.

Accordingly, we demand the permanent abolition of the death penalty in cases related to opinion and political conflict, as stated in Articles (125, 126/1/2/3, 127/3, 129) of the Penal Code, and the amendment of Articles (2715) of the Military Penal Code, Article (27) of the Military Penal Code, in addition to Articles (34, 35) of the Anti-Kidnapping and Banditry Crimes Law, in a manner that is consistent with human rights and ensures the availability of guarantees for fundamental human rights.

We emphasize the necessity of enhancing the rule of law and ensuring the independence of the judiciary, in order to prevent its use as a tool for settling political scores and to guarantee justice for all citizens. We also call for the restructuring of the judiciary in a way that ensures its independence and impartiality, and prevents the politicization of judicial rulings.

We agree that the continued application of the death penalty in political cases in Yemen constitutes a blatant violation of human rights and contributes to the exacerbation of political conflicts and violence. We call upon all relevant authorities to take immediate steps to abolish these provisions and work towards reforming the judiciary to ensure the achievement of justice and the protection of human rights in Yemen.

The Signatories:

Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC)

- 1. Abductees' Mothers Association (AMA)**
- 2. Al-Amal Women's and Sociocultural Foundation (AWSF)**
- 3. Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children (CSWC)**
- 4. Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism**
- 5. Marib Dam Foundation for Social Development (MDF)**
- 6. Musaala Organization**
- 7. SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties**
- 8. Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC)**
- 9. Watch for Human Rights**
- 10. Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV)**