

Yemeni Organizations Condemn the Use of the Judiciary to Target Human Rights Defenders and Undermine Freedom of Expression in Yemen

Civil society organizations are closely monitoring, with great concern, the campaign of repression and the targeting being practiced against human rights defenders by various authorities in Yemen. This targeting is in response to their activities in defending freedoms and the realization of human rights, as well as their interests in the rights of victims.

In recent times, the intensity of repression has significantly increased as authorities have notably used the judiciary to punish defenders, silence their voices, and undermine freedom of expression in Yemen.

In recent developments, the Specialized Criminal Court for Terrorism Cases in Aden has decided to summon Yasser Al-Maliki, a lawyer and human rights defender concerned with victims' rights, for trial and to publish him as a fugitive from justice, along with several other activists. This is based on allegations of their involvement in an armed gang. Additionally, Al-Maliki has been brought to trial before the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a alongside the leadership of the Yemeni Teachers' Association, stemming from his support for the issues faced by teachers who exercised their right to protest and demand their salaries from the Houthi group over the past two years.

Civil society organizations condemn the fabricated accusations directed at Al-Maliki and other human rights defenders and journalists. These organizations consider the charges as punishment for their stances defending human rights and exercising their right to freedom of expression.

This targeting of human rights defenders and freedom of expression reflects the overwhelming desire of government authorities in Aden and de facto authorities in Sana'a to use the judiciary to pursue human rights defenders and activists based on their opinions and positions. It is intended to restrict their access and ability to carry out their work freely.

It seems that the authorities in Aden and Sana'a differ in everything, but their agreement on tightening the space for civil society organizations and their workers as well as journalists and media platforms. This behavior exacerbates the crisis and increases the polarization of the judiciary in Yemen.

Everyone is aware of the fierce campaign against civil society in Yemen. Dozens of workers from various international agencies and local organizations have been detained for the past four months by the de facto authority in Sana'a. Parties to the conflict have sponsored campaigns of defamation and intimidation against workers in human rights and civil society organizations. They have manipulated the divided judiciary to punish these workers and to prevent them from performing their work.

We have followed the issuance of numerous verdicts in previous years—some of which included the death penalty—from the specialized criminal courts against activists and defenders of human rights in Yemen. The procedures taken by those courts cannot be described other than as lacking in the principles of justice, most importantly neutrality, integrity, and the right to a defense. This behavior frightens us when defenders are summoned and tried once again as we realize that their fates will not differ from those previously judged.

We are confident that the prosecution of human rights defenders and activists involves punishment and intimidation to prevent them from fulfilling their role in defending rights and freedoms and supporting victims of violations affecting various segments of Yemeni society. The data regarding the cases brought against human rights defenders indicates a state of political polarization that has reflected onto the judiciary, where human rights defenders are the intended victims in light of the fragility of justice and law enforcement institutions.

The organizations signing this statement demand that the Yemeni government in Aden and the de facto authorities (the Houthis) in Sana'a cease using the judiciary to target civil society, immediately refrain from targeting journalists and activists, and ensure their right to express their opinions and fulfill their roles in defending and supporting victims of violations.

We also call on the international community, represented by the United Nations and all international influences, to play their role in defending human rights defenders and workers in civil society organizations, journalists, and activists in Yemen, enabling these actors to carry out their roles in realizing and increasing the practice of human rights. We urge pressure on the authorities in Aden and Sana'a to prevent the use of the judiciary to pursue activists and undermine freedom of expression in Yemen.

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Signatory organizations:

1. Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (Rasd Coalition)
2. Musaalah Organization
3. Al-Amal Cultural and Social Women's Foundation
4. Marib Dam Foundation for Social Development
5. Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism
6. Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children
7. Center for Economic Studies and Media

8. Human Rights Monitoring Organization
9. Association of Mothers of Abductees Organization
10. SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties
11. Foundation for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms
12. Woman and Child Development Center
13. ARAB-EUROPEAN CENTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW
(AECHRIL)
14. Peace Paths Foundation
15. Monitoring Center for Rights and Development
16. Rescue foundation for development
17. Future Partners Foundation for Development & Human Rights
18. Dameer Foundation for Rights and Freedoms
19. Yemen Media guide for Development Centre
20. Rights Radar for Human Rights
21. Ruwwad the Development and Human Rights Foundation
22. Experts for Development Organization
23. The National Organization of Yemeni Reporters SADA
24. Yemen media guide for Development Centre
25. Social Peace Promotion and Legal protection foundation
26. Human Development Foundation HDF
27. Peace Track Initiative
28. The National Organization for development society
29. Nahda Youth Organization to Save the Marginalized
30. Yemeni Center for Justice and Development
31. Yemen Future