



Black Market Killers

The Narrative of the Assassination
of the Pioneer of Investigative
Journalism in Yemen Mohammed
Abdo Al-Absi

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Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism

Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism is an organization that seeks to strengthen the methodology of investigative work in order to create a new future for the Yemeni press.

Free Media focuses its efforts on digging into journalistic stories at high level in terms of impact, and giving priority to the quality of the materials published on its pages rather than focusing on their quantity or speed of completion. Our focus is on issues that affect our society; in all sectors, health, education, development, security, justice, human rights, women's issues, the environment, climate change and corruption.



Our method is based on careful journalism based on interviews, field work and research based on verified sources. Our stories seek to go far in digging up phenomena in order to answer two central questions: how and why. They are edited according to the highest journalistic standards both ethically and professionally. They represent the essence of the efforts of the employees of Free Media Center, including journalists, human rights defenders and technicians.

They are not gatherings of information from other sites. Free Media focuses on clarifying the relationships and patterns of Yemen-related phenomena and events regardless of where they occur around the world, while ensuring that adherence to the journalistic principles which guide our work is not compromised: balance, objectivity, accuracy, and serving the public interest.

«For the Truth» Project

For the Truth” works to seek justice for crimes committed against journalists. The project consists of a series of investigations into cases where a journalist was killed for doing his job. These investigations aim to bring new facts and information about the killings to light, paving the way for justice and accountability.”



Summary

Journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi, 35, was a prolific journalist during his journalistic career in Yemen, which is one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. Reporters Without Borders ranked it as the third most dangerous country for journalists' lives according to its 2021 report.¹

Over the past decade, the rate of crimes targeting journalists in Yemen has increased. However, the killing of journalist Al-Absi was unprecedented in the history of assassinations in Yemen as he was assassinated by poison. Al-Absi was one of the most prominent journalists who emerged at the beginning of the new millennium and is considered the pioneer of investigative journalism in Yemen, as he took a difficult path for himself to defend the interests of the country and fought great epics in the face of corruption with high professionalism.²

During his career, Al-Absi has been known for investigative reporting and tracking corruption in public and private sector organizations, or other international companies. Al-Absi fought the battle bravely at all levels and by various means: paper newspapers, websites, his blog, and his Facebook account. He used all journalistic arts to expose corruption under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Government of National Accord, the first two years of the de facto authority in Sana'a, and the Houthi group, also known as "Ansar Allah".

1 | Since 2014, Yemen's military conflict has continued to tear the country apart, with extremely serious consequences for press freedom

2 | Yemeni Journalists Syndicate Statement December 2016

Mohammed Al-Absi and several of his colleagues were at a cafe on Hadda Street in the center of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, on December 2016, 21. He left the cafe with a relative just before sunset. As usual, he went to have tea in a cafeteria, on Al-Komaim Roundabout near the cafe, then had dinner. When he returned home, he was sweating though it was winter. After exercising, foam started coming out of his mouth, his family tried to help him, but he passed away.

The family stopped the burial ceremony when they learned that Al-Absi's relative, who was with him that day, had developed the same symptoms and was in intensive care in a hospital in the capital, Sana'a.³

The Houthis tried to influence the incident, forcing authorized institutions such as the hospital as well as the Criminal Investigation Department to claim that the death was natural.⁴ The family insisted on taking a legal path to uncover the circumstances of the incident. So far, no official result has been issued by the apparatus of the de facto authority "Houthis" in Sana'a. However, our team in this investigation, found strong indications that the Houthi group was behind the assassination.

A new network of oil traders emerged after the Houthis took control of the country's institutions in late 2014. Since Al-Absi is a journalist specializing in oil corruption, he **was able to access information and documents revealing irregularities in the black gold sector:** The crisis of oil derivatives and electricity, and the flourishing of the black market.

3 | Private interview by the investigation team with a source from Al-Absi family on January 30, 2024

4 | Previous source

Houthi leaders had begun to control the oil trade and achieve economic gains. Al-Absi reached the names of those leaders involved, so he was threatened, and whenever he posted something new, he was harassed. He stopped posting for a while and was providing information to his friends. He didn't know he was under surveillance, all his movements and habits were monitored, and one of his sources providing him with the documents, a well-known businessman from Taiz city, had fallen into the hands of Houthi intelligence.

The Houthi leader Abu Ali Al-Hakim - a senior military and security leader of the Houthis and current head of the Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance Service at the Ministry of Defense- summoned the journalist Al-Absi to his house, but no one knows what happened between them. The next day the most famous investigative journalist in Yemen was assassinated, only two months after his marriage.

Law enforcement institutions in Sana'a, which are under the de facto authority of the Houthis, manipulated the procedures of the assassination of journalist Mohammed Al-Absi. The details of the crime and the suspicious procedures did not fit the assassination of the most important investigative journalist in Yemen.

A Criminal Investigation officer went to the place where the journalist usually sits, and returned to tell the family his findings: Behind the place where Mohammed sat there was a generator; he died because of it. However, according to our sources, the generator did not work that day.⁵

The Criminal Investigation Department preserved the case file of Al-Absi's assassination for three years before being transferred to the prosecution. It stayed in the Criminal Court for three years before the case was «reserved for lack of sufficient evidence», which is contrary to our findings.⁶

5 | Interview with a private source who spoke to the Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism in February 2024

6 | Interview with a lawyer who was on the defense in February 2024

We met the only companion who had tea with Al-Absi in his last hours, the lawyers, Al-Absi's family, and journalists close to him. We checked the test result of the sample that was extracted from the journalist Al-Absi's body and transported to Jordan after his autopsy in Sana'a. We checked Al-Absi's recent work and the messages he sent to his friends, we followed the procedures taken by the institutions under the de facto authority in Sana'a, so **that our investigation team based its conclusion on the following indicators:**

First: Threats.

Al-Absi predicted the Houthis' plans towards the most prominent economic sector, which occupies the first place among the financial resources that supply the country's treasury, as an extension of his investigative work in the oil field. The journalist's role is illustrated by analysis of the Houthi break in into the Safer facility in Marib in eastern Yemen, the largest oil terminal on which the country relies economically.

The journalist warned of the Houthi raid of the Safer facility, which came just before the Houthis raid Marib. Soon after, the journalist Al-Absi realized that the Houthis were preparing to control Marib by reading the statements of Houthi activists who were focusing on the revenues of the Safer facility and spreading what Al-Absi described as lies. One claimed that the company supported the tribes and Houthi opponents with 50\$ million, another said 200\$ million. Al-Absi appeared on local and Arab television media, criticizing Houthi policy.

In March 2015, Houthi gunmen broke into the house of journalist Mohammed Al-Absi. Mohammed addressed them: "You could have taken me from the airport away from my family and these cheap behaviors. Sana'a is my country more than Taiz, I belong to it more than Abdulmalek Al-Houthi. I was born, grew up, and lived here and we will not leave. I am not scared of you, because I have never been scared of anything but Allah." Al-Absi continued: "The shame of these actions and to scare women is not the job of men."

Second: The New Corrupts.

After his return to Sana'a, journalist Al-Absi received documents indicating that the Houthis were behind the oil derivatives crisis that the country was witnessing, describing them as internal enemies. The documents he published on his blog and Facebook account confirm that the Houthis detained huge quantities of oil in the port of Hodeida and refuse to unload them, pointing out that the Houthis benefit from black markets as a result of these actions.⁷

After that, the Houthis decided to float oil derivatives, so Al-Absi published several documents⁸, pointing to the group's direction to the oil market and trading the suffering of Yemenis, through the electricity crisis and the rise of the dollar crisis. Between April 2015 and June 2016, he continued to receive threats and harassment, including the smashing his car glass and flatting of the tires.

Third: Last Works.

Al-Absi sensed serious threats, so he stopped publishing under his name. According to what our team found, Al-Absi was working cautiously on an in-depth investigation related to the smuggling of weapons and toxic and dangerous substances used in arms manufacturing that will reach the Houthis via oil tankers. According to the information we have received, these materials would have been carried by a new shipping company established in Dubai, affiliated with Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdussalam. At that time Al-Absi was waiting for important documents on this subject to arrive. In addition, Al-Absi got into a fight with a Houthi-affiliated team consisting of Mohammed Al-Emad, Shafie Al-Naji, and businessman Daghsan Mohammed Daghsan, a famous pesticide and oil trader close to the Houthis⁹. On the background of negotiating an oil shipment seized by the Houthi-run oil company, Al-Absi entered as an agent for the importing company belonging to businessman Ammar Tawfiq Abdurrahim.

7 | Documents: Investigation : Who is imposing a suffocating siege on the Yemeni people (Blog of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi)

8 | 14 new documents about the owners of the black market in Yemen and the Hodeidah diesel ship (Blog of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi)

9 | Exclusive interview with a relative of journalist Mohamed Abdo Al-Absi in January 2024

Fourth: Colleagues' Messages.

The investigation team confirmed messages sent by Al-Absi to a group of his colleagues, activists, media professionals, and others, revealing Houthi leaders who established companies to monopolize the oil trade, and the purpose of this direction.

Journalist Al-Absi revealed in his messages that he was unable to publish because of the threats and harassment he received. He also told a group of fellow journalists that he felt danger after the arrest of one of the sources providing him with information.

The source was businessman Ammar Tawfiq, who was arrested by the Houthis in Sana'a in 2016. They saw the messages between him and the journalist Al-Absi and found out what he was planning and what investigations he was working on¹⁰

Fifth: Summon.

Before his death, journalist Mohammed Al-Absi was summoned to the house of Abu Ali Al-Hakim, head of the Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance Authority in the Houthi-affiliated Ministry of Defense. The conversation was likely about the negotiations and businessman Ammar Tawfiq, who was being held by the Houthis,

These serial acts, the threats, discovery of the investigations he was working on, his entry into negotiations over a detained oil shipment, his summoning to the house of Abu Ali Al-Hakim are interconnected and inseparable from the investigative journalist's assassination, especially after the release of businessman Ammar Tawfiq.

10 | 3 exclusive interviews conducted by our team with private sources associated with journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi

Sixth: Pressures to bury the body.

Al-Absi's family received threats and advice from the Houthis to bury the body of Mohammed Al-Absi. A criminal investigation officer told Al-Absi's family that the cause of death was the journalist's inhalation of carbon monoxide emitted by a generator. This happened after pressure from local public opinion and unions as well, after attempts to adopt the narrative of natural death¹¹.

Seventh: Criminal investigation and manipulation of the file.

After the family insisted on an autopsy, the test result of the sample analyzed in Jordan on February 2017 ,2, confirmed that the blood in the sample contained %65 carboxyhemoglobin, which is enough for death.

After Al-Absi's sisters, along with a relative of the journalist, who had also developed the same symptoms, went to the criminal investigation and confirmed that the Cafe generator did not work that day,

the criminal investigation officers sent Al-Absi's sisters and the lawyer out of the office and stayed with Al-Absi's relative alone, he confirmed that he was scared.

The criminal investigation did nothing about the disappearance of the first blood test that Al-Absi's relative did in the hospital, nor about the surveillance camera videos that confirm the attempts of two unknown people to visit Al-Absi's relative while he was in intensive care. The Criminal Investigation Department also refused to send a warrant to the morgue of Kuwait Hospital to hand over the video documenting the forensic autopsy of Mohammed Al-Absi's body to be included in the file despite the orders of the Public Prosecutor in Sana'a. Previously,

11 | Separate interviews during the year 2024 with three relatives of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi

criminal investigation officers told the family that it was illegal for them to receive an autopsy sample. The case file with the Criminal Investigation Department stayed for three years without being transferred to the prosecution.

Eighth: Prosecution.

The investigation reports mentioned the names of influential Houthi figures or those close to the Houthis. They were not investigated, either by the Criminal Investigation or the Prosecution. After six years the case file of the assassination of journalist Al-Absi disappeared in the corridors of the West Sana'a Prosecution¹².

The disappearance of the murder case file in the corridors of the prosecution is a dangerous precedent in the history of the Yemeni judiciary. According to the information we obtained, the couldn't get the prosecution's decision, which ordered "to close the case for lack of evidence." The lawyers learned about the decision informally and asked the prosecutor to hand over a copy of the decision, but he refused.

Ninth: Deleting Traces.

The investigation team also noticed some actions by the Houthis, aimed at hiding the traits of the assassination of the journalist Al-Absi, including: breaking into the hospital after the news of taking a sample to Jordan, hiding medical reports, including an echocardiogram (ECG), attempts to seize the journalist's devices and phone numbers, and more seriously, the disappearance of journalist Al-Absi's assassination case file in the corridors of the West Sana'a Prosecution.

Tenth: The result.

According to the expert analyses and conclusions we reached, Al-Absi was assassinated through a chemical compound put in food or tea, according to an expert in chemistry: with effort, the chemical is metabolized in the body and turns into carbon monoxide leading to death.

According to the previous observations of the Special Investigation Team, the following is recommended:

Recommendations.

The investigation into the killing of Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi in Sana'a, which is under the control of the Ansar Allah group "Houthis", has been influenced at the stage of gathering evidence in the criminal investigation, and at the stage of investigation in the Public Prosecution by influential people suspected of involvement in the crime. There are strong indications of obstructing justice by investigators working under the authority of Ansar Allah group "Al-Houthis". To uncover the truth about the murder of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi and to achieve justice,

the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Freedom of Expression should establish a committee of international experts that will effectively and thoroughly reinvestigate the case and take into account Al-Absi's work as a motive for the killing. This investigation should include the relationship between Al-Absi's murder and his journalistic work published before the murder. The investigation should specifically include the relationship between his murder and the package of threats he was subjected to as well as details of the summons he was subjected to by Abo Ali Al-Hakim. The story of arresting the businessman Ammar Tawfik. All friends who exchanged messages with journalist Al-Absi regarding information about corruption in the oil sector should also be investigated.

The international community must provide support to bring justice to Al-Absi's family and to combat impunity for crimes against journalists. The international community must monitor the reinvestigation of Al-Absi's murder. Resources and expertise must be provided to help solve the murder. The international community must increase its support for Yemen's efforts to break the cycle of impunity.

A person is using a magnifying glass to inspect documents on a desk. In the background, a laptop is open. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an office or investigation setting.

The Story Background

On November 2005 ,15, the Speaker of Parliament, prominent Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, confirmed this by saying: “We do not know anything about the volume of oil extracted or sold, neither I as Speaker of the House of Representatives, nor the House and its members.”

The oil sector in Yemen has been suffering organized corruption under the official patronage of the ruling authorities since the discovery of oil in the country in the eighties of the last century. Since its discovery, oil in Yemen has been the first economic resource on which the country depends, as oil revenues in the country budgets constitute a very high percentage, reaching 68 to 74 percent, of the total revenues of the 2005 and 2006 budgets, meaning that these revenues cover about three-quarters of the country budget expenditures¹³.

During the tenure of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the oil sector was surrounded by ambiguity, and still till today. No one knows the real figures of oil exports, and its revenues, including the Legislature, and the House of Representatives. On November 2005 ,15, the Speaker of Parliament, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, confirmed this by saying: **"We do not know anything about the size of oil extracted or sold, neither I as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, nor the House and its members¹⁴."**

After nearly 18 years, nothing has changed in the statements of government officials, as a former official at the Ministry of Finance confirmed that **"the revenue sector knows nothing, and does not receive any data on the size of actual exports of crude oil or the amount of its revenues, except for the data allowed to be announcement¹⁵."**

Forms of corruption in the oil sector in Yemen vary, some of which take an official feature adopted by the ruling authority, as it was during the era of former President Ali Saleh, and the most prominent of these images

Extra revenues resulting from oil price differences. In its general budget the country presents the expected estimated prices of oil, placing a low value, while global prices are high. Between 2000 and 2008, revenues resulting from oil price differentials amounted to 24.5 trillion riyals, equivalent to US12.5\$ billion at that time. This huge return was tampered with by "the corruption of the upper rank of the ruling regime and the influential positions of power¹⁶."

The other image of corruption lies in the oil derivatives subsidized by the country, where local companies get subsidized derivatives at prices lower than international prices, and sell them to foreign companies at the international price with a specific percentage reduction for negotiation, so that the huge differences go "to the pockets of the corrupt, smuggling gangs and those who provide them with the umbrella of protection and the main beneficiary in power¹⁷."

The lack of control and accountability of the oil sector, including the relevant country institutions such as the Central Organization for Control and Auditing, has led to the spread of corruption, including the corruption of suspicious deals made by the country and its men with international companies, in exchange for privileges and commissions.

Al-Absi and suspicious deals

Journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi revealed a government's deal with the French company Total and the Korean company Suez and Kogas¹⁸, under which the two companies receive gas at low prices, in exchange for percentages obtained by Yemeni officials. In 2010, journalist Al-Absi founded a coalition against the gas deal and suspicious deals in 2010.

After the departure of the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, following the events of 2011, and the transfer of power to his deputy, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, Mohammed Al-Absi continued following up the oil corruption file.



Yemeni parties and political components agreed with the General People's Congress (GPC), the former ruling party, to form a government of national accord, under international agreements, including the Gulf initiative presented by Saudi Arabia.

During the period, Al-Absi focused on the corruption of the electricity sector and linked it to the oil file. He added other files, including the wounded of this 2011 revolution. He continued until the Ansar Allah group "Houthis" raided the capital Sana'a with the support of supporters of its ally Ali Abdullah Saleh, the former president of Yemen, in late 2014.



The Houthis began to expand and control the Yemeni cities, Hodeidah was among those cities, it was strategically located on the Red Sea, in the west of the country. Its strategic port, which is one of the main destinations, if not the most important, for the export and import of commercial shipping, including oil, in addition to the Ras Issa facility, Saleef, and large tanks dedicated to unloading oil derivatives.

It was difficult for the Houthis to control oil sources in eastern Yemen, specifically the Safer area in the eastern province of Marib, which is under the control of the internationally recognized government, as it is the highest station that exports the largest amount of oil derivatives in Yemen.

This fragmentation turned the oil trade upside down, the Houthis wanted an economic resource that would enable them to control Yemen for as long as possible. Consequently, it was able to affect the movement of oil exports from areas controlled by the country apparatuses of the recognized government. Because they know the oil market and what it represents for Yemen, the Houthis opened the door to importing oil from abroad and unloading it in the port of Hodeidah by an official decision under the name: **Floating Oil Derivatives**

A new class of corrupt people in the oil sector was formed with this equation. A new class of leaders of the de facto authority "Houthis" which was responsible for the oil derivatives crisis, controlling import mechanisms. Because the journalist Al-Absi always chose issues of importance related to the interest of the people, and as a journalist specializing in oil corruption, he had access to information and documents revealing the massive corruption that revolves around the black gold sector: manipulating quantity figures to get fines resulting from delayed unloading, The Golden Guard, the black market, the war effort, the five riyals imposed by the Houthis on every liter that enters the country, the huge difference between the international price and the cost of importing oil and selling it in the local market, and smuggling.

As the investigative journalist points out, the Houthis are behind all this. Al-Absi was close to accessing documents revealing the arrival of toxic substances and pesticides used in dangerous industries and war as well.

The violent situation in Yemen creates significant risks for critical Yemeni journalists, where some have to carry out their work under constant threat of violence.

"The Yemeni press was going through the worst phase in its history," according to the title of the report sent by Mohammed Al-Absi to the Doha Centre for Media Freedom in July 8 .2015 journalists were killed in a short period of 2015, the Houthis broke into the headquarters of a number of media outlets, and more than 300 journalists lost their jobs. After this, the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate called on the press community to hold a protest in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, in the north of the country. Al-Absi covered the vigil, quoting Marwan Dammaj, secretary-general of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in 2015, as saying:

"The Yemeni press is going through the worst phase in its history, in light of the militia method of the Houthi group (Ansar Allah), and the increasing of crimes and systematic violations against journalists and media institutions in an escalating and more aggressive manner during the past three months."

Back then only, the number of kidnapped and forcibly disappeared journalists was 12. **Al-Absi said in his report** that the journalists who participated in the vigil expressed "concern that many of their colleague journalists who were kidnapped are languishing in informal prisons inside military camps and headquarters under bombardment by the Saudi-led coalition. The Houthi group uses them as human shields. The two journalists, Abdullah Qabil and Yousef Al-Aizari, were killed at a military site in the Haran area of Dhamar City in central Yemen, a few days after they were kidnapped by the Houthi group and held in an informal **prison**, in one of the military sites included in the Decisive Storm Air Coalition Targets¹⁹."

Until the date, when Al-Absi published his report in July 2015, considering that the Yemeni press was going through its worst historical phase, Al-Absi cited a number of violations against journalists and media workers as well as various media outlets, based on the documentation of the Freedom Organization earlier, the number was: more than **"359 cases of violations"**.

Press conditions in Yemen deteriorated to even worse levels after that period. During the period that began with the invasion of the Houthi group (Ansar Allah) in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, on September 2014, and until 2022, "international and local organizations monitored about 3,000 violations against journalists, including 49 killings .” **Investigative journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi was one of the killed journalists in Sana'a.**

Press conditions in Yemen deteriorated to even worse levels after that period. During the period that began with the invasion of the Houthi group (Ansar Allah) in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, on September 2014, and until 2022, "international and local organizations monitored about 3,000 violations against journalists, including 49 killings²⁰.” **Investigative journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi was one of the killed journalists in Sana'a.**

A journalist who will not be repeated

Al-Absi continued to address major issues that required a measure of courage, during the era of the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and after his departure and the transfer of the presidency to his deputy Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi and the formation of a government of national reconciliation from all parties, Al-Absi continued to fight corruption in the oil and gas sector, and alternative energy as well, and the file The wounded of the 2011 revolution and others.

Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi was born in Yemen's capital Sana'a, where his father moved from Al-Aboos in the southern province of Taiz. His father was a real hard worker who did his best to take care of his family and educate them to the fullest. His son Mohammed was the last of Abdo Al-Absi's sons. He was the fifth out of a total of seven members, two sons and five females.

The genes of the struggle passed from Abdo Al-Absi to his son Mohammed, the smart and active son, who used to go to school and help his father. After graduating from high school, the son went to work to ease the burdens of his father. He couldn't go to university, instead, eagerly he read books in various sciences. Despite his young age, he was a very knowledgeable intellectual and a talented writer, which made the press open its doors for him early, **to start his journalistic career in cultural management in the government newspaper Al-Thawra.**

Mohammed Al-Absi lived a traumatized personal life, his mother, older brother, and sister died, too. Mohammed continued to struggle at different levels of life, supporting his family, his old father, and his sisters, to continue their education. He could not complete his university studies, but he excelled in various scientific fields relying on self-education, and knowledge. He was a model of a self-made man, who gained courage from his experiences, so he did not hesitate to fight corruption giants.

Despite his intensive work and non-stop activity, Mohammed Al-Absi was balanced in life, between work and hobbies. He is the writer who will issue his first work **"Alone like a drop ... All like rains"** He is a cinematic viewer with a critical sense, a connoisseur listener of great reciters and artists, an enthusiastic athlete, and a big fan of Germany and Dortmund and not the end of Munich of course. He also liked to walk with his friends after their gatherings or alone in Sana'a streets. One day in July 2013, he walked under light rain showers alone,

, as he wrote: **"I would like to scream until the sky cracks, whenever I think that my sick father, who lived a harsh life, and my grandfather, who lived 83 years and it was crueler than his son's life and that my grandfather's father, his grandfather as well, and even five generations of my ancestors and grandparents lived in Yemen as tenants and not as citizens. And that all of them had inhabited rental houses for more than two centuries. They all died, except for my father, may Allah heal and keep safe, without acquiring a small piece of land except for their unknown graves! whenever I think about it, I feel terrified and filled with anger, not hatred. Until I hear voices inside me saying that Yemen is a country that has never known justice and true citizenship, neither in its past nor in its present."**

Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi entered journalism early, and his pen quickly caught the attention of Yemeni journalists and writers. He was amazing in choosing topics of interest to Yemenis, amazing in dealing with them, and brave in presenting them. He began to open files of financial and administrative corruption during the era of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, government corruption, the private sector corruption, tax evasion, and suspicious deals.

Before the current war, he terrified one of the world's most important oil and gas companies, France's Total, producing a series of in-depth reports on corruption deals between this company and government executives under the former regime. He published these reports in several private newspapers such as "Talk of the City, Al-Ahali where he was the editorial consultant,

Al-Neda'a, and the street". Al-Absi also worked on publishing corruption files involving the government of former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, as the government at the time sold a deal of liquefied gas to the government of South Korea at low prices, in exchange for personal privileges and commissions. When publishing the document of this deal, Al-Absi said: "The documents of the biggest corruption deal of the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and it is unfortunate that they are published in my blog on Google, limited in circulation, and not in a local or Arab print or television media, but there is nothing else I can do.

" For years the document has been a forbidden country secret, with former Finance Minister Sakhr Al-Wajeih saying years ago that no one knew about it, not even the Parliament.

In 2010, Al-Absi founded the National Coalition Against the Liquefied Natural Gas Deal and Suspicious Deals, consisting of newspaper editors, journalists, prominent activists, and businessmen, too.

Al-Absi published his investigations and documents exposing corruption in various fields, wheat and sugar, telecommunications and electricity, in addition to other writings in politics, criticism, ideology, literature, and sports, but his main focus was on two of the most obscure topics in Yemen: **oil and gas.**

Al-Absi continued in this direction, confronting major issues that require a degree of courage. Even after the departure of the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the transfer of the presidency to his deputy, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, and the formation of a government of national accord from all parties, Al-Absi continued to fight corruption in the oil and gas sector, alternative energy as well, and the file of the wounded of the 2011 revolution and others.

Clash with the new corrupt

The Houthi brothers, or Ansar Allah, or the jinn, or whoever the identity of the gunmen is, went to my house looking for me this evening after I spoke to Sky News from Cairo. You know very well that I am traveling, and I will be back in a few days, and you can take me from the airport away from my family and use these cheap methods.”

| Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi

The Government of National Accord, consisting of Yemeni political parties and entities, added a new dose to oil derivatives in 2014. The Ansar Allah group "Houthis" took advantage of the anger of the public to mobilize against the Government of National Accord and local and foreign agreements, helped by various factors, including the military alliance with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, to expand and control Amran City in the north of the country, next raided the country military camps and institutions in the capital Sana'a, and later expanded to other cities.

Al-Absi monitored the Houthis movements towards the oil sector, and predicted the war of Marib City in the east, from the gate of the Safer Company, which according to the investigative journalist: the only company that is the most economical and least expensive among all the oil companies operating in Yemen, and because, according to Al-Absi's information, it provides the public treasury with a third of the budget, which is why it is considered the country's national security.

In October 2014, Mohammed Al-Absi wrote a lengthy article entitled: "[Houthi Gendarmerie Break into the Safer Oil Company](#)". "Gendarmerie" is an Italian word, which Al-Absi explained as "a professional term for a division of the Vatican's religious guards." In that article, Al-Absi narrated the circumstances of breaking into the Safer Company with dozens of Houthi gunmen led by a Houthi leader named Abu Ahmed, and political and media figures affiliated with the Houthis, the raid was under the name of a visit before the battles developed between the Houthis and the Yemeni army, supported by tribes and civilian gunmen in their current form. Al-Absi published what happened in the raid, the Houthis' demands were: **stopping the export of gas, as well as stopping disbursements and employment.**

According to Al-Absi, the company's leaders explained to the Houthi envoys "the status of the company and the signed agreements, the need for Yemen to respect signed international contracts, and the possibility of paying billions of dollars in compensation to foreign companies if Yemen violates the agreement without a legal or constitutional justification."

Al-Absi said that the Houthis visit to the company: "Should not go unnoticed by public opinion and political and economic elites. It can only be read as a threatening message to the company and its employees, and an attempt to subjugate them. Otherwise, the "popular committees" and oversight committees, many of which have been established by the Houthis in a number of ministries and country institutions, will do the job: "A Brotherhood-style institutional revolution in 2012, with the difference that this version is more bravado and pretentious. Or that this visit, I mean the raid, intended to get to know each other and normalize the relationship, in preparation for a war front and a new battle that the Houthis intend to fight soon: the battle of Marib."

The investigative journalist's writing was about the Houthis' search for an economic resource that finances the war and allows them to stay as long as possible, but the Houthis' threats to the Safer Oil Company are in favor of "traders, suppliers, and smugglers of oil derivatives." **Al-Absi said** it is not in their interest for Yemen to produce oil derivatives at cheap prices, as Safer does, but **rather** to "import at international prices and be subsidized until they get a huge price difference when they smuggle them."

The investigative journalist did not know that his writing would be so accurate. Unfortunately, he did not take into account that a new network would be established to trade and import oil derivatives. A Houthi network would be formed before he exposed it. The Houthis would adapt the course of the war to get an important economic tributary without attracting the attention of the opponents, by importing oil and in **hidden ways exposed by journalist Mohammed Al-Absi.**

Al-Houthi's intentions became clearer by expanding the war and heading towards Safer Company, in early 2015. **Al-Absi alerted to this based on the statements of Houthi leaders,**

the journalist Al-Absi wrote under the title: "To the Houthis... If you lie, do it well. " **He clarified:** "The Houthis are preparing for a war in Marib, while the blood of their wars has not yet dried in Sana'a. Their pretext is that the country supports Al-Qaeda and the tribes of Marib with millions of dollars. However, what is interesting is that this time they did not improve the marketing of lies that will pave the way for the cannons."

Al-Absi relied on the statements of Houthi leaders, including Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, who told Al Jazeera that "the country supports the tribes of Marib with \$ 50 million" and the statement of leader Ali Al-Emad to Al-Saeeda TV that "the country supports the tribes of Marib with \$ 200 million," according to Al-Absi.

The First Threat

Between February and March 2015, Al-Absi was outside the country and appeared on a number of Arab channels warning of the steps taken by the Houthis. On March 2015, 4, Houthi-affiliated gunmen arrived at Al-Absi's house in Sanaa searching for him. Al-Absi wrote on his page: "The Houthi brothers, Ansar Allah, the Jinn or whatever the identity of the gunmen who went to my house in search of me this evening after speaking to Sky News from Cairo. You know very well that I am traveling out and I am coming back in a few days, you can pick me up at the airport away from my family and these cheap behaviors. Sana'a is my country more than Taiz, and I belong to it more than Abdulmalik. I was born, grew up, and lived there and we will not leave it. I am not scared of you or anyone but Allah.

My stomach is clean and my hands are not stained. Be men! These behaviors and terrorizing women are not the job of men. At least learn how to be men from Ali Abdullah Saleh, Ali Mohsen, Beit Al-Ahmar, Islah, and all those who ruled before them. We opposed them and we strongly succeeded against them, but they did not follow this degenerate behavior."

On his blog, Al-Absi republished the story drafted by local media quoting this post.

Continuing the Battle

Analysis of the most prominent articles of the investigative journalist's blog

During our analysis of Al-Absi's work, **three topics emerged.**

- **The first** is public criticism of every aspect of corruption that affects the interests of local communities.
- **The second** is corruption related to the oil and energy sector.
- **The third** is that Al-Absi examined irregularities surrounding oil and Yemen's booming black market.

لثلاثاء، 28 يونيو 2016

وثيقة: أزمة سيولة نقدية لدى البنوك المحلية هذه المرة بالريال اليمني

حتى وقت قريب كانت السوق المصرفية تواجه أزمة خانقة وشحة في العملة الصعبة الدولار. العكس: تعاني البنوك اليمنية، خلال الأيام القليلة...



هناك تعليق واحد:

وثيقة: آلية لشراء شركة النفط 50% من شحنات التجار تباع للمواطن بالسعر الرسمي

الخبر السار أن محطات شركة النفط الحكومية بدأت في بيع البنزين للمواطنين بالسعر الرسمي 3000 ألف ريال. لكن الخبر المزعج أن الكميات قليلة، وم...



هناك تعليقان (2):

لخميس، 23 يونيو 2016

14 وثيقة جديدة حول أرباب السوق السوداء في اليمن وباخرة مازوت لحديدة

بينما اليمنيون في الظلام وسكان الحديدة جحيم الحرّ باخرة مازوت الحديدة تجوب البحار منذ 7 أشهر ذهاباً وإياباً بين بريطانيا والحديدة وج...



Manufactured Crisis

Journalist Mohammed Al-Absi returned to Yemen's Houthi-controlled capital Sana'a. The threats did not stop him from continuing the path he had set for himself: upholding the truth and exposing corruption. At that time, the Yemeni cities were experiencing a suffocating crisis in oil derivatives. On April 2015, 25, Al-Absi published a document confirming that influential people affiliated with the Houthi group or his ally at the time, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, could obtain quantities of oil derivatives with the stroke of a pen under the name of the **"war effort"**²¹,

at a time when all Yemeni cities suffer from "the lack of fuel, gas and oil derivatives."... All hospitals suffer the shortages of fuel and diesel, especially in Taiz and Aden. The Ministry of Communications is threatening to cut off the Internet service due to the lack of diesel operating the service. Al-Absi published a document directing the disbursement of 220 liters of diesel to one of the figures on April 2015, 28. Almost a month and a half later, in June 2015, the oil derivatives crisis had worsened, with battles between the Yemeni army and civilian militants on the one hand, with material support and air cover from the countries of the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia, and the Ansar Allah group "Houthis" and supporters of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh on the other.

The investigative journalist has condemned the attacks by the Saudi-led Arab coalition, stressing this so the Houthis and others won't take it as an opportunity to accuse him of standing with one side against another.

The Houthi-Saleh alliance justified the oil derivatives crisis with the restrictions and siege imposed by the Saudi-led Arab coalition on Yemeni seaports. However, Al-Absi concluded that the oil derivatives crisis was caused by the internal siege, relying on a document revealing the daily navigation movement issued by the port of Hodeidah.

Al-Absi published the document on his blog on June 2015 ,25, showing the names and numbers of commercial ships that arrived at the port of Hodeidah , in one day only: 8 ships waiting to unload the cargo, including three ships carrying varying quantities of oil derivatives up to about 115085 tons of diesel, oil, and diesel²².

Al-Absi asked: "Where do these large quantities of fuel go?" **then replied:** "**The Houthis and black-market traders sell them double their price to Yemenis, while they acquire whatever quantities they want under the pretext of the war effort.**" He described those who trade the suffering and needs of Yemenis from the inside as more despicable than those who kill them with rockets from the sky, "and those who kill them with their shells and trade in their needs are twice as despicable."

The Catastrophe of Flotation

In August 2015, the Houthis' so-called Revolutionary Committee issued a decision to float oil derivatives. **Al-Absi commented with a series of observations that the decision would open the market for the traders to supply the market with oil derivatives with no order. According to data narrated by Al-Absi,** the decision to float is just an emergency exit for the Houthis to steal the remaining provisions under the item of subsidizing derivatives in the country's budget. In addition to "allowing the private sector to import so that the black market is regulated and from now on the blame is on the private sector."

Al-Absi said that the oil company would stop supplying derivatives for the benefit of the electricity corporation. It would become an open market for private companies due to the flotation decision, which stipulated in Article (3), to add "an amount of 5 riyals per liter of gasoline and diesel to finance the establishment of a power station, and the amount is provided to the project account in the Central Bank of Yemen."

He added: "Since 70 percent of Yemen's electricity is generated by heavy fuel, this means either it goes out of service or operated with fuel at the international price (which is theoretically and practically impossible), which means that Yemenis will remain without electricity until the new Houthi power station is installed, which may happen in conjunction with the Mahdi's exit from the crypt."

Al-Absi will continue to follow the consequences of the flotation decision, which he will describe as catastrophic. Later, he will reveal where the five riyals imposed by the Houthis for every liter of oil entering Yemen go. In an article he published on his blog in June 2016, Al-Absi revealed that the amounts go to the Houthi war effort through the account of a fake company called **"Golden Guard" with the Agricultural Cooperative Credit Bank "CAC Bank"**.

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Al-Absi said that reliable sources in the Ministry of Oil and other banking confirmed the information to him, and indicated "the nature of banking transactions, as many traders and businessmen importers of fuel and oil derivatives ask the local banks that they deal with and where their accounts and financial balances are, to issue bank certified checks (accepted payment) **in favor of the following**"

- 1 Hodeidah Port Customs (including taxes, customs duties, and improvement).
- 2 Yemen Petroleum Company at its account with the Central Bank.
- 3 Golden Guard account at the Agricultural Cooperative Credit Bank.

Al-Absi said: the "Golden Guard **means the golden guard or protector**. This term has already been used in oil contracts by senior men of the former regime, who refer to it as a return for protection."

The Black Market as a Houthi Industry

الاثنين، 2 نوفمبر 2015

وثيقة: السوق السوداء للوقود في اليمن.. كصناعة رسمية مليشياوية

قالت وكالة سبأ إن رئيس "اللجنة الثورية محمد علي الحوثي؛ التقى بممثلين عن شركة النفط وهيئة مكافحة الفساد اليوم وناقش معهم آلية توزيع ا...



On October 2015, 30, Al-Absi published official documents issued by Yemen Petroleum Company showing the company holding dozens of oil tankers that were heading to the capital, Sanaa, carrying varying quantities of smuggled diesel fuel.

In a letter by the director of the pro-Houthi oil company, Ali Al-Taifi, to the acting oil minister, accusing three companies, affiliated with three businessmen: Al-Huthili, Fahem, and Hammadi, of feeding and supplying the black market in the cities, selling 40,000 tons of oil derivatives at the black-market price in "hard currency." This raised the exchange rate from 215 to 280 riyals. Although the Hodeidah branch oil company syndicate had confirmed that the oil company's leadership allowed the unloading of "a ship loaded with 14,975 tons of diesel directly into oil tankers at the port of Hodeidah without examining, measuring or unloading it first in the company's tanks according to the followed procedures," according to a statement obtained by Mohammed Al-Absi.

However, the oil company director's letter to the Houthi-affiliated Supreme Revolutionary Committee said it had detained Al-Huthili company's fully loaded oil tankers because it was "the biggest black-market seller."

Two days later, on November 2015 ,2," the head of the Revolutionary Committee, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, met representatives of the oil company and the Anti-Corruption Commission and discussed with them the mechanism for distributing oil derivatives, monitoring and eliminating the black market" as published by Saba news agency, the Houthi-run version.

The investigative journalist followed the details of the meeting, and came up with a document on the same day, published on his blog under the title: "Document: **The Black Market for Fuel in Yemen... as an official militia industry**²³."

In the document, Sana'a governor, appointed by the so-called Revolutionary Committee, ordered the release of the oil tankers of the Al-Huthili company, which the director of the oil company described in his letter to the Revolutionary Committee as the biggest black-market seller.

Al-Absi said that the meeting, attended by some traders whose fuel oil tankers were detained, was to discuss the mechanism for distributing oil derivatives to the black market, in a way that attracts less attention and achieves more material returns.

Suspicious events in the oil market

Back to the article published by Al-Absi on October 2015 ,30, which was reinforced with a message directed by the Houthi Oil Company director to the Acting Minister of Oil, **he accused four companies of selling to black markets and causing high exchange rates.**

In that article, **Al-Absi revealed two observations** that will lead him to new facts about what is happening in the backstage of the oil trade in the new regime. Digging deep into the file brought danger to Al-Absi's life.

The first observation: is that the letter of the oil company director does not mention, except, casually to the Ras Essa facility run by businessman Ahmed Al-Essa, although it is the main platform that feeds the black market in Yemen. It also neglected to mention other companies, such as Abdullah Al-Wazir's company Adima and Ammar Tawfiq Abdurrahim's Crugas, a company that the oil company's leadership granted a license to import without a tender.

The second observation: that raised suspicion and question marks to journalist Mohammed Al-Absi is that the Saudi-led coalition forces detained most of the oil-laden ships belonging to Crugas company while allowing the passage of others to enter the port of Hodeidah .

Before reaching the shocking facts in the documents, Al-Absi published primary information from sources within the oil company, stating that there are oil derivatives ships imported by traders for the company, sufficient for the country for two months. However, some factors caused the ships to be detained and not unloaded. Among them is an internal conflict within the oil company's leadership and the company's revolutionary committee, where one party is working for Crugas and another is lobbying hard for Adima company

CruGas and the Great Secret

On June 2016, 7, journalist Al-Absi published documents on his blog revealing shocking figures, ships belonging to a company, anchored in the port of Hodeidah loaded with oil shipments sufficient for Yemen for six months. In the investigation published by Mohammed Al-Absi on his blog²⁴, he revealed with documents that the Houthis detained ships loaded with oil in the port of Hodeidah 7 months ago.

Al-Absi published official correspondence between the oil company and the CruGas Trading Company, affiliated with businessman Ammar Tawfiq and Sadiq Al-Mafaraz, confirming his information. According to one of the letters dated June 2016, 7, CruGas confirms the arrival of ten ships to the port of Hodeidah, loaded with gasoline and diesel, and that the ships have been ready for unloading for 6 months, yet they have not been unloaded.

The CruGas letter shows that its total purchases of 173,000 tons of gasoline and 314,000 tons of diesel cover Yemen's consumption in normal conditions for six months.

Al-Absi revealed that CruGas manipulated the quantity of gasoline in its ships, as indicated by the company's own letters, in letter No. 1 CruGas says that the ship Hangze carries a quantity of only 25 thousand tons of gasoline? While in letter No. 8 dated May 2016, 4, the ship was carrying a quantity of 60,000 tons of gasoline, for 638\$ per ton. Al-Absi indicated that the reason for this manipulation was related to the delay fine demanded by the company.

Al-Absi questioned: **Why ships imported for the oil company, which will be sold at the official price, have been stuck for six months at the commercial dock of Hodeidah port, and their delay fines exceed \$ 20 million, while ships belonging to traders enter the port of Ras Essa smoothly and are sold in the cities' streets and the black market?**

Al-Absi said that the CruGas company, affiliated with Ammar Tawfiq, is benefiting from the heavy financial fines that the country will pay to the company as a result of the delay in unloading, amounting to \$ 7 million per ship, while Al-Taifi, the pro-Houthi oil company director, or "black market supporters benefit in case of side agreements about the commissions with the traders who flooded the black market with their fuel."

Al-Absi pointed to the attack on Crugas by the director of the branch of the oil company in the capital's secretariat, Ibrahim Al-Warith. As well as the weak position of the Coordination Council of the oil company's unions, after appointing the director of Ras Essa facility, Abdullah Al-Dhayah, and his disagreement with his deputy, "Nabil Al-Mutahar" and the position did not come until the dispute, between Crugas and the oil company represented by Ibrahim Al-Taifi for the cake is over, according to Al-Absi's expression.

Following the dispute, more than one committee was formed, including the Commercial Department Committee, by the company's deputy director, Ibrahim Al-Moaiad, which included Houthi leaders and the oil company leaders.

The committee came out with a report published by journalist Al-Absi, in which it recommended communicating with the head of the Revolutionary Committee to end Crugas's account, not paying any amounts to it, and not buying any new shipments.

Al-Absi pointed out that all the contracts and privileges of Crugas would not have been completed without Ali Taifi. To confirm this, on June 2016 ,23, the investigative journalist will publish 14 new documents about the Hodeidah diesel ship²⁵, Orino2, which entered and exited the commercial dock of Hodeidah port three times and did not unload its cargo despite being checked by the Saudi-led Arab coalition.

Al-Absi published a series of confidential correspondence and documents revealing "the existence of a 'lobby' within the country apparatus working for the benefit of flotation traders and the black market. The obstacles placed in front of the commercial dock ships of the port of Hodeidah fade and overcome the commercial ships anchored in Ras Essa. In just six months, more than 19 commercial ships belonging to the private sector were unloaded," according to Al-Absi.

Five months **before the assassination**

This is what happened...

Groom's break

Mohamed Abdo Al-Absi stopped publishing about corruption in the oil and energy sector in July 2016. Based on testimonies gathered from his journalist friends and relatives, Al-Absi sensed serious threats, as his car was repeatedly tampered more than once.

Mohammed took a short break, taking care of his father, checking on his sisters, and asking about his family. The family he was concerned about so much worked hard for even forgot his personal life and did not add a new member to the family.

The investigative journalist caught his breath and began preparing for his wedding in July 2016. In the invitation he published on his page on Facebook, **he wrote:** "Father Abdo Al-Absi has the honor to invite you to attend my wedding on Monday after the next, on 201/8/1 and **confirmed:** "I was hoping that the wedding would be in other circumstances, but I postponed it a lot since October 2014. The situation did not stabilize, but got worse and ruined the country.

The Last Fight with the Killers' negotiators

The investigative journalist did not rest much. However, he did not show that he had resumed journalistic work related to following up corruption files again. He wanted to get **to the secrets of the dispute between the oil company run by Ali Al-Taifi, who is affiliated with the Ansar Allah group "Houthis", and the CruGas company affiliated with Ammar Tawfiq Abdurrahim.**

Why did the Saudi-led Arab coalition stop CruGas' oil ships for three months?
Why did the Houthis stop them in the port of Hodeidah for seven months without unloading, even though the oil company gave CruGas a license to import in its name?
Why are these suspicious procedures that double the suffering of Yemenis and prolong the oil derivatives crisis, even though the ships are loaded enough for domestic consumption for at least six months?

Investigative journalist Mohammed Al-Absi contacted businessman Ammar Tawfiq, owner of CruGas Company, Al-Absi found serious files related to smuggling weapons²⁶,

toxic substances, pesticides, and other materials used in the arms manufacture. During his research on the subject, Al-Absi found that one of the suspicious shipments would reach the Houthi group through tankers loaded with oil shipments. Al-Absi wanted to find out about the new companies and who they belong to? Along with the emergence of a new network of traders making huge sums of money, this network is using the companies for other businesses.

In addition, journalist Al-Absi discovered the secret of the dispute between the CruGas company, represented by Ammar Tawfiq, and the Houthi-run oil company: In addition to the conflict over financial ratios, the pressure on the businessman -who extended his lines of communication with the journalist Al-Absi- was due to his refusal to buy oil shipments in the name of his company CruGas, when in fact these shipments will go to the benefit of new companies affiliated with Houthi leaders.

Al-Absi did not appear as an investigative journalist tracking serious details, during this period, Ammar Tawfiq hired him to negotiate with the oil company to unload the cargo stopped at the port of Hodeidah. Al-Absi was sitting with representatives of the oil company, but the truth is that these figures represented the Houthis. The most prominent names that Mohammed sat with to agree on ending the oil derivatives crisis and unloading the ships of businessman Ammar Tawfik are:

- **Daghsan Mohammed Daghsan**, a trader from Saada and owner of a company that used to import oil derivatives, as well as a famous pesticide dealer.
- The second figure is Shafe' Al-Nagi, a Houthi leader linked to the oil trade.
- The third is Mohammed Al-Emad, a Houthi media figure and former advisor to the oil company, who later launched Al-Haweeah Channel.

Mohammed Al-Absi did not agree with the Houthi negotiators, meanwhile, he had discovered the activities of the Houthi leaders in the oil sector and some of the responsible companies. He contacted a group of trusted activists and colleagues providing them with information about Houthi leaders involved in oil corruption and suspicious activities. Some of those contacted by Mohammed Al-Absi: former Houthi leader Ali Al-Bukhaiti, who disagreed with the Houthis and defected from them according to his new appearance.

Relations between Al-Absi and Houthi negotiators strained, with the Houthis placing Ammar Tawfiq under house arrest. Mohammed sent him: "We will expose them." hinting at the new documents he will get soon, which reveal the activities of Houthi leaders in the oil sector. Al-Absi did not know that intelligence in Sana'a, run by Houthi leader Abu Ali Al-Hakim, had arrested the businessman Ammar Tawfiq, and was reading the conversations between him and the investigative journalist. Al-Absi continued contacting Ammar, and the Houthis were briefed on Al-Absi's movements and the investigations he was working on. One day, Al-Absi received a message: "It seems that Al-Emad has tricked the subject against you." Then he understood that Ammar was arrested.

Three sources confirmed to our team, Mohammed Al-Absi's disclosure of his fears after the arrest of Ammar Tawfiq. One of the sources said that he met Al-Absi in the capital, Sana'a at his request, and he was frightened. He told him that the source who provided him with information and documents, was arrested and that the party that arrested the source saw the messages and communications between them.

They became closer to him than any other time. Before Al-Absi's assassination, he was summoned by the Houthi leader in charge of managing the intelligence of the Houthi group in his home. The journalist went there, and met the businessman Ammar Tawfiq and Abu Ali Al-Hakim, as sources close to Al-Absi indicated, but no one knows what happened.

The Assassination Day

Mohammed Al-Absi was with a number of his colleagues at the rest house on Haddah Street in the center of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, on December 21, 2016. He left the rest house with one of his relatives before sunset, and as usual, he went to drink tea in a cafeteria in the Al-Kamim roundabout near the rest house, then he had dinner. When he returned home, he was sweating in the cold season. After exercising, foam was coming out of his mouth. The family tried to help him, but he died.

Journalist Mohammed Al-Absi usually meets friends outside his home. He chews Qat at a friend's house or in a well-known Cafe in the center of the capital Sana'a. After that, he has a cup of tea in a famous cafeteria on Hadda Street in the capital, Sana'a, and then returns home.

That day, on December 2016, 20, Mohammed Al-Absi met a relative, Ahmed (fake name of Al-Absi's relative, for security reasons), on Hadda Street in the capital, Sana'a. They both went to the Cafe, where they will chew Qat with Mohammed's friends. Before sunset, Mohamed and Ahmed went out to the cafeteria near the Cafe, and as usual, Mohamed ordered tea "half a cup of tea", but the waiter served the cup "full". Mohammed refused the tea, asked the waiter to bring another cup of tea, and gave the previous order to his relative Ahmed.

After they had tea, they walked for about two hours from Al-Komaim Roundabout on Hadda Street to Tahrir Street. They talked about the family - it is Mohammed's habit to talk about the family's situation. When they arrived at Al-Tahrir Street, Mohammed entered the restaurant with his relative. Al-Absi ordered dinner: eggs and liver, he ate a little liver, it seemed that he was not hungry, his relative, who accompanied him for dinner, ate the whole dinner. After that, the two walked to Al-Absi's house. Al-Absi invited his relative to come in to complete chewing Qat at home, and his relative replied: "You told me that today you have work, finish it, and tomorrow we will chew Qat together until the morning." They agreed on this.

It was cold in December 2016, Mohammed arrived home, and his sister opened the door she was surprised that he was sweating, and **asked him:** Who poured water on you? **He replied:** He sweats because of walking. He went into the bathroom to take a shower and then spoke to his sister about his foundation project before his sister went to sleep and Mohammed went to exercise. A few hours later, Mohammed's sisters woke up at the screams of his wife, who had been married for only four months and twenty days. She was shouting out to help Mohammed.

His sisters entered the living room, Mohammed was lying with his head on the sofa, he had convulsions, and tightening his hands. His wife and two sisters tried **to do something:** they splashed water on him and opened his mouth, but they couldn't. Yellow foam began to come out of his mouth, his wife called the neighbors and his sister called her cousin to help him, his stomach had begun to swell.

The family moved to the nearby Tunis Hospital, where the doctor told them, **"died."** The family did not believe, so his sister suggested transferring him to the German Hospital. When she opened the cover on Mohammed's body, his whole body was blue, she was surprised and asked the doctor about the reason, and he replied: "The breath stops. There is no oxygen in the blood."

The others rejected the idea of transferring him to another hospital, so the family took the death certificate and brought Mohammed back to the neighborhood. One of the doctors living in the same neighborhood assured them that he had just met Mohammed, and he was completely fine, **how did he die?**

The doctor searched Mohammed's body and found redness behind his shoulder, he threw foam out of his mouth, there was a light of hope for the family that Mohammed was not dead, so they transferred him to Cairo Hospital, tried to resuscitate him, and injected him, his body began to give a signal, but there is no pulse, in the end, the doctor told them: **there is no use.**

When some of his colleagues learned the news, they came to see him. **Journalist Tawfiq Al-Janad wrote: "Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi did not die, he was killed. When I saw his face and the cotton tampons in his nose today, he was telling me it was the smell of poison, Tawfiq."** Activists told Al-Absi's sisters that they would start arranging the burial ceremonies in the morning.

Last Messages

After the news of his death, several activists published the last messages they received from investigative journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi, including the former leader of the Houthi group, Ali Al-Bukhaiti, who published the messages partly, after hiding the names of leaders involved in oil corruption.

Sources in the family, who reviewed Mohammed's electronic accounts, confirmed the authenticity of these messages but expressed their dissatisfaction with the way Al-Bukhaiti dealt with Al-Absi's messages. Before the satirical journalist and broadcaster **Mohammed Al-Ruba** published those messages which revealed the size of the threats the investigative journalist felt in the time he discovered organized corruption at a high level in the leaders of the Houthi group. **In his post, Al-Ruba said:** I received a message a few days ago on Facebook: "Hey bro! give me your lmo number, I gave him my number, so he sent me a message on lmo **telling me** I will contact you from another number, my number is watched," then I received a message from an account called 'O Lord your kindness' telling me: 'This is my number that no one knows except you and limited people.'

Al-Absi asked Al-Ruba to talk about the oil corruption giants and assured him: "I did investigative research on black market traders in Yemen. It became clear to me that the largest oil companies monopolized to import oil currently, are three companies, all are Houthi companies. **The first and largest company** belongs to Mohammed Abdussalam, spokesman for the Houthi group, who founded an oil company called "Yemen Life" Company, run by his brother.

Another company belongs to Daghsan Mohammed Daghsan, an arms dealer from Saada. The company's name is "**Oil Primer**", and the "**Black Gold**" company belongs to "Ali Qarsha". Now these three Houthi companies are the monopoly on importing oil into Yemen and selling it at high prices." **Al-Absi added:** "Currently, a company has been established in Dubai as a front that buys oil in its name nominally or from its branches so that they do not face problems in obtaining licenses by the coalition" and **added:** "I am still looking for the name of this company that they founded in Dubai and who runs it."

In his letters, **Al-Absi confirmed** what he was publishing on his blog about the Houthi procedures related to oil trading, starting with floating derivatives and heading to the black market. He related the rise of the dollar price to 300, at that time because of the withdrawal of hard currency from the market and transferring it to trade in oil imports from outside.

According to Al-Absi's analysis, the Houthis' control over the country's institutions and their control of the oil sector led to the formation of a new commercial class of the Houthis in a short period, "and this explains their purchase of real estate and buildings even though the country is at war and **their intention to open fourth-generation telecommunications companies, banks, and others.**"

Al-Absi stressed in his messages to Al-Rube: This is one of the reasons for the failure of Mohammed Abdussalam, spokesman for the Houthis, and his negotiating team to come up with any solutions in all peace negotiations. They are trying to keep the current situation as long as possible so they can achieve wealth that enables them to survive economically.

Regarding businessman Ammar Tawfiq, owner of CruGas, Al-Absi said: "The last thing they did was the exclusion of an import company for businessman Ammar Tawfiq, a trader from Taiz because he refused to buy oil for their companies in his name from abroad. Six of his oil tankers were detained in the dock of Hodeidah port until the fines accumulated on him became more than the cost of the cargo."

The only witness

After sitting in the Cafe nearly until sunset, drinking tea, and having dinner with Mohammed Al-Absi, his relative Ahmed, who accompanied him that day, returned home. When he started chewing Qat, he had a stomachache, and then he started sweating, after a while there was an abnormal movement in the intestines.

After half an hour he felt a need to vomit, and his upper abdomen was blocked: **When I wanted to swallow saliva it was difficult, I felt it was blocked (my throat).**

"His stomach began to swell, and he went to the bathroom, the feeling of nausea was increasing but he could not vomit or drink water for two hours. At midnight and after drinking apple cider vinegar "he threw out a lot of foam" constantly. The movement of the intestines did not stop, and then he was taken to a hospital: After a short time, he was injected with a large, purple injection. Al-Absi's relative threw up everything, a foam resembling acid, which reacted with each other. The rumbling of the intestines continued. When the doctors put him on a cardiogram, the result was that the heart had almost stopped, they changed another device, and the result was the same: they told him, "You need intensive care, or take your shroud and go to the cemetery".

It is not reasonable for this human being to walk on his feet, his eyes open, and in the ECG his heart is stopped." The same astonishment would be expressed by a doctor close to the family of Mohammed Al-Absi when she saw the echo report of the investigative journalist Mohammed Al-Absi's heart: It is impossible that this result is for a normal person.

Al-Absi's sisters had not known the news of Mohammed Al-Absi's relative, the family was preparing to bury the investigative journalist, thinking that the death was natural.

In the morning, the father of Al-Absi's relative came, greeted Al-Absi's sisters, and told them that his son was sick and that his color had changed. When Al-Absi's sister asked him what had happened to his son, he said: "He began to feel suffocation, swelling in his stomach, and began to vomit, the doctor gave him a poisoning injection, and he began to convulse. We took him to the Technology Hospital, and they told us that he was dying, they transferred him to Istishari Hospital on 60th Street.

The hospital director confirmed that he had taken a strong poison, and promised to write a report confirming this according to the results of the tests conducted while he was in Al-Ahli Hospital. After the news of the assassination of investigative journalist Al-Absi spread, the hospital director warned Al-Absi's relative from replacing his medicine or food, warning him of visits fearing of eliminating Al-Absi's relative because he is the only witness to the assassination of investigative journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi.

Ahmed learned that unknown people had come to visit him, but his cousins guarded him and did not allow anyone to visit him unless he was reliable fearing for his life.

There were two military crews in front of the hospital, after leaving intensive care, Al-Absi's relative was surprised by the report that says that he entered the intensive care because of a bloating in the stomach.

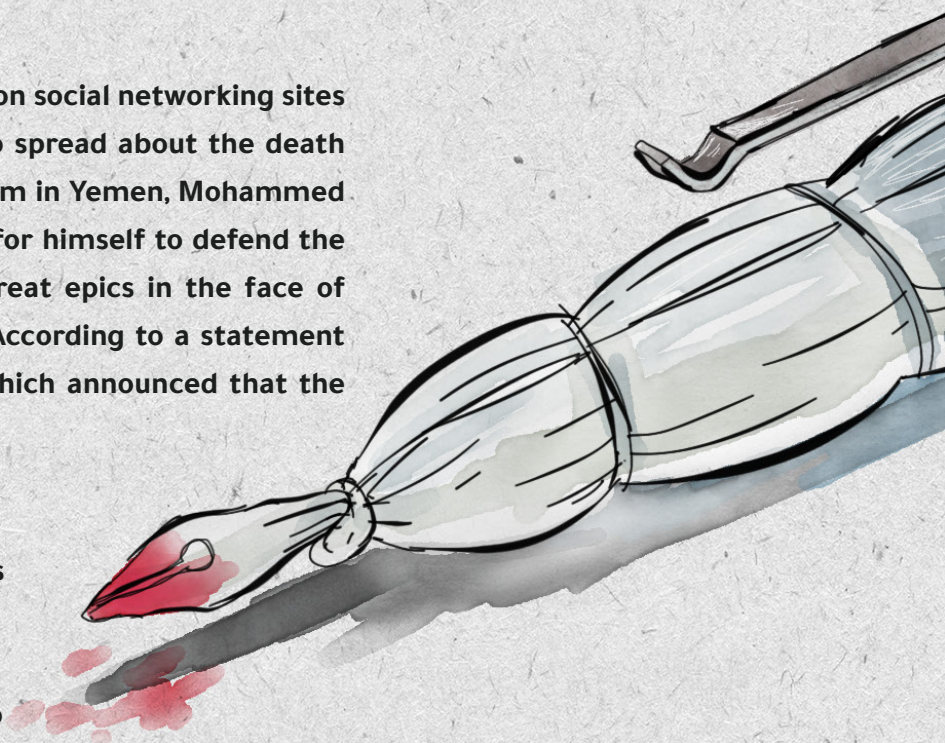
These procedures reveal that the hospital was subjected to pressure, threats, or even deals, to hide the important details of the case of Al-Absi's relative to hide any trace that leads to the true cause of the death of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi.

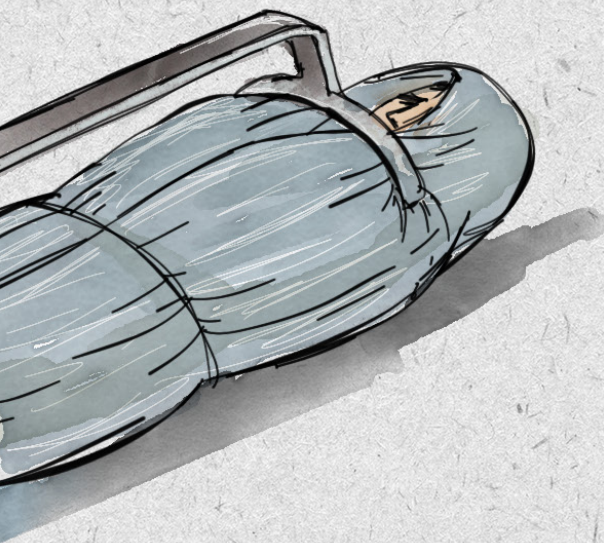
Our investigative team learned that the hospital concealed the first blood test of Al-Absi's relative, as well as surveillance camera videos that documented the presence of two suspicious visitors while he was in intensive care. When Al-Absi's sisters traced the details of what happened to Ahmed, the family realized that journalist Mohammed Al-Absi had been killed in a professional assassination, and informed his friends and relatives to stop burial procedures to do an autopsy.

Pressure to Bury the Body

Public opinion, activists, and journalists on social networking sites questioned the narrative that began to spread about the death of the pioneer of investigative journalism in Yemen, Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi, who took a difficult path for himself to defend the interests of the country and fought great epics in the face of corruption with high professionalism. According to a statement by the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, which announced that the death "is still mysterious."

The Journalists Syndicate confirmed its support the family of journalist Al-Absi's demands to autopsy his body, which was deposited at Kuwait Hospital in Sana'a, to confirm the truth and circumstances of death.





The Syndicate said that it is following up Al-Absi's case with the judicial authority to find out the causes of death, demanding a serious and independent investigation. It also demanded the involvement of a forensic doctor representing the Syndicate and a family representative in the autopsy process.

A few days later, Al-Absi's family received threats and advice demanding that they close the case file and bury the body. One of those who used to hang out with Mohammed recently told the journalist's sister: "Your brother died from Allah."

Others told the family that Al-Absi did not have those files (which deserved his death) and that Mohammed died naturally, and some of them asked to close the case and told Al-Absi's sister: "**You can be killed after your brother.**"

Al-Absi's sisters did not surrender to all pressures. Despite that, the competent authorities under the control of the de facto authority in Sana'a, the Houthis, did not move to investigate the incident that aroused public opinion, the assassination of the journalist Al-Absi. Al-Absi's sisters continued to move from one institution to another: the Public Prosecutor, Criminal Investigation, Prosecution, and Hospital, to approve an autopsy. The paperwork took 18 days, until the day of the autopsy. Al-Absi's sisters had lost trust in many individuals and colleagues, as well as in the institutions of the Houthi authorities. The journalist's sisters trusted limited individuals whom they moved with.

When the investigative journalist's body was autopsied, his body was burned from the inside. When they opened his head, there was something like explosions in the ear and nose. The journalist's sister did not speak to anyone, in order to secretly transport the samples. She felt that the Houthis were observing her and they could destroy the sample indirectly, so she agreed with the forensic doctor, to take two samples from Mohammed's body instead of one. On the day of releasing the samples, an activist learned and informed the criminal investigation, who went to Mohammed's house and informed his sisters that they violated the law.

The sister had prepared everything to travel at two o'clock at night with the good sample, which was not announced until she arrived in Aden and traveled to Jordan.

The former Houthi leader and well-known activist Ali Al-Bukhaiti was in the Jordanian capital Amman at the time, he was communicating with Al-Absi's sister and her friend in Jordan. He wanted to know what they were doing, and the results of the sample test. The family was also suspicious of Al-Bukhaiti, as previously he tried to hide the Houthi leaders involved in oil corruption and manipulate the message that Al-Absi had sent him. Before others published the message, which was headed by Mohammed Abdussalam Fleita, the Houthi spokesman and head of its negotiating delegation.

Al-Absi's sister refused Al-Bukhaiti's invitation.

Follow-up team Statement on the case of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi's death

The team following the death of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi would like to officially announce today, February 2017 ,5, the completion of the autopsy and examination of samples and the appearance of the results of the autopsy and analysis.

After the follow-up team received, on Saturday, February 2017 ,4, a copy of the report of the assigned forensic doctor from the prosecution on duty.

The result of the laboratory examination and the forensic doctor's report concluded as follows: "The death of journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi, 35 years old, was due to poisoning and suffocation with carbon monoxide gas, where carboxy hemoglobin was found in the blood with a saturation rate of %65, which is considered fatal."

Based on this finding, the family of journalist Al-Absi and the follow-up team supporting them call on the Public Prosecution to start a transparent and efficient investigation into the circumstances of the death, to ensure that all the causes and circumstances surrounding it are known.

Because of the uncertainty and questions raised by the tragedy of his sudden death at a very exceptional and sensitive situation, the team worked hard to ensure the integrity of legal, medical, and technical procedures to reach the truth.

In this regard, the follow-up team would like to clarify the general context of the progress in the case of journalist Al-Absi's death before public opinion.

First: The Circumstances

Journalist Al-Absi died suddenly on Tuesday, December 20, 2016. Because of his exceptional role in fighting corruption, real doubts were generated about the death and its causes. After discussions between the family and a number of friends and colleagues of the deceased, the burial process was postponed, the body was kept in the morgue of Kuwait Hospital, and a team was formed to follow up on the case.

Second: Procedures

The "follow-up team" began the procedures by requesting an autopsy to find out the causes of death. The team communicated with the Public Prosecution regarding the necessary procedures to implement the request, and accordingly, an independent forensic doctor was selected by the family and the team, and assigned by the Public Prosecution in order to complete all legal procedures for autopsy and take the samples required for examination.

As a result of the lack of equipment and materials for the test in Yemen, samples of the deceased's body were transferred to a specialized center abroad.

The process of transporting the sample from Sana'a faced some difficulties, including the closure of Sana'a International Airport, and the inability to transport it through international organizations for technical reasons, which forced the team to transport the sample to the city of Aden and from there to the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Third: Sample Collection and Transportation

An autopsy and sample were taken on Monday, January 2017 ,9, at Kuwait Hospital in Sana'a. After verifying the integrity and identity of the body by representatives of the family, the team, and the prosecution, the sample was kept by the Public Prosecution, and secured by correct medical and technical methods under the supervision of specialists.

After cryogenic preservation, the sample was transported to Aden by land, coordinating with the various authorities to secure its arrival without any obstacles. On Wednesday, January 2017 ,11, through Aden International Airport, the follow-up team transferred the sample to the Department of Laboratories and Criminal Evidence in the Jordanian capital, Amman, to examine it and determine the causes of death.

Fourth: Setting the Date of Burial

After confirming that the sample had arrived safely, journalist Al-Absi's family and the follow-up team set a date for the funeral of the deceased on Friday, January 2017 ,13.

Fifth: Sample Examination

The Department of Laboratories and Criminal Evidence in the Jordanian capital, Amman, received the sample confirming that it was received safely. The test began on Thursday, January 2017 ,12. The sample test results were then handed over in a sealed envelope to the follow-up team, which in turn transferred it closed and sealed to Sana'a on January 2017 ,29, and handed it over to the forensic doctor.

Sixth: Expenses

The follow-up team of journalist Al-Absi's death case confirms that it did not request or receive any financial support from any side or political party and that the team afforded all the costs.

Finally, due to the great importance of investigative journalist Mohammed Abdo Al-Absi's death as a public opinion issue, its importance derives from the courageous and exceptional role he played in fighting corruption and struggling for justice and truth. In addition to calling for the completion of legal investigations after the causes of death have been known. The team also calls for honoring and perpetuating the memory of the deceased and celebrating his biography by continuing the struggle of Yemenis for rights and freedoms and upholding the values of truth and accountability²⁷.

Results



The Fact:

According to expert analyses and conclusions we have reached, Al-Absi was assassinated by a chemical compound that was most likely placed in tea, as it was the only meal shared by journalist Mohammed Al-Absi with his relative Ahmed. With effort, the chemical substance is metabolized in the body and turns into carbon monoxide, leading to death. Importantly, the report proved that the blood was saturated with the deadly substance "carboxyhemoglobin." This substance, according to Dr. Anas Al-Nazari, a specialist in analytical chemistry, can also be concentrated in the blood through a chemical compound called dichloromethane, which is a liquid organic solvent that can be put in drinks or food or even applied to the skin, and which turns into carbon monoxide by enzymes in the liver. It is most likely that in Mohammed's case, he was poisoned by putting dichloromethane in his juice or food.

The influence of the killers: Criminal Investigation

The Criminal Investigation Department in Sana'a dealt with the killing of journalist Al-Absi, with procedures aimed at diverting attention from this result, which answers **the question:** How did the amount of %65 of carboxy hemoglobin reach Mohammed Al-Absi's blood?

In the beginning, the Houthis pressed to deal with the incident as a natural death. After the family insisted on an autopsy, the Criminal Investigation began adopting another story indicating that the death cause was not natural, it was accidental but not related to journalist Al-Absi's work, **as a criminal investigation officer told the family.**

The Special Investigation Team reached conclusions, based on information from various sources, and analyses of the actions taken or rejected by the Criminal Investigation Department in Sana'a, which raise doubts about the Criminal Investigation work to conceal evidence of Al-Absi's assassination, **including:**

First: refuting the story that Mohammed Al-Absi "inhaled" carbon monoxide, emitted from the generator of the Cafe in which Mohammed sat on the day of his assassination, an officer in the criminal investigation went to the Cafe where Mohammed usually stays, and returned to tell Al-Absi's sisters what he had reached: "Behind the place where your brother sits, there is a generator, which releases carbon monoxide, and your brother inhaled it." But the information obtained by the investigation team refutes this story, as the generator for the Cafe where Mohammed sat with his friends that day, did not work in the first place. Even if the generator was working that day, why was only Mohammed hurt, even though others were in the place? In addition, inhaling carbon monoxide will make the patient feel suffocated immediately, not after walking the streets of Sana'a and exercising for hours.

Second: when the family conducted an autopsy, the criminal investigation informed them that they had got the sample illegally. Although, the family extracted all the necessary papers from the law enforcement institutions under the de facto authority in Sana'a.

Third: When Al-Absi's relative, who was accompanying him on the day of death, and Al-Absi's sisters, accompanied by a lawyer went to the criminal investigation department, **the investigator sent the sisters and the lawyer who was following the case out and closed the office. According to Ahmed's statement, the interrogator told him, "Fear for yourself and your family," and Al-Absi's relative told him, "I don't have children,". The interrogator replied, "I have children."**

Fourth: The Criminal Investigation Department, under the de facto authority of the Houthis in Sana'a, refused to issue a memorandum to the morgue of Kuwait Hospital to hand over the autopsy video, to be included in the case file.

Fifth: Despite the availability of many documents, information, and memoranda for the Criminal Investigation Department, the case remained locked in the drawers and was not referred to the prosecution. After more than a year and a half of the assassination of journalist Mohammed Al-Absi, his family accused the Criminal Investigation Department of being complicit with the Search Prosecution to bury the case and blur the evidence. The journalist's family said in a statement in July 2018: "The case of the martyr Mohammed Al-Absi has not yet been transferred to the prosecution."

Sixth: Some perpetrators' names were mentioned in the investigation reports, but the criminal investigation did not interrogate them. According to the family's statement: "the incomplete reports, papers, and reports were not completed." **The family confirmed** that: "The case of the martyr Mohammed Al-Absi is one of the most important cases of public opinion and organized eliminations that occurred in the last three years. The circumstances confirmed the involvement of people and influential parties polluted by corruption and criminality in planning, preparing, and implementing them. They are still trying to bury the case, blur all its traces and effects, and obstruct achieving justice," Noting that all the demands of the martyr's family were clarifying the truth, achieving justice, and supporting their cause by tracking and pursuing the perpetrators, arresting them and bringing them to justice to receive their just and deterrent punishment. However, these demands have been proven by reality and by the practices of the concerned authorities to be difficult to achieve.

Seventh: Al-Absi's case remained in the criminal investigation for another year and a half, then was transferred to the prosecution three years later.

The influence of the killers: The prosecution

The investigation team monitored a series of actions that show the imbalances that took place in the prosecution of the West Secretariat of the Capital, after transferring the case of the assassination of journalist Mohammed Al-Absi there, and for another three years:

1- The defense team, consisting of 12 lawyers, accused the de facto authorities of the Houthis of working to bury the assassination case of journalist Mohammed Al-Absi.

Although the case file contains leads confirming the involvement of people close to the Houthi group in the journalist Al-Absi's assassination, they were not summoned or reached because of their influence.

2- Three years after transferring the file to the prosecution, no action has been taken, despite the defense team's request to complete some of the deficiencies from the prosecutor who left the case file at home. This confirms that there was a deliberate suspension of the case by the authorities as a result of pressure from some influential people.

3- At the beginning of 2022, the prosecution informally informed the defense team that it had issued a decision to close the case file for lack of evidence.

After this, the defense team submitted a request to the prosecutor to hand over a copy of the decision so that the defense team could make the appeal procedures. However, the prosecutor officials' statements contradicted those who denied any decision in the case and those who said that the case file did not exist in the first place. This is a dangerous precedent in the history of the Yemeni judiciary, as the case file of the murder/assassination of journalist Al-Absi disappeared in the prosecution.

4- 11 out of 12 lawyers withdrew from the defense team formed in Al-Absi's case, fearing for their lives, because the case is related to the oil giants and involved big traders who monopolize the oil market in Yemen currently. They have a lot of influence, according to our findings.