



Chasing death

Details of what the journalists
of Hodeidah City were subjected
to, and messages targeting their
colleagues with explosive devices



Nikon



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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

While journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi and his wife, journalist Rasha Al-Harazi, were on their way to a hospital in Aden city, southern Yemen, to check the health condition of Rasha and her fetus, which is about to see the light, an explosive device planted in the car of the journalist Al-Otmi exploded, killing Rasha and her fetus instantly, and Mahmoud was seriously injured and entered intensive care.

For Yemeni journalists, the crime that took place on November 2021 ,9 was "horrible and unprecedented". The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, in a statement condemning it, expressed its fear that the crime was a dangerous indicator of "a new and violent era targeting journalists in Yemen by these cheap and cowardly means, in light of the impunity of the killers and violators of journalists...¹"

Nearly five months after the horrible crime, the press community was shocked by a similar crime, which also occurred in Aden city, when an explosive device exploded in the car of journalist Saber Al-Haidari, killing him and two passersby, in mid-June 2022.

In this report, the investigation team of Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism found that the journalists targeted by explosive devices are affiliated with a media group representing the voice of Hodeidah city, western Yemen. The voices conveying what is happening in the strategic governorate of Hodeidah caused inconvenience to Ansar Allah group "Houthis".

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



Following the targeting and the scattering of the media group, the voice of truth subsided after its members realized that they were targeted even after they had left Houthi-controlled areas.

Hodeidah city is strategically located in western Yemen and takes its importance from both geographical and economic aspects. As it overlooks the Red Sea, which is close to global trade lines, and contains the port of Hodeidah, which is "The main gateway for the flow of food shipments and aid from Arab and European countries to the city,

in addition to being the main commercial center in Yemen, which controls more than 70 percent of the country's income. Before the war the port used to receive 90 percent of it", which is why Hodeidah is the first economic funding of the Houthis, who took control of the city in 2015.

The Houthis tightened security procedures on Hodeidah city and worked to tighten the security grip on its people.

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

It was easy to throw accusations at any opponent who writes about violations in the coastal city claiming that he is working with the countries of the Arab coalition established by Saudi Arabia to strike the Houthis. The people of Tihama had the largest share of charges, trials and executions. As for the media workers, a group of them fled to the areas controlled by the internationally recognized government and settled on the coast of Taiz governorate, in the city of Mokha, in the west, then Aden in southern Yemen. They continued to perform their work, but they were pursued. Some wanted to silence their voices, and they faced threats, arrests, and poison. Then, after the explosive devices that killed Rasha Al-Harazi, wounded her husband, Mahmoud Al-Otmi, the bomb that killed journalist Saber Al-Haidari, the arrest of journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi, and other activists, Hodeidah's voice faded.

The police and law enforcement agencies in the temporary capital of Aden, affiliated with the internationally recognized government, moved to investigate the crime that targeted Rasha Al-Harazi and her husband Mahmoud Al-Otmi. However, the inadequacy and negligence prevailed those movements. The authorized agencies did not adjudicate the incident from its various aspects and intertwined details. In addition, nothing was done in the murder of journalist Saber Al-Haidari.

Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism worked to investigate the details of the targeting journalists with explosive devices in Aden city, within the framework of 'For the Truth' project, and to collect information from the victims' relatives or close associates. In addition to talking with sources in the official authorities related to the case file. Colleagues who were in contact with the journalists, and former detainees of the Houthi group, were interrogated by the Houthi services about their relationship with the targeted victims. We have found clear lines leading to the party that framed the plan to eliminate the journalists with explosive devices, which is the Houthi group, specifically its intelligence services in Hodeidah, according to these conclusions:

Threats and stalking:

The investigation team noticed the presence of abnormal activity represented by chases and prosecutions of journalists and activists in Hodeidah city. The center was able to conduct individual interviews with journalists and activists who fled to areas controlled by the recognized government. The journalists confirmed that they received threats from Houthi leaders if they did not stop their anti-Houthi media activities. They poisoned a journalist in his food. The intelligence services of the Houthis were pursuing people who communicated with the journalists or those with whom journalists communicated³.

Kidnapping and Torture:

The Houthi apparatus kidnapped a number of journalists and activists in Hodeidah city, who were subjected to severe torture and were referred to courts in Sana'a. We interviewed a number of those who were later released. Houthi investigators were already looking for details about the media workers and activists who were able to leave Hodeidah city and settle in areas controlled by the recognized government. In addition to documenting testimonies about the way the Houthis dealt with one of the detainees on the day Mahmoud Al-Otmi and his wife Rasha Al-Harazi were targeted with an explosive device.

Pressure on Journalists' families:

The Houthis pressured journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi's family before he was targeted with an explosive device. That includes the arrest of the journalist's brother and his detention for more than a year, to force Mahmoud to return to their areas of control. They also forced Mahmoud's parents to sign a paper to disown their journalist's son.

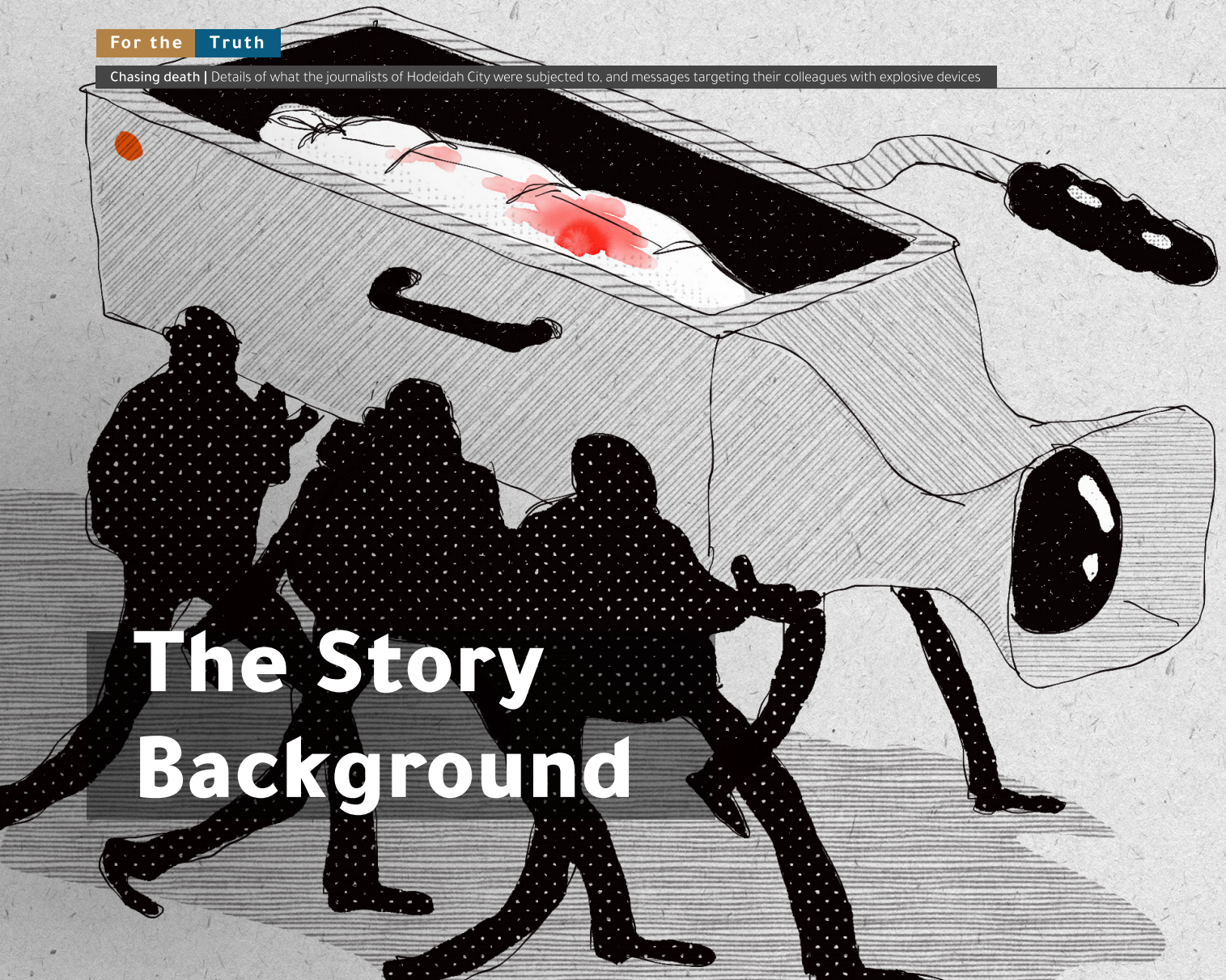
The family of journalist Saber Al-Haidari was subjected to Houthi pressure after his death and funeral. The family, who live in Houthi-controlled areas, received unprecedented threats after voices appeared accusing the Houthis of pursuing Tihami journalists who live in Aden, according to press sources and others close to Al-Haidari's family confirmed to our team.

Surveillance cameras.

The surveillance camera in the hospital where Mahmoud Al-Otmi received treatment after an explosive device injured him and his wife, recorded a person, who wanted to enter Mahmoud's room to visit, but the criminal investigation officer didn't allow him after doubting his suspicious movements in the hospital. Three days later, the person appeared in the hospital's surveillance camera recordings throwing an injection into the garbage barrel. Mahmoud's friends believed he wanted to eliminate the journalist. It later became clear that this person came from Houthi-controlled areas, according to security sources in the Criminal Investigation Department in Aden Governorate⁴.

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The Story Background

The Houthi security and military forces in Al Hudaydah governorate began pursuing activists and journalists, as campaigns began to spread on websites and social media platforms, exposing the violations that Al Hudaydah governorate and its people are being subjected to. The Houthis arrested a number of them, while others, including a media group from Al Hudaydah, fled to areas controlled by the recognized government, and continued to practice their journalistic work, but they were under surveillance.

Hodeidah city has geopolitical and economic importance for the Republic of Yemen. It is in the west of the country, on the Red Sea, which makes it close to global trade lines. It has important facilities such as the port of Hodeidah and Ras Issa, where oil tanks and facilities for receiving and exporting crude oil, and receiving trade and exported and imported containers. In addition to its vast farms, which were previously considered Yemen's food basket. When Houthis controlled Sana'a in late 2014 and expanded into Yemeni cities, they were looking for an economic resource that would allow them to survive and continue to control Yemen as long as possible. They couldn't control Marib in eastern Yemen, which is the first oil destination and the main resource for the country budget. They also lost control of the southern province of Aden, which has a famous port and is close to Bab Al-Mandab. As well as the port of Mokha, the famous coast, west of Taiz. That's why the Houthis tightened their grip on Hodeidah city. They did not hesitate to oppress the people of Tihama just because of suspicion of working against the agendas of Houthi group, and dealing with the international coalition formed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to strike the Houthis. The Houthis executed nine Tihami people at one stroke on charges of contacting with Saudi Arabia and the UAE⁵. They also tortured men and women from Hodeidah city or residents there.

When the Houthis controlled Hodeidah city in 2015, they tended to attract media workers affiliated with the governorate, including a group of activists and journalists, and until 2017 they were unable to attract influencers to work with them.

The security and military agencies of Houthis in Hodeidah city began pursuing activists as campaigns began to spread on websites and social networking sites showing violations against Hodeidah city and its people. Houthis arrested a number of them, while others, including a media workers from Hodeidah, fled to areas controlled by the recognized government and continued to practice their journalistic work, but they were under surveillance.

Houthis wanted to silence the voices of Hodeidah by various means, threatening messages, bombing. Now there is no voice and we don't know what's going on there⁶.

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



About Targeted Journalists

Rasha Al-Harazi used to work in photography and had a great passion for media, so she joined the media department at Hodeidah University, western Yemen, in 2014. At Hodeidah University, Mahmoud Al-Otmi met his colleague Rasha Al-Harazi, and they got married in 2019. Rasha worked in community and charitable work in Hodeidah city, and opened with her friends a charity bakery to help the people through the difficult times caused by war. As a journalist, Rasha worked at Menasati 30 and was a trainee with UNESCO in 2019.

As for her husband, Mahmoud Al-Otmi, he was associated with covering the events taking place in Hodeidah, which was raided by the Houthis. Later, he launched the Nawras news website as a front to work with a group of journalists from Hodeidah after they fled the brutality of the security and military services in Hodeidah, which is run by the Houthi group

Journalist Saber Al-Haidari was among the journalists from Hodeidah , who left the areas controlled by Houthi group. He headed to Aden, southern Yemen, a city under the control of the internationally recognized government. Haidari is a 42-year-old journalist, who has an outstanding record in the field of media, which he started in 2002 as a responsible for activities at the Government Media Center, and then head of the local communications department in public relations at the Ministry of Information in 2004.

This allowed him to work as an escort for a number of Arab and international media delegations and then as a coordinator with a number of Arab and international media before working as Director of the Follow-up Department of the Government Spokesperson's Office in 2013.

Al-Haidari moved to private work in February 2015, as executive director of the Friend of Media Foundation, worked as an assistant documentary film producer for a number of channels, produced reports for a number of foreign media organizations, and was a reporter for Japanese television.

With Houthis taking control of the Yemeni capital Sana'a in late 2014 and expanding into other Yemeni cities, the Yemeni press and the media in general were going through the worst era in their history. In the first six months of the war, in 8 ,2015 journalists were killed and more than 300 lost their jobs⁷. At the time, Yemeni journalists were displaced, they lost their jobs, and when they could not work in areas controlled by Houthi group, many moved to areas more suitable for journalistic and media work in areas controlled by the recognized government.

Journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi left Hodeidah alone under cover of darkness to Taiz city in central Yemen, while his wife Rasha Al-Harazi returned to her family in Sana'a. After a while, Al-Otmi prepared his apartment in the temporary capital of Aden and received his wife Rasha, restarting his personal family life.

Al-Haidari was not better than Al-Otmi , as the journalist from Hodeidah, who lives in the capital, Sana'a, was subjected to the same harassment as journalists working in Hodeidah. So, Saber Al-Haidari left Sana'a to Aden in 2017.

Journalists affiliated with Hodeidah city continued to live and perform their media work from Aden city. Journalists Mahmoud Al-Otmi and Rasha Al-Harazi were expecting their baby. On November 2021 ,9, Rasha didn't feel well so Mahmoud drove her by car to the hospital for medical examinations. On the way an explosive device planted under the car exploded, killing Rasha immediately. The journalist's remains were mixed with her fetus, and Mahmoud Al-Otmi was seriously injured and was taken to intensive care.

Less than seven months later, Yemeni journalists and Hodeidah media in particular were surprised by a similar incident targeting one of their voices, journalist Saber Al-Haidari.

Saber Al-Haidari was with his colleagues, after dinner, they parted on Caltex's roundabout in Aden. Al-Haidari left by his cart towards his home, soon after that his colleagues heard a violent explosion.

This explosion was in Kaputa area near 90th Street leading to the residential city of Inma in Aden, where the journalist's car arrived and exploded because of an explosive device, killing him and two passersby, in mid-June 2022.

Reactions:

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate mourned the killing of journalist Rasha Al-Harazi, and condemned the targeting of Rasha and her husband Mahmoud Al-Otmi with an explosive device. It described the targeting as a horrible and unprecedented crime against "unarmed journalists while they were heading to the hospital." The syndicate expressed its fear that the crime is a dangerous indicator of a new and violent era that "targets journalists in Yemen by these cheap and cowardly means, in light of the impunity and accountability of the killers of journalists and their violators." In a statement issued by the Journalists Syndicate after the assassination, November 2021 ,9, the Syndicate called on the security authorities in Aden to quickly investigate the incident, uncover its circumstances, and arrest the perpetrators to receive their deterrent punishment⁸.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) joined the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in condemning the crime. Anthony Belangi, Secretary General of the International Federation, said: "The targeted killing of Rasha Abdullah Al-Harazi and the injury of Mahmoud Amin Al-Otmi is a horrible crime that words cannot describe. The authorities in Yemen must immediately investigate and take concrete steps to end impunity for crimes against journalists and ensure their safety." "We are saddened by the loss of our journalist colleague Rasha Al-Harazi in an attack that seriously injured her husband, journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi, in Aden. Rasha was a trainee with UNESCO in 2019. UNESCO condemns this attack and calls for an end to impunity and support for the safety of journalists⁹."

The reactions that followed the targeting and assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari in mid-June 2022 did not differ, as the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate condemned the assassination of Al-Haidari, and called on the security services in Aden city to "quickly investigate and uncover the circumstances of the crime, announce the results of the investigations and uncover the threads of the crime and the perpetrators who planned and carried out this horrible crime against a journalist who has nothing but the word¹⁰."

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate expressed its strong dissatisfaction with the lack of results of investigations into previous similar crimes, including the crime of targeting Mahmoud Al-Otmi and his wife Rasha Al-Harazi. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor confirmed that the assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari, in the temporary capital of Aden, is an unfortunate result of the failure to hold the perpetrators accountable for previous crimes¹¹.

For his part, the Minister of Information in the recognized government, Muammar Al-Eryani, accused the Houthis, hours after the assassination of journalist Al-Haidari, of being behind the assassination and said that "journalists and reporters of Arab and foreign media have become a target for Houthi militia, and that their systematic targeting aims to spread terror in journalists and prevent them from performing their message from the liberated areas¹²."

Official Procedures

Journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi submitted an official report to the security agencies in Aden city, after the horrible targeting with the explosive device that killed his wife Rasha and her fetus. Although a source in the Security Department of Aden city informed Al-Otmi of the arrest of a number of suspects and that one of the defendants tried to commit suicide, the competent authorities refused to hand over a copy of the case file to the journalist when he requested it¹³.

Our team found a deficiency in the procedures of government agencies in Aden city related to the case of targeting Mahmoud Al-Otmi and Rasha Al-Harazi with an explosive device. According to a security source, this deficiency appeared during the investigation process, in addition to the weakness of follow-up and investigation procedures.


In the assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari, the head of the Yemeni Presidential Command Council, Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, directed an urgent investigation into the "cowardly bombing" that targeted the car of journalist Saber Al-Haidari and his colleagues in Aden, indicating that the bombing "aims to silence the truth, spread disinformation speeches, and the myth on which violent and terrorist groups, led by the Houthi militias supported by the Iranian regime, live on"¹⁴. As he stated.

Despite this strict and explicit order, the agencies authorized to investigate the assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari have not accomplished anything. According to sources close to the journalist's family, they do not have any information about the course of the investigation so far. They expressed their suspicion of bodies and organizations that communicate with the family unofficially. We also monitored that the family who lives in areas controlled by the Houthi group was harassed after the assassination¹⁵.

Hodeidah Voices

They are a group of Yemeni journalists who graduated from the Faculty of Media at Hodeidah University in 2014. They began their journalistic activity in the same year that coincided with the outbreak of war in Yemen, which prompted them to work to confront the Houthi group in the media and monitor human rights violations. From here began the story of their persecution by the Houthi group, some of whom were arrested and some of whom were assassinated.

Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism worked to investigate information in the assassination incidents with the explosive devices that Mahmoud Al -Otami, Rasha Al -Harazi, and Saber Al -Haidari, in Aden Governorate, were exposed to in November 2021, and June 2022. After the stage of collecting statements, testimonies and data, we moved to the stage of building an investigation and using experts to analyze the details to get the truth for which journalists paid their lives.

The image shows the silhouettes of three people standing against a bright, low sun, creating a strong orange and yellow glow. The sun is a large, bright circle in the upper left quadrant. The people are positioned in the lower half of the frame, their forms dark against the bright background. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

The team found that the two incidents of targeting Mahmoud Al-Otmi that killed his wife, journalist Rasha Al-Harazi, and the other that led to the death of journalist Saber Al-Haidari, were an extension of a series of prosecutions, chases and threats against a group of journalists known as the "Hodeidah Group"¹⁶.

The features of targeting media workers in Hodeidah city began after the entry of Houthi militants into the city in 2015, and the group's attempts to attract a number of media workers and influencers from the coastal city in western Yemen to lead public opinion. Mahmoud Al-Otmi received an offer to work in return for a monthly salary.

At that time, Al-Otmi was still studying in the media department at Hodeidah University, and he evaded them in order to finish his study. During the period between 2015 and 2017, Houthis were unable to attract influencers in the governorate, so the journey of pursuit and pursuit began.

Mahmoud Al-Otmi lived with one of his colleagues in a hotel in the city of Hodeidah. Then they moved to an unknown place. Mohammed Al-Salahi, one of Mahmoud's colleagues, who was later detained by Houthis for six years, said: "We were afraid of Houthis. After a while, they arrested two of our colleagues, AA, and AA. We received news that Houthis were looking for us, and for Mahmoud specifically."

Mahmoud left Hodeidah at night in coordination with his colleagues who arranged a secret plan to travel secretly away from Houthi group. Later, gunmen wearing civilian clothes raided the media center founded by Mohammed Al-Salahi, Mahmoud Al-Otmi's colleague. It was found that the Houthi gunmen **were led by the director of the Security and Intelligence Service in Hodeidah, named "Abu Ala'a Al-Omeisy"**. They seized computers, personal phones and blindfolded Mohammed Al-Salahi and his companions then took them to an unknown destination.

Mahmoud Al-Otmi settled in Mokha, west of Taiz, in areas controlled by the recognized government. To escape the persecution of Houthi group, his media colleagues began to move to Mokha successively. During this period Hodeidah Media Group established a news website called "Nawras"; The website was dedicated to publishing the events and violations taking place in Hodeidah city based on field sources. It is clear that the work upset the Houthis because it directs public opinion and draws the attention of the stakeholders in the Yemeni scene to the most important economic resource for the group. Journalists put themselves in in the range of surveillance of the Houthi agencies.

The Houthis were able to find out the field sources that provide Hodeidah media with news, and began to pursue them. The members of the group in Mokha, led by Mahmoud Al-Otmi, received direct threats from intelligence agencies affiliated with the Houthis: **stop the group activity or they will be targeted.**

At this time, Mahmoud Al-Otmi's wife, Rasha Al-Harazi, was still in Sana'a. When Al-Otmi moved to Aden and prepared the apartment where he would settle, Rasha moved to live with her husband in the new apartment. Later, Hodeidah journalists moved from Mokha, west of Taiz, to Aden to resume their work as well.

Rasha was a trainee with UNESCO in 2019, while Mahmoud worked as a collaborator with Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath channels. After some time, he moved on a journalistic mission to the central city of Al-Baidha'a. There, he obtained information indicating the relationship of the extremist Al-Qaeda organization with the Houthi armed group. Mahmoud Al-Otmi's name appeared in this coverage on Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath channels, after that, threats began to increase against Mahmoud and the entire press group representing the voices of Hodeidah city.

No one expected that the threats would reach the level of an explosive targeting, since Mahmoud and Rasha live in areas controlled by the recognized government, and no member of the group expected that cells affiliated with the Houthis could reach Aden,

which is controlled by the recognized government, as confirmed by Nashwan Saeed, a member of the Hodeidah Media Group.

After the killing of journalist Rasha Al-Harazi and the injury of Mahmoud Al-Otmi with an explosive device in November 2022, Hodeidah media workers who live in Aden were suspicious whether the whole group was targeted or not. Who is behind the assassination? Is it the extremist organization Al-Qaeda, want Mahmoud Al-Otmi alone, or are the Houthis targeting the whole group?

Mahmoud Al-Otmi stopped working, due to his injury, in addition to the difficult psychological and mental state he experienced after the loss of his wife Rasha Al-Harazi and his son, who did not see the light.

Hodeidah Media Group in Aden continued its work. However, publishing the facts was disturbing to the Houthis. The Houthis at this time likely understood that the group work was led by another journalist other than Mahmoud, the son of Al-Hodeidah, the media expert, and the quiet journalist Saber Al-Haidari, who worked as a reporter and producer for Japanese television¹⁷.

One of the important works produced by Al-Haidari which disturbed to the Houthis is a report for Japanese television about the deviation of humanitarian aids. in Houthi-controlled areas. Al-Haidari documented those aids went to the battlefronts or to elements affiliated with the Houthi group instead of those who really deserve, in the same time donors suspended some humanitarian aid, so the Houthis thought that donors relied on what journalist Al-Haidari produced.

At that time, Hodeidah media workers were organizing massive electronic campaigns about the violations committed by the Houthis in Hodeidah city, one of which was under the hashtag **"Hodeidah is dying"**.

When an explosive device exploded on journalist Saber Al-Haidari in mid-June 2022, the members of the group realized that they were being targeted, and that the Houthis were behind the explosive message. After that the voice of truth of Hodeidah city disappeared from the Yemeni media.

Results



According to our tracking of the course of events and threats experienced by the members of the Hodeidah city Media Group, Free Media Center team for investigative journalism found that the Houthi group is behind the assassination of journalist Rasha Al-Harazi and the injury of her husband Mahmoud Al-Otmi on November 2021 ,9, and the assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari on June 2022 ,15, with explosive devices.

The team concluded these conclusions:

First: Officials

The team of Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism concluded that the intelligence agencies of Houthis in Hodeidah city were monitoring and tracking the movements of journalists and activists in Hodeidah city. The team noticed that there are at least three intelligence agencies responsible for planning to target Hodeidah media:

- 1 The Security and Intelligence Service in Hodeidah governorate, led by a person called Abu Ala'a Al-Omeisy , at the forefront.
- 2 Military intelligence in Hodeidah, led by Riad Baladi.
- 3 A brigadier general in the Houthi security agency in Hodeidah, Abu Zaid Al-Mu'ayad
- 4 Abu Ammar Al-Qadami¹⁹

Second: Threats and stalking

Free Media Center documented the pursuit of journalists, media workers and activists in Hodeidah city by the Security and Intelligence Service and the kidnapping of a number of them. Also, Houthi leaders working in the intelligence apparatus sent threats to the group that managed to leave Hodeidah, including threats to journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi himself days before he was targeted with an explosive device that if he did not stop his anti-Houthi media activity. In addition, Free Media Center had access to information indicating an attempt to assassinate a member of the Hodeidah media group, eliminating him by poison, and pursuing the sources he communicates with. According to the testimonies of those we interviewed, this journalist currently lives outside the country²⁰.

Third: Arrests and Interrogations

The investigation team documented a separate testimony of the case of targeting Rasha Al-Harazi and Mahmoud Al-Otmi. It was the testimony of journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi, one of those arrested by Houthis in Hodeidah city in 2018. He was released after more than five years. While documenting the case of violation suffered by journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi and the details of what happened to him in Houthi prisons and departments, Al-Salahi confirmed that Houthi investigators asked him more than once about the address of Mahmoud Al-Otmi and the residence of Rasha Al-Harazi. In addition to their search for information and details about some journalists in Hodeidah. After a while, **"Abu Ammar al-Qadami came to me at detention and said I have good news: 'We have reached them, and each one of them will be arrested and eliminated, he added that Rasha will be arrested and we will take off her clothes and you will see actions that you have not seen before.'** Three days later, another interrogator came and asked me about the charity bakery that Rasha was running, who was supporting her, and where does the money she gets under the pretext of doing good go." "I was also tortured by the Security and Intelligence Service led by Abu Ammar Al-Qadmi, and after being tortured, he showed me a picture of colleague Mahmoud Al-Otmi and I. He tried to convince me to communicate with colleagues such as Mahmoud Al-Otmi and Ashraf Al-Mansh, to find out exactly where they live."

After Mohammed Al-Salahi was transferred from Hodeidah to Sana'a, interrogators told him one day: "No one asks about you while your colleagues buy houses and live happily with their families." One day, Al-Qadami said to him, "**We have good news for you about Daeshi Mahmoud and Daeshi Rasha.**" He did not understand the hint, and then it was clear that he meant the news of Rasha's assassination and Mahmoud's injury when an explosive device exploded in their car in Aden. **"The scene was horrible," he says.**

According to journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi's testimony, while he was in detention in Honish prison in Sana'a, there was an Internal Security officer named Moath Al-Ahdal. Al-Salahi mentioned that previously he had known Moath as an officer in Internal Security, and it happened that the officer Moath Al-Ahdal was imprisoned in the same prison with the journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi. The reasons for his arrest: According to what Moath told Al-Salahi, he was arrested by Abu Zaid Al-Mu'ayad because he returned from Aden without permission. Al-Ahdal said he had traveled to Aden City to join the ranks of the internationally recognized Yemeni government and was staying in the Basateen neighborhood of Dar Saad, with a group working to implement the Houthi group's plans in government-controlled areas.

Fourth: Pressure on the journalists' families

The Houthis used the families of Hodeidah media workers as a pressure card to prevent journalists and activists who left the areas of the Houthi group, from publishing facts. There were many hostile patterns used by the Houthis on the journalists' families, including direct pressure, as happened with the family of journalist Mahmoud Al-Otmi, through arresting his brother and detaining him for more than a year to force the journalist to return to them. ²¹

Or indirect hostility, as happened with the family of journalist Saber Al-Haidari. In a statement of Al Haidari family, they held **"all relevant authorities in Sana'a and Aden their responsibilities to ensure the security and safety of each member of the family and to protect their dignity against any excesses or risks to which the family may be exposed. Especially with the harassment of our daughter, the sister of the murdered, journalist Nabiha Al-Haidari, which coincided with the announcement of the date of the martyr's burial."**

The International Federation of Journalists said that since the assassination of Saber Al-Haidari, his sister Nabiha Al-Haidari, who lives in Houthi-controlled areas, has received dozens of insulting and abusive messages. The joint statement with the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate said, "The case of Nabiha Al-Haidari illustrates how women are attacked for being journalists, even when they are grieving. Her courage in the face of this harassment shows her strength in fighting on behalf of thousands of women journalists in the region, who are harassed and subjected to violence in silence." IFJ General Secretary **Anthony Belanger** said: "We condemn such despicable attacks, especially after the loss she suffered. Such harassment against this journalist is deeply shameful. We offer Nabiha Al-Haidari all our support and will stand by her side along with the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in her battle to hold her harassers accountable. We cannot tolerate this situation and impunity for crimes against journalists in Yemen"

Fifth: Suspect

Based on three sources, the official agencies in Aden City have found evidence confirming that the Houthi groups "Ansar Allah" are behind the targeting of Rasha and her husband Mahmoud, but carelessness in dealing with the case has led to the escape of the main suspect from Aden.

According to **Free Media sources**, surveillance cameras showed the presence of a person from Bagil in Hodeidah city, at the place of the explosion.

This person works for one of the leaders of the intelligence services that were pursuing the media workers, and the suspect submitted a request to hand over the corpse of Rasha Al-Harazi, claiming that he is a member of the journalist's family. He also tried to visit Mahmoud Al-Otmi in intensive care but the criminal investigation officer didn't allow him.

The surveillance cameras showed the same person throwing a syringe into a garbage barrel. Those we interviewed thought that he intended to eliminate Mahmoud Al-Otmi, and when the criminal investigation began collecting information and suspected this person, he had already left Aden.

Recommendations:

- **Establish an independent investigative body, involving representatives of victims' and journalists' families, enable the investigative body to operate independently inside the country, and ensure effective investigations into crimes (they faced or still facing) against Yemeni journalists, guaranteeing that perpetrators of violations are brought to justice for accountability and impunity.**
- Bodies and institutions, in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, which are authorized to investigate cases journalists' assassination, should not delay legal procedures or neglect the crimes to which journalists are subjected. What happened in the two incidents of targeting a group of Hodeidah media workers with explosive devices -targeting and wounding Mahmoud Al-Otmi and killing his wife, journalist Rasha Al-Harazi, and her fetus. In addition to the other incident of the assassination of journalist Saber Al-Haidari- this reflected on the situation of the press in general, and the media workers of Hodeidah in particular.. This is in favor of the perpetrators of violations and takes away the rights of the previous victims and others who have been cut off from news due to the cessation of supplying the public with information. Government institutions should share their findings with victims' families and make the results of the investigations public.
- **Provide safety for the families of Yemeni journalists, especially those living in areas controlled by the Houthi group, and not blackmail journalists with their relatives or expose them to any threat, in any way. In addition, all parties must stop violations committed against Yemeni journalists, and take all necessary procedures to protect journalists and media workers in Yemen and stop violations against them.**
- The international community should pressure stakeholders in Yemen to fulfill their obligations under international and humanitarian law and local laws that guarantee freedom of opinion and expression and to oversee effective investigations in accordance with international standards into crimes and attacks against Yemeni journalists.