



Statement on Transitional Justice as a Foundation for Lasting Peace in Yemen

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yemen enters its eleventh year under a devastating war that has left deep scars on its people, society, and state. It is a war that has not only claimed lives and displaced millions but has also witnessed grave and systematic violations that, in many aspects, amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity—flagrant breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Human rights organizations have documented thousands of cases of killings, torture, enforced disappearance, sexual violence, indiscriminate shelling, and child recruitment, building over the years an extensive database that today stands as one of the most important legal and knowledge assets for Yemenis in their pursuit of justice.

Despite this bleak reality, Yemeni civil society, supported by international partners, has played a vital role in documenting crimes and advocating for victims. Organizations have produced dozens of human rights reports and implemented multiple projects funded by donors, most notably the DT Institute, which has significantly contributed to building the capacities of these organizations and enabling them to become credible human rights actors that amplify victims' voices at international forums.

But today, a critical question arises: Where do we go with all these documentation efforts? Should they remain confined to reports and archives, or can they become a bridge toward accountability and justice, and an entry point for healing Yemen's deep societal fractures?

At **SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties**, in partnership with the **Mothers of Abductees Association**, we have launched the **SPARK project** to declare that the time has come to move from documentation toward building a comprehensive pathway for transitional justice. This project is rooted in the establishment of the **Justice for Yemen Pact**, which brings together Yemeni human rights organizations working collectively to adopt transitional justice as a prerequisite for any just peace.

We have already begun opening broad community dialogues that bring together victims, civil society organizations, and political actors to explore their visions and priorities. As part of this process, we published an in-depth study entitled "*The Road to Peace*" and established a **Reconciliation Committee** with clear internal regulations and a structured plan, aiming to address many open wounds through a restorative justice approach.

Alongside this, we established the **Justice Forum**, which provides space for deep dialogue on the structural roots and drivers of the war in an attempt to develop a shared vision that guarantees



non-recurrence of cycles of violence and violations. Despite the security and financial challenges we face, and the urgent need for further capacity building, these initiatives have received encouraging community engagement, reflecting Yemenis' strong thirst for justice.

Our work is not limited to the present. We attach great importance to the concept of **collective memory** as a tool of justice and a guarantee of non-recurrence. In the city of Taiz, which endured a brutal siege, we are working to establish a “*Memory Museum*” to document and commemorate the suffering of the siege through visual art, photography, and archival material, in partnership with local authorities and artists. Memory is not merely a recollection of the past—it is a condition for building a future where tragedies do not repeat.

Looking ahead, we plan to conduct comparative studies of international experiences, such as those of Chile and Rwanda, to draw lessons for the Yemeni context. This will pave the way toward a uniquely Yemeni approach to transitional justice that is informed by global lessons but remains rooted in local realities.

Recommendations for Supporting Transitional Justice in Yemen:

1. **Integrating transitional justice into the UN agenda on Yemen** by affirming that it is an integral part of any political settlement—not a secondary issue. This requires the UN Envoy and states engaged in the Yemen file to include it as a standing item in the negotiation process.
2. **Providing technical and capacity-building support to Yemeni human rights organizations** working on transitional justice and related files, with a focus on strengthening capacities in documentation, reparations, and transitional justice program design. This also includes transferring international expertise (from South Africa, Chile, Morocco) and adapting it to the Yemeni context.
3. **Enhancing protection for human rights defenders**, particularly those working on sensitive transitional justice issues such as enforced disappearance and sexual violence. This entails urgent protection mechanisms, advocacy when violations occur, and issuing official statements and appeals in cases of threats or arrests.
4. **Supporting memory and evidence-preservation initiatives**, including the creation of a national archive, memory museums, or other projects documenting violations as part of ensuring non-recurrence, as well as providing technical assistance to preserve evidence in line with international court standards.
5. **Ensuring the participation of victims and marginalized groups** in shaping policies and mechanisms related to transitional justice, with particular attention to women, children, and persons with disabilities. A priority is the establishment of a **national reparations fund** with international support.

In Conclusion:



Transitional justice in Yemen cannot succeed unless it rests on three pillars:

- Victims at the center,
- Civil society as a partner,
- The United Nations as guarantor and supporter.