

Summary of the Working Papers Presented at the Workshop on the Protection of Children's Rights (Challenges and Future Solutions Roadmap)

17–18 December 2025 | Aden

Paper 1: Children's Rights in National Legislation: Barriers and Alignment with International Standards

Prepared by: Judge Ingrid Abdullah, Head of the Juvenile Court, Aden

I. Analytical Framework

The paper assessed Yemen's national legislative framework—namely the Constitution, the Child Rights Law No. 45 of 2002, the Juvenile Welfare Law, and the Crimes and Penalties Law—and examined the extent to which these instruments respond to the international obligations arising from Yemen's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991. It emphasized that, while Yemeni legislation grants children special protection, urgent updating is required to respond to current risks and the realities of armed conflict.

II. Legal Gaps and Legislative Constraints

The paper identified several key gaps that hinder full protection, most notably:

1. Inconsistent definition of "child": a contradiction between the Juvenile Law (which sets the age of a "juvenile" at 15) and the Child Rights Law and international standards (which recognize childhood up to 18), affecting criminal responsibility and the type of protection provided.
2. Shortcomings in criminal legislation: the need to review the Crimes and Penalties Law with regard to children aged 15–18 to ensure they are treated under protective and rehabilitative measures rather than severe punitive sanctions.
3. Limited legislative awareness: insufficient understanding among some executive authorities of the substantive distinctions between the concepts of "child" and "juvenile."
4. Civil registration challenges: obstacles in birth registration that undermine proof of legal age before courts.

III. Institutional and Resource Constraints

The paper highlighted institutional and material challenges facing judicial and justice institutions, including:

- Limited financial resources for juvenile care institutions and inadequate technical standards.
- Insufficient specialized institutions to protect highly vulnerable groups (street children and child beggars).
- Weak coordination and cooperation between relevant ministries (Justice, Interior, Social Affairs) and non-governmental actors.

IV. Solutions Roadmap and Reform Options (Practical Proposals)

The paper proposed implementable reforms, including:

- Legislative amendments: revising the Child Rights Law and the Juvenile Welfare Law to unify the definition of a child in line with international standards (18 years) and ensure age-appropriate safeguards in criminal justice.
- Best interests of the child: establishing this principle as the primary reference for all judicial and administrative decisions.
- Psychosocial support: providing tailored protection for children affected by armed conflict and ensuring accountability for perpetrators.
- Capacity building: expanding community awareness and legal training for justice and security personnel.
- Institutional reform: allocating adequate resources to strengthen care institutions and activating the National Committee for Children's Rights as a high-level coordination body.

Paper 2: Activating the Role of Judicial and Justice Institutions (Prosecution, Courts, and Juvenile Justice)

Prepared by: Dr. Salwa bin Brik, Director General, Department of Women's and Children's Rights, Ministry of Justice

The paper focused on the concept of the “justice chain of procedures,” explaining that child protection begins at the moment of arrest and initial investigation and continues through trial and judgment. It noted a positive shift from limiting juvenile care institutions to a few governorates (Aden and Taiz) toward expansion through the establishment of new facilities in Hadramout and Lahj, with an aspiration to scale this model nationwide to ensure that no child is detained outside the specialized legal framework.

II. Logistical and Procedural Challenges (Field Diagnosis)

The paper highlighted challenges undermining the efficiency of juvenile justice, including:

5. Logistical gaps in emerging governorates: the continued presence of children in detention facilities or “military camps” (as previously in Abyan and Lahj) instead of specialized care institutions, posing risks to children's rights and safety.
6. Centralized procedures and slow litigation: reliance on manual, paper-based processes leading to case backlogs and prolonged detention pending judgments.
7. Weak supporting personnel: the need to strengthen the capacity of judicial police and technical experts in handling children's psychological and legal needs.
8. Independence and coordination challenges: the need to reinforce separation of powers and strengthen coordination between the Ministry of Justice and security authorities to expedite the transfer of juveniles to competent institutions.

III. Practical Solutions and Immediate-Impact Reform Roadmap

The paper proposed measures prioritizing quick gains, including:

- Digital reform (automation): full digital transformation of prosecution offices and courts to reduce delays, enable accurate case tracking, and prevent administrative errors.
- Immediate institutional expansion: establishing specialized juvenile prosecution offices and courts in all governorates and activating care institutions to ensure a detention environment that safeguards children's dignity.
- Strengthening the judicial police role: training specialized personnel for juvenile cases to support evidence collection and investigations in line with human rights standards.
- Oversight and transparency mechanisms: engaging civil society in assessing judicial performance through complaint platforms and digital surveys.

- Success stories as practical models: building on experiences of transferring children from camps to juvenile centers and following up on detained girls; such interventions should be institutionalized and replicated.

IV. Concluding Recommendation

The paper concluded that the solution lies in structural and procedural reform that ensures judicial independence and specialized child-sensitive justice, alongside the systematic use of data and analysis to inform evidence-based decisions.

Paper 3: The Role of the Government Technical Quadripartite Committee for Preventing Child Recruitment (Achievements and Challenges)

Prepared by: Mr. Nabil Majed, Deputy Minister of Human Rights for Partnerships and International Cooperation

I. General Context and International Commitments

The paper underscored the Ministry's commitment to documenting violations against children in Yemen through periodic reports submitted to international fora. It explained that the "Prevention of Child Recruitment" project, which stalled in 2014, was revived in December 2018 and further developed into a national vision to address recruitment and related violations.

II. Institutional and Operational Mechanisms (Quadripartite Committee)

The paper outlined the government's operational structure, including:

- An executive quadripartite committee comprising the Ministries of Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Defense, Interior, and Social Affairs and Labor to ensure integrated roles.
- A network of 80 field focal points across military camps in liberated governorates to support monitoring and compliance.
- Child protection units established in coordination with the Ministry of Interior to remove children from detention centers or camps and transfer them to civilian entities away from conflict dynamics.
- Capacity building and partnership: intensive training for focal points and engagement of civil society organizations as oversight and awareness partners.

III. Strategic Achievements

Key achievements highlighted included:

- Diplomatic achievement: a UN Secretary-General decision to remove the Yemeni government from the "List of Shame" for child recruitment, with efforts underway to extend these results to all forces aligned with the internationally recognized government.
- Sustained awareness campaign: awareness programs through schools and media outlets continuing through 2026 to strengthen a child protection culture.

IV. Current Challenges and Risks (Recruitment by the Other Party)

The paper reported alarming indicators regarding recruitment by the Houthi militia, including:

- A decade of recruitment: Ministry estimates indicate approximately 30,000 children recruited into military activities over the past ten years.
- Recent summer centers: exploitation of school holidays to mobilize around 700,000 children in recent summer camps for indoctrination and military incitement, posing a serious threat to Yemen's future generations.

Paper 4: Violations of Children's Rights in Education and Protection Measures

Prepared by: Dr. Dina Awadh Sadaqah, Deputy Minister of Education for Girls' Education

I. Status of Educational Facilities During the Conflict

The paper reviewed severe damage to the education sector due to direct and indirect attacks and presented statistics reflecting the scale of the challenge:

- Total schools: 5,745 schools under the internationally recognized government, of which 5,457 are operational.
- Closed schools: 288 schools currently closed; 267 permanently closed due to conflict or conversion into military sites, while 21 are under reconstruction.
- Field impact: increased dropout rates—especially among girls—and deterioration of school furniture and equipment.

II. Qualitative Violations (Curriculum Manipulation and Ideological Distortion)

The paper warned of a dangerous violation beyond physical destruction: curriculum manipulation in areas under the control of de facto authorities, noting:

9. Sectarian coloring of curricula: transforming schools into tools for reshaping children's awareness and indoctrinating them with ideas encouraging war and death rather than reflection and coexistence.
10. Erosion of human values: removing concepts of creative thinking, aesthetics, art, and music, and replacing them with discourse that incites violence.
11. Recruitment through education: using the education system as a gateway to recruit children and shape future fighters by instilling distorted awareness.

III. Practical Solutions and Proposals to Mitigate Violations

The paper proposed a roadmap to protect children's right to safe and sound education, including:

- Technical curriculum review: specialists should review and develop curricula to meet children's psychological and skills needs, insulated from conflict dynamics.
- Safeguarding education from politicization: stopping ideological interference and shielding curricula from sectarian, ideological, and regional polarization.
- Institutional coordination: strengthening coordination between the Ministries of Education and Awqaf (Religious Endowments) to harmonize educational messaging in mosques, with emphasis on girls' education in rural areas.
- Improving the school environment: integrating extracurricular and practical activities to make schools attractive and foster balanced child development.
- Sustainable reconstruction: continuing cooperation with international partners to rehabilitate damaged schools and vacate those used as targets or military sites.

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Paper 5: Government Efforts to Reduce Violations Against Children, Prevent Recruitment, and Implement the Roadmap and the “Six Points”

Prepared by: Brigadier Staff Ali Mohammed Salem, Representative of the Ministry of Defense in the Joint Technical Committee

I. Legal and Regulatory Framework for Government Commitment

The paper traced the legal and institutional trajectory of the Ministry of Defense’s efforts—from endorsing the Paris Principles in 2012 to Presidential Decree No. (12) of 2020, which issued strict military directives prohibiting the recruitment of children under 18 and established a Child Protection Unit within the armed forces and security services.

II. Implementation of the “Six Points” and Field Deployments (Phase One Results)

The paper presented quantitative and field results of joint technical teams’ work during 2022, including:

12. Field verification and monitoring: extensive missions across military regions (1st–5th) through six teams, implementing more than 474 field activities (visits, inspections of camps, checkpoints, and detention sites).
13. Institutionalizing military directives: delivery of 98 official documents and military orders to senior leadership and distribution of 150 guidance files to second- and third-line commanders to ensure dissemination at all command levels.
14. Direct awareness sessions: delivery of 56 lectures during military formations focusing on risks of recruitment and the legal and criminal consequences for violators.
15. Focal points: appointment and training of over 80 officers as focal points across formations (including Security Belt forces, Giants Brigades, and the National Resistance) to ensure compliance.

III. Protection Mechanisms and Preventive Measures

The paper highlighted operational measures, including:

- Child handover protocol: procedures for handling children apprehended during operations (recruited by the other party) and ensuring transfer to civilian authorities (Ministry of Social Affairs) in line with international standards.
- Reporting and complaints system: establishment of a free hotline (8000699) to receive reports on recruitment cases while protecting informants.
- Safe Schools commitment: full military commitment to vacating educational facilities and ensuring they are not used for military purposes.

IV. International Recognition of Progress

- 2022: removal of the Yemeni government from the UN Secretary-General’s list related to the six grave violations (“List of Shame”).

- 2025: removal of the Security Belt forces from the list following engagement in the government mechanism and the appointment of focal points and a Child Protection Unit.

V. Remaining Challenges and Upcoming Targets

- Institutionalizing child rights training within military academy curricula.
- Completing the activation of the Child Protection Unit across all military axes and security units.
- Securing operational budgets to sustain the complaints system and periodic field monitoring.

Paper 6: The Six Grave Violations Against Children and Access to Justice

Prepared by: Judge Omran Jazem, Judge and Legal Researcher

The paper consisted of two components:

- Part I: Definition of the six grave violations.
- Part II: Judicial mechanisms to achieve justice for Yemeni children affected by the six grave violations.

Key points included:

- Defining the six grave violations under international law and Yemeni legislation as acts contrary to international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law.
- Characterizing the six grave violations against children during armed conflict as war crimes; noting that the Yemen conflict (since 2015) constitutes a non-international armed conflict involving organized armed groups with unified command and control over parts of the State's territory.
- Noting that Yemeni law criminalizes the six grave violations against children, particularly under the Military Crimes and Penalties Law and the Child Rights Law, while the Child Rights Law does not specify penalties.
- Clarifying that the Military Crimes and Penalties Law criminalizes these violations (notably Articles 20–21), defines categories of persons subject to the law, and assigns investigative jurisdiction to the military judiciary.
- Referring to international jurisdictional pathways for prosecuting perpetrators, and the conditions governing the Yemeni military judiciary's jurisdiction and the categories of persons subject to it.
- Concluding that the prevailing problem is the lack of effective activation of legal procedures against perpetrators of the six grave violations.
- Recommending that the Yemeni government, the Office of the Prosecutor General, the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Human Rights Violations, and civil society organizations provide legal support to child victims and submit complaints on the six grave violations before the military judiciary.

Paper 7: Violations Against Marginalized and Displaced Children

Prepared by: Salim Al-Aghbari, Programs Director, Insaf Organization for Rights and Development

- The paper introduced its background and key problem statement, focusing on marginalized and vulnerable groups (marginalized communities and displaced persons in Yemen) and aiming to move from documentation to concrete response and action.
- It examined root causes of violations, analyzed shortcomings in policies, legislation, and existing responses, and opened an in-depth discussion on realistic and actionable intervention alternatives at institutional, legal, and community levels.

From the author's perspective, the central issue is the clear gap between the scale and gravity of grave violations affecting marginalized and displaced children and the weakness of effective response across institutional, legal, and community dimensions. Despite increased documented cases and the existence of legal provisions criminalizing most violations, the most vulnerable children still lack real protection and continue to face risks without effective redress or accountability.

The paper noted that these children suffer compound violations and patterns of abuse linked to discrimination—including the six grave violations—while the gap between legal provisions and practical implementation remains wide.

It emphasized structural vulnerability, social discrimination, and institutional exclusion. Such fragility affects access to education, and perpetrators of violations against these groups often do not face the same consequences as they would if victims belonged to other social categories. In addition, racist discourse contributes to increased violations; the situation faced by marginalized and displaced children is, fundamentally, a social problem. Host communities may view displaced families as outsiders, further weakening community-based protection.

The paper concluded:

16. Continued grave violations against marginalized and displaced children, without addressing root causes, threatens deep and cumulative consequences extending beyond direct victims to society at large and the future of stability and social peace. Harm is not measured only by immediate physical injury but by long-term psychosocial effects that reproduce cycles of violence and vulnerability.
17. These violations contribute to social fragmentation and deepen stigma and marginalization, especially among groups already excluded. Persistent violence without accountability entrenches injustice and erodes trust in justice systems, weakening social cohesion and fueling revenge and violence. It also makes it harder for affected children to reintegrate into education and work later, deepening poverty and intergenerational vulnerability.
18. The complexity of grave violations affecting marginalized and displaced children, and their intertwined structural causes, requires moving beyond partial or temporary approaches toward integrated, sustainable interventions. No single legal, security, or humanitarian pathway can ensure

effective protection alone unless embedded within a multi-level framework combining institutional reform, legal accountability, community prevention, and socioeconomic empowerment.

Paper 8: Transitional Justice and Violations of Children's Rights (Truth, Reparations, and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence)

Prepared by: Judge Mohammed Al-Hattar, Judge and Researcher in Transitional Justice and Human Rights

- This paper summarized the study “Transitional Justice and Violations of Children’s Rights in Yemen,” completed in October 2025 under the project “Enhancing Awareness and Ensuring Children’s Rights During Conflict – Phase II (SAFE II),” implemented by DT Institute in partnership with the Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV).
- The study used a multi-tool methodology, including analysis of national and international legislation, review of National Dialogue Conference outcomes, and examination of local and international reports, alongside lessons from comparative experiences integrating children’s rights into transitional justice. It also included field surveys of victims, families, experts, civil society organizations, and political actors, enabling a comprehensive picture of childhood under conflict.

Key findings included:

- A wide gap between legal and international commitments and actual protection practices, and institutional shortcomings; most respondents observed the absence of genuine commitment to implementing CRC provisions.
- Violations against children have gone beyond individual incidents to constitute a systematic pattern of grave crimes, requiring child-sensitive transitional justice mechanisms that account for continued conflict, multiple power centers, weak political will, institutional collapse, and deep polarization.
- Impacts are multi-dimensional across the short and long term. Psychosocial impacts rank first, followed by physical and social impacts; long-term effects include chronic psychosocial difficulties, lost opportunities for education and work, potential re-engagement in violence or re-recruitment, and erosion of trust within families and communities.
- The study emphasized the importance of including children as key actors—not merely victims—drawing on international experiences showing that participation in hearings, truth-telling, memory preservation, reconciliation, and reparations helps address legacy harms and strengthen sustainable peace.
- It highlighted the need for a comprehensive national pathway balancing accountability and reconciliation, rebuilding trust through recognition, apology, non-recurrence commitments, and reparations, without undermining prosecution in grave crimes.
- It stressed integrating children’s issues into any peace process or national transitional justice framework; establishing specialized truth commissions to document violations against children; designing comprehensive reparations and rehabilitation programs (psychosocial, educational, and health); and ensuring meaningful participation of children and families in shaping solutions and

policies—alongside legal and institutional reform and mobilizing local and international civil society to promote a culture supportive of children’s rights and social reconciliation.

The study concluded with recommendations directed at government decision-makers, the international community, conflict parties, political actors, and civil society.

Paper 8 (as numbered in the source): The Role of Local Civil Society Organizations in Providing Psychosocial Support and Reintegration for Child Victims and Survivors

Prepared by: Dr. Rania Khaled, Child Psychosocial Support Consultant

The paper addressed the following themes:

- An overview of psychosocial support for children.
- The importance of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and their contributions to protection, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and reintegration of child victims and survivors.

It highlighted key challenges facing these organizations, including:

19. Limited capacity and financial sustainability.
20. Scarcity of specialized staff.
21. Social stigma and weak cross-sector coordination.

It also presented opportunities and recommendations, including:

22. Establishing protection and rehabilitation centers in cities and camps.
23. Mainstreaming psychosocial support within education and health services.
24. Building a national network of specialists.
25. Training caregivers on home-based psychosocial care.
26. Improving referral mechanisms between local institutions.
27. Providing long-term follow-up programs for the most affected children.

Paper 9: The Role of International Organizations and UN Agencies in Activating Referral Mechanisms and Community-Based Protection (UNICEF Experience)

Prepared by: Mr. William Coley, Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF

The paper explained that UNICEF's programming is anchored in government-led plans and strategies, as the State is best positioned to identify needs and priorities. Accordingly, UNICEF agreements and programs are designed to respond to these needs, in coordination with leadership and through strengthened cluster coordination. The paper reaffirmed that Yemeni children continue to face the six grave violations.

It noted key challenges, including fragmented governance, limited awareness, and the impact of conflict on infrastructure. It recommended establishing a government-led system to guide service delivery—such as the strategic child protection plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

In addition, a contribution by Save the Children (presented by Mr. Hassan) reviewed key services provided to children affected by war and conflict.

Paper 10: International Advocacy and the Role of UN Mechanisms—In Partnership with Yemeni Civil Society—in Protecting Children in Yemen

Prepared by: Judge Ishraq Al-Maqtari, Member of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Human Rights Violations

The paper presented an overview of the situation faced by children in Yemen and the international treaties protecting children from the six grave violations. It introduced the concept and objectives of child rights advocacy, highlighted key international mechanisms relevant to Yemen, and outlined how these mechanisms can be activated.

It outlined the role of local civil society organizations through child rights advocacy, including:

- Monitoring implementation of international mechanisms ratified by the State.
- Supporting child victims and survivors and facilitating access to services.
- Defending children's rights and conducting awareness-raising and civic education.
- Building capacities of law enforcement bodies and relevant institutions dealing with child victims.
- Supporting the government in developing laws and policies that protect children.
- Submitting complaints and reports and contributing to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).
- Using Special Procedures and strengthening the capacities of non-governmental organizations.