



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda items 2 and 5

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Human rights bodies and mechanisms**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-11590(E)



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## **Acts of Intimidation and Persecution against Human Rights defenders in Yemen**

### **Preamble**

Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights is deeply concerned about the widespread of reprisal acts, persecution, and intimidation carried out by Houthi Militia against those cooperating with mandate holders and experts, within the framework of special procedures, and United Nations (UN) mandated commissions of inquiry, in addition to the repeated threats against the United Nations Special Procedures.

Since Houthi Militia's coup against the legitimate government in 2014, reprisal acts and intimidation have increased and worsened, as individuals working in Yemen face acts of intimidation and revenge by de facto authorities due to their cooperation with UN mechanisms or for doing work assigned thereto, such as providing information and issuing reports that document the militia's violations. Such violations take several forms, starting from travel ban, threats and harassment, moving to defamation campaigns and stalking, and culminated by physical assault, arrest, arbitrary detention, torturing and mistreatment, including sexual violence and denying access to medical care.

Maat stresses that the continuity of such acts contributes to undermining the peace process in Yemen, which is recommended by the international community and the United Nations, in addition to shrinking the civic before defenders and advocates in Yemen.

Reprisal acts are defined by the Human Rights Council in resolutions no. 12/2, 24/24, and 36/21 as "Acts of intimidation and or retaliation against: (a) Those who sought cooperation or have already cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives and human rights mechanisms; or those who provided a testimony or information to any of the aforementioned. (b) Those who benefit or have already benefited from the procedures established under the supervision of the United Nations to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, along with all who provided them with legal aid or any other type of assistance in this regard. (c) Those who help or have already helped with communication under the procedures stipulated in Human Rights Instruments, along with all who provided them with legal aid or any other type of assistance in this regard. (d) Relatives of victims of human rights violations or those who provided victims with legal aid or any other type of assistance.

### **Intimidating Human Rights Advocates**

Houthi militia intimidate human rights defenders by imposing considerable limitations to stop documenting violations done by the militia. These limitations include, but not limited to, arbitrarily arresting human rights defenders over no real charges. For example, on the 4th of March, 2020, Marwan Al Qasimi, the human rights defender was arbitrarily arrested by Houthi militia National Security Service in Sana'a, and forcibly disappeared. At the beginning of August, 2020, he was released while suspecting that his release was thanks to the attorney's defense in Yemen.

By the end of January, 2019, human rights advocates have reported the arrest of Awfa al-Naami, a humanitarian worker in Sanaa. Al-Naami, the country manager of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland-based Safe World organization, was arrested after she was summoned by the Houthi-run national security. She has not been heard from since. Meanwhile, unidentified men also stormed the group's office, confiscating documents and computers, and sealed it. Now, in spite of their release, the mentioned human rights defenders are still imprisoned for days with no serious accusations.

On the 11th of April, 2011, the Specialized Criminal Court relevant to the de facto authorities in Sana'a handed down a death sentence to 4 journalists: Abdel Khalek Omran, Akram Al Walidy, Hareth Hamid, Tawfik Al Mansoury, for publishing news, rumors, and propaganda

against the de facto authorities, jeopardizing the state's interests.<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning that the 4 journalists were arrested on the 9th of June, 2015 while working in Dreams Tourist Hotel in Sana'a. They had spent 5 years in prison, suffering all kinds of ill-treatment and violations, such as torture, mistreatment, denial of family visits, denial of communicating with their lawyer, and according to the victims' families, they were sentenced to death without allowing their lawyer, Abdel Magid Sabra, to attend the trial.<sup>2</sup>

## Recommendations

- Pressuring Houthi militia to stop its acts of terrorism and revenge against the human rights defenders either for cooperating with UN mechanisms or with UN missions in Yemen.
- Pressuring Houthi militia to allow the return of the UNHCR representative in Yemen, as yielding to the de facto authorities' desires means more intransigence against UN bodies and practicing defamation and threatening the UN representatives.
- The United Nation urgently exerts pressure on the de facto authorities in Yemen so that the technical team could carry out the needed repairs for Safer Oil Tanker, as not assessing risks after the seawater intrusion to the engine room may cause a potential environmental disaster that increases the Yemenis' suffering.
- Stopping asking for, pursuing, or arbitrarily arresting human rights advocates for long periods with no serious accusations.
- Over-ruling the death sentence given to the 4 journalists on the 11th of last April, as it represents a vivid disregard to the International Human Rights Law and undeniable limitation to the freedom of human rights defenders and lawyers.

<sup>1</sup> لا بد من تدخل عاجل لحماية أربعة صحفيين يمنيين حكمت جماعة أنصار الله الحوثيين بإعدامهم، مركز القاهرة: منظمات حقوقية  
، للمزيد على الرابط التالي 2020 مايو 25 لحقوق الإنسان، <https://tinyurl.com/y2k45mz9>،

<sup>2</sup> أغسطس 10 المحكمة التي أصدر حكمها ضد الصحفيين غير حيادية وقررت إعدامهم في مكان عام، الخبر بوست، محامي  
، للمزيد على الرابط التالي 2020، <https://tinyurl.com/y5rb6k29>.