



THE REPORT OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION IN YEMEN

First Quarter of 2023
(January, February and March)

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against Freedom of Speech and Expression
IN YEMEN

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Media Freedom Observatory - Yemen



This report was prepared by the Media Freedom Observatory in Yemen. It is a platform affiliated with the Studies and Economic Media Center. The Observatory is devoted to monitoring and documenting cases of violations against the freedom of press and expression in Yemen.

With the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Yemen, this report was completed, and the said information solely belongs to the Media Freedom Observatory, and by no means expresses in any way the position of the European Union, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Yemen, or the Dutch Foreign Ministry.

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Violations Cases Against Media in Yemen

The first quarter of 2023

Violations
Against
Media

16

1

Against media organizations



broken into

15

3



trial and
summon
journalists

3



Detention

4



deprived of rights

2



Threats

2



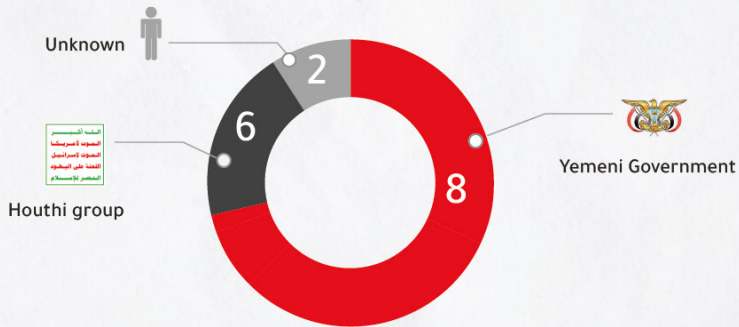
Attacks

4



Arrests

Violations Responsibilities



Violations Areas



Report Methodology

The data and information in this report were collected by a professional team of observers, who are positioned in various Yemeni regions.

In collecting data, the observers relied on different methods, including direct contact with the victims, testimonies of their relatives, media or the reports submitted by the victims or their relatives to MARSADAK. The MARSADAK team reviewed and verified all the observed data and information through a verification mechanism that included at least 3 different sources.

The data and information contained in this report do not mean that all violations against journalists and social media activists in Yemen have been recorded. There are cases of violations that victims or their families were hesitant to report to avoid serious risks and consequences that may be instigated by the violators.

We would also like to point out that for the sake of brevity, we will not cite all the stories of violations, as the report will only present the most prominent stories of violations suffered by journalists in Yemen.

Executive Summary

According to a report on media violations in Yemen during the first quarter of 2023, there were 16 cases of violations against journalists, including the arrest of a journalist in Sana'a due to his work, the burning of a car belonging to journalist Saly Al-Mekhlafi's husband, and the continued trial of three journalists in Hadramout and Aden for publication issues.

It is concerning that all trials against journalists are taking place in non-specialized courts for press and publication issues, but rather in courts specialized in terrorism and state security issues, such as the case of journalist Ahmed Maher and the trial of other journalists in Hadramout before the Public Funds Prosecution. All of these practices aim to intimidate journalists and silence them from continuing their journalistic work freely and professionally.

The Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate headquarters in Aden has not been spared from abusive practices against journalists and media institutions. In just five months, armed men, for the second time, in Aden stormed the union's headquarters, removed the union's sign, and imposed an armed siege on the building.

The violations were reported in 5 governorates: Sana'a, Hadramout, Marib, Taiz, and Aden. On the top list of perpetrators against media people and activists is the internationally recognized Yemeni government with nine violations out of the total 16 recorded cases. Although the territories under The Houthi group are free of independent or opposition journalism, the armed group came second with six incidents.

It is worth noting that not all violations have been reported, for victims may fear reporting so as not to face dangerous consequences from perpetrators.

Types of Violations

According to a report of the first quarter of 2023, there were 16 cases of violations against in Yemen. Out of these, 15 were violations against individuals such as journalists and social media activists. It stands for 93% of the violations. On the other hand, one violation was committed against the journalists' syndicate whose headquarters was raided in Aden, which represents 7%.

The violations included one arrest, two cases of detention, four cases of assault, one case of threat, four cases of depriving journalists of their rights and allowing their families to visit them, as well as the interrogation and trial of three journalists in non-specialized courts.

The Observatory registered also the incident of storming into the Headquarters of the Yemeni Media Syndicate in Aden. The building was besieged, and its sign was removed.

Geographical Distribution of Violations

According to a report, different regions in Yemen witnessed several violations against the media. The report documented six cases of violations in Sana'a, three cases in Hadramout, three cases in Marib, two cases in Taiz, and two cases in Aden.

Liability for Violations

With eight incidents out of the total cases that were reported during the first quarter of the current year, the Yemeni government topped the list of perpetrators against journalists. In addition, Ansar Allah-affiliated rebels, was the culprits of six violations, and two cases by unidentified people.

Detention

No	Journalist	Violation type	Violation date	Governorate
1	Tareq Basloom	Detention	29/1/2023	Hadramout
2	Khalil Al-Tawail	Detention	11/2/2023	Marib



Tareq Omar Basloom

- **Type of violation:** detention
- **Place of violation:** Hadramout
- **Date of violation:** 29 January 2023
- **Perpetrator:** Yemeni government

Journalist Tareq Omar Basloom was detained in the security prison in Al-Mukalla, the capital of Hadramout Governorate, after being summoned by the Public Funds Prosecution following a complaint filed against him by the Public Works and Roads Office in the Hadramout Coast due to his writings and criticisms of the office's work and projects. Basloom was shocked to find himself detained along with a group of young people upon his arrival at the prosecution's office. The prosecutor's deputy refused to release him despite being previously released on bail in the same case. After more than five hours of detention and the intervention of the prosecutor's chief, he was allowed to go freely. The Public Works Office had lodged a case against Basloom in the Public Funds Prosecution on December 11, 2022, and he was investigated by the prosecution for the same case and released on commercial bail. The security authorities in Hadramout must take responsibility for what journalists are subjected to and work to create a suitable environment for press freedom in the governorate.



Khalil Al-Tawail

- **Belqees Satellite Channel-Marib**
- **Type of violation:** detention
- **Date of violation:** 29 January 2023
- **Perpetrator:** Yemeni government

Journalist Khalil Al-Tawail, a Belqees TV Channel correspondent in Marib, was detained by security authorities while covering an arts event in front of the Belqees Hotel in Marib on February 10, 2023, and was released hours later.

Al-Tawail confirmed that he was detained while covering an arts event in front of the Belqees Hotel in Marib on the twelfth anniversary of the 11th February Revolution, but he was taken aback to find security forces detaining him along with a group of young people. The security forces also assaulted other citizens who were attending the event.

This attack on the Belqees TV correspondent is not the first of its kind, as Al Tawail has endured numerous attacks while working as a journalist. The security authorities in the governorate must take responsibility for what journalists go through and work to foster an atmosphere that promotes press freedom.

Violations

No	Journalist	Violation type	Violation date	Governorate
1	Khalil Al Tawail	Attack	12/1/2023	Marib
2	Omar Al Sarori	Attack	12/1/2023	Marib
3	Tawfiq Al Mansori	Attack	19/2/2023	Sana'a
4	Sali Al Mekhlafi	Attack	14/3/2023	Taiz



Saly Al Mekhlafi

- **Yemen Shabab Satellite Channel-Taiz**
- **Type of violation:** attack on the property
- **Date of violation:** 14 March 2023
- **Perpetrator:** unidentified individuals

Unknown individuals set fire to the car of journalist Saly Al-Mekhlafi's husband. She provides various reports on the lives and rights of rural people on the Yemen Shabab TV channel.

Al-Mekhlafi confirmed that unknown individuals burned her husband's car after midnight and fled the scene. Despite filing a complaint with the security authority, the perpetrators are still at large.

She also stated that she had been threatened after moving with her husband to the Habashi Mount area to work and cover the lives and rights of rural people. Her work is broadcast in reports on the morning program "Sabahkom Ajmal" on Yemen Shabab TV.

The techniques employed by criminals against journalists, their families, and property are horrifying. The security authorities are responsible for protecting journalists, apprehending the offenders, and bringing them to justice. If successful, the security authorities will be able to deter such attacks and protect the lives of journalists and their families.



Tawfiq Al-Mansouri

- **Place of violation:** Sana'a
- **Type of violation:** attack
- **Date of violation:** 19 March 2023
- **Perpetrator:** Houthi group

The Media Freedoms Observatory received a report from the family of journalist Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, who had been detained in Houthi prisons for eight years. The family stated that Tawfiq was assaulted and beaten inside the Central Security Prison in Sana'a.

Tawfiq's health deteriorated significantly since his arrest due to chronic diseases, including diabetes, kidney failure, and heart problems.

On June 9, 2015, while carrying out their journalistic duties, Tawfiq Al-Mansouri and eight other journalists were unjustly and illegally detained. He experienced numerous sorts of abuse while being detained, and visitors were forbidden. During his trial, the Houthi group did not comply with local and international laws, since and other journalists were tried in non-specialized courts in press and publication cases. Their lawyers were prevented from attending the sessions and defending the journalists during interrogation. To add insult to injury, independent doctors were not allowed to see the detainees. He and three of his colleagues received death sentence, and the other five were released after more than five years of detention.



Khalil Al-Tawil

- **Belqees Satellite Channel - Marib**
- **Type of violation:** assault
- **Date of violation:** 12 January 2023
- **Perpetrator:** the Yemeni government



Omar Al-Sururi

- **Belqees Satellite Channel - Marib**
- **Type of violation:** assault
- **Date of violation:** 12 January 2023
- **Perpetrator:** the Yemeni government

The Belqees TV crew in Marib, Khalil Al-Tawil and Omar Al-Sururi, were attacked and beaten with rifle butts, and live bullets were fired into the air by Central Bank soldiers in Marib. They were taken to the bank gate to be detained and their camera as well as their mobile phones was confiscated. They were searched and their privacy was violated.

Belqees TV issued a statement condemning the assault on its correspondents in Marib, requesting the local security forces to apprehend the perpetrators, safeguard them from harm, and provide a secure atmosphere for them. Sadly, this is not the first time that Belqees TV reporters in Marib have been attacked and bothered while carrying out their professional duties.

Threats

No	Name	Violation Type	Violation date	Governorate
1	Ebrahim Al Hussaini	Threat	9/3/2023	Taiz



Ebrahim Al Hussaini

- **Journalist- Taiz**
- **Type of violation:** threat
- **Date of violation:** 9 March 2023
- **Perpetrator:** unidentified individuals

Journalist Abdullah Al Hussaini received a death threat from an unknown person via a fixed phone number on March 9 of last year, demanding him to stop his journalistic activity and accusing him of defaming authority commanders in the Shemaitin District, south of Taiz. Al Hussaini was said to report that these commanders were in the habit of taking over the property of a citizen.

Al Hussaini reported that he had been threatened by unknown persons via a fixed phone number, and that he would be returned to prison if he continued his journalistic activity, especially after accusing the head of the security authority in the region of supporting an armed robbery of land belonging to Ali Abdullah Shamsan in «Ashar» area in the Shemaitin District, and continuing his campaign condemning the corruption of local, security, and military commanders in the southern countryside of Taiz.

Sadly, this is not the first time that Al Hussaini has been subjected to arbitrary practices, as he was previously arrested and forcibly disappeared in one of the prisons of the Fourth Brigade in the «Al-Aufa» area on the pretext of his journalistic writings criticizing the security situation in the Shemaitin District. In order to silence him, he was also pursued, his salary was suspended, and he was incited against.

Detainees deprived of rights

No	Name	Violation Date	Perpetrator
1	Abdulkhaliq Amran	28/2/2023	(Houthi group (Ansaru Allah
2	Hareth Humaid	28/2/2023	(Houthi group (Ansaru Allah
3	Akram Al-Waleed	28/2/2023	(Houthi group (Ansaru Allah
4	Tawfiq Al-Mansouri	28/2/2023	(Houthi group (Ansaru Allah

The Houthi group dealt harshly with the four journalists who had been sentenced to death, and their families were prevented from visiting them. The Houthi group also prevented them together with other prisoners from leaving their cells to the prison yard to where the sunlight was. In addition, the group refused to include the names of the four detained journalists in the prisoner exchange list between the Yemeni government and the Houthi group under the auspices of the United Nations.

The four journalists had been detained for nearly eight years and had been subjected to various forms of physical and psychological torture during their enforced disappearance. They faced a death sentence due to their journalistic work.

While working from a hotel in Sana'a due to the power cut in many areas in Yemen, these journalists were arrested by an armed group belonging to the Houthi group. Their mobile phones and cameras were confiscated.

They were then detained in an unknown location for more than three months before their families found out that they were in the Revolution Preventive Detention Center, where they were detained for six months before being transferred to the Habra Preventive Prison. There, they were subjected to solitary confinement, enforced disappearance for more than a month, and physical and psychological torture, such as hanging by the hands and interrogation that lasted for more

than 10 hours. They were prevented from receiving visits from their families from time to time.

Nine journalists, including Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, Abdul Khaliq Omaran, Akram Al-Walidi, and Harith Hamid, went on a hunger strike to protest their mistreatment by the Houthi group. The Houthis held the first trial session for the nine journalists on December 9, 2019, without allowing their lawyers to attend the investigation session, despite the journalists' request.

Upon attending the first trial session, the lawyers requested to have a copy of the charges, but the court rejected their request. The four journalists, Abdulkhaliq Amran, Akram Al-Waleed, Harith Humaid, and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, were sentenced to death by a Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa on April 11, 2020, on politically motivated charges of treason and spying for foreign states. The court convicted five journalists, including Hisham Tarumom, Hisham Al-Yousfi, Haitham Rawah, Essam Belghaith, Salah Al-Qaed and Hassan Annab, of the charges against them and sentenced them to the time they spent in prison.

After being in prison for a long time, many journalists have been suffering from various health and psychological problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, spinal cord problems, food poisoning, joint inflammation, and urinary tract infections.

Trials of Journalists

No	Journalist	Governorate
1	Ali Al Al-Awbathani	Hadramout
2	Khaled Mohsen Al Kathiri	Hadramout
3	Ahmed Maher	Aden



Ali Al Al-Awbathani

- **Violation type:** interrogation and trial
- **Place of trial:** Hadramout
- **Date of trial:** 9 January 2023
- **Perpetrator:** the Yemeni government

The Public Funds Prosecution in Hadramout Governorate held the second trial session for journalist Ali Salem Al-Awbathani on January 9 of last year, on charges related to posting on his personal Facebook page. The case was lodged against him by the Presidency of Hadramout University, regarding publications that addressed the university's violations. The case was adjourned.

The prosecution had summoned journalist Al-Awbathani on December 19, 2022, and the first investigation was conducted with him on 22 of the same month. He was released on commercial bail before the Public Funds Prosecution. Hadramout University charged him with "defaming a scientific institution."

Journalists and media activists in Hadramout Governorate have been frequently targeted on charges related to publication, despite the fact that the Public Funds Prosecution, Criminal Investigation, and Public Prosecution are not competent to summon journalists in publishing cases. Through these practices, the security and judicial authorities in the governorate seek to intimidate and silence journalists from continuing their work freely and professionally.



Khaled Mohsen Al Kathiri

- **Violation type:** interrogation and trial
- **Place of incident:** Hadramout
- **Perpetrator:** the Yemeni government

The Public Prosecution in Sayoun, Hadramout Governorate, summoned journalist Khaled Mohsen Al-Kathiri on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, to investigate the complaint filed against him by the Youth and Sports Office in Wadi Hadramout and the Desert over journalistic publications that addressed the facilities of the Sayoun Sports Club and the compensation that the club deserves for the facilities that were deducted for the establishment of the Sayoun Olympic Stadium.

Al-Kathiri stated that he attended the Sayoun Primary Prosecution Office on Sunday, February 5, 2023, to view the complaint filed against him by the Director-General of the Youth and Sports Office in a journalistic publication, despite the fact that the prosecution had previously started the investigation and was waiting for the decision according to the law, but the prosecutor did not decide on the case.



Ahmed Maher - Journalist

- **Violation type:** interrogation and trial
- **Date of trial:** 17 March 2023
- **Place of incident:** Aden
- **Perpetrator:** the Yemeni government
- **Status:** detained since 6 August, 2022

The specialized criminal court in Aden held the first trial session in the case of journalist Ahmed Maher on 17 March 2023. Maher has been detained since August 6 of last year on charges related to publication.

The first trial session for Maher comes after months of obstructing trial procedures and refusing to transfer him from the Bir Ahmed Prison to the court. The criminal court, however, is not competent in media and publication cases.

The journalist's father stated that his son was allowed to attend the first session after being prevented from going to court for 13 sessions. He added that his son stood before the judge and told him about the "injustice and torture" he was subjected to, and his arrest on 6 August, 2022, followed by torture and terror practices against him, his brother, and his family by the leader in the Southern Transitional Council, "Musalih Al-Zarhani." Ahmed then asked the judge for his legal right to be acquitted of the charges against him.

The procedures taken were illegal and contrary to Yemeni laws and international human rights law during the detention, disappearance, and torture of journalist Ahmed Maher. He was arrested on August 6, 2022, and then appeared in a video confessing under duress to acts that undermine the security of the state, before being transferred to the Aden-based, incompetent criminal court.

Storming into the Yemeni Media Syndicate



Armed men stormed the building of the Yemeni Media Syndicate in Aden for the second time in less than five months. They removed the sign of the Syndicate and replaced it with another one and imposed an armed siege on the building.

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate described the attack as a "dangerous" step that threatens the union's life in the country and its subsequent repercussions on the syndicate's work. The Syndicate confirmed that its protection as an institute and property is the responsibility of the authorities, which should be done to safeguard the rights, and enhance the status of civil society institutions.

At the same time, the Aden Independent Channel TV, which is affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council, quoted the head of the "Union of Southern Journalists and Media Professionals," Eidros Bahshwan, as saying that their union has regained control of its main headquarters, which was under its control during the era of the Southern State.

Several local and international organizations concerned with freedom of opinion and expression condemned the attack on the building of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in Aden, and called on the concerned authorities and local authorities in the governorate to take urgent measures to ensure the return of the properties to their legitimate owners, enable journalists to regain their rights and resume their work, and hold those responsible for the attack accountable

Journalists detained despite the expiration of their judicial sentences



Mohammed Abdu Al-Salahi

Date of Arrest:

October 21, 2018

Date of sentence:

June 28, 2022

Journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi had been sentenced to three years and eight months in prison by a specialized criminal court in Al Hudeidah, but the Houthi group has failed to carry out the sentence and free him, despite the fact that it has expired. On October 20, 2018, the Houthi group swooped in on the office of the media company "Mega Pixel" where Al-Salahi works and arrested him. He vanished without a trace for five whole months. Al-Salahi remained incarcerated in the Political Security Prison in Al-Hudeidah alongside journalist Bilal Al-Arifi, who was released after being held for two years.

Al-Salahi was interrogated for five to six hours a day for the first three months of his detention. He was beaten, suspended from the ceiling with iron chains, and even had a blow to the testicles, leaving them swollen for two months. The journalist Mohammed Al-Salahi's trial failed to meet the most fundamental requirements of due process. The prosecution and the criminal court in Sana'a and Al-Hudeidah participated in his secret trial, which took place within the walls of the Security and Intelligence Prison.

Al-Salahi was initially interrogated by the specialized criminal prosecution on November 23, 2019, nine months after his enforced disappearance and torture. His lawyers were not permitted to join the inquiry sessions.



Mohammed Al-Junaid

Date of arrest:

February 23, 2019

Date of sentence:

June 28, 2022

More than 145 days have passed since the expiration of journalist Mohammed Al-Janid's sentence given by the specialized criminal court in Al-Hudeidah, which was set at three years and eight months in prison. Nonetheless, the Houthi group has failed to enforce the ruling and release him. The Houthi group is steadfast in its opposition to his release. In Al-Hudeidah's Political Security Prison, al-Janid remained hidden from public view for five months after his detention on February 23, 2019. His family spent a lot of money and time trying to find out his whereabouts, but was unable to locate him, even though five months have passed since his arrest. Searching for him and paying off people with ties to the Houthi militia only made things worse for the family. The basic requirements for a fair and impartial trial were not met during the prosecution of Al-Junaid. He was put on trial behind closed doors in Sana'a and Al-Hudeidah at the Public Prosecution, the Criminal Court, and the Security and Intelligence Prison. The first time Al-Junaid was interrogated was a year after his imprisonment, and lawyers were not permitted to attend. They were moved to the Security and Intelligence Prison in Al-Hudeidah from the Security and Intelligence Prison in Sana'a at the beginning of June 2022. Al-Junaid and Al-Salahi were found guilty on all counts against them, including spying, supporting the aggression, and damaging public security, during a hearing of the Special Criminal Court in Al-Hudeidah on June 28. They were given a total of three years and eight months in jail, beginning counting from the day they were taken into custody.

Journalists still behind bars ¹

م	Name	Current place of detention	Violation Responsibility	No of days behind bars ²
1	Waheed Al-Soufi	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2892
2	Abdul Khaliq Omran	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2852
3	Tawfiq Al-Mansouri	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2852
4	Akram Al-Walidy	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2852
5	Harith Hamid	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2852
6	Mohammed Al-Salahi	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 1623
7	Nabil Al-Soudi	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 2748
8	Mohammad Ali Al-Junaid	Hodeidah	Houthi group	Days 1497
9	Walid Al-Matari	Ibb	Houthi group	Days 1014
10	Mohammed Al-Hatami	Hodeidah	Houthi group	Days 1639
11	Mohammed Al-Muqri	Hadramout	Al-Qaida organization	Days 2727
12	Abdul Rahman Khalid	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 398
13	Nabil Sultan	Sana'a	Houthi group	Days 483
14	Ahmed Maher	Aden	Legitimate Yemen government	Days 238

1 - Until March 31, 2022

2 - From the date of the arrest until 31 March 2022



Studies and Economic Media Center (SEM-C) is one of the Civil society organizations that works on economic field, awareness and promote the economic issues transparency, good governance and participated citizens in decision-making. Also, It works to find a professional media

<https://economicmedia.net/>







Yemen Media Freedoms Observatory (MARSADAK) is a monitoring and information platform aimed at disseminating all matters relating to freedoms of opinion and expression in various Yemeni regions in a professional and independent manner, as well as, analyzing and advocating for journalists' issues at the local and international levels.

<https://marsadak.org/>

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