

التحالف اليمني لرصد
انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان

Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring
Human Rights Violations



Children, Not Soldiers

A report documenting the recruitment and use of children as practiced by the parties to the conflict in Yemen For the period from 2015 to 2022

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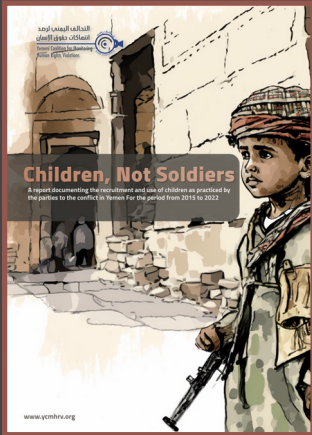
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Children, Not Soldiers

Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV), also known as “Rasd Coalition”, is a Yemeni non-governmental organization. Rasd Coalition was established in January 2015, License No. 1240 in response to valid need in the field of human rights, and considering the deteriorating human rights situation is Yemen, the matter that necessitated establishment of such Coalition

YCMHRV monitors and documents all human rights violations in Yemen and issues specialized reports on them. Also, organizes seminars and various events to disseminate and publicize these reports. YCMHRV submits these reports to relevant concerned entities. Noting that the first step in bringing justice to victims is to document their grievances for the moment of truth, committing ourselves in this respect with relevant human rights standards and laws

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First: Executive summary

The future of Yemen and the situation of Yemenis in the coming years appear to be bleak, as long as children suffer from exploitation and grow up in a sociocultural environment that cultivates hatred, violence and intolerance of the other in them. After eight years of armed conflict in Yemen, Yemen's children are living in the worst years in decades.

The United Nations reports that more than 11,000 children have been killed or maimed during the war, and more than 3,995 children have been recruited⁽¹⁾. More than 2 million school-age children are out of school, around 6 million children are at risk of disruption to the educational process⁽²⁾, and 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, including nearly half a million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition⁽³⁾. This means that this huge number of children are likely to join armed groups to be consumed by the war as fuel within the next ten years if the situation in Yemen does not improve.

The “Children, Not Soldiers” report is one of the activities of the Monitoring and Documentation project for the recruitment of children in Yemen. This report is the fruit of six months of monitoring and documentation work carried out by 10 monitors affiliated with the Rasd Coalition in parallel with an advocacy campaign aimed at highlighting violations of child recruitment, educating heads of families about the risks embedded in this phenomenon, and taking part alongside the concerned authorities to end child recruitment.

The report shows that Yemeni children have been subjected to widespread violations of their rights guaranteed by international conventions due to the conflict, including changing their beliefs and national identity, forced recruitment, sexual exploitation and other violations that may fall under human trafficking.

1- More than 11,000 children killed or injured in Yemen: A UNICEF Press release, available at this link: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-11000-children-killed-or-injured-yemen>

2- See UNICEF Report: <https://www.unicef.org/yemen/press-releases/number-children-facing-education-disruption-yemen-could-rise-6-million-unicef-warns>

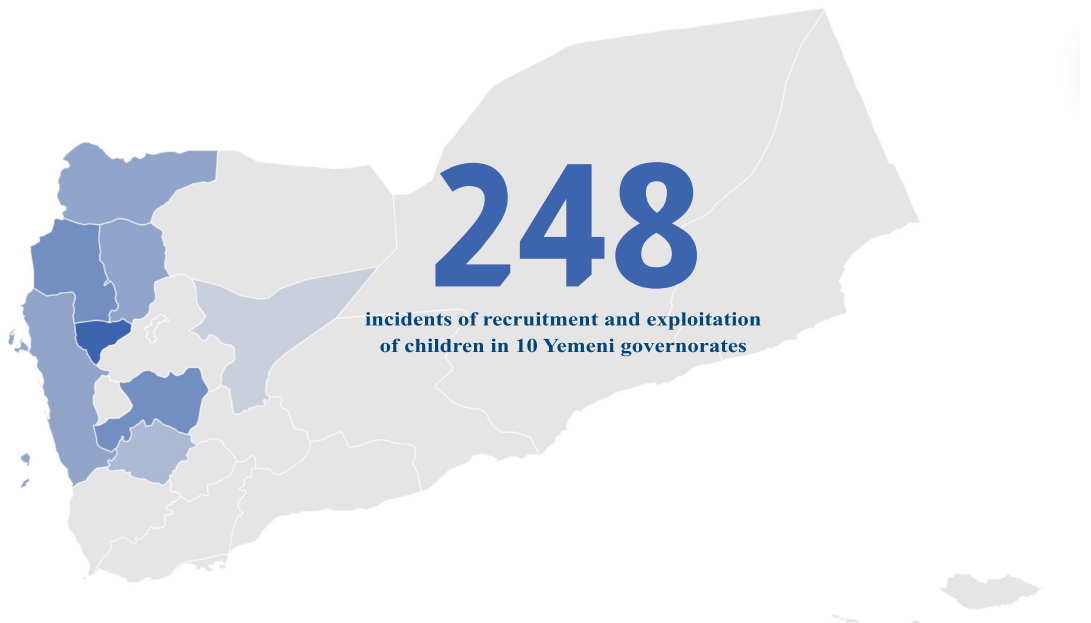
3- See the UN Report: Yemen facing 'outright catastrophe' over rising hunger, warn UN humanitarians <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113852>

During the reporting (project) period, the field team of the Rasd Coalition documented 248 incidents of recruitment and exploitation of children in 10 Yemeni governorates: (Sana'a, Hodeidah, Amran, Marib, Sa'adah, Dhamar, Ibb, Aden, Hajjah, and Al-Mahweet). The findings of the report show that Ibb governorate ranks the highest governorate as far as child recruitment is concerned with 55 child soldiers, followed by Amran with 46 child soldiers. Ten cases have been selected to be presented in the report to substantiate its findings.

The report concludes that the Houthi armed group was the most prominent in recruiting children, recruiting 231 children. The other parties to the conflict have also been engaged in child recruitment, but at a limited scale. The Yemeni government has recruited 9 children, while 8 others have been recruited by paramilitary formations that are not aligned with the authority of the legitimate government.

The report indicates a surge in child recruitment in 2022, the year in which the Houthi group signed the plan to end child recruitment with the United Nations, and the International Campaign to End Child Recruitment was launched by the internationally recognized government and the United Nations Office in Yemen.

The report shows that 238 children have been recruited by coercive means, whereas



10 children have been recruited through intimidation. The parties to the conflict have used various ways to influence children, including handing salaries to 43 children to recruit them; joining cultural orientation classes/courses helped recruit 26 children; 41 children have been recruited after they have been moved to camps, 8 others have been recruited without knowing what was meant of them, 6 have been lured into joining military ranks by handing them weapons, 3 have been pushed by their families, 7 have been recruited at security checkpoints. Although the motives of 98 child soldiers remain unknown, it is believed that many of them have been affected by economic factors or the media and educational curricula.

The findings of the analysis of the documented incidents show that the largest number of recruits died during the hostilities. The report documented the death of 142 child soldiers, 82 children are still serving in the military ranks, 13 children returned to their homes, five others detained by other parties and the fate of four children is unknown.

The report reveals that the Houthi armed group worked to attract and recruit children through a network of supervisors and mobilizers. For this purpose, the group has allocated tremendous financial resources to facilitate the work of its supervisors and mobilizers in influencing children. The group has also deliberately modified the educational curricula, which had a decisive effect on pushing them to join military ranks. Propaganda and the media have been used to create a halo on the dead child soldiers, particularly during their funerals, which motivates their peers to join military ranks, sympathizing with them and taking revenge for them⁽⁴⁾. Other means include mobilization speech by the leaders of the group and the production of several media materials and programs with the aim of motivating children to fight under the slogans of defending the homeland, honor, land and integrity against the “Israeli-American- Saudi Coalition”, as they call it.

The report also shows that child soldiers are treated as suspects rather than as victims. They face challenges when returning to their communities, and are stigma-

4- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL9xdo2vNzc>

tized as criminals or as having the potential to commit crimes. This stigmatization increases their insistence on their positions to stay with armed groups, and weakens the possibility of integrating them into societies.

The absence of international justice and the weakness of accountability mechanisms and local justice have contributed to encouraging the parties to the conflict in exploiting children. Added to this is the factor of the depletion of the human resources of the personnel of the parties to the conflict as a result of the conflict, which prompted the parties to the conflict to attract children to join their ranks because they are less expensive and can easily be manipulated.

Rasd Coalition believes that the leaders of the Houthi armed group and many of its members qualify as “war criminals” for the effective role they play in the forced recruitment of children under 15. They have been significantly involved in committing serious crimes against children during the ongoing armed conflict. They have clearly contributed to the violation of the rules of warfare and human rights law. Leaders of the Yemeni government and a number of its military commanders, on the other hand, have not fully complied with the prohibition of recruitment of children under 18, in accordance with the provisions of the conventions ratified by Yemen, and have contributed to violating government pledges to ending child recruitment.

The Yemeni government has largely failed to develop effective child protection programs, nor has it performed its tasks in rehabilitating national bodies specialized in child protection. It has so far failed to find an effective mechanism at the level of the capital and other governorates to receive grievances on child exploitation and recruitment, and to intervene urgently to save them.

The absence of international accountability mechanisms has significantly contributed to the rise in child recruitment, as the report concluded that the interventions of UN organizations, especially those concerned with children, did not meet the required level, despite their contribution to humanitarian access and the fight against hunger and acute malnutrition of children, but they clearly failed to produce long-term programs to reduce the recruitment of children. In the next phase, the Yeme-

ni government must dedicate a large part of its interventions to devising grievance mechanisms, monitoring, follow-up and intervention with the parties in order to rescue the victims, and implementing joint humanitarian, educational and awareness-raising programs in schools, mosques and places where children are located, with the participation of parents, to raise awareness of the risks involved in child recruitment.

Despite the great efforts made by the “Rasd Coalition” and its field team in documenting human rights violations related to the exploitation and recruitment of children, many obstacles stood in the way of work, most notably the difficulty of reaching child victims. The censorship and distortion practiced by the parties to the conflict on the efforts of civil society during the past period has had a negative impact on the cooperation of several victims and their families. Failure to achieve accountability and justice for victims of human rights violations during the past years has made it difficult to urge the victims to respond to documentation efforts.

Second: Introduction

A- Background to the Yemeni conflict and its impact on children

The conflict in Yemen, which fiercely broke out with the Ansar Allah group (the Houthis) taking control of Sana'a in September 2014, has had devastating effects on the Yemeni children. More than 11,000 children were killed or maimed in Yemen, according to a statement issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in December 2022⁽⁵⁾. Suffice it to say that the future of Yemen does not bode well, as long as more than two million children are out of school.⁽⁶⁾ Yemen continues to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with two-thirds of the population - a total of 20.7 million people - in need of urgent humanitarian assistance thanks to manifold emergencies, such as conflicts, epidemics and natural disasters.⁽⁷⁾

B- The most prominent consequence of the armed conflict is child recruitment

The children of Yemen are facing severe crises in the various educational, health and humanitarian aspects; yet, the parties to the conflict went to the children and involved them into their battles, instead of working to stop those repercussions. There is no doubt that the protracted conflict and severe humanitarian crisis have prompted many children to respond to the influence of the parties and join their ranks. There is a clear relationship between children dropping out of school and their involvement in fighting. The huge human loss of the combatants constituted a disturbing concern for the parties to the conflict, which prompted them to attract children to their ranks. In its latest figures, the UNICEF reported that 3,995 children were recruited, including (3,904 boys who were recruited to fight, and 91 girls who participated in events or at checkpoints).⁽⁸⁾ Without a doubt, such figures are almost insignificant compared to those the Rasd Coalition has collected during the eight years of conflict.

C- Why focus on child recruitment?

Although all parties to the armed conflict have recruited children, the violent and de facto-dominated armed groups resort to recruiting children disproportionately. Therefore, appearance & propaganda is one of the most prominent tricks used by

5- See the UN News website <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/12/1116532>

6- According to the July 2021 UNICEF report, see the UN News website <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2021/07/1079132>

7- Attachment No. (1) is a table showing some events related to children and armed conflict in Yemen

8- See the UN News website <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/12/1116532>

extremist armed groups, as their media extensively uses images of children engaging in acts of violence. Violence and images are used to show the group's strength and cruelty at the same time.⁽⁹⁾ Children are considered a strategic supply for such organizations that make sure such children continue to stay with them for longer periods, not to mention that they recruit children because it is less expensive than recruiting adults.⁽¹⁰⁾

This is the case of the Houthi group in Yemen, particularly with its classification as a terrorist group by the UN Security Council.⁽¹¹⁾ Although the group signed on an action plan with the United Nations in April 2022 to end child recruitment, the Rasd Coalition has documented the recruitment of (34) children during the following months, from the signature date until the end of 2022.

The Houthi group resorts to recruiting children because it is easy to attract and lure them. For instance, the group's leadership has changed the educational curricula/schoolbooks in areas under its control and incorporated ideas and beliefs, reflecting the concepts and principles in which the Houthis believe, in order to influence and shape the children's awareness to be an easy tool in their hands.

On the other hand, despite showing good intentions and signing on an action plan with the United Nations to end the recruitment of children, the Yemeni government is still recruiting children through its forces and affiliated formations, albeit in a limited manner; however, this proves that the Yemeni government is not serious about ending their recruitment. Moreover, armed formations that are not under the authority of the legitimate government continue to recruit children.

D- The social, economic, religious and psychological reasons that influenced the recruitment of children

There are many factors affecting the recruitment of children, but the most prominent of which includes social factors as a result of pressures on the family and the impact of the educational curricula and schoolbooks on children; economic factors as a result of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions and the families' need for sources of income; and cultural factors that may include the beliefs instilled in the minds of children, as well as in both the political institution and the media which play a major role in the process of influencing and mobilizing.

9- See the guide issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It is a guide on children being recruited and exploited by terrorist groups. Vienna - 2018.

10- See the Deraya Strategic Forum for Public Policies and Development Studies, the rates of child recruitment in the world are "terrifying." The situation is getting worse, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the highest child recruitment rate, and Houthi crimes against them continue. <https://bit.ly/3M3Twis>

11- See the United Nations News website, February 2022 <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/02/1095132>

Among the (248) recruited children documented by the Rasd Coalition, two main patterns were used by the Ansar Allah group and other parties to attract children. The findings of the incidents analysis showed that (238) children were recruited by enticing means while (10) others were recruited by intimidating means. Other related means were used which affected recruitment, whereby (43) children were recruited by enticing them with a monthly salary; (26) were recruited by the influence of their involvement in the Houthi group's religious orientations; (41) were transferred to camps; (8) were recruited without knowing what was wanted from them; (6) were enticed with firearms to hand over weapons; (3) were forced into being recruited by their families; and (7) were recruited at security points, while the motives for their recruitment of (98) children were unknown. However, it is believed that many of these children were recruited due to economic motives, as well as the impact of the media & the educational curricula/schoolbooks on shaping their awareness, and the ease of attracting them.

E- Child recruitment supervisors and mobilization centers

The so-called supervisors or mobilizers in local communities have played a key role in the exploitation of children, as they are considered the first hand of the parties responsible for recruitment. The Rasd Coalition was able to obtain (143) names of such local supervisors, including (140) supervisors affiliated with the Houthi group, whether as supervisors of districts, villages and small communities, or as collaborators. The “*supervisor*” is considered as the control authority for the Houthi group in his area.

The report identified (13) centers for mobilizing and receiving child soldiers in the governorates of Dhamar and Sa'adah alone. These centers are considered the first entry point for training children on weapons and combat culture before sending them to the military or security authorities to take up their duties.

F- Ending child recruitment is a priority in the accountability approach

Since its inception, the Rasd Coalition has attached great attention to the grave violations committed against children. It looks forward through this report to working on restoring the international and local focus on child recruitment, particularly since the parties to the conflict, including the Houthi group, have signed action plans with the United Nations to end recruitment and demobilize children from their ranks. But the Rasd coalition feels that impunity is what allows parties to the conflict to neglect their obligations and continue to mobilize children. The Rasd Coalition believes that

child protection is a safety for the future of the Yemenis; however, this will only be achieved by adopting an international approach to accountability, and this requires concerted efforts on the part of all those who believe in the values of justice and human rights in/or for Yemen.

Third: Methodology

A- Data collection process

The Rasd Coalition is dedicated to documenting violations against children by issuing many specialized reports, focusing on child recruitment.⁽¹²⁾ The Rasd Coalition has collected a lot of information about this issue and followed up on many reports, investigations, programs and photographic materials. It has also communicated before and during the investigation period with special sources such as families of children or human rights defenders and those concerned with this matter.

B- Investigation method

The Rasd Coalition relied on (10) field researchers, who, during the period from August 1 to January 31, 2023, have documented (248) incidents of child recruitment as examples of recruitment operations that took place from 2015 until the end of 2022 in the governorates (Sana'a, Hodeidah, Amran, Marib, Sa'adah, Dhamar, Ibb, Aden, Hajjah, Al-Mahweet). These governorates were chosen due to the ability of the conflict parties to recruit children in them, and some of them witnessed or are still witnessing fierce hostilities. The field researchers relied on direct interviews most of the time, but also conducted remote interviews using the means of communication available on the Internet and wrote down the information through a pre-prepared form. They also relied on photographic materials in addition to collecting pictures of the victims and sites whenever possible.

C- Concepts and terminology

The report refers to the child soldier who is under the age of (15) years and who is under the age of (18) years, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and in accordance with Yemen's declaration banning the recruitment of children under this age. Recruitment, whether it occurs in a forced or voluntary manner, includes

12- See the report «Child Recruitment in Yemen from July 2014 to July 2018» <https://ycmhrv.org/uploads/files/Child-Recruitment-in-Yemen.pdf>

And the report «The Assassination of Innocence» <https://ycmhrv.org/uploads/files/KILLING-KIDS.pdf>

And the report «Children of Yemen: From Schools to Barricades» <https://ycmhrv.org/uploads/files/Yemen-Children.pdf>

direct participation in combat or auxiliary actions for hostilities, including delivery of food, weapons or information, as well as service at security checkpoints and civilian military headquarters. The report used a number of other terms that appeared in a unified context, which are included in the attached table.⁽¹³⁾

D- Reaching out to the perpetrators and their means of recruitment

The Rasd Coalition monitored the media platforms affiliated with the parties to the conflict, which published media materials aimed at influencing children, and used it as a criterion to determine the willingness of the parties to exploit children and the extent of their involvement in child recruitment. In this regard, the Houthi media was the most prominent in publishing these materials.⁽¹⁴⁾

The Rasd Coalition also listened to testimonies about people involved in child recruitment, and obtained information and pictures from centers and camps from which and/or to which children were mobilized. Schools are incubators for the Houthi group to inculcate its ideas, whether through the curricula that it changed in favor of its agendas that stimulate a culture of fighting, antagonizing the other, and glorifying its leading figures.⁽¹⁵⁾ Therefore, the Rasd Coalition monitored the group's use of schools for its own celebrations/events to influence children, in addition to using them for the so-called "*summer centers*" as vital incubators to attract children.⁽¹⁶⁾

Moreover, the Rasd Coalition obtained pictures of recruited children from inside a training camp used by the Houthi group, where they had physical exercises and weapons training in preparation for combat.⁽¹⁷⁾

E- Evaluation of sources and evidence

The information included in the report is a summary of analysis and evaluation of all the documents collected by the field researchers. It established facts, which are very likely to be reliable, through testimonies, documents, and TV news reports published by the parties, while the facts that are not supported by evidence were neglected. The Rasd Coalition also hired an independent expert to analyze and categorize the data from the documents to extract circumstantial evidence, factors and information related to child recruitment. In the report, we were keen to review examples of

13- Attachment No. (2) of terms and concepts included in the report

14- A large funeral for a child soldier who was killed in the battles and broadcasting it on Al-Masirah channel, the mouthpiece of the Houthis, to influence the children and suggest that their fighting in the ranks of the group is what the Islamic religion commands <https://bit.ly/3KeloOd>

15- Attachment No. (3) Examples of educational content in the curricula for schoolchildren that have been changed by the Houthi group

16- Watch the closing ceremony of the summer centers 2021, in which the children presented a parade similar to military parades, carrying the groups flags and pictures of its leaders <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1pCtXs6jB>

17- Attachment No. (4) A group of photos of recruited children during training inside a camp of the Houthi group

recruitment operations for whom we obtained informed consents from the information providers. We were also keen to protect the privacy of children by not showing pictures or names of those who requested anonymity; we only referred to them by pseudonyms. The report did not include any of the names of witnesses and information providers out of concern for their safety.

F- Obstacles to investigation

The security grip of the parties to the conflict poses a problem for the researchers and their safe transportation. In addition, reaching out to child soldiers involved in the ranks of the parties represents another problem with regard to understanding their circumstances and the reasons that force them to stay with the parties. The team also faced obstacles as families would decline to speak about the recruitment of their children for fear of reprisal that could be caused to them. The researchers were not able to reach several areas in which child recruitment was likely to be practiced in a disproportionate manner, as they feared that the “supervisors” in Houthi-controlled areas, or those who collaborated with the parties to the conflict, would inform against them.

G- Why did we choose such example cases?

The Rasd Coalition documented (248) incidents of child recruitment, of which (10) were selected from different governorates and presented in this report as examples. The findings of the analysis indicate that such governorates have high rates of child recruitment. The examples of incidents were distributed among the responsible actors, where the most prominent examples included victims of the Houthi group while two examples included victims of the government forces. A number of criteria were taken into account, including age groups under and above the age of (15) years, in addition to reviewing other examples according to the criterion of recruitment motives.

The examples of incidents included (8) children from Ibb governorate who were recruited within a period of one month: Samih Mohammad Al-Lawzi (16) years old, Abdul Ghani Hammoud Al-Hardi (16) years old, Abdul Wasie' Amin Al-Hatar (15) years old, Ali Naji Al-Ghader (16) years old, Ghamdan Mohammad Taha (16) years old, Mohammad Hammoud Fasila (16) years old, Noah Ali Al-Hitar (15) years old, and Nour Addeen Abdul Samad Al-Hitar (16) years old. Such children were selected on the basis of geography, being from one area, and based on the fact that it highlights the Houthis' behavior in attracting them from schools.

From Al-Mahweet Governorate, the case of the child, Ashraf Ali Mohammad Amer

(13) years old, was presented, and his economic and social status was exploited because he was suffering from a hearing and speech impairment, due to which he would face social contempt, which ultimately prompted him to join the ranks of the Houthis and get killed in their battles. This example case refutes the group's claims that their recruitment of children is voluntary and with the consent of their families.

The report selected the recruitment cases of two children, of which the government forces are accused. The first child, Abdul Ghani Shaif Akil (16) years old from Amran Governorate, was recruited by taking advantage of his economic situation as he was from the "marginalized" people; he was killed in battles in Marib Governorate. The second child was Ahmad Antar Naji (17), whose displacement in the city of Marib was so exploited that he was pushed into fighting against the Houthis.

From Hodeidah governorate, the report selected the case of two child brothers, Anwar and Jamal Abdul Nasser (16 and 17) years old, as well as the case of child Saqr Abdu Masmoud (12) years old, who were all recruited by the Houthi group. The first case was selected based on the fact that the two children were brothers and on the consequences of lacking education in their area on their awareness. The second case was selected to present the methods used by the Houthi group to attract children.

The report selected the case of the child, Bassam Ali Radan (15) years old, from Dhamar Governorate, who was recruited by the Houthi group and was killed in fighting. His case was selected to highlight the role of the media propaganda used by the Houthi group in creating an aura on those recruited children, who were killed among its ranks, in addition to highlighting its impact on their peers.

From Sa'adah governorate, the report selected the cases of the two children, Hashim Rabie' Al-Maghrabi (13) years old, who was recruited in al-Jawf and transferred to Sa'adah, as well as the child, Majid Saleh al-Qutini (13) years old. Their selection was based on their age and the Houthis' use of intimidation methods against the local people in the governorate, which is the hometown of the group's top leader.

The report selected the case of the child, Yassin Abdul Basit Al-Ramadi (17) years old from Amran Governorate, to reveal the Houthi group's exploitation of children deprived of their parents, as well as its impact on their economic and social status, which enabled the group to attract them.

Fourth: legal background

A- Child recruitment in human rights conventions

Yemen has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict⁽¹⁸⁾. The Convention prohibits the recruitment of any person under the age of (15) into the armed forces⁽¹⁹⁾. The Optional Protocol urges the States to raise the minimum age for volunteering in their armed forces from the minimum age stipulated in the Convention; this protocol also requires the States that have ratified it to declare the minimum age allowed for volunteering in their armed forces.⁽²⁰⁾ The Yemeni President issued an order to the Ministry of Defense to prevent the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into the ranks of the armed and security forces⁽²¹⁾.

Yemen has ratified the International Labor Organization Convention No. (182) prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, as well as the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights.⁽²²⁾ The first Convention deems that the forced conscription of children is one of the worst forms of forced or compulsory labor for children.⁽²³⁾ The second and the Convention on the Rights of the Child both require that education for children be directed towards developing their personalities, talents, mental & physical abilities, as well as respect for human rights and a sense of responsibility in a free society with a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, and gender equality.⁽²⁴⁾

The parties to the conflict in Yemen announced their commitment not to recruit children and to demobilize child recruits from their forces. In 2014, the Yemeni government signed an action plan with the United Nations⁽²⁵⁾ to end child soldiers, and the Houthi leaders pledged in 2012 to end the use of child soldiers.⁽²⁶⁾ In April 2022, they signed an action plan with the United Nations to protect children and prevent grave violations, including a ban on child recruitment.⁽²⁷⁾ In March 2019, the Arab

18- See the international and regional agreements ratified by Yemen, available at this link <https://yemen-nic.info/contents/Politics/itefaqeya.php>

19- Article (38/3) of the agreement

20- Article (3/1,2) of the protocol

21- For the text of the order, see the Almashhad Alduali website <https://www.almashhad-alduali.com/news152.html>

22- See the international and regional agreements ratified by Yemen, available at this link <https://yemen-nic.info/contents/Politics/itefaqeya.php>

23- Article (3/a) of the agreement

24- Articles (28, 29) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article (13) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

25- Available at this link <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Yemen-Fact-Sheet-Septem2ber-2016-rev-LF.pdf>

26- Available at this link <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2012/11/yemeni-authorities-and-al-houthi-armed-group-to-end-child-recruitment/>

27- Available on the UN News website <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/04/1099202>

Coalition countries signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations to protect children.⁽²⁸⁾

According to the treaties ratified by Yemen, the Yemeni government is obligated to protect children from the violations they are exposed to, as well as to demobilize children under the age of (18) from its forces. The government must also work to protect the children from joining the ranks of armed groups. Moreover, other parties, including the Houthi group as a de facto authority, must implement their obligations and apply human rights standards during armed conflicts. For this reason, many United Nations resolutions were issued and work has been done within the international framework.

B- Child recruitment in the international humanitarian law conventions

Yemen has ratified the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, which prohibits the States from recruiting children under the age of 15 into their forces, and prohibits their recruitment into armed groups or their participation in hostilities.⁽²⁹⁾ This comes in addition to the rules established by the customary international law to protect children during armed conflict and the necessity of providing them with the necessary assistance, including education.⁽³⁰⁾ Such rules are made binding by the international custom. The UN Security Council deems the recruitment of children among the six grave violations during the armed conflict.⁽³¹⁾ The Rome Statute decides that recruiting children under the age of (15) and involving them in actual combat, in a compulsory or voluntary manner, is a war crime, whether by states or armed groups, and whether the conflict is international or non-international.⁽³²⁾

The conflict in Yemen is described as “non-international”, a description decided by international jurisprudence on the conflict between government forces and an armed group, based on the criterion of the intensity of violence and the armed group’s control over a geographical area and its possession of a leadership capable of carrying out coordinated and continuous military operations. This type of conflict is governed by Common Article 3 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions issued in 1977. Yemen has ratified both of them, as mentioned above.

28- Available at this link <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2019/03/mou-to-strengthen-the-protection-of-children-affected-by-armed-conflict-in-yemen-signed-with-the-coalition-to-support-legitimacy-in-yemen/>

29- Article (3/4-c) of the protocol

30- See ICRC Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 135

31- See the six grave violations <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/ar/six-grave-violations/>

32- Article (8, Paragraph 2/E/7) of the Statute of the International Criminal Court

Accordingly, the Yemeni government must be committed to the international humanitarian law and must respect its commitments regarding the demobilization of child soldiers from its forces as well as the prevention of their recruitment in the future. This applies to other parties to the conflict, including armed groups as well, to which the obligations of the international humanitarian law apply, pursuant to the provision stated in Common Article 1 of the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. Therefore, the Houthi group must abide by the human rights standards applied in armed conflicts, as it is a party to the conflict and has de facto control over a geographical area and its population, not to mention that the group actually imposes a system of governance.

The United Nations also decided that non-state armed actors that exercise government-like functions or exercise effective control over territory and populations must respect and protect the human rights of individuals and groups. The resolution includes Paragraph No. (29) in the detailed findings of the report prepared by the Panel of eminent international and regional experts on Yemen, document A/HRC/45/6,⁽³³⁾ which concluded that the Houthi group is in fact the de facto authority of north-western Yemen, and it can be considered bound by the international standards to human rights. This has also been reiterated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has recognized the critical role of non-state actors under human rights principles aimed at protecting people.⁽³⁴⁾ The ICRC stated that “when non-state parties to armed conflicts control territory over an extended period of time, the international humanitarian law continues to apply and provide protection to civilians.”⁽³⁵⁾

C- The international criminal law and ways to achieve accountability in Yemen

There are several mechanisms that can be considered an important basis on the path to achieving accountability and justice, although the local mechanisms are described as ineffective at the present time. However, such mechanisms can be built upon in order to protect children from grave violations during armed conflicts.

The National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations of Human Rights (NCIAVHR) is important at the present time as a monitoring and investigation mechanism, as it investigates child recruitment cases and submits files to the Public Prosecutor. In this context, the NCIAVHR announced it would be submitting the findings

33- Available at the link <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/A-HRC-45-CRP.7.pdf>

34- Available at the link <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4354-icrc-strategy-2019-2022>

35- Available at the link https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/document/file_list/challenges-report_ihl-and-non-state-armed-groups.pdf

of its work to the judiciary.⁽³⁶⁾

Despite the importance of the judiciary as a means of criminal investigation for those responsible for the recruitment of children, according to the role assigned to it in achieving justice and the imposition of penalties entrusted to it by the Child Rights Law No. (45) of 2002, it has become unable to carry out its roles due to the circumstances and consequences of the conflict, which left the judicial institutions divided. This is evident in the non-filing of any case related to the recruitment of children out of all the violation cases that have been documented.

According to the Child Rights Law, the state is obligated to take full measures to protect children, including bringing those responsible for violations against children to justice, which is the task of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood as a supervisory and executive mechanism. However, this council has become divided between the parties to the conflict, as it is ineffective in the areas under the recognized government's control, while playing complicit roles with the Houthi group in its areas of control.⁽³⁷⁾

The terms of the action plan signed in 2014 between the Yemeni government and the United Nations to end child recruitment included investigating into allegations of recruitment and use of children by Yemeni government forces and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.⁽³⁸⁾ For this reason, the Yemeni government has formed a technical committee in partnership with the UNICEF, among its tasks is to prevent the recruitment of children into the government forces.⁽³⁹⁾ This mechanism is important in the context of the government forces' monitoring of their commitment to end child recruitment regardless of its limited impact. According to the findings of the investigation, the Yemeni government has not fully been committed to ending the recruitment and demobilization of children from its ranks.

In implementation of its obligations, Yemen must work to improve the detection of child soldiers in its ranks by providing mechanisms for direct complaints and counseling for child soldiers. Such mechanisms should be made available in the areas under the Yemeni government's control and circulated to all schools, hospitals, organizations and other sectors related to children, so that reporting is accessible to child soldiers, their peers, families, and the community.

Yemen is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Yemen began ratification in 2013, but the final accession process required the approval of

36- See press release issued by the committee in 2022 <https://www.nciye.org/?p=1874>

37- See the activities of the Houthi-controlled council, available at this link <https://www.facebook.com/HCMCYemen/>

38- Review the text of the business plan <https://bit.ly/3LXIR8Q>

39- See the launch of the Joint Technical Committee <https://www.newsline-ye.com/news481.html>

the Head of State. Pursuant to the customary law, individual criminal responsibility continues to exist and is recognized for the perpetrators of war crimes as well as serious crimes.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This applies to the perpetrators of the crime of recruiting children, whether they are individuals or heads of armed forces or armed groups. This also includes direct officials or those who provided assistance, contribution, incitement, planning or gave orders for that.⁽⁴¹⁾

Within the framework of its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the UN Security Council adopted, in its Resolution No. 1612 (2005), an important mechanism for the protection of children, through the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is an unprecedented mechanism for monitoring and reporting regarding serious violations against children, the purpose of which is to present systematic information and collect accurate information regarding grave violations committed against children in the course of armed conflict to be used to enforce the parties' accountability and compliance with the international child protection standards.⁽⁴²⁾

According to reports submitted by the Working Group on Children, the United Nations included all parties to the war in Yemen on the "black list" of child abusers in 2017.⁽⁴³⁾ However, it retracted and removed the name of the "Arab Coalition"⁽⁴⁴⁾ and the Yemeni government⁽⁴⁵⁾ from this list, while the Houthi group is still on the list.

The Security Council had decided to establish a sanctions committee for Yemen pursuant to Resolution 2140 (2014) to impose sanction measures. The resolution stipulated a number of criteria for implementing sanctions, including participation in sexual violence in armed conflicts, or the recruitment or use of children in armed conflicts in contravention of the provisions of international law.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The council imposed a number of sanctions on people from the Houthi group and those associated with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh for their role in violating the standards applied by the sanctions committee.

As we follow the work of the UNICEF, the organization's programs and interventions are often humanitarian, although among its duties is to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, particularly in emergencies. For this reason, the UNICEF should allocate programs targeting schools and local communities to raise

40- Rule (151) of the study of the International Committee of the Red Cross on customary international humanitarian law

41- Refer to rules (151, 152, 153) of the ICRC study on customary international humanitarian law.

42- See the role of the team as available on the website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict <https://bit.ly/40ICn1G>

43- The news is available at this link http://arabic.china.org.cn/txt/2017-10/07/content_50032900.htm

44- The news is available at this link <https://bit.ly/3TXTY3t>

45- The news is available at this link <https://bit.ly/3ISbfOZ>

46- See about the committee, its work and mandate <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ar/sanctions/2140>

awareness of the dangers of child recruitment. Integrated and long-term programs should be funded, starting with mechanisms for submitting and following up on complaints about child soldiers with the parties in order to achieve such children's return and reintegration into society.

Fifth: General Findings

A- Figures and data

The report documented (248) cases of recruitment of children, who were recruited from January 2015 to December 2022 in (10) governorates: Sana'a, Amran, Ho-deidah, Ibb, Sa'adah, Marib, Aden, Dhamar, Hajjah and Mahweet. According to the findings presented in the report, the governorate of Ibb had the highest rate of child recruitment among the governorates with (55) children, followed by Amran with (46) children, while Sana'a had the lowest rate with (4) children. Figures indicate that the number of children recruited in rural areas (239) is much higher than the number of children recruited in urban areas (13).

The figures show that (192) victim children are from the category of children residing permanently in their areas and (45) children from the category of the socially marginalized, while (11) children from families displaced by the conflict. The figures also indicate that the number of children under the age of (15) amounted to more than those recruited above that age, as they amounted to (145) children under the age of (15) and (103) children between (15) and (18) years old.

The report concluded that the year of 2022 saw a higher rate of child recruitment with (70) children, compared to (56) children in 2020.

The number of children recruited by the Houthi group amounted to (231) children, which is the highest percentage among all parties to the armed conflict and the number of children recruited by government forces amounted to (9) children, while (8) others were recruited by forces not under the authority of the legitimate government.

The report analyzed the facts to find out the fate of the recruited children. The fate of those who were killed in combat operations represented the majority, as their number amounted to (141) children; (82) children continue to be recruited, while (13) others have returned to their homes.

The Rasd Coalition believes that the findings presented in the report does reveal the magnitude of recruitment and exploitation of children during the armed conflict and that the Houthi group has committed such a dangerous act in a wasteful manner. On the other hand, the Yemeni government's commitment to ending child recruitment has not risen to the level of complete prevention, as figures indicate that children continued to be recruits within its forces in the past two years.

The Rasd Coalition has monitored hundreds of child soldiers over the past years, as their number amounted (5,588) children who were recruited during the period from 2015 to late 2022, with (5,467) children recruited by the Houthi group and (93) others recruited by the government forces, while (29) children were recruited by formations not under the control of the government / non-state formations.⁽⁴⁷⁾

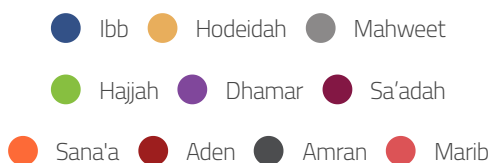
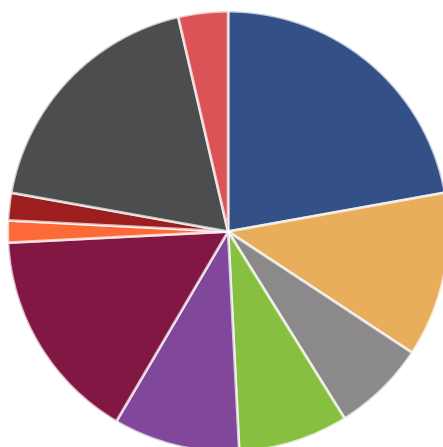
B- The most prominent areas in which recruitment is concentrated

Among (248) child soldiers who were documented in (10) governorates, the governorate of Ibb had the highest number with (55) children, followed by Amran with (46) children, Sa'adah with (39) children, Hodeidah with (30) children, Dhamar with (23) children, Hajjah with (20) children, Mahweet with (17) children, Marib with (9) children, Aden with (5), and Sana'a with (4) children. The figures indicate that the governorates under the control of the Houthi group have the highest rate of child recruitment.

47- From a statement on the occasion of the International Day against the Exploitation of Child Soldiers, February 2023
<https://bit.ly/3IV8Zqj>

Distribution by regions

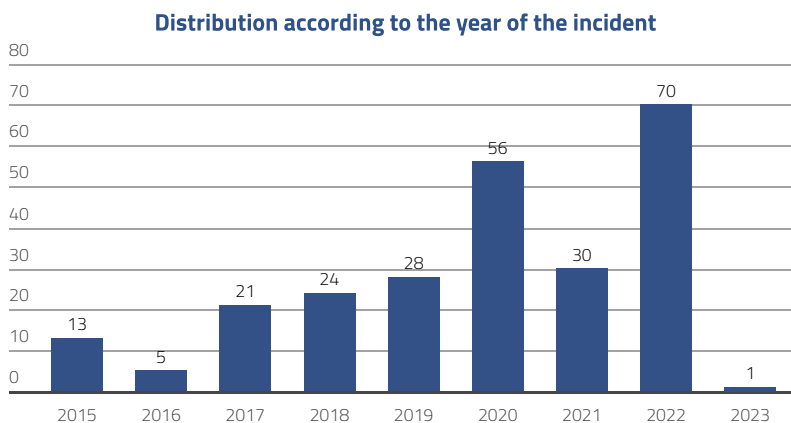
Governorates	No. of child soldiers
Ibb	55
Hodeidah	30
Mahweet	17
Hajjvah	20
Dhamar	23
Sa'adah	39
Sana'a	4
Aden	5
Amran	46
Marib	9
Total	248



The figures indicate that the number of children, who were recruited in the rural areas, is (239) children compared to (13) children in urban areas, a comparison which reveals that the Houthi group and other parties to the armed conflict have utilized the economic, social and cultural factors in rural areas that have higher rates of poverty and illiteracy among its population, as well as a lower rate of enrollment in education among girls and boys.

The report concluded that the year of 2022 saw a higher rate of child recruitment with (70) children, which reveals an increase in recruitment operations even after the Houthi group signed the action plan to end child recruitment in April 2022 – compared to (56) children in 2020, (30) children in 2021, (28) children in 2019, and (24) children in 2018.

Distribution according to the year of the incident	
Year	Death toll
2015	13
2016	5
2017	21
2018	24
2019	28
2020	56
2021	30
2022	70
2023	1
Total	248



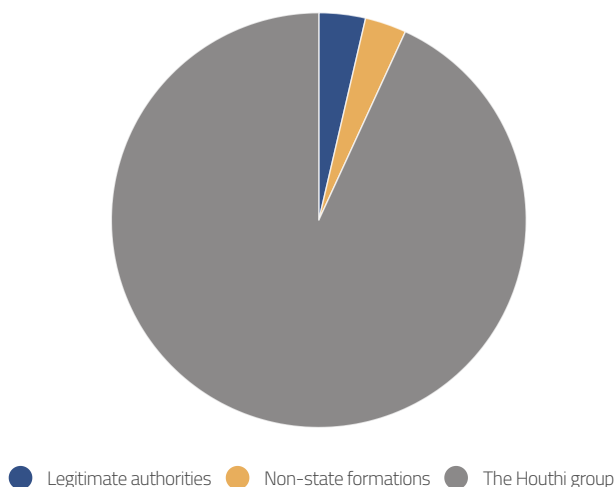
C- The possible responsibility of the perpetrators

An analysis of the documented facts reveals that the Houthi group is the most prominent party in terms of exploiting and recruiting children. The group has recruited (231) children; such a number points to the Houthi group's widespread violation of the international law and that its practices in recruiting children under the age of (15) amount to a war crime. The figures also indicate that government forces did not completely prevent the recruitment of children into their forces, as well as demobilize the child soldiers, as the report includes (9) children recruited by government forces, who were either killed or are still enlisted in their ranks. The report also includes (8) children who were recruited into military formations that are not under the authority of the legitimate government in the areas of southern and western Yemen.

The figures reveal that the Houthi group increased its recruitment operations even after signing an action plan to end child recruitment, and that the Yemeni government also did not actually abide by its commitments to prevent the recruitment of children into its forces. The same applies to other military forces that are not under the authority of the legitimate government.

Responsible Actors	No. of Children
Legitimate authorities	9
Non-state formations	8
The Houthi group	231
Total	248

Distribution according to the actors

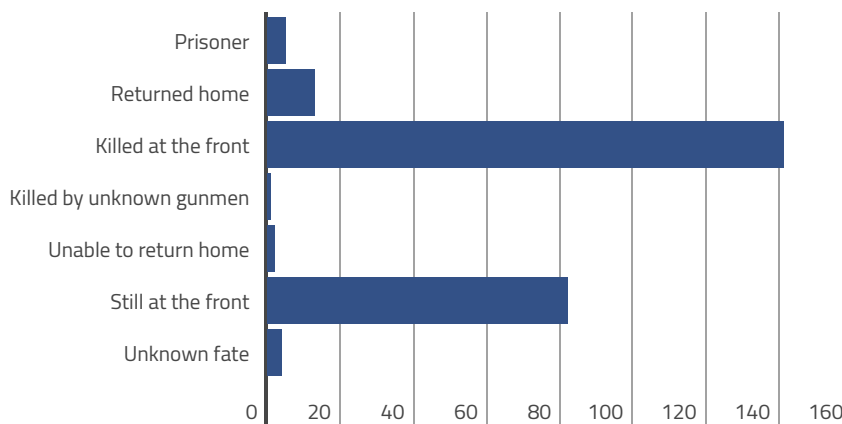


D- Distribution of the victims according to the type of violation

Figures indicate that most of the children, who were recruited, were killed in the battles waged by the parties to the armed conflict. In fact, the number of dead among those documented in the report amounted to (142) children, while (82) children continue to be recruited within the ranks of the parties responsible for their recruitment; (13) children have returned to their homes, while (5) children continue to be detained by parties to the conflict, and (2) others are unable to return to their homes.

The current status of the child	
Categories	No. of children
Prisoner	5
Returned home	13
Killed at the front	141
gunmen Killed by unknown	1
Unable to return home	2
Still at the front	82
Unknown fate	4
Total	248

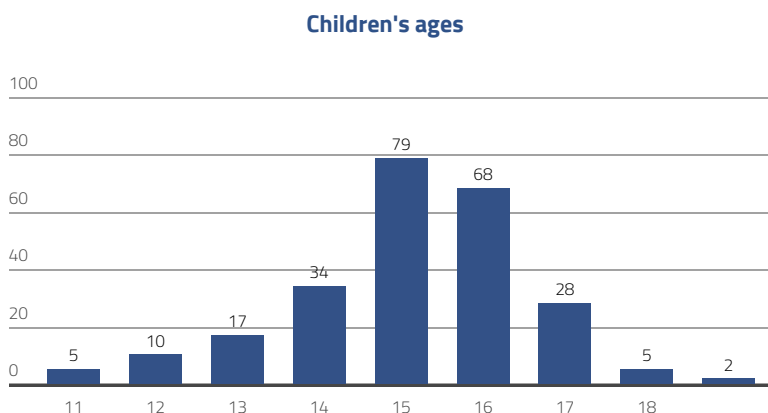
Distribution according to the victim's status



E- Distribution of the victims according to age groups

The figures indicate that the children under the age of (15), who were recruited by the Houthi group, are more than those between (15) and (18) years old, as their number amounted to (145) children under the age of (15), while (103) others were above this age. This is attributed to the impact of the educational curricula/schoolbooks on the awareness of children at schools and the excessive use of such content in mobilizing children. Five years ago, the Houthi group began to change the educational curricula/schoolbooks according to its religious and sectarian orientations.

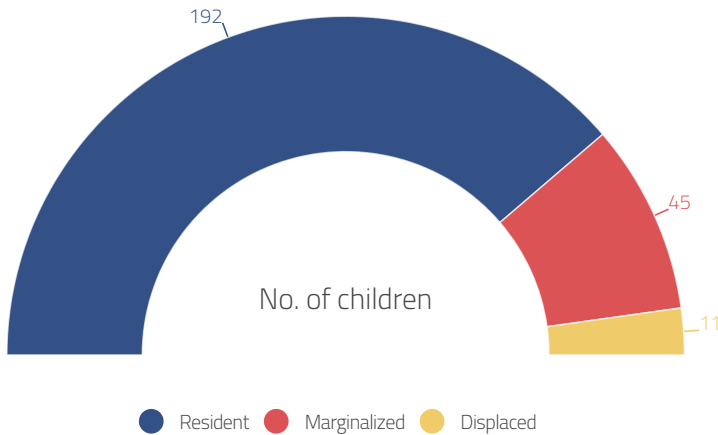
Figures distributed by age										
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Null	total
Children's ages	5	10	17	34	79	68	28	5	2	248



F- Distribution of the victims according to social groups

The figures show that the recruited children from the category of permanent residents in their communities represent the majority of victims, thanks to the power and influence that the supervisors in their local communities has enjoyed. The number of victims of this category amounted to (192) victims, followed by children from the category of socially marginalized people or those who are called “dark-skinned” with (45) victims, while the number of victims from the displaced community amounted to (11) children. The Rasd Coalition believes that the deteriorating economic situation of children this category has encouraged them to enlist in order to get a monthly salary.

Distribution according to the type of residence				
Category	Resident	Marginalized	Displaced	Total
No. of children	192	45	11	248



G- Examples of violation cases

(8) Children recruited within one month

Samih Mohammad Al-Lawzi (16) years old, Abdul Ghani Hammoud Al-Hardi (16) years old, Abdul Wasie' Amin Al-Hatar (15) years old, Ali Naji Al-Ghader (16) years old, Ghamdan Mohammad Taha (16) years old, Mohammad Hammoud Fasila (16) years old, Noah Ali Al-Hitar (15) years old, and Nour Addeen Abdul Samad Al-Hitar (16) years old.

Time: January 2022

Place: Dhi Bahloul and Al-Durai'an areas in Yarim District, Ibb Governorate, before they were transferred to Sa'adah Governorate.

Violation: Child recruitment, deprivation of the right to education, and the respective families had no knowledge of the circumstances of their recruitment.

Violator: The Houthi group, through one of its supervisors called "Abu Turab", a security official in Yarim District.

Findings: All the children were transferred to Sa'adah Governorate and enlisted to join a training camp; their fate is still unknown.

Case selection criteria: These children were selected based on the fact that they were from one area, and because they were taken from their school to be recruited. In addition, this case shows how the Houthis have used schools in exploiting children and depriving them of their right to education.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must return these victims to their families and must integrate them into school after having them psychologically rehabilitated to ensure they do not return to the ranks of any armed group.

Case summary: These eight children were attending the school in the village of Dhi Bahloul and Al-Durai'an, in the Yarim District where the security supervisor Saddam Mutahar Ghallab, called "Abu Turab", was based.⁽⁴⁸⁾ With the help of the local tribal sheikh, Abu Turab began to meet with these children and lured them into joining his group, without the knowledge of their families. These children left the village one after another in June 2022 and were all transferred to Sa'adah Governorate.

The Rasd Coalition met with four witnesses from the area. One of the witnesses said⁽⁴⁹⁾ that the security supervisor, with the help of the district sheikh, was able to lure (13)

48- He also works as the Security Director of Yarim District, Ibb Governorate

49- Interviews took place on September 22, 2022.

children into joining the Houthi group's ranks, following a number of successive visits he paid to the village school. The parents of the children were not informed until after their children were transferred to a training camp in Sa'adah Governorate; they learned about it from the supervisor himself. The witness added that the families have never been in touch with their children and that they still do not know about their fate since their departure.

Ashraf Ali Mohammad Amer, (13) years old

Time: Ashraf was killed on February 1, 2022, in an air strike by the Arab Coalition, while he was fighting at the Al-Ain front, Shabwah Governorate. He was recruited on December 5, 2016.

Place: The old neighborhood of Mahweet City

Violation: Exploiting his economic and social status, as well as recruiting and involving him in hostilities, and having him killed in an air strike by the Arab Coalition.

Violator: The Houthi group, through its both supervisors in the city of Mahweet, Ibrahim Abdul Mo'men Al-Wadaei and Mohammad Rizq Shaker Al-Mahdi.

Findings: The victim moved between a number of battle fronts before he was killed in an air strike by the Arab Coalition warplanes at the Al-Ain front in Shabwah Governorate, when the Houthis waged an offensive against the area in early 2022.

Case selection criteria: The child, Ashraf, was suffering from a hearing and speech impairment. The report cites his case to present the feeling of social contempt facing many children, like Ashraf, which pushes them to join armed groups. This case also refutes the allegations of the Houthi group that it recruited children of their own free will.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must stop recruiting children with disabilities, provide a decent & safe life for disabled children and their families, provide them with special care, and aim to pay fair compensation to the child's family in a manner that ensures reparation/redress.

Case summary: The child, Ashraf, was suffering from a hearing and speech impairment, because of which he could not learn; and there were no special schools in his area for such a type of disability. He could not also work because of it, so he felt that he was a burden on his families. His father, a public servant at the Finance Office in the governorate, is the provider of eight children, but his government salary has been

cut off since 2015. This increased the child's psychological condition and his feeling of embarrassment from the community. Ibrahim Al-Wadaei and Mohammad Rizq Al-Mahdi, who belongs to the Houthi group, took advantage of the child's condition, promising him a job and a monthly salary, and providing his father a special food basket from the share of the "Mujahideen".⁽⁵⁰⁾ Despite the strong opposition of his father, the child rushed for it and got involved with the Houthis to express himself and prove to the community around him that he can earn money for himself and his family.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on the state parties to recognize that a disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community ... and provide resources and assistance to him and his parents.⁽⁵¹⁾ However, the Houthi group took advantage of his social and psychological status to involve him in its ranks.

Witness reports: The Rasd Coalition interviewed three relatives of the victim.⁽⁵²⁾ One of them said that after the Houthi supervisor was able to recruit Ashraf, the victim was transferred to Sana'a to attend a combat training course in December 2016 and the Houthis gave him the military rank of "second lieutenant" before they sent him to fight. So he participated in a number of battle fronts, including in Nehm, Al-Jawf, Shabwah and the Western Coast. He was wounded in 2018 while fighting in Al-Durayhimi front in Hodeidah, and in September 2021 he was injured again in the Marib front. During these years, he visited his parents from time to time.

In December 2021, he was transferred to the Al-Ain battle front in Shabwah Governorate, when fierce fighting broke out between the Houthis and the forces of the Giants Brigades in the governorate. On the 1st of February 2022, a warplane of the Arab Coalition raided the site where Ashraf was fighting; his fellow fighters heard the sound of its warplane, so they fled the site but he did not, because he was unable to hear the sound of the warplane due to his disability. He was killed in the air raid; he was 17 years old at the time.

The Houthi group held a large funeral for the child in his hometown, Mahweet, which was reported in the group's media outlets⁽⁵³⁾ His father appeared in a television clip, blessing his death and supporting the Houthi group. The Rasd Coalition believes that the Houthis, through this funeral, want to convey messages that the child's recruitment and killing was voluntary, but the reality is that his recruitment

50- A term used by the Houthi group describe its fighters.

51- Article (23) of the Convention.

52- Interviews took place on February 7, 2023.

53- See Al Masirah TV website at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS9nhOfk1i0>

comes within the policy of forced recruitment of children. Ashraf's recruitment was a desperate attempt to survive and prove his importance to the community; and voluntary recruitment has no meaning for a child at the age of (13), who had no sense of fighting, and without the consent of his parents. What happened to Ashraf calls for holding accountable the leadership of the Houthi group and those directly responsible for his recruitment.

Abdul Ghani Shaif Akil (16) years old

Time: Killed on February 4, 2022

Place: Al-Osha District, Amran Governorate; he was killed in Al-Juba District, Marib Governorate

Violation: Recruitment and involvement in hostilities, and his death in military operations

Violator: Government forces in Marib

Findings: After he was involved in combat operations, the child was killed fighting within the ranks of the government forces during the battles that took place between them and the Houthi forces in the Al-Juba area of Marib Governorate.

Case selection criteria: The child was selected based on the fact that he belonged to the Muhamasheen category in Yemen, and that his recruitment took place after he lost his family; the child was living alone following the death of his parents and the departure of his brothers from the family home after they got married. Moreover, the child remained in a state of neglect, moving between families and did not receive sufficient care and attention; so, he was attracted to fight within the ranks of government forces as he was lured into receiving a monthly salary.

Recommendations: The government forces must compensate the child's family and aim to punish the people who participated in the process of recruiting him.

Case summary: The Rasd Coalition met with three residents in the child's area. One of the witnesses said⁽⁵⁴⁾ that two years before the child was killed, he was recruited by the government forces in Marib, taking advantage of his young age and the separation of his family. He was lured into receiving a monthly salary. After he joined them, he was trained to use weapons and was involved in military actions. When fighting broke out between the Houthi forces and the government forces during the first attack on the city of Marib in late 2021, the child was pushed to the frontline in the Juba area, where he was killed in February 2022.

54- Interview conducted on October 7, 2022

Majed Saleh Al-Qutini (13) years old

Time: May 20, 2021

Place: Adhalah area, Al-Hashwah District, Sa'adah Governorate

Violation: Denying him the right to education and recruiting him

Violator: The Houthi group, through the field supervisor and mobilization officer, Mutahar Muhammad Najah, in Al-Hashwah District.

Findings: After the child was recruited with the approval of his family, after he was lured into foodstuffs; he was sent to a two-month religious orientation course, before he joined the ranks of the group. His family still does not know about his fate.

Case selection criteria: Since the Sa'adah Governorate is the stronghold of the Houthi group's top leader, its influence is strong in the area; the group can attract children from their families through intimidation or enticement, and the local people cannot resist the group's methods.

Recommendations: The international organizations concerned with children, including the UNICEF, must implement social programs in Sa'adah Governorate and at the level of all its schools, in order to raise awareness of the danger of child recruitment. The Houthi group must also return the child to his family and have him integrated psychologically and economically into the society.

Case summary: The Houthi group relies on the district field supervisors with regards to the mobilization process; it also has local officials at the district level who are linked to such supervisor. During the documentation process conducted by the Rasd Coalition, the team was able to collect the names of persons who had a major role in mobilizing child soldiers. The child, Majed Al-Qutini, was one of the victims of these supervisors, as the district supervisor, Mutahar Mohammad Naji, was able to lure the child's family into foodstuffs that will be given monthly in exchange for their agreement to recruit the child. The supervisor had what he wanted, as the child was transferred to attend a religious orientation course at a school near his hometown for two months. Then he was sent to fight in the southern borders with Saudi Arabia.

The Rasd Coalition met with two witnesses from the child's family.⁽⁵⁵⁾ One of them said that Majed was in the sixth grade at Al-Hurriya School; the district director directorate was able to convince his family by registering them in the list of beneficiaries who receive monthly food assistance, which is supervised by the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The district director was a local member on this supreme council, so the family agreed to have the child recruited. There has been no news about the child since he was transferred to a training camp, and his family still does not know about his fate.

55- Interviews took place on 17 November 2022

Anwar and Jamal Abdul Nasser Al-Junaid (16, 17) years old, respectively

Time: July 5, 2022

Place: Al-Mantasha, Jabal Ras District, Hodeidah Governorate

Violation: Recruitment of children and denial of the right to education; currently, both brothers work as security escorts for the Houthi supervisor in the area.

Violator: The Houthi group through one of its supervisors called Al-Junaid Al-Tayyib Ahmed Al-Nour, brother of the director of the Jabal Ras District.

Findings: The two children stopped attending school, and now they work as security escorts for the Houthi supervisor in the area.

Case selection criteria: The children were selected based on act that they are brothers, and that their father contributed to their recruitment. This case also shows the area's lack of a public school and the impact on the population's awareness, as well as the ability of the Houthi group to mobilize children.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must return the two children to their families and end their military work with its supervisor in the area. It must also reintegrate them into society, provide financial assistance to the family, and aim to build a school for the children of the village so that they can continue their education.

Case summary: The two children were in the seventh grade at the "Faris Al-Arab" school, and their father joined the Houthi group's ranks after it took control of the area in 2015. The district supervisor, Al-Junaid Al-Tayyib Ahmed Al-Nour, was able to persuade the two children's father to join both of them in the ranks of the group. The district supervisor had what he wanted.

In addition, the supervisor aimed to convince the two children and inculcate the ideas of the group in their minds, as the local people's awareness level was low due to an almost complete absence of education. The school in which the two children were attending did not have an educational building; the students were studying under the trees.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The supervisor was able to convince the two children to work for him as security escorts.

The father of the two children bears the responsibility of upraising them in addition to the responsibility of the State.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The father could have the chance not to exploit

56- See the story of a village girl who hopes to grow up to build a school and the story of education under the trees, available at this link <https://ye-voice.com/news154209.html>

57- Article (18/1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates: (States Parties shall make every effort to ensure recognition of the principle that parents bear joint responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or legal guardians, as the case may be, have primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best

his two children to work in dangerous tasks, but this does not absolve the responsibility of the group and the field supervisor of district in which he enjoys influence, as he is the brother of the director of the Jabal Ras District, as appointed by the Houthis. The government leaders and Houthi supervisors in Hodeidah Governorate have significant influence over the local people.

The Rasd Coalition listened to three residents in the area. A witness said⁽⁵⁸⁾ that the Houthi supervisor recruited a number of children and pushed them to fight under the pretext of confronting Islamic State (IS). “As for Jamal and Anwar, they were recruited with the consent of their father, who joined the ranks of the Houthis after they took control of our village; they are currently working as security escorts for the supervisor.”

Bassam Ali Raadan (15) years old

Time: Bassam was killed in February 2022 and buried in his hometown on December 5, 2022

Place: Bani Asaad area, Jabal Al-Sharq District, Dhamar Governorate

Violation: Recruitment and involvement in hostilities

Violator: The Houthi group, through the director of the Jabal Al-Sharq District and mobilization officer, Najji Ahmed Sabr.

Findings: After the Houthi group recruited the child, Bassam, it transferred him to fight in Shabwah Governorate and the Western Coast; he was killed in military confrontations on the Western Coast.

Case selection criteria: This case was selected to highlight the role of the media propaganda used by the Houthi group in creating an aura over the dead children recruited in its ranks and its impact on their peers, in addition to using other means of recruitment. The child was granted a senior military rank, i.e., “First Lieutenant”, despite his young age.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must compensate the family of the child, Bassam Raadan, and stop luring children into joining its ranks. It must also stop holding large funerals for dead recruited children and stop broadcasting them via its media so as not to attract their peers to engage in fighting. The father of the child must assume his responsibility for improving the living conditions of the rest of his children so that they do not join the ranks of armed groups.

interests of the child shall be their primary concern.

58- Interview conducted on December 28, 2022

Case summary: The child was lured into joining the ranks of the group through local mediators, “mobilization officers” affiliated with the director of Jabal Al-Sharq District, called Naji Ahmed Sabr.⁽⁵⁹⁾ After his recruitment, the child was granted a military rank and engaged in fighting in Shabwah, eastern Yemen, and in the Western Coast, western Yemen, where he was killed during battles between the Houthis and the joint forces in February 2022.

The Rasd Coalition monitored a large funeral held by the Houthi group and reported by its media outlets⁽⁶⁰⁾ on December 5, 2022. The Rasd Coalition believes that this huge aura that the Houthi group creates for the dead child soldiers and airs via its media is one of the means to attract their peers to engage in fighting. At the funeral, the victim’s relatives urged the rest of the children to fight, which suggests his family’s participation in pushing him to enlist; this may be among the economic factors facing the family

The Rasd Coalition met with two residents, one of whom said⁽⁶¹⁾ that the child, Bas-sam, fought for several months within the ranks of the Houthis before he was killed; his body was kept in custody for eleven months by the joint forces until it was received in December 2022 through local mediation. He added that the child’s recruitment took place with the help of his peers who had previously been recruited by the district director.

Hashim Rabie’ Al-Maghrabi (13) years old

Time: June 15, 2022

Place: A resident of Wadi Al-Sulaila, Bart Al-Jawf, and was transferred to be recruited in Maran, Haydan District, Sa’adah Governorate.

Violation: Exploiting the child’s economic situation and recruiting him.

Violator: The Houthi group through its supervisor Sadiq Hassan Al-Gharibi

Findings: He was lured away from his area in Wadi Al-Sulaila, Al-Jawf Governorate, and transferred to a training camp in Wadi Khair, Maran, Haydan District, Sa’adah Governorate.

Case selection criteria: The report presented this case because of the age of the child, who was 13 years old the time, in addition to exploiting his needy family by giving them a food basket on a monthly basis.

59- See the District’s news on Al Masirah TV website <https://www.masirahtv.net/post/226225/>

60- See Al Masirah TV website <https://www.masirahtv.net/post/224492/>

61- Interview conducted on December 27, 2022

Recommendations: The Houthi group must return the child to his family and integrate him into the society. It must also provide financial aid to the family so that it can improve their economic situation.

Case summary: The child, Hashim, was in the sixth grade of primary school, when his relative, the Houthi supervisor in the area, managed to persuade the child's family to recruit him. The supervisor lured them into a food basket that will be provided on a monthly basis.

The Rasd Coalition listened to two witnesses from his village.⁽⁶²⁾ One of them said that by virtue of his kinship with the child, the supervisor of the Houthis in the village was able to take him out of school and send him to Sa'adah. We later learned that he was placed in a combat training in a camp in Wadi Khair in the Maran area,⁽⁶³⁾ Haydan District, Sa'adah Governorate.

Saqr Abdu Masmoud (12) years old

Time: January 20, 2022

Place: Al-Suwaiq Al-Tahaytah District, Hodeidah Governorate

Violation: Child recruitment

Violator: The Houthi group through the supervisor of the West Coast Front, Abu Taher

Findings: The child continues to fight within the ranks of the Houthi group in the Al-Suwaiq area, Al-Tahaytah District

Case selection criteria: The Houthi group used money to lure children and their families, as the sources of income are very low among the local people in Hodeidah Governorate. Utilizing this economic situation, the group was able to attract the victim to engage in fighting.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must return the child victim and stop exploiting him and his family with the money it pays, and allow international organizations and investigative mechanisms to visit the advanced fighting areas to monitor their commitments to end child recruitment according to the plan signed with the United Nations.

Case summary: The Rasd Coalition listened to three witnesses.⁽⁶⁴⁾ One of them

62- Interview conducted on September 20, 2022

63- This area is the hometown of the top leader of the Houthi group, Abdul Malik Al-Houthi.

64- Interviews took place on November 2, 2022.

said that the Houthi supervisor has attracted a number of children for recruitment in the Al-Suwaiq area; Saqr and his elder brother were among those recruited after promising them monthly salaries. They were sent to fight in the Al-Durayhimi battle front, where they continued for two months, then they were redeployed and sent to the Al-Tahaytah front, where the two brothers continue to be stationed as of the date of documenting the case.

Yassin Abdul Basit Al-Ramadi, (17) years old

Time: December 1, 2022

Place: Eyal Siraih area, Amran Governorate

Violation: Child recruitment

Violator: The Houthi group, through its supervisor, Mohammad Saleh Noman

Findings: The Houthi supervisor attracted the child to a religious orientation course held by the group in Amran Governorate; after completing it, he was recruited and sent to fight in Al-Jawf Governorate.

Case selection criteria: The case was selected based on the fact that child was an orphan, and that due to the economic conditions facing his mother and his brothers, who belong to the category of the Muhamasheen, he was lured into recruitment.

Recommendations: The Houthi group must return the victim child to his mother and aim to compensate her, rehabilitate the child psychologically and integrate him into the society, and stop exploiting children deprived of one or both of their parents to recruit them and entice them with money and weapons.

Case summary: Yassin was living with his family in a deteriorating economic situation due to the death of his father and being from the Muhamasheen group. He was studying at the basic stage in the village school, so the supervisor of the Houthis in the Eyal Siraih district, through one of his assistants, attracted him to a religious orientation course that was held in a school for a number of children and youth. After completing this course, the supervisor was able to lure the child into joining the group.

The Rasd Coalition heard three witnesses.⁽⁶⁵⁾ One of them said that the Houthis gave the child a salary, a firearm, and a military number after he joined them; he was transferred to Al-Jawf Governorate to fight in their ranks, and he continues to be with them since then.

65- Interview conducted on January 23, 2023

Ahmed Antar Naji (17) years old

Time: May 6, 2019

Place: He was enlisted in the 310th Brigade in Ma'rib Governorate; he is from the Eyal Siraih District of Amran Governorate

Violation: Recruiting children and involving them in hostilities

Violator: The Government forces in the city of Marib, the 310th Brigade

Findings: The child felt intimidated that the Houthi forces would capture Marib, so the child was eager to fight so as not to lose his last home after he was displaced from his hometown in Amran, which was captured by the Houthis; the child continues to be recruited by the government forces.

Case selection criteria: This case was selected based on the exploitation of the situation of the child who displaced from Amran Governorate to the city of Marib, and his fear for the fall of Marib into the hands of the Houthis, as he has no other place to call home. In addition, it was selected because the government forces had him recruited into their ranks.

Recommendations: The government forces in the 310th Brigade must end the recruitment of the child, Ahmed Antar, pay fair compensation to him and his family, as well as psychologically reintegrate him into the society, and stop using children who were displaced to the city fleeing from the Houthis' oppression, to fight under the pretext of revenge.

Case summary: The Rasd Coalition listened to three of his colleagues.⁽⁶⁶⁾ One of them said that the child and his family fled from his hometown in Amran to escape the oppression of the Houthis after their control over it; they settled in the city of Marib. During the Houthi attack on the outskirts of Marib, a member from the government forces was able to incite the child and push him to fight in defense of Marib against the Houthi forces. The child joined the forces of the 310th Brigade and continues to be recruited by them, moving around from one battle front to another.

66- Interviews took place on January 8, 2023

Sixth: Recommendations

To the Houthi armed group

- 1- Immediate cessation of the recruitment and exploitation of children, and the demobilization of child soldiers from the frontlines and the respective logistical activities, including their demobilization from security check points and civilian institutions.
- 2- Work according to the action plan signed with the United Nations to end all child recruitment.
- 3- Cease the use of money, weapons, military ranks, food and other means of monetary value to encourage and engage children in any recruitment, and to entice their families.
- 4- Reintegrate child soldiers in their communities, psychologically rehabilitate them, provide them and their families with financial compensation, and redress their harm.
- 5- Compensate and redress the families of child soldiers who were killed in battles, and children who were wounded and affected by the recruitment.
- 6- Suspension of school curricula that were changed after 2015, and restore the educational curricula/schoolbooks that were printed before that date, in a manner that ensures the best interests of children, as well as rehabilitates and educates them on national identity, peace, and coexistence with the other.
- 7- End summer educational programs that sow hatred, extremism and violence, and rehabilitate the Yemeni educational institution.
- 8- Spare children all forms of influence by armed conflict at schools, mosques and institutions, and stop the holding of special events in such entities and keep them away from manifestations of conflict.
- 9- Allowing the establishment of social programs for children in schools, mosques and civil institutions to provide support and raise

awareness of the dangers of exploitation for them and their families.

- 10- Stop broadcasting propaganda and indoctrination Children's stunts through media institutions and programs, and stop creating illusions or deceiving them by holding large funerals for dead child soldiers, which are attractive factors for their peers.
- 11- Work with United Nations organizations, including the UNICEF, to establish prompt mechanisms for filing complaints about the recruitment and exploitation of children and violence against them, and to ensure prompt follow-up and serious solutions for all cases of this kind.
- 12- Allow all national monitoring and investigation mechanisms of civil society organizations and institutions to document cases of human rights violations, including those against children.
- 13- Lifting the guardianship of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and allowing it to operate freely in a way that achieves the interests of children and the goals for which it was established.
- 14- Allow all international accountability and investigation mechanisms to operate freely in the areas under its control and work in good faith with initiatives related to achieving justice and accountability in Yemen.
- 15- Emptying schools and institutions for children of fighters and working to prepare them for the return of children.

To the Yemeni government

- 1- Ending child recruitment, withdrawing those from its ranks, and returning them to their families.
- 2- Work to hold perpetrators and participants in the recruitment of children accountable.
- 3- Requiring military forces, including the forces supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, not to recruit children under the age of (18) years.
- 4- Compensation and redress for children who have been recruited and

their families, including the adoption of social programs for their integration and psychological rehabilitation.

- 5- Adopting practical mechanisms in Aden and the rest of the governorates to receive complaints about the recruitment and exploitation of children and forms of violence directed at them, and to intervene in finding quick solutions.
- 6- Restructuring the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood to ensure that it carries out its mission and provide it with the necessary capabilities for that.
- 7- Evacuating schools from fighters and preparing them for the return of children.

To the United Nations

- 1- Make the principle of accountability a priority in the work of the United Nations and its agencies regarding Yemen, in order to ensure that local and regional violators are held accountable for the crimes committed.
- 2- Work seriously to form an international commission of a criminal nature, to investigate and collect files on crimes committed against children on the occasion of the conflict in Yemen or constitute a gross violation of human rights and the international humanitarian law.
- 3- Reactivating the team of regional and international experts on Yemen, in order to ensure the documentation of crimes and the preservation of evidence.
- 4- Peace talks between parties to the conflict do not include any amnesty measures that would prevent the prosecution of persons criminally responsible for committing crimes, or interfere with the right of victims to an effective remedy and to the truth about violations.
- 5- Developing chronic plans with all parties to implement their pledges to end recruitment, including the formation of teams from civil society and under the supervision of the United Nations to monitor

and access the frontlines of combat, training places, and military and security institutions.

- 6- Adopt long-term programs to protect Yemeni children from the danger of armed conflict, targeting all Yemeni regions, including:
Ha that spread There is work Yat Recruitment, to sensitize mucusrh Rehabilitation of the psychologically affected and their reintegration into society, in conjunction with economic programs for them and their families that will distance them from the impact of the conflict.
- 7- Establishing rapid mechanisms to receive complaints about the recruitment of children in the various Yemeni governorates and disseminating them widely in camps, schools and related institutions.
- 8- Develop practical programs to enroll children in schools, and increase support for educational and developmental interventions.

Attachments >>

Attachment No. (1) is a table showing the most important events that are related to the armed conflict and the violations against children in Yemen

Description of the event	Date
The Yemeni government signed with the United Nations an action plan to end child recruitment by the country's armed forces	May 14, 2014
The Houthi group in Sana'a signed an action plan with the United Nations to protect children and prevent grave violations against them	April 18, 2022
command signed alliance Arab led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations to enhance the protection of children affected by the armed conflict in Yemen	March 25, 2019
The Minister of Human Rights in the recognized government inaugurated the work of the joint technical committee between the Yemeni government and the United Nations «UNICEF» to prevent child recruitment, which was approved by the Council of Ministers.	November 16, 2018
issued the Yemen president Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi made a decision a Recruitment of children in the ranks of the armed and security forces is prohibited.	February 19, 2020
The Ministry of Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the recognized government, in partnership with the United Nations Office in Yemen, launched the International Campaign to Prevent Child Soldiers	May 25, 2022
The United Nations included all parties involved in the war in Yemen within the blacklist to violators of children's rights in armed conflict, Which Arab coalition and the Houthi group Yemeni government forces and Al Qaeda and Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula	October 7, 2017
The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses the need to stop the coalition Arab led by Saudi Arabia Aerial bombing of Yemen	October 11, 2018
The Secretary-General of the United Nations excluded the Arab coalition from the blacklist, in a step during which he noted its measures to protect children, and confirmed that the coalition was subject to monitoring for a full year.	June 15, 2020
The United Nations removed the name of the Yemeni government from the list of parties involved in grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.	July 2022
The Security Council adopted Resolution 2624 (2022) under Chapter 7, which requires the renewal of the sanctions regime, describing the Houthi group in one of its paragraphs as a "terrorist group." The resolution also lists the Houthis as an entity under the targeted arms embargo.	February 28, 2022

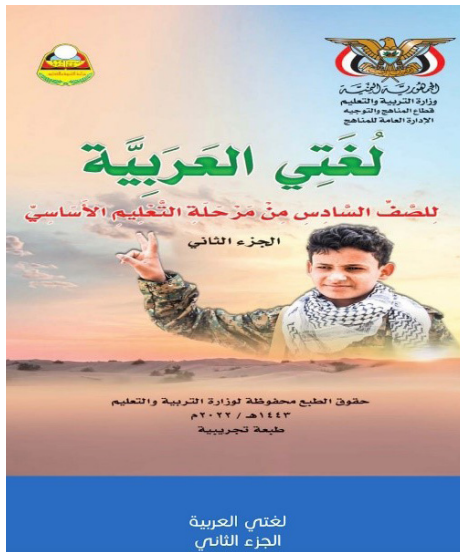
Attachment No. (2) shows a number of terms used in the report

Term	Signified
Convention on the Rights of the Child	The International Convention on the Protection of Children, ratified by Yemen on May 1, 1991
internationally recognized government	It is the government that gains international legitimacy, and it is represented by the Presidential Leadership Council
Ansar Allah group (Houthis)	It is the de facto authority that controls Sanaa and the governorates of northwestern Yemen
Southern Transitional Council	The de facto authority controlling Aden and other governorates in southern Yemen
joint forces	Forces controlling the western coast led by Tariq Muhammad Saleh, a member of the Presidential Leadership Council of Yemen, and receiving support from the United Arab Emirates
West Coast	An area that includes parts of the governorates of Taiz and Al-Hodeidah, extending from Bab Al-Mandab in the south to the outskirts of the city of Al-Hodeidah, along the Red Sea, and is controlled by the joint forces.
Arab Coalition	Countries that intervened militarily in favor of the Yemeni government, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE
Admin	A member of the Houthi group, and works within the chain of command or what is known as the Supreme Revolutionary Committee. He has many roles, most notably mobilization, recruitment and fund-raising. He exercises control and assumes the tasks of supervising the administrative unit or the geographical area in which he was assigned or resides.
Religious Orientations	A series of secret programs implemented by the Houthi group for those involved in its ranks, starting from instilling ideas and ending with combat training, and then formal engagement in fighting. Which a tradition followed by the community For children after polarization they, most of the children who attended these courses were involved in hostilities
Marginalized children	They are dark-skinned children

Attachment No. (3): Three photos taken from the educational curricula printed by the Houthi group for children in schools. Copied from a journalist's investigation, and according to the investigation, it gives a simple glimpse of the extent to which the new school curricula contain combat (jihadi) mobilization, encourage children to engage in combat fronts, and raise the culture of violence and hostility to the other and to everything that is different.

On the cover of the second part of *My Arabic Language* textbook, Hani Tomer, one of the children who joined the fight with the Houthis in Sa'adah Governorate, was killed in military confrontations in Al-Jawf Governorate. A whole unit was added to talk about him and his "heroism, courage and self-sacrifice for the sake of God."⁽⁶⁷⁾

The third picture is of the founder of the Houthi group, Hussein Badr Al-Houthi, who was killed in the fighting between the Houthi group and the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in what was known as the Six Sa'adah Wars.



67- Half of Yemen's children learn to love 'jihad' in the Houthi way at schools, available at this link <https://bit.ly/3ZtIMxG>

Attachment No. (4) A group of photos obtained by the Coalition for Monitoring Child Soldiers, inside a training camp affiliated with the Houthi group, showing photos of children displaying weapons and practicing physical and weapons training in preparation for combat





التحالف اليمني لرصد
انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان

Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring
Human Rights Violations

