

Yemen: Press freedom hampered by systematic repression and widespread impunity

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the undersigned Yemeni, regional, and international human rights organisations express grave concern about the ongoing deterioration of press and media freedoms in Yemen. Journalists and media workers continue to face systematic repression in areas controlled by both the Houthi group and the internationally-recognised government. These violations include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and unfair trials – punishment for people simply exercising their right to freedom of expression and for criticizing local issues. Yemen remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, and violations are routinely carried out with nearly total impunity. We urge all authorities in Yemen to fulfill their obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Yemen is a state party.

Judiciary as a tool of repression

Over more than a decade of conflict, Yemen's [judicial system](#) has increasingly been used to restrict press freedom and silence independent and critical voices. In January 2024, the Primary Court in Ataq sentenced journalist [Aziz Al-Ahmadi](#) to four months in prison, suspended, over a social media post that criticised local authorities. Similarly, [Awad Kashmim](#), head of the Freedoms Committee at the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in Hadramawt, was arbitrarily detained.

In 2024 alone, at least 40 cases of journalists being summoned and interrogated – often based on fabricated charges – were [documented](#). The targeted journalists were referred to courts lacking legal jurisdiction, such as the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a, which is normally reserved for terrorism-related cases. Despite the existence of dedicated press and publication courts, many journalists continue to be prosecuted before criminal courts.

In late September 2024, the Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a sentenced journalist [Taha Ahmed Rashid Al-Maamari](#), owner of Yemen Digital Media and Yemen Live for Media Production and Satellite Broadcasting, to death. Human rights lawyers, including Abdulmajid Sabra and Sami Yassin, were also subjected to threats, [arbitrary arrests](#), and unfounded charges of treason.

Since 2022, judicial harassment of journalists has escalated significantly, with an increase in prosecutions for those who criticise public officials. In several cases, courts sentenced three [journalists](#) to prison for charges such as “insulting a public employee” and “threatening to disclose confidential information.” In September 2024, coinciding with the 62nd anniversary of the 26 September Revolution, the Houthi group launched a wide-scale campaign of arrests, detaining hundreds, including journalist [Mohammed Al-Meyahi](#), for expressing dissenting views online.

Ongoing impunity

Journalists in Yemen face serious threats and grave violations from all parties in the ongoing conflict, including the internationally-recognised government, the Houthis, and other armed groups. Violations include killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture, all in the absence of effective accountability mechanisms.

Various factions have monopolised media outlets, severely reducing access to independent information sources, criminalising journalism, and creating an environment of fear and self-censorship. Repeated attacks have rendered journalism in Yemen an extremely dangerous profession. Women journalists face additional threats, including online [harassment](#) and organised smear campaigns aimed at silencing their voices and excluding them from the media sphere.

Over the past decade, more than 2,600 violations against journalists have been documented, with the Houthis responsible for the vast majority. At least five journalists remain in arbitrary detention, including Wahid Al-Sufi, forcibly disappeared since 2015, and both Mohammed Al-Meyahi and Naseh Shakir, who remain in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance.

Since 2020, targeted assassinations of journalists have increased. Many have been silenced through murder. The most recent case is the killing of television cameraman Musab AL-Hattami, who was [targeted by Houthi](#) forces on Saturday, 26 April, 2025 in Marib while on assignment to produce media content about the ongoing conflict. Other assassinated journalists include [Saber AL-Haidari](#), a correspondent for Japanese TV, killed by an explosive device planted in his car in Aden in June 2022; photojournalist Fawaz Al-Wafi, shot dead in his car in Taiz in March 2022; journalist [Rasha Al-Harazi](#), killed in November 2021; and AFP photographer Nabil Al-Quaety, who was gunned down by unidentified assailants in Aden in June 2020. These crimes persist in [the absence of impartial investigations](#), and with no accountability from any party in Yemen.

The undersigned organisations call on Yemeni authorities to:

- Immediately release all journalists who have completed their sentences and all those arbitrarily detained in violation of their rights to due process and a fair trial.
- Ensure that journalists are tried exclusively before press and publication courts in accordance with Yemen's international legal obligations.
- Support comprehensive legal reforms to align national laws with international human rights standards and guarantee full protection of freedom of expression and journalists' safety.
- Launch transparent, independent investigations into all incidents involving the targeting and deliberate killing of journalists.
- Reform the justice system to ensure judicial independence and end the use of the judiciary as a tool to suppress dissenting voices.
- End the judicial harassment of journalists and human rights defenders, and restore the independence of the judiciary.
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The Undersigned Organizations:

1. ARTICLE 19
2. [Studies and Economic Media Center \(SEMC\)](#)
3. Yemeni Media Freedom Observatory- [Marsadak](#) (YMFO)
4. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
5. SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties
6. European Arab Center for Human Rights and International Law
7. American Center for Justice (ACJ)
8. Rights Radar for Human Rights
9. Alkarama- Geneva
10. Watch for Human Rights (Watch4HR)
11. Foundation for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms
12. Abductees' Mothers Association
13. shohood organization for human rights – Yemen
14. Center of my Right for Support the Rights and Freedoms
15. Yemen Future for Culture and Media Development
16. Sama Southern Media League
17. Qarar foundation for Media and development
18. Dameer Foundation For Human Rights
19. Mansa Foundation For Media And Development Studies
20. Media Sac for Media and Development
21. The Electronic Foundation for Humanitarian Media-EOHM
22. Marib Youth Footprint Initiative
23. Media village for development and Information
24. Abjad Center for Studies and Development
25. Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism
26. The Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (Rasd Coalition)
27. Sawasia Organization For Human Rights
28. Monitoring Journalist Network
29. Al-Amal Women's and Sociocultural Foundation
30. Musaala Organization for Human Rights
31. Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children (CSWC)
32. Musawah Organization For Rights and Freedoms
33. Rescue foundaton for development
34. HOCO Civil Orientation Protection Organization
35. Masar Foundation for Development and Human Rights
36. Baheth Foundation for Development and Human Rights
37. Marib Dam Foundation for Social Development (MDF)
38. Marib Youth Footprint Initiative
39. Albelaad center for studies and media
40. League of Women for Peace
41. The Independent Civil Rights Movement

