



Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015 - Yemen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yemen is a republic with a constitution that provides for a president, a parliament, and an independent judiciary. Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh stepped down in 2012 when voters elected Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, the sole consensus candidate, as president in a vote generally considered free and fair. The transitional government sought to expand political participation to formerly excluded groups, including women, youth, and minorities. Progress ended when Ansar Allah forces, a movement of Houthi rebels backed by former president Saleh, staged an armed takeover against the government in 2014, precipitating its exile. Houthi rebel actors exerted significant control and influence over government institutions, including the security forces; the government-in-exile exercised limited control over some security forces.

On January 22, Houthi-Saleh rebels seized the presidential palace and other government buildings in Sana'a. The Houthis placed President Hadi under house arrest, and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and his cabinet resigned. On February 6, the movement illegally disbanded parliament and attempted to establish the appointive Supreme Revolutionary Committee as the highest governing authority. In March, President Hadi requested Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) military intervention, invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter, and fled the country the following day. A Saudi-led coalition launched air and ground operations against the Houthi rebels. Peace talks led by the UN special envoy for Yemen began in December.

The most significant human rights problems were arbitrary killings, disappearances, kidnappings, and other violence committed by various groups, as well as a corrupt judicial system that did not provide for the rule of law, further weakened after the Houthi-Saleh takeover. The internationally recognized government-in-exile lacked the capacity to enforce laws protecting against human rights abuses, particularly after its exile in March.

Other human rights abuses included the use of excessive force and torture by security forces; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; lengthy pretrial detentions; infringements on citizens' privacy rights; limits on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; lack of transparency; corruption; violence and discrimination against women, children, persons with disabilities, and minorities; use of child soldiers; restrictions on worker rights; and trafficking in persons to include forced labor. Government and Saudi-led coalition delays or denials of permits for commercial and humanitarian aid shipments bound for rebel-held ports exacerbated a deteriorating humanitarian situation, where a reported 82 percent of the population required aid. Air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition resulted at times in civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure, including destruction of a medical

facility operated by Doctors without Borders. The unstable security situation significantly complicated efforts to assess human rights practices.

Impunity was persistent and pervasive. Security forces remained essentially immune from civilian oversight. Expanded Houthi-Saleh influence over government institutions severely reduced the government-in-exile's capacity to conduct investigations.

Nonstate actors committed significant abuses while engaged in internal armed conflict. Groups included: Houthi-Saleh rebels; tribal militias; resistance forces; militant secessionist elements; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and a local branch of Da'esh, also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Few actions led to prosecutions.

Note: This report draws heavily on non-U.S. Government sources. The United States Embassy in Sana'a suspended operations and withdrew all U.S. Government personnel from Yemen on February 10.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

The government-in-exile exercised limited control over military and security forces due to Houthi rebel influence. Competing family, tribal, party, and sectarian influences also affected the government-in-exile's ability to control military and other security forces. During the year military and other security forces loyal to the government-in-exile battled with Houthi-Saleh forces. For additional information on deaths resulting from the ongoing conflict, see section 1.g.

There were numerous unconfirmed reports that current or former members of the security forces committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. Security forces, some affiliated with the former regime, and armed groups operated outside the law and committed human rights abuses.

Politically motivated killings by nonstate actors increased significantly during the year. Such actors included Houthi-Saleh rebel forces and terrorist and insurgent groups claiming affiliation with AQAP or Da'esh. Prior to the Houthi takeover in Sana'a in 2014, the number of killings involving gunmen on motorcycles increased to the extent that the government banned motorcycles in that city; rebels reportedly did not continue that ban in areas under their control during the year.

In August the Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV), a government-funded NGO created to document Houthi-Saleh violations, reported that Houthi and pro-Saleh forces killed 11 detainees, including Amin Nagi al-Ragawi of the Islah Party and two journalists whose views the rebels found objectionable, on Jabal Hirran in Dhamar Governorate between December 2014 and August.

In August, AQAP militants carried out public executions in Ta'iz, according to press reports.

In January an unknown perpetrator detonated a bomb outside a police academy in Sana'a, killing 37 persons and wounding 66. The blast targeted a line of prospective cadet enrollees, according to Human Rights Watch and the Henry Jackson Society.

Da'esh, emerging in Yemen this year, claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on Houthi-affiliated Shia mosques. See the *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/. On December 3, Da'esh-affiliated militants executed two members of the Awlaki tribe in Seiyun in Hadramawt Province after kidnapping them, according to a senior tribesman.

On August 30, unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle shot and killed the chief of security operations in Aden, Colonel Abd al-Hakim al-Sunaydi, in the city's al-Mansurah district, according to several media reports.

In September media reported the killing of al-Hudaydah University Secretary-General Hassan Said Abd al-Wadud by unknown assailants who threw a hand grenade into his passing car. On September 4, unknown assailants shot and killed human rights activist Anwar al-Wazir in Ta'iz Governorate, according to media reports.

On the evening of September 6, unknown assailants shot and killed Popular Resistance leader Abdullah al-Zanqari in Aden, the fourth killing of a resistance leader in the city in a week, according to media reports.

Impunity for security officials remained a problem, in part because the government-in-exile exercised limited authority over officials implicated in committing abuses and using excessive force.

b. Disappearance

During the year there were reports of politically motivated disappearances and kidnappings of individuals associated with political parties, NGOs, and media outlets critical of various security forces within the government, as well as others reportedly kidnapped for supporting the Houthis in the north or the Hiraq separatist movement in the south (see section 1.g.). The incidence of kidnapping of citizens increased during the year because of deteriorating security in many areas. Houthi-Saleh rebels and their allies sometimes detained individuals' civilian family members. Nonstate actors targeted foreigners, including those believed to be working for foreign diplomatic missions.

Abductions were difficult for foreign entities to verify, unless they involved a foreigner or government official. Many unofficial groups abducted persons to achieve specific goals. During the period September 2014 to August 15, Houthi and pro-Saleh forces and their allies arbitrarily detained 5,894 persons in 17 governorates, 900 of them in Aden; by the end of that period, the captors had released 4,640 of the detainees and continued to hold 1,254, according to the YCMHRV (see section 1.g., Abductions).

On January 17, Houthi forces kidnapped then presidential advisor Ahmed bin Mubarak while he was delivering the draft constitution to a national review body in Sana'a, releasing him later that

month. As of November no authority had investigated the case or arrested suspects, according to the government-in-exile.

In March, Houthi fighters detained three men at a military base in Lahij who were delivering medical supplies to a pharmacy connected to al-Jumhuri Hospital in Aden and accused them of delivering medicine to Da'esh-backed groups.

On April 18, Houthi-Saleh forces abducted Sana'a University professor of political science Abd al-Majid al-Mikhlafi and his son Fikri at Haradh on the border with Saudi Arabia, according to the YCMHRV. Al-Mikhlafi's captors freed him on August 17, according to media reports; no information was available about Fikri al-Mikhlafi.

In September the Houthi-controlled National Security Bureau (NSB) released three Saudi, two American, and one British hostage; the American hostages had been held 177 days, according to media reports.

In February tribal forces kidnapped French aid worker Isabelle Prime and her interpreter; they released them in August.

In August a UAE military operation freed British petroleum engineer Douglas Robert Semple, who AQAP had kidnapped in February 2014 in Hadramawt Governorate, according to press reports.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution prohibits torture and other such abuses. Although the law lacks a comprehensive definition of torture, there are provisions allowing jail terms of up to 10 years for acts of torture.

Prior to its exile, there were reports that the government's security officials committed abuses. Human rights NGOs, former detainees, and prisoners alleged that torture and mistreatment occurred frequently during arrests or detentions.

There were also reports of abuses by elements of the Houthi-Saleh security forces and in institutions under their control. Torture and other forms of mistreatment were common in Houthi-Saleh detention facilities, according to the YCMHRV, which documented 796 cases in 16 of the country's 21 governorates and the capital Sana'a from September 2014 to August 15. On January 31, Houthi forces abducted activist Fuad Ahmed al-Hamdani while he participated in a peaceful protest and detained him for 143 days. YCMHRV monitors claimed Houthi forces tortured him, based on the injuries they observed when they visited him in detention on February 15 and after his release. According to al-Hamdani, his captors subjected him to extreme physical discomfort through contortion, beat him on the thighs and hips with an iron rod until he lost consciousness, and forced him to pledge not to organize demonstrations.

On February 11, Houthi militia detained three men in Sana'a after they attempted to join a peaceful protest marking the anniversary of the 2011 revolution, and tortured them, according to Human Rights Watch and the YCMHRV. One victim, Saleh Awad al-Bushri, died within hours of his

release, according to YCMHRV monitors who observed injuries sustained during his detention (see section 1.a.).

In August unconfirmed social media reports described the mutilation of Houthi rebels by fighters loyal to the government-in-exile.

According to the government-in-exile, a group of AQAP fighters killed approximately 10 progovernment fighters before detaining a group of Houthi snipers, torturing them, and mutilating them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening and did not meet international standards. Prisoners lacked many basic needs. The government-in-exile exercised no effective control over prison facilities during the year. In past years government officials and NGOs identified overcrowding, lack of professional training for corrections officials, poor sanitation, inadequate access to justice, intermingling of pretrial and convicted inmates, lack of effective case management, lack of funding, and deteriorating infrastructure as problems within the 18 central prisons and 25 reserve prisons (also known as pretrial detention centers). Authorities held prisoners with physical or mental disabilities with the general population with no special accommodations.

Houthi-Saleh rebels seized control of most prisons, according to the government-in-exile, and released many convicted criminals; they also engineered several jailbreaks from facilities they did not control. Under Houthi-Saleh management, prisons and other places of detention failed to meet minimum health or hygiene standards, according to YCMHRV monitors who visited Houthi-run facilities in Sana'a during the year.

Tribes in rural areas operated unauthorized "private" prisons and detention centers based on traditional tribal justice. Tribal leaders sometimes placed "problem" tribesmen in private jails, sometimes simply rooms in a sheikh's house, to punish them for noncriminal actions. Tribal authorities often detained persons for personal or tribal reasons without trial or judicial sentencing.

Physical Conditions: Under the transitional government, the Ministry of Interior acknowledged prison conditions did not meet international standards but stated the government could not afford improvements. After the Houthi rebel takeover, information on prison conditions and population was limited.

No information was available on prison populations post Houthi-Saleh takeover during the year. In 2014 human rights NGOs reported that 70 percent of detainees either awaited trial or were remanded subject to investigation. In some rural and women's prisons, as well as in some prisons in the capital, local NGOs reported that prison authorities held juveniles with adults. Until the government's exile, the Ministry of Human Rights made efforts to separate juvenile detainees from adults, although overcrowding and financial constraints limited progress. By custom young children and infants born in prison remained in custody with their mothers until age nine. Prison authorities performed pregnancy tests on all female prisoners upon entry into a facility. Prisons segregated male and female adult prisoners and subjected them to similar conditions.

Political prisoners reportedly faced torture, abuse, and other forms of mistreatment, while all prisoners experienced harsh physical conditions. In 2014 the NGO National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) claimed bribery and corruption played major roles in prison mismanagement, and prisoners who paid bribes received better services and benefits. Observers described most prisons, particularly in rural areas, as overcrowded, with poor sanitary conditions, inadequate food and access to potable water, and inadequate medical care.

Houthi rebels reportedly chained detainees to toilets for months, denied them water, and prevented them from performing their prayers, according to former detainees.

On October 19, riots reportedly broke out in al-Hudaydah's central prison to protest overcrowding and the mistreatment of a prisoner, according to media reports. The riots continued until at least October 20, when security forces, assisted by Houthi militia, used bullets and tear gas to disperse a demonstration in the central courtyard. Ten prison guards were injured.

No credible statistics were available on the number of inmate deaths during the year.

The continuing conflict negatively affected the condition of prisons. On April 2, AQAP militants stormed a prison in al-Mukalla in Hadramawt Governorate and freed at least 270 prisoners, according to media reports. Two guards and five inmates died during the incident. There were no reports of subsequent recapture of any of those freed.

On June 30, AQAP militants stormed the central prison in Ta'iz, freeing an estimated 1,200 prisoners, according to rebel-controlled media. There were no reports of subsequent recapture of any of those freed.

On October 24, tribesmen from al-Muflahi reportedly attacked Aden's central al-Mansurah prison, using a rocket-propelled grenade. One guard, a member of the resistance loyal to the government-in-exile, died in the attack, according to media sources. The breach reportedly led to the escape of Ghassan al-Muflahi, a prisoner accused of attempting to bomb the offices of former Aden Governor Nayif al-Bakri; unknown assailants had attempted to free al-Muflahi two months previously, according to the reports.

Administration: No information was available on prison administration after the Houthi-Saleh takeover during the year. Poor recordkeeping and a lack of communication between prisons and the central government made it difficult for authorities to estimate accurately the size of the prison population. Prior to the government's exile, a restructuring of prison administration also impeded improvement in recordkeeping. Many prisoners faced prolonged stays in detention beyond their sentences if they or their families could not pay fines or provide expected bribes.

The transitional government recognized the need to find alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, but had taken no action by the time of the Houthi takeover. There was no ombudsman to serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees. Under past practice prisoners could submit complaints to judicial authorities, but according to NGO reports, authorities would largely ignore such complaints. Authorities generally allowed prisoners and detainees visitors when family members knew a detainee's location but granted limited access to family members of security-offense prisoners and detainees. They generally allowed prisoners and detainees religious observance.

Independent Monitoring: The ongoing conflict prevented substantial prison monitoring by independent human rights observers such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), although YCMHRV had limited access to some prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, but both continued to occur. The law prohibits arrests or serving subpoenas between sundown and dawn, but local NGOs reported that authorities took some persons suspected of crimes from their homes at night without warrants. Security forces remained largely under the control of Houthi rebels as of year's end.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

By law the primary state security and intelligence-gathering entities, the Political Security Organization (PSO) and the NSB, report first to the minister of interior and then the president. The relationship and coordination efforts between the NSB and PSO are unclear. There was no clear definition of many of the NSB's priorities. The law charges the PSO with identifying and combating political crimes and acts of sabotage. These institutions came under Houthi-Saleh control following the Houthi-Saleh rebel takeover of Sana'a in September 2014, although their structure appeared to remain the same.

The Criminal Investigation Division reports to the Ministry of Interior and conducted most criminal investigations and arrests. The ministry's paramilitary Special Security Force (SSF), often responsible for crowd control, was under the direct authority of the interior minister, along with the counterterrorism unit. The Ministry of Defense also employed units under its formal supervision to quell domestic unrest and to participate in internal armed conflicts.

The SSF, Yemen Special Operations Forces, Presidential Guard (formerly the Republican Guard), NSB, and other security organs ostensibly reported to civilian authorities in the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, and the Office of the President; however, security institutions in Sana'a and other rebel-occupied areas of the country operated with increased impunity during the year. Civilian control of these agencies deteriorated as rebel actors undid restructuring efforts inspired by the GCC Initiative (GCC-I), a regional effort to promote national reconciliation. Interest groups, including former president Saleh's family and other tribal and party entities, expanded their influence over these agencies, often through unofficial channels rather than through the formal command structure. Such influence, coupled with a lack of effective mechanisms to investigate and prosecute abuse and corruption, exacerbated the problem of impunity.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law provides that authorities cannot arrest an individual unless they apprehend him while he is committing a criminal act or have served him with a summons. Additionally, authorities must arraign a detainee must within 24 hours or release him. The judge or prosecuting attorney, who decides whether detention is required, must inform the accused of the basis for the arrest. The law stipulates authorities may not hold a detainee longer than seven days without a court order. The government-in-exile exercised no effective control over the responsible institutions within the country.

The law contains provisions for bail, but no information was available on their systemic application; in the past some authorities abided by these provisions only if they received a bribe. The law prohibits incommunicado detention, provides detainees the right to inform their families of their arrest, and allows detainees to decline to answer questions without an attorney present, but no information was available on systemic practice; in the past authorities did not always respect these rights. The law states the government must provide attorneys for indigent detainees, but no information was available on systemic practice; in the past the government often did not do so. Tribal mediators commonly settled rural cases without reference to the formal court system.

Detainees often did not know which investigating agency arrested them, and the agencies frequently complicated matters by unofficially transferring custody of individuals among entities. Prior to the rebel takeover, security forces routinely detained relatives of fugitives as hostages until the fugitive was located. Authorities stated that they detained relatives only when the relatives obstructed justice, but human rights organizations rejected this claim.

Arbitrary Arrest: Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the government routinely practiced arbitrary arrest, and the rebels who seized power did the same. The number of persons arrested arbitrarily was difficult to estimate. Even prior to the outbreak of conflict, authorities did not record many detainees' names, did not transfer some detainees to official detention centers, and arrested and released many detainees multiple times during the year. In many areas Houthi and pro-Saleh forces and their allies arbitrarily detained persons and kept them in temporary prisons, including at military sites. Between September and August 2014, the largest number of arbitrary detentions occurred in Sana'a, followed by Aden, according to the YCMHRV. Other nonstate actors also arbitrarily detained persons.

A Baha'i Yemeni whom authorities detained in 2013 appeared before a court on November 8. In 2013 PSO officials took him from his home and held him in prison in Sana'a without charge and without access to a lawyer. The individual reported authorities tortured him during the first 45 days of his detention. During the court hearing, the judge threw out all evidence obtained during the period of alleged torture, emphasized that the detainee was not on trial for his beliefs, and said any charge against him must be for a crime not related to his faith. According to an NGO, the judge also denied the defense lawyer's request for the detainee's conditional release on the grounds of poor health but directed that he receive medical attention. The court scheduled another appearance for November 24, but the authorities admitted the individual to a hospital from prison on November 23. The court rescheduled the appearance to December 6, but no additional information was available.

Pretrial Detention: No information was available on pretrial detention practices during the year. In the past international monitoring organizations estimated that half of all detainees held by the Ministry of Interior either awaited trial or held during a pending investigation. Prolonged detentions without charge or, if charged, without a public preliminary judicial hearing within a reasonable time, were common practices, despite their prohibition by law. Staff shortages, judicial inefficiency, and corruption caused trial delays.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the judiciary was weak, not fully independent, and hampered by corruption, political interference, and lack of proper legal training. Judges' social and political affiliations and occasional bribery influenced verdicts. The

government's lack of capacity and reluctance at times to enforce court orders, especially outside the cities, further undermined the credibility of the judiciary. Criminals threatened and harassed members of the judiciary to influence cases. Once exiled, the government lost control over the court or prison systems, and both systems deteriorated.

Trial Procedures

The law considers defendants innocent until proven guilty. Trials are generally public, but all courts may conduct closed sessions "for reasons of public security or morals." There are no jury trials. Judges, who play an active role in questioning witnesses and the accused, adjudicate criminal cases. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. The law provides for the government to furnish attorneys for indigent defendants in serious criminal cases, but no information was available on systemic practice; in the past the government did not always provide counsel in such cases. In principle defendants and their attorneys had access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, and authorities allowed defense attorneys to counsel their clients, address the court, and examine witnesses and any relevant evidence. All defendants had the right to appeal, and the slow pace of court cases provided adequate time to prepare a defense. Defendants could not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. During the year there was little information available regarding respect for due process.

A court of limited jurisdiction considers security cases. A specialized criminal court, the State Security Court, operates under different procedures in closed sessions. This court does not provide defendants with the same rights provided in the regular courts. Defense lawyers reportedly did not have full access to their clients' charges, relevant government-held evidence, or court files.

In addition to established courts, there is a tribal justice system for noncriminal issues. Tribal judges, usually respected neutral sheikhs, often also adjudicated criminal cases under tribal law. Authorities usually did not formally charge persons tried under the tribal system usually but rather publicly accused them. Tribal mediation often emphasized social cohesion more than punishment. The results carried the same weight as court judgments, if not more, because the public often respected the tribal process more than a formal court system seen by many as corrupt and lacking independence.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were numerous reports of political prisoners and detainees, although confirmation of the number and assessment of the status of political prisoners or detainees was difficult. Activists accused the interim government of detaining Hirak activists, demonstration leaders, and journalists. Following their takeover of state institutions, rebels detained activists, journalists, and demonstration leaders. They did not charge detainees publicly, and they severely restricted or barred information to and access by local or international human rights organizations. Absent public charges it was often difficult to determine whether authorities held detainees for criminal or political activity.

As of June, 13 journalists were in prison, according to the Yemen Journalists Syndicate. On June 9, Houthi forces abducted 10 journalists from Sana'a, including Akram al-Waleedi, according to the

YCMHRV, citing a family member. Rebels first detained them at the Criminal Investigation Division and later at an undisclosed location (see section 2.a., Freedom of Speech and Expression).

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The law provides a limited ability to pursue civil remedies for human rights violations as tort claims against private persons. There were no reports of such efforts during the year. Citizens cannot sue the government directly but may petition the public prosecutor to initiate an investigation.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits these actions, but authorities continued such interference. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, government security forces sometimes detained relatives of fugitives as hostages until authorities located the suspect. In other cases detention of family members continued while the families negotiated compensation for the alleged wrongdoing. There were no reports that authorities injured or mistreated such family members.

Both before and after the armed takeover, security forces sometimes claimed justification for their actions on security grounds, and, at other times, the attorney general personally authorized telephone call monitoring and reading of personal mail and e-mail. Once exiled the government lost control over security institutions.

In multiple instances Ansar Allah authorities went to the homes of activists, journalists, and political leaders opposed to the Houthis and used arrest and other means to intimidate perceived opponents and to silence dissent. Authorities frequently compelled detainees to sign contracts promising not to affiliate themselves with groups their captors saw as opposed to Ansar Allah, according to Human Rights Watch. According to human rights NGOs, rebel security actors searched homes and private offices, monitored telephone calls, read personal mail and e-mail, and otherwise intruded into personal matters without legally issued warrants or judicial supervision.

No citizen may marry a foreigner without permission from the Ministry of Interior, the NSB, and, in some instances, the PSO, under a regulation authorities enforced arbitrarily. In the past the government enacted regulations to reduce a form of sex tourism in which significant numbers of foreigners, particularly Saudis and Emiratis, entered into temporary marriages with young Yemeni women (as is possible under Islamic law). They then left the bride, frequently pregnant, without means of support, to return to their countries of origin, where they would terminate the temporary marriage (see section 6, Women). The ministry typically approved marriages to foreigners if the foreigner provided an embassy letter stating that the government of the non-Yemeni spouse had no objection to the marriage and presented a marriage contract signed by a judge. Frequently, bribes facilitated approval; there was no available information on current practice.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts

The country experienced significant internal conflict during the year. On January 22, forces affiliated with the Houthi-led Ansar Allah, a movement backed by former president Ali Abdallah Saleh, seized the presidential palace and other government buildings in Sana'a, leading Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and his cabinet to resign, while the Houthis placed President Hadi under house arrest. On February 6, the movement illegally disbanded parliament and attempted to establish the Supreme Revolutionary Committee as the highest governing authority. On March 24, President Hadi requested Arab League/ GCC military intervention, invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter; the president fled the country the following day. In response to this request, on March 26, Saudi officials announced the formation of a coalition to counter the Houthi rebellion, with membership including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, and Senegal. The Saudi-led coalition conducted air and ground operations throughout the remainder of the year.

Clashes occurred as the parties expanded control over, lost, and regained territory. The military's loyalties divided among numerous local actors. Armed clashes continued and expanded to several areas of the country among Houthi-Saleh rebels, supporters of both the Islah Party (Sunni Islamist) and the Rashad Party (Salafi), armed separatists affiliated with the Southern Mobility Movement, tribal forces, and progovernment resistance forces, and some Saudi-led coalition ground forces, with participation by elements of the country's armed forces. Terrorist groups, including AQAP and Da'esh, carried out attacks against government representatives and installations, Houthi combatants, members of Hirak, and other actors. AQAP and Da'esh accused of behavior violating sharia law. In October, Vice President Bahah (who was named to this position in April) and most ministers established themselves in Aden and attempted to restart government services, despite an attack on their temporary headquarters on October 6, for which Da'esh claimed responsibility. On December 15, UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, convened the government-in-exile and Houthi-Saleh representatives to peace talks in Switzerland. As of year's end, those talks continued, and the government had established a tentative hold in Aden.

Yemeni and international observers criticized all parties to the conflict for civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure resulting from shelling and airstrikes.

As a result of the fighting, the humanitarian situation in the country deteriorated significantly, with a reported 82 percent of the country's population requiring humanitarian assistance by the end of the year, according to the UN.

Killings: NGOs, media, and humanitarian organizations reported on the use of what they considered disproportionate force by all parties to the ongoing conflict.

Available information on civilian casualties is incomplete, especially with the closure of many health facilities during the year due to insecurity and the lack of supplies. Casualties reportedly resulted from airstrikes and shelling of civilian areas. Numerous organizations tried to track fatalities in the fighting. For instance, on September 1, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stated that of the estimated 95 civilian deaths during the preceding two weeks in Ta'iz, the Saudi-led coalition's aerial bombardment caused 53, while the OHCHR attributed the remaining 42 to sniper fire and shelling by Houthi rebel forces. According to the government-in-exile, shelling by Houthi-Saleh forces killed 7,235 civilians between March 21 and August 15. The OHCHR estimated that between March 26 and December 31, the conflict produced 8,119 casualties, including 2,795 killed and 5,324 wounded.

In August the YCMHRV reported 3,074 fatalities and 7,347 injured persons during the period September 2014 to August 15 in 14 of Yemen's 21 governorates plus Sana'a. As of August 19, the World Health Organization counted 4,513 persons killed since the start of the conflict, many of them reportedly civilian.

In September the UK-based NGO Action on Armed Violence reported 1,363 civilian fatalities between January 1 and July 15 due to explosive weapon use; of 124 recorded incidents, 60 percent took place in populated areas. According to Human Rights Watch and other reporting, from March 20 to September 27, an estimated 1,866 civilian fatalities occurred from all causes, the majority from coalition airstrikes.

There were many reported instances of killing civilians. For example, on August 29, Houthi-Saleh rebel forces shelled the al-Saeed mosque in Usayferah, north of Ta'iz, reportedly causing the deaths of 20 children ages two to 14.

Houthi rebels fired numerous rockets and three SCUD missiles across the border into Saudi Arabia, killing at least 47 Saudi civilian and military personnel from April to December, according to media reports.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reported that the Saudi-led coalition launched rocket attacks into populated civilian areas near the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border in the northern Yemeni town of Sa'ada and Hajjah Province. Human Rights Watch reported that seven rocket attacks killed 13 persons, including three children, in seven rocket attacks from April to mid-July in Hajjah Province.

The Saudi-led coalition airstrikes resulted in civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure on multiple occasions. Coalition sources sometimes reported that damage in a given explosive incident resulted not from airstrikes but from shelling by Houthi-Saleh rebel forces; there were often contrary claims by pro-Houthi media. Due to ongoing fighting, there was limited opportunity for post-incident forensic investigations.

On July 24, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit a wedding party in a village near Mokha, Ta'iz Governorate, resulting in upwards of 130 civilian fatalities and as many injuries, according to media reports.

On August 30, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike targeted the al-Sham bottling plant in Hajjah Province, according to the coalition spokesman, resulting in more than 30 casualties, according to media reports. The coalition spokesperson asserted that Houthi rebels had used the plant to make explosive devices and to train African migrants pressed into service as combatants. Human rights organizations reported that there had been no militant activity in that area for several months.

Abductions: Between September 2014 and August 15, Houthi-Saleh forces and their allies abducted and forcibly disappeared 982 persons in 17 governorates, extracting forced pledges and confessions and demanding ransom from family members, according to the YCMHRV. Tribal groups were probably responsible for kidnappings for ransom, as were other nonstate actors such as AQAP, according to reports by the NGO HOOD in 2014 (see section 1.b.).

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture: Media and NGOs reported that the Houthis used land mines in civilian areas in the governorates of Abyan, Aden, Marib, Lahij, and Ta'iz. According to Human Rights Watch, land mines killed at least 12 persons and wounded more than nine since September. Al-Jazeera reported that the Houthis planted land mines on intercity roads and in residential areas in and around Aden in retaliation for their defeat and loss of the city in August. Adel Saeed, an expert at the Yemen Executive Mine Action Center, said in a press interview that the Houthis left behind tens of thousands of mines, explosive devices, and explosive remnants of war. The government-in-exile and the Saudi-led coalition brought in an antimine team from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to clear the land mines.

Child Soldiers: Although law and government policy expressly forbid the practice, children under age 18 directly participated in armed conflict for government, tribal, and militant forces, primarily as guards and couriers. During the year the Houthis and other armed groups, including tribal and Islamist militias, including AQAP, increased their recruitment, training, and deployment of the children as participants in the conflict, according to Human Rights Watch. In May, Human Rights Watch reported that children accounted for as many as a third of all fighters for these armed groups. Fighting killed at least 279 children and wounded 402 others between March 26 and June 16, more than four times the 2014 child casualty rate, according to Human Rights Watch.

Tribes, including some armed and financed by the government to fight alongside the regular army, used underage recruits in combat zones, according to reports by international NGOs such as Save the Children. Houthis routinely used children to operate checkpoints and search vehicles. Combatants reportedly involved married boys ages 12 to 15 in armed conflicts in the northern tribal areas. Tribal custom considers married boys as adults who owe allegiance to the tribe. As a result, according to international and local human rights NGOs, half of tribal fighters were youths under 18. Other observers noted tribes rarely placed boys in harm's way but used them as guards rather than fighters.

Extremist groups also used child soldiers. AQAP recruited boys for combat operations against military and security forces.

Also see the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Other Conflict-Related Abuses: There were reports of restriction of the passage of relief supplies and of humanitarian organizations' access. After progovernment forces established a tenuous hold by August, the government-in-exile and the Saudi-led coalition delayed or withheld clearance permits for commercial and humanitarian aid shipments bound for rebel-held Red Sea ports, directing shipments instead to Aden. Also that month, media and NGOs reported that multiple attacks severely damaged infrastructure critical to offloading shipments at the Houthi-controlled Port of al-Hudaydah on August 18. According to these reports, five cranes, several storehouses, and the container terminal sustained damage. Supply interruptions made it difficult for aid agencies to support vulnerable populations. Increasing food insecurity, fuel shortages, damage to local infrastructure, and lack of access for humanitarian organizations to vulnerable populations contributed to the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

In general, NGOs reported relative cooperation from Houthi leadership related to delivery of humanitarian aid to ports that they controlled; however, the Houthis did not permit the delivery of humanitarian aid to the besieged city of Ta'iz, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis there.

There were reports of attacks on health-care facilities. On October 26, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit a medical facility operated by Doctors without Borders (MSF) in Haydan District, Sa'ada Governorate, resulting in one staff member's injury and the building's destruction, according to MSF. According to another international NGO based in Sana'a, an initial strike landed to the side of the facility, while a subsequent one hit it directly.

In August, Houthi forces reportedly shelled al-Thawrah Hospital in Ta'iz and turned the Yemen International Hospital on the city outskirts into a military barracks, installing heavy artillery, according to reports by the government-in-exile, citing Yemeni NGOs.

There were reports of deliberate attacks on health-care workers. On September 2, a gunman at a Houthi checkpoint killed two ICRC workers, both Yemeni nationals, in Amran Governorate. On August 25, the ICRC evacuated its foreign staff in Aden after gunmen robbed its main office while holding staff at gunpoint. On December 1, unknown parties kidnapped two ICRC workers; the kidnappers subsequently released one while the other, a Tunisian national, remained in captivity at year-end.

Eight Yemeni Red Crescent Society volunteers died in the line of duty since the start of the conflict. Two volunteers died in an airstrike in the al-Swaida area of Ta'iz. On April 4, two volunteer paramedics died when an unknown assailant's gunfire hit their ambulance in Aden. On March 30, an unknown assailant shot and killed a volunteer ambulance driver in al-Dhale in the south.

There were reports of use of civilians to shield combatants. Houthi-Saleh forces reportedly used captives as human shields at military encampments and ammunition depots under threat of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes, extracted forced pledges and confessions, and demanded ransoms ranging from 100,000 to 200,000 rials (\$465 to \$930) from family members, according to the YCMHRV. They seized most detainees in their homes or at their workplaces during raids, detaining the remainder at checkpoints, according to the YCMHRV, citing a Houthi militia document. Houthi-Saleh forces detained individuals without judicial orders and denied them family visits or legal representation, according to the YCMHRV.

On May 21, Houthi and pro-Saleh forces used detainees as human shields during Saudi-led coalition airstrikes against rebel positions on Jabal Hirran in Dhamar Governorate, according to the YCMHRV.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Expression

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press "within the limits of the law," but rebel actors did not respect these rights, and the government-in-exile was not in a position to

enforce them. Following the outbreak of conflict in March, rebel actors actively suppressed news outlets, including formerly government-run media, as well as independent journalists. Rebels ransacked media outlets, according to Reporters without Borders. In the summer and fall, the government-in-exile reconstituted some media outlets outside the country. Since Ansar Allah disbanded parliament in February, the government-in-exile did not and was unable to take action to amend the Press and Publications Law, unchanged since 1990. Despite several initiatives by activists to amend it, the law calls for journalists to uphold national unity and prohibits criticism of the head of state.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: There were reports that Houthi-led Ansar Allah suppressed the freedom of speech.

Press and Media Freedoms: Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the transitional government approved legislation to regulate broadcasting and television channels, and radio stations proliferated. A number of domestic private stations operated under media production company permits, and several stations broadcast from abroad for domestic audiences.

The law stipulates that newspapers and magazines show a bank statement of 700,000 rials (\$3,260) and have one million rials (\$4,660) in operating capital to obtain a license to publish. According to the law, newspapers and magazines must pay 10,000 rials (\$47) annually to renew their licenses. Similarly, correspondents of regional and international media outlets must pay 5,000 rials (\$23) annually to renew their work licenses.

Violence and Harassment: Rebel actors, including Houthi militias and forces loyal to former president Saleh were primarily responsible for a campaign of violence and harassment against journalists, according to a report from the Yemen Journalists Syndicate, an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists. The government-in-exile was unable to take any substantive steps to protect journalists from violence and harassment (see section 2.a., Nongovernmental Impact).

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The government-in-exile did not and could not counter the practice of censorship by rebel actors inside Yemen. During the year Houthi-controlled Ministry of Telecommunications and Internet service providers reportedly systematically blocked websites and domains that it deemed critical of the Houthi agenda.

Prior to the government's exile, Customs Authority and Ministry of Culture officials occasionally confiscated foreign publications regarded as either pornographic or religiously objectionable, according to the Freedom Foundation. No information was available on practices following the government's departure.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the government required book authors to obtain certification from the Ministry of Culture for publication and to submit copies to the ministry. Publishers sometimes refused to deal with an author who had not obtained certification. Prior to the conflict, the ministry approved most books, but long delays were frequent. Both the ministry and the PSO monitored and sometimes removed books from stores. A ban continued on publishers distributing books deemed pornographic.

Libel/Slander Laws: The law criminalizes criticism of the “person of the head of state,” although not necessarily “constructive” criticism; the publication of “false information” that may spread “dissent and division among the people”; materials that may lead to “the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni revolution”; and “false stories intended to damage Arab and friendly countries or their relations” with the country. Citing these restrictions, the Specialized Press and Publications Court intimidated journalists with excessive prosecutions for criminal defamation prior to the government’s exile. No information was available on the court’s subsequent operations.

Nongovernmental Impact: Houthi rebels and AQAP significantly inhibited freedom of expression and members of the press through violence and harassment. As of December the Houthi rebels controlled several state ministries responsible for press and communications, including the Ministry of Telecommunications. Ansar Allah selected items for formerly government-run broadcast and print media and did not allow reports critical of Houthi rebels.

From January through June, according to the Yemen Journalists Syndicate, Houthi-Saleh rebels, and presumably popular resistance forces and tribal militias, were responsible for a range of abuses of the media. Fighting killed 10 journalists; authorities arrested, kidnapped or prosecuted 55 media workers; and dozens of journalists fled to their villages or left the country. There were 48 cases of storming of newspapers and radio stations and 21 cases of journalists threatened, harassed, and/or victimized by smear campaigns in which authorities accused them of treason due to their work or for expressing their opinion. Authorities forced eight journalists to stop working and threatened them with dismissal and salary cuts; and hundreds of state media workers, including those working for al-Thawrah, Saba, Yemen TV, and Radio Sana’a, were similarly affected. There were 16 cases of newspapers and media outlets shut and their equipment confiscated; nine television stations shut; and 33 websites blocked. Rebel actors were primarily responsible for these abuses, although some cases involved other security forces and the Saudi-led coalition, according to a Yemen Journalists Syndicate report. As of the end of the year, 13 journalists were in prison, according to the syndicate.

In August the Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC), a Yemeni NGO, reported a marked increase in media freedom violations, including “killings, injuries, arrests, intimidation, raids of homes and offices, website blackouts, and newspaper closures” by actors within the country, principally Houthi-Saleh rebels and presumably popular resistance forces and tribal militias. An estimated half of the 61 recorded incidents were abductions, 17 were instances of intimidation, five were raids, one was a killing, and another was a wounding. In September, SEMC reported 42 similar violations.

Houthi rebels stormed Suhail TV twice since September 2014, according to the Freedom Foundation. The station reportedly relocated outside Yemen.

On March 27, Houthi forces reportedly ransacked al-Jazeera’s news bureau in Sana’a to protest Qatar’s participation in the Saudi-led coalition’s military campaign against Ansar Allah, according to the International Federation of Journalists.

On April 25, Houthi rebels ransacked the Sana’a headquarters of Belquees TV, according to Reporters without Borders.

In July, Houthi rebels stormed and took control of government-run Yemen TV's studios and offices in Sana'a, according to the Freedom Foundation. Government-in-exile officials later established a parallel Yemen TV base in Riyadh.

In May pro-Houthi forces detained Abdullah Qabil and Yousef al-Ayzari, journalists who had criticized Ansar Allah. Both journalists reportedly died when a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit the building in which the Houthis held them in Dhamar Governorate, according to Human Rights Watch.

On June 9, Houthi forces abducted 10 journalists including Akram al-Waledi from Sana'a, according to the YCMHRV, citing a family member; the rebels first detained them at the Criminal Investigation Division and later at an unknown location. No information on the journalists' status was available at year's end.

In December 2014, AQAP mortally wounded captive American journalist Luke Somers and South African teacher Pierre Korkie, both of whom it detained in Shabwah Governorate.

On October 12, AQAP kidnapped three journalists in the city of al-Mukalla, according to Reporters without Borders.

In January an explosion killed local journalist Khaled al-Washli while he covered attempts to defuse a bomb placed by AQAP, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

On March 18, an unknown assailant in Sana'a shot and killed leading Yemeni journalist and human rights defender, Abd al-Karim Mohammed al-Khalwani, according to Reporters without Borders.

Internet Freedom

The government-in-exile did not and could not uphold internet freedom. Censorship affected internet freedom, and there were notable cases of Ansar Allah intrusion into cyberspace. The Houthi-controlled Public Telecommunications Corporation systematically blocked user access to websites and internet domains it deemed dangerous to the rebel actors' political agenda.

According to an October 20 study by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab, Ansar Allah used internet-filtering technology to censor sources critical of the group and "to manipulate the information environment."

Electricity and fuel shortages during the year, as well as the reduced availability of access points, poor quality of internet lines, and high costs, reversed what had been a positive growth in the use of the internet. According to the Ministry of Telecommunication and Communication Technology, the number of internet users had increased from 14.9 percent in 2012 to an estimated 17 percent in 2014.

On August 5, according to Human Rights Watch and the YCMHRV, Houthi rebels abducted prominent pediatrician and activist Dr. Abd al-Qader al-Juneid at gunpoint from his home in the al-Humayra neighborhood of Ta'iz, accusing him of disseminating anti-Houthi writings in his Twitter feed. As of November 2, al-Juneid remained in captivity, and no authority had investigated the case or arrested or tried suspects, according to the government-in-exile.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Prior to the conflict, political parties frequently attempted to influence university academic appointments and faculty and student elections. They actively recruited new students into party branches specifically created as youth divisions (for example, the General People's Congress Youth Division and the Islah Youth Division), through which the parties could mobilize youth on campuses.

The NSB maintained permanent offices on campuses, reflecting continued government concern about security and, in some cases, controversial speech. Party-affiliated officials at the Ministry of Higher Education and academic institutions reviewed prospective university professors and administrators for political acceptability before hiring them and commonly showed favoritism toward supporters of specific political parties. There were no reported instances of censored curriculums, sanctioned professors or students; however, after their takeover Houthi and other actors' incursions onto campuses and detentions of academics appeared designed to intimidate them as perceived opponents.

On August 23, Houthi forces kidnapped several professors from the University of Sana'a campus, according to media and NGO reports. Within a month the captors released the professors, according to the government-in-exile.

On October 17, a group of unidentified Islamists entered the Administrative Sciences College in Aden and informed the staff and students they could no longer teach male and female students in the same classes, according to an NGO.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law provides for freedom of assembly. The government-in-exile was unable to prevent infringements on freedom of assembly by rebel forces and their proxies, who responded at times with excessive force to demonstrations and protests in various parts of the country.

Shortly after Houthi rebels seized government offices and disbanded parliament, the interim interior minister on February 8 ordered police in Sana'a to prevent all unauthorized demonstrations, citing "the exceptional circumstances" prevailing in the country, according to Human Rights Watch.

Between January 25 and February 11, Houthi-Saleh rebels beat peaceful protestors in Sana'a with sticks and rifle butts, according to Human Rights Watch. They detained at least 46 protestors between January 25 and February 11 but released most the same day. Militias detained another 10 persons near demonstration sites for up to 13 days.

On February 11, Ansar Allah militiamen detained three men attempting to join a protest and tortured them. One victim died. During the same protest, the militiamen stabbed two protestors in the neck, according to Human Rights Watch.

In March, Houthi forces used lethal force against demonstrators in Ta'iz Governorate, killing at least seven persons and wounding more than 83, according to Human Rights Watch.

Freedom of Association

While the law provides for freedom of association, the government-in-exile lacked the capacity to protect this right. The law regulates associations and foundations and outlines the establishment and activities of NGOs. Authorities require annual registration. The law exempts registered NGOs from taxes and tariffs and requires the government to provide a reason for denying an NGO registration, such as deeming an NGO's activities "detrimental" to the state. It forbids NGOs' involvement in political or religious activities. It permits foreign funding of NGOs. The law requires government observation of NGO internal elections. There were no known attempts by NGOs to register during the year.

According to the government-in-exile, Houthi-Saleh forces "stormed and looted" the premises of 115 civil society organizations between March 21 and August 15.

On April 18, Houthi rebels looted the office of the Yemen Parliamentarians against Corruption (YemenPAC), the local branch of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) and a registered NGO in Yemen. Rebels damaged equipment and documents, according to a July 8 GOPAC statement. According to a June 11 statement on the YemenPAC Facebook page, the rebels were armed, and Houthi forces had previously subjected the group's offices to multiple "inspections" from September 2014 through April 4, and an additional raid on May 24.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. Prior to September 2014, the transitional government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern. The Houthi takeover and the ensuing conflict, however, made it difficult for humanitarian organizations to reach many areas of the country due to security concerns. The government-in-exile did not and could not enforce the law.

According to UNHCR, the country's laws and policies were consistent with international standards, but the authorities' capacity to protect and assist persons in need was limited. No authority was able to provide services in some parts of the country.

In-country Movement: Rebel forces, resistance forces, elements of the army and security forces, and tribesmen maintained checkpoints on major roads. In many regions, especially in areas outside effective central security control, armed tribesmen frequently restricted freedom of movement, operating their own checkpoints, sometimes with military or other security officials, and often subjecting travelers to physical harassment, extortion, theft, or short-term kidnappings for ransom. The number of nongovernment checkpoints increased in many governorates as central government control in those areas weakened. All sides of the conflict damaged transportation infrastructure, leading to widespread damage or destruction of key roads, bridges, and other key infrastructure.

Social discrimination severely restricted women's freedom of movement. Women in general did not enjoy full freedom of movement, although restrictions varied by location. Some observers reported increased restrictions on women in conservative locations, such as Sa'ada. Authorities required travel permits for all non-Yemeni nationals leaving Sana'a.

Foreign Travel: The law requires women to have the permission of a male guardian, such as a husband, before applying for a passport or leaving the country. A husband or male relative may bar a woman from leaving the country by placing a woman's name on a "no-fly list" maintained at airports, and prior to the conflict, authorities strictly enforced this requirement when women traveled with children.

In September authorities twice prevented Dr. Shafiq al-Wahsh, director of the Women's National Committee, from leaving the country to participate in meetings in preparation for peace talks. The Houthis stated they rejected her request because of the security situation in the country.

Internally Displaced Persons

According to the Task Force on Population Movements, co-led by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were more than 2.5 million IDPs as of November. The government's IDP registration system has been on pause since the escalation of the conflict in March.

IDPs originated from all governorates and have dispersed throughout the country. Ta'iz Governorate hosted the highest number of IDPs (approximately 392,000 individuals), followed by Amran (an estimated 288,000 persons) and Hajjah (approximately 280,000 individuals). The governorates of al-Dhale, Abyan, al-Bayda, al-Jawf, Dhamar, Ibb, Sa'ada, Sana'a, and Hadramawt each hosted more than 100,000 IDPs. Approximately 50 percent of the total displaced population originated from the governorates of Sa'ada, Ta'iz, and Amanat al-Asimah. IDPs with available resources and nearby family generally rented houses or stayed with relatives. IDPs without means usually sought refuge at the first village, school, or public health facility that would accept them.

Humanitarian organizations' access to IDPs was generally poor due to the ongoing conflict; however, the ICRC and MSF maintained a presence in multiple locations throughout the country. According to reporting shared by the United Nations, humanitarian organizations, local NGOs, and charities that still functioned in the capital supported IDPs in Sana'a with food, shelter, and non-food items. IDPs from Sa'ada reported limited access to cash for purchasing basic household items. Most were farmers and had no other means to earn an income while in Sana'a.

The humanitarian situation in Ta'iz Governorate worsened as Houthi-affiliated forces continued to prevent food, medical supplies, and fuel from entering the city. Without fuel to run generators, the State Water Foundation could not function, putting hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk of illness due to disruption to water and sanitation facilities. Militias held trucks containing food, medical supplies, and aid equipment at checkpoints and prevented them from entering major cities.

Armed robberies, theft of vehicles, and the looting of offices impeded humanitarian organizations' access to IDPs.

On March 30, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike at the al-Mazraq IDP camp in Hajjah Governorate killed approximately 40 persons, including three government soldiers who were guarding the facility, and injured an estimated 200, according to media reports (see also section 1.g., Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts).

There was a marked increase in food insecurity throughout the country. On August 27, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network reported that at least 6.2 million people faced extreme food consumption gaps or were experiencing extreme loss of livelihood assets that would likely lead to food consumption gaps. An additional 6.7 million persons required livelihood support. Rates of acute malnutrition were high among displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. Government and/or Saudi-led coalition delays or denials of clearance permits for humanitarian and commercial aid shipments bound for rebel-held Red Sea ports, and Houthi checkpoints that disrupted overland distribution of food, significantly exacerbated food insecurity (see section 1.g., Other Conflict-Related Abuses).

In August, Saudi Arabia's King Salman Relief Center set up a temporary camp for displaced persons in al-Abr District, 60 miles south of al-Wadiah border crossing. The camp provided services for as many as 3,000 persons, including electricity, air conditioning, and drinking water.

Protection of Refugees

Yemen maintained open borders during the conflict and received refugees from a variety of countries. Many refugees became increasingly vulnerable due to the worsening security and economic situation in the country. Somali, Ethiopian, and Eritrean refugees, and others shared in the general poverty and insecurity of the country.

UNHCR estimated that since the start of the year, despite the conflict, more than 70,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants arrived in Yemen by sea, the majority from Ethiopia as well as Somalis and other nationalities. Many were attempting to reach or return to Saudi Arabia for work, deceived by smugglers who told them the conflict in Yemen was over, according to UNHCR. Additionally, UNHCR figures showed there were approximately 250,000 refugees, mainly Somali, in Yemen. Due to the fighting, many had displaced from Aden to the camp at Kharaz and towns in southern Yemen. The government-in-exile could not provide physical protection to refugees.

More than 121,000 persons fled Yemen since March, some seeking to cross the border into Saudi Arabia, and others to cross the Red Sea for Djibouti, Somalia, or other nearby countries, despite the difficulty and danger of the crossing. Almost half of the persons who fled Yemen were Yemeni nationals; others included Somali refugees, Ethiopians, Djiboutians, Sudanese, and other third-country nationals who had worked in Yemen prior to the conflict. Between April and mid-

November, IOM assisted 2,060 migrants to leave Yemen by air, and organized 12 boat rotations that evacuated 2,257 migrants by sea.

Access to Asylum: Yemen is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol; however, no law addresses the granting of refugee status or asylum, and there was no system for providing protection to asylum seekers. In past years the government provided automatic refugee status to Somalis who entered the country. There is not information available on whether this practice continued during the conflict. Approximately 5 percent of refugees were from Ethiopia (the majority of new arrivals during the year), Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, and other countries recognized under UNHCR's mandate.

Refugee Abuse: In past years multiple NGOs reported criminal smuggling groups had built a large number of "camps" near the Yemeni-Saudi border city of Haradh, where authorities held migrants hoping to reach Saudi Arabia for extortion and ransom. There were reports of torture and kidnapping by smuggling gangs.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens with the ability to change their government peacefully through free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised that ability. The outbreak of conflict interrupted a government-initiated new voter registration program. There were no elections since the outbreak of conflict in 2014.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers generally considered the one-candidate election conducted in 2012 to be free and fair. Elections for the presidency remain pending under the GCC-I, which superseded elements of the constitution and permitted the extension of President Hadi's term through the end of the transition. In March 2014 political parties acting within the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) endorsed that extension, and President Hadi remained the legitimate holder of the office. In September 2014 13 parties signed the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, which temporarily ended the violence associated with the Houthi entrance into Sana'a and called for implementation of the NDC outcomes, including elections and a new constitution.

In January the Constitutional Drafting Committee prepared a new draft constitution for review by the national body designated for that purpose under the GCC-I. On January 17, a government representative was in the process of delivering the draft constitution to that national body when Houthi forces kidnapped him (see section 1.d., Disappearances).

On February 6, Houthi rebels declared the constitution null and void, illegally disbanded parliament, and announced the formation of the appointive Supreme Revolutionary Committee as the highest governing body. A government initiative to update voter rolls remained suspended.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The law requires political parties to be national organizations that do not restrict their membership to residents of a particular region, or to members

of a given tribe, religious sect, class, or profession. The power-sharing agreement outlined in the 2011 GCC-I broke down as rebels drove the internationally recognized government from the country.

According to the government-in-exile, between March 21 and April 15, Houthi-Saleh forces “stormed and looted” 163 premises belonging to or associated with political parties (For example, see section 1.c. and section 4).

Since March, Houthi forces reportedly detained more than 100 members of the Islah Party after it expressed support for the Saudi-led coalition campaign against the rebels. On April 4, Houthi militia members detained Islah Party leader Muhammad Qahtan after first placing him under house arrest on March 31, according to Human Rights Watch. As of August 15, Qahtan’s captors continued to hold him in an undisclosed location without access to his family, according to the YCMHRV. In August, Houthi rebels entered the home of Islah Party Secretary-General, Mohammed al-Yadumi, kidnapping his brother and two of his sons, according to media reports. As of November 2, no authority had investigated the case or arrested or tried suspects, according to the government-in-exile; and the al-Yadumi family members whereabouts remained unknown.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the 2014 NDC outcomes included a 30-percent quota for women in all branches of government. Thirty percent of delegates to the 2013-14 NDC were women, and women chaired many committees and working groups.

The NDC had one delegate representing the minority group commonly known as “Muhamasheen” or “Akhdam.” According to some estimates, the Muhamasheen (an ethnic group largely descended from East Africans) comprised up to 10 percent of the population. Although only one of the 565 delegates was from the Muhamasheen, this representation was a first for the community.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

While the law provides for criminal penalties for official corruption, the government-in-exile was unable to implement the law effectively. There were reports of government corruption during the year. A burdensome process creates a separate legal system for the political elite. According to the constitution, approval of one-fifth of the members of parliament is necessary to conduct a criminal investigation on a deputy minister or higher-ranking official. The law then requires a two-thirds majority in parliament and presidential permission to bring criminal investigation results to the general prosecutor for indictment. The government did not use the procedure before Houthi rebels illegally disbanded parliament in February.

Corruption: The culture of corruption was pervasive, and observers reported petty corruption in nearly every government office. Job candidates often expected to purchase their positions. Observers believed tax inspectors undervalued assessments and pocketed the difference. Many government officials and civil service employees received salaries for jobs they did not perform or multiple salaries for the same job. Corruption also regularly affected government procurement.

Recent analyses by impartial international and local observers, including Transparency International, agreed that corruption was a serious problem in every branch and level of government, and especially in the security sector. International observers presumed government officials and parliamentarians benefited from insider arrangements, embezzlement, and bribes. Political leaders and most government agencies took negligible action to combat corruption.

The Central Organization for Control and Audit (COCA) is the national auditing agency for public expenditures and the investigative body for corruption. COCA presented no report to parliament before Houthi rebels illegally disbanded parliament in February. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the president was responsible for appointing its top officials. In cases involving high-level officials, COCA submitted reports directly to the president, who had the power to refuse the reports. Since COCA's inception in 1999, authorities have prosecuted only low-ranking officials for corruption. It has conducted no known investigations since February.

Some police stations reportedly maintained an internal affairs section to investigate security force abuses, and citizens had the right to file complaints with the Prosecutor's Office. The Ministry of Interior had a fax line for citizens to file claims of abuse for investigation. There was no available information on how many fax complaints the ministry received or investigated or whether the mechanism still existed.

In August 2014, to combat fraud and corruption in the government payroll system, the government implemented a plan to collect biometric information on all government employees, including soldiers and security forces, and to create a central registry designed to eliminate tens of thousands of fraudulent names and double dippers from the payroll. By the end of 2014, this registry included nearly half a million civil servants. It had reportedly identified 5,000 workers who illegally received more than one paycheck. The government suspended implementation following the armed Houthi takeover in February. The government also suspended implementation of a payment system for soldiers and security forces via bank or post office accounts. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, that system bypassed paymasters who had previously paid soldiers in cash, to provide for only the intended individuals collecting salaries.

The independent Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC) received complaints and developed programs to raise awareness of corruption prior to the outbreak of conflict. It included a council of government, civil society, and private sector representatives. A lack of capacity, particularly in terms of financial analysis, hampered the SNACC. According to the government-in-exile, the SNACC continued to operate "at minimal levels" during the year; however, no information was available on the number of complaints received or referrals for prosecution.

On June 10, GOPAC presented Yemeni parliamentarian Ali Ashal with its first-ever International Anticorruption Award "for his work fighting corruption and promoting oversight in Yemen and around the world." GOPAC recognized him in part for introducing the Access to Information Right Law in parliament, which passed in 2012.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires annual disclosure of financial assets by all ministers, deputy ministers, agency heads, members of parliament, and Shura Council members. Filers are to provide disclosures to the SNACC for verification. The information was not publicly available. The SNACC may also request disclosures from any other government employee. The law does not

require disclosure of assets of children or spouses. It provides for penalties for false filing of information.

Public Access to Information: The country's "right of access to information" law requires establishment of an independent agency to respond to requests for information and resolve grievances when authorities deny requests; however, the government did not establish that agency prior to the outbreak of conflict. Houthi rebels established extralegal "resolution committees" and "monitoring committees" within ministries as part of their continued efforts to establish parallel government institutions, while at the same time inserting themselves into the government.

The law normally requires the Ministry of Finance to publish the government budget online, in print, and in CD format; however, the government-in-exile continued to implement the 2014 budget on a month-by-month basis, as provided for under Article 88 of the constitution. Information related to contract awards, including geographical area, company, and terms of the contract, was publicly available through the High Tender Board website and announcements in state media. Government spending, however, particularly at the local level and with respect to military and security, and data relating to extractive industries were murky and difficult to trace.

The law provides for journalists to have some access to government reports and information, but the government did little to provide for accessibility or transparency.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without outright government restriction, but lower-level government officials, particularly those in security organizations, were occasionally uncooperative and unresponsive to human rights groups' views and requests for information. Local and international organizations attempting to investigate human rights cases reported obstacles in accessing victims, prisoners, and prisons. International, regional, and local media published their reports.

Rebel actors subjected domestic human rights NGOs to significant harassment during the year (see also section 1.b., Freedom of Association).

Government Human Rights Bodies: In 2014 multistakeholder working groups within the NDC focused on a wide spectrum of problems pertaining to human rights, including freedom of press and expression, women's and minority rights, and religious diversity. In September, Presidential Decree Number 13 established an independent National Human Rights Commission, which is responsible for investigating all human rights violations since 2011. Its chairman is Qaher Mustafa Ali Ibrahim, and it consists of eight members with legal, judicial, or human rights backgrounds.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equal rights and equal opportunity regardless of race, gender, language, belief, or disability, in accordance with the UN Charter, the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the Charter of the Arab League, as affirmed by the 1994 constitution, but the government-in-exile could not enforce the law in country. Discrimination based on race, gender, social status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability remained a serious problem. Some groups, such as the marginalized Muhamasheen or Akhdam community and the Muwaladeen (Yemenis born to foreign parents), faced social and institutional discrimination based on social status. Societal discrimination severely limited women's ability to exercise equal rights.

Article 75 of the draft constitution completed in January, under the authority of the provisional government and awaiting review (see section 3), affirmed "equal rights, freedoms, and public duties without discrimination due to sex, skin color, race, origin, religion, sect, belief, opinion, economic or social status, disability, political or geographic affiliation, occupation, birth, or any other considerations."

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, but does not criminalize spousal rape because the law states that a woman may not refuse sexual relations with her husband. The government-in-exile could not enforce the law against rape effectively in country. The punishment for rape is imprisonment for up to 25 years.

There were no reliable rape statistics, principally because of social stigma, fear of familial and societal retaliation, and a legal system largely stacked against survivors, which limited willingness to report the crime. Most rape victims did not report the crime due to fear of shaming the family, incurring violent retaliation by the perpetrator or a family member, or facing prosecution. By law authorities can prosecute rape victims on charges of fornication if authorities do not charge a perpetrator. There were no known cases during the year. According to law without the perpetrator's confession, the rape survivor must provide four male witnesses to the crime.

The law states that authorities should execute a man if convicted of killing a woman. The penal code, however, allows leniency for persons guilty of committing an "honor" killing or violently assaulting or killing a woman for perceived "immodest" or "defiant" behavior.

The law provides women with protection against domestic violence, except spousal rape, under the general rubric of protecting persons against violence, but authorities did not enforce this provision effectively. Victims rarely reported domestic abuse to police. Spousal abuse generally was undocumented, but women's groups asserted that physical, emotional, and sexual abuse within marriage was widespread.

The tribal arbitration process rather than criminal courts usually adjudicated cases of violence against women due to the widespread perception, shared by authorities, that violence against women was a private, family matter. Some local female tribal experts argued that tribal arbitration

is fairer for women, and victims often preferred it to the courts for that reason. Due to social pressures, authorities expected an abused woman to take her complaint to a male relative, rather than to authorities, to intercede on her behalf or provide sanctuary. For these social reasons, as well as the corruption and inefficiency of the justice system, criminal proceedings in cases of domestic abuse were rare.

As of September 2014, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Human Rights maintained hotlines for complainants, although they had little capacity to act on complaints. The Ministry of Human Rights referred callers to various civil society organizations or foundations for assistance. It also referred complainants to the nongovernmental National Women's Union for assistance. The National Women's Union, which had chapters across the country, had at least one shelter. The general director of the Family Protection Unit reported that the unit rarely received complaints of violence against women. No information was available on the availability of hotlines during the year.

The ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis hampered media coverage and advocacy of women's rights and investigations of violations of women's rights.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not prohibit female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), although a 2001 ministerial directive banned the practice in government institutions and medical facilities, according to Human Rights Watch. The 2013 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), administered by the Ministry of Public Health and Population, found that 19 percent of all women aged 15-49 had undergone some form of FGM/C. In some coastal areas influenced by cultural practices from the Horn of Africa, such as Mahara and al-Hudaydah, FGM/C practitioners had subjected up to 90 percent of women reportedly to FGM/C. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in 2012 that 97 percent of FGM/C procedures took place in the home and found Type 2--partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with and without excision of the labia majora--in 83 percent of studied cases. The Women's National Committee and the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Guidance provided a manual for religious leaders on women's health problems, including the negative health consequences of FGM/C. A 2012 UNICEF report concluded that, despite an awareness campaign, the country still lagged in addressing the problem.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Cases of "honor" killing--the murder of a daughter or sister who "shamed" the family--occurred, particularly in rural areas. Most cases of honor killing went unreported, and authorities investigated very few instances. There have been reports that family members murdered both male and female victims of rape or sexual abuse who reported the crime, to protect the family's honor. While the law stipulates the death penalty for a man convicted of murdering a woman, the penal code allows leniency for persons guilty of committing an "honor" killing or violently assaulting or killing a woman for perceived "immodest" or "defiant" behavior. The law also allows for a substantially reduced sentence when a husband kills his wife and a man he believes to be involved in an extramarital affair with her. The law does not address other types of gender-based violence such as beatings, forced isolation, imprisonment, and early and forced marriage.

Sexual Harassment: No laws specifically prohibit sexual harassment, although the penal code criminalizes "shameful" or "immoral" acts. Authorities, however, rarely enforced the law. Sexual harassment in the streets was a major problem for women. A 2010 report by the Athar Foundation

for Development, the most recent data available to date, found that 98.8 percent of women faced sexual harassment in the streets. The extent of sexual harassment was difficult to determine, although anecdotal reports, direct observation, and infrequent media reports suggested it also occurred in the workplace. There were anecdotal reports of employers transferring men accused of sexual harassment to other offices to prevent further abuse, although no further information was available.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of interference by the government-in-exile in the right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of children, to have the information and means to do so, and to attain the highest standard of reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. NGOs reported, however, that nonstate actors forbade birth control devices and other forms of contraception in areas under their control. Social pressure, women's lack of knowledge about reproduction, and the young age of marriage for many girls also meant many women had little or no real control over reproduction. Access to contraceptives and procedures involving reproductive and fertility treatments required the consent of both husband and wife. It was technically illegal for single women to buy and use contraception, but if a particular contraceptive (such as birth control pills) had another medical use, a woman could procure it. The information and means to make decisions on reproduction were available in cities, although contraception, skilled pre- and post-natal assistance, and obstetric care were too costly for much of the population. The 2013 DHS indicated that only 28 percent of ever-married women had used a "modern" family planning method. Contraceptive use increased with educational attainment and had increased over the 16-year period for which survey data were available, according to Human Rights Watch. During the year there was, however, a general lack of access to medications and pharmaceutical products due to the conflict.

Most women gave birth at home attended by traditional midwives and did not see a doctor during their pregnancies or after delivery. According to UN sources, the estimated maternal mortality ratio was 385 deaths per 100,000 live births during the year; there were an estimated 3,300 maternal deaths during the year. Major factors contributing to the high maternal mortality rate included lack of access to skilled health care (including emergency obstetric care), adolescent pregnancy, and lack of awareness and education on reproductive health.

Discrimination: Women faced deeply entrenched discrimination in both law and practice in all aspects of their lives. Mechanisms to enforce equal protection were weak, and the government-in-exile could not implement them effectively.

Women cannot marry without permission of their male guardians; do not have equal rights in inheritance, divorce, or child custody; and have little legal protection. Women do not enjoy the same legal status as men in family law, property law, inheritance law, and the judicial system. They experienced discrimination in areas such as employment, credit, pay, owning or managing businesses, education, and housing (see section 7.d.). The estimated 55-percent female literacy rate, compared with 85.1 percent for men, accentuated this discrimination. Women accounted for 30.5 percent of university students countrywide. Prior to the conflict, the NDC had adopted a 30-percent quota for admission of women to institutions of higher education.

Under family law and inheritance law, courts awarded custody of children over a specified age (seven years for boys and nine years for girls) to the divorced husband or the deceased husband's family. In numerous cases former husbands prevented divorced noncitizen women from visiting

their children. Under sharia inheritance laws, which assume that women receive support from their male relatives, daughters receive half the inheritance and accidental death or injury compensation awarded to their brothers.

Women also faced unequal treatment in courts, where the testimony of a woman equals half that of a man's. Female parties in court proceedings such as divorce and other family law cases normally deputized male relatives to speak on their behalf, although they have the option to speak for themselves.

A husband may divorce a wife without justifying the action in court. In the formal legal system, a woman must provide justification. Under tribal customary law, however, a woman may divorce without justification.

Some local interpretations of sharia prohibit a Muslim woman from marrying a non-Muslim man, others permit marrying a Christian or Jewish man. All interpretations allow a Muslim man to marry a Christian or Jewish woman. The foreign wife of a male citizen must remain in the country for two years to obtain a residency permit.

Any citizen who wishes to marry a foreigner must obtain the permission of the Ministry of Interior (see section 1.f.). A woman wishing to marry a foreigner must present proof of her parents' approval. A foreign woman who wishes to marry a male citizen must prove to the ministry that she is "of good conduct and behavior."

Yemeni women may confer citizenship on children born of a foreign-born father if the child is born in the country. If the child is not born in the country, in rare cases the ministry may permit a woman to transmit citizenship to the child if the father died or abandoned the child (see section 6, Children).

Women experienced economic discrimination (see section 7.d.). Within the country's limited professional sphere, women have low rates of representation in a range of fields, including the security sector. In October, Ta'iz resistance forces announced the graduation of the first class of female police officers, according to official government media.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship derives from a child's parents. A child of a Yemeni father is a citizen. Yemeni women may confer citizenship on children born of a foreign-born father if the child is born in the country. If the child is not born in the country, in rare cases the Ministry of Interior may permit a woman to transmit citizenship to the child if the father died or abandoned the child. The NDC recommended that a parent of either sex be able to convey citizenship.

There was no universal birth registration, and parents, especially in rural areas, never registered many children or registered them several years after birth. The requirement that children have birth certificates to register for school was not universally enforced, and there were no reports of authorities denying educational or health care services and benefits to children based on lack of registration. The lack of birth registration compounded difficulties in proving age, which led to authorities recruiting minors into the military and trying and sentencing juveniles as adults, including imposing the death penalty.

Education: The law provides for universal, compulsory, and tuition-free education from ages six to 15. Public schooling was free to children through the secondary school level, but many children, especially girls, did not have easy access. In addition to the 1.1 million children not attending school before the crisis escalated in March, another 1.8 million children lost access to school due to the conflict. In Sana'a city alone, half a million school-aged children ceased attending school between March and September 21, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). According to a November Humanitarian Situation Report from UNICEF, student registration and attendance ranged from 20 to 50 percent in most parts of the country.

Although attendance was nominally mandatory through the ninth grade prior to the outbreak of the conflict, only 79 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls attended primary school. The gender gap was larger for secondary and postsecondary schooling, with 34 percent of girls attending secondary school and only 6 percent continuing to postsecondary education. The lack of private toilet facilities for girls and reports of sexual harassment on the school commute contributed to the drop in female attendance after puberty.

As of September 17, 70 percent of schools had closed since March, and various armed groups occupied at least 68 school buildings, according to Save the Children. In a September 21 bulletin, OCHA estimated that "shelling and airstrikes" had totally damaged 140 schools and partially damaged 390 across the country. School damage and destruction was particularly severe in the governorates of Hajjah, Marib, Sa'ada, Sana'a, and Ta'iz, where the conflict was particularly intense.

Medical Care: Due to social discrimination, male children received preferential medical treatment.

Child Abuse: The law does not define or prohibit child abuse, and there was no reliable data on its extent. Authorities considered violence against children a family affair, and tribal arbitration was more likely to handle it than reporting to police.

Early and Forced Marriage: Early and forced marriage was a significant, widespread problem. There was no minimum age for marriage, and girls married as young as eight years of age, which traditionalists claimed served to assure they were virgins at the time of marriage. UNICEF's 2013 data estimated that 12 percent of females married by age 15 and 32 percent by age 18. The conflict likely exacerbated the situation, but new information was not available. The law forbids sex with underage brides until they are "suitable for sexual intercourse," an age that is undefined. An assessment undertaken by Intersos in Ta'iz in July found that 27 IDP and 10 host community families openly practiced early marriage, caused mostly by security concerns and local traditions, according to an NGO.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Cases of "honor" killing--the murder of a daughter or sister who "shamed" the family--occurred, particularly in rural areas. Most cases of honor killing went unreported, and authorities investigated very few instances. There have been reports that family members murdered both male and female victims of rape or sexual abuse who reported the crime, to protect the family's honor.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law does not define statutory rape and does not impose an age limit for consensual sex. The law prohibits pornography, including child pornography. Article 161 of the Child Rights Law criminalizes the prostitution of children.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, observers reported the practice of foreigners visiting the country to enter short-term marriages with underage girls. No laws specifically address sex tourism from outside the country, but it was particularly a problem in Aden and Sana'a. In 2014 the Ministry of Interior attempted to stop the use of "temporary marriage" provisions of Islamic law as a vehicle for sex tourism (see section 1.f.). There were reports that elements within the government security forces exacted bribes and fees for facilitating temporary marriages. No information was available about related practices during the year.

Child Soldiers: See section 1.g., Child Soldiers.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Anti-Semitism

Fewer than 150 Jews remained in the country, residing in two communities in Sana'a and Amran Governorate. Weak law enforcement put the Jewish community at risk, particularly following the Houthi takeover in Sana'a in September 2014, after which anti-Israeli rhetoric increased and blurred into anti-Semitic utterances. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the transitional government continued to protect the Sa'ada Jewish community in Sana'a and provided secure housing and a living stipend. See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

Anti-Semitic material was rare. Many Yemenis were proud to sustain a small Jewish community with some charities reportedly donating food and gifts during Jewish holidays, and media coverage of the country's Jews was generally positive. The most prominent exception was the slogan of the Houthi movement, "Death to Israel, a curse on the Jews."

Members of the Jewish community are not eligible to serve in the military or federal government. Authorities forbid them from carrying the ceremonial Yemeni dagger.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

Several laws mandate the rights and care of persons with disabilities, but the government-in-exile was unable to enforce them. The law permits persons with disabilities to exercise the same rights as persons without disabilities, but this did not happen in practice. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, social stigma and official indifference were obstacles to implementation.

The law reserves 5 percent of government jobs for persons with disabilities, and the law mandates the acceptance of persons with disabilities in universities, exempts them from paying tuition, and requires that schools be made more accessible to persons with disabilities. The extent to which any authority implemented these laws was unclear.

Children with disabilities may attend public schools, although schools make no special accommodations for them. There were some private educational institutions for persons with disabilities in large cities. Many parents refused to send their children with disabilities to public schools, due to concern about potential harassment.

Although the law mandates new buildings have access for persons with disabilities, compliance was poor. Most persons with disabilities relied on their extended family for support.

Information about patterns of abuse of persons with disabilities in educational and mental health institutions was not publicly available.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, authorities imprisoned persons with mental disabilities with criminals without providing adequate medical care and in some instances without legal charge. At that time the Ministry of Interior reported that family members sometimes brought relatives with mental disabilities to ministry-run prisons, asking officers to imprison the individuals. Ministry-run prisons in Sana'a, Aden, and Ta'iz operated semiautonomous units for prisoners with mental disabilities in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society. Conditions in these units reportedly were deficient in cleanliness and professional care. Prior to its exile, the government did not act on a 2005 Ministry of Interior initiative to establish centers for persons with mental disabilities and, once in exile, the government could not act on it.

The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The government-in-exile could not continue collaboration with the World Bank to administer a Social Development Fund; nor was the ministry able to oversee the Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, which provided limited basic services and supported more than 60 NGOs assisting persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Although racial discrimination is illegal, racial and social discrimination against the Muhamasheen, who traditionally provided low-prestige services such as street sweeping, was a problem. The Muhamasheen generally lived in poverty and endured persistent societal discrimination. Muhamasheen women were particularly vulnerable to rape and other abuse because of the general impunity for attackers due to the women's low-caste status. In 2013 the NDC's Rights and Freedoms Working group announced agreement on measures to protect the rights of the Muhamasheen and to ban discrimination against them.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced discrimination and could face the death penalty, although there have been no known executions of LGBTI persons in more

than a decade. The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, with the death penalty as a sanction, under the country's interpretation of Islamic law.

Due to the illegality of and possible severe punishment for consensual same-sex sexual conduct, there were no LGBTI organizations. Because the law does not prohibit discrimination, the government did not consider LGBTI problems "relevant" for official reporting, and few LGBTI persons were open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The government blocked access to LGBTI internet sites. LGBTI persons in Aden reported threats from AQAP; non-Yemen-based LGBTI rights blogs reported on the killings of four gay men by AQAP in Aden.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

While there were no reports of social violence against persons with HIV/AIDS, the topic was socially sensitive and infrequently discussed. Senior imams participated in international meetings on community support for persons with HIV/AIDS, and the country's senior cleric advocated on television for family and community compassion. Discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS is a criminal offense, but incidents occurred during the year. Human Rights Watch claimed that in August 2014, at a hospital in Sana'a, three professionals claimed that a doctor refused to treat a patient when she learned the patient was HIV positive.

Other Social Violence or Discrimination

In July in Hadramawt Governorate, AQAP executed three individuals it accused of "witchcraft and sorcery." It also distributed flyers in Hadramawt threatening to "sever the hands" of corrupt officials.

Section 7. Worker Rights

Government enforcement of labor law was weak to nonexistent due to lack of capacity, corruption, and conflict. Labor laws were still in effect, but Houthi rebels controlled the ministries responsible for their implementation, and the government-in-exile was unable to enforce them. Little information on labor conditions during the year was unavailable.

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The labor code provides for the right of salaried private-sector employees to organize and bargain collectively without government interference. These protections do not apply to public servants, day laborers, domestic servants, foreign workers, and other groups who together make up the majority of the work force. The civil service code covers public servants. The law generally protects employees from antiunion discrimination and prohibits dismissal for union activities. Due to the conflict, the government-in-exile lacked the capacity to enforce labor laws effectively.

While unions may negotiate wage settlements for their members and may conduct strikes or other actions to achieve their demands, workers have the right to strike only if prior attempts at

negotiation and arbitration fail. They must give advance notice to the employer and government and receive prior written approval from the executive office of the General Federation of Unions of the Republic.

The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs has veto power over collective bargaining agreements. Employees may appeal any dispute, including cases of antiunion discrimination, to the ministry. Employees also may take a case to the Labor Arbitration Committee, which the ministry chairs, composed of an employer representative and a representative of the General Federation of the Yemeni Workers' Trade Unions (GFYWTU). Parties generally preferred to resolve cases via the committee system, since court proceedings were costly and the judicial system was often corrupt.

According to the GFYWTU, the government allowed public sector employees, especially those employed in ministries, to unionize and strike if the unions had more than 200 members. Otherwise, authorities prohibited public employees from unionizing, and they must take labor grievances to court.

Although not required by law, all unions were federated within the GFYWTU. While not formally affiliated with the government, the GFYWTU was the only official federation and worked with the government to resolve labor disputes.

The law requires a minimum of 18 employees to establish a union in a workplace. The majority of private-sector employers registered only five to 10 employees, allowing them to avoid many social security and labor union regulations. Companies with more than 100 employees comprised fewer than 100,000 persons. Union sources stated the private sector had begun to recognize the benefit of working with unions to meet employee demands. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, penalties were generally sufficient to deter violations.

Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, the government at times sought to influence unions by inserting its own personnel into them. In some instances political parties also attempted to control unions and professional associations by influencing internal elections or placing their own personnel in them, usually tied to the government.

In practical terms a union's ability to strike depended on its political strength. Under the transitional government, authorities often accused unions and associations of being tied to a political party. The Development Working Group of the NDC called for the independence of all unions.

The government-in-exile was unable to enforce laws on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The penal code prescribes up to 10 years' imprisonment for any person who "buys, sells, gives [a human being] as a present, or deals in human beings; and anyone who brings into the country or exports from it a human being with the intent of taking advantage of him." This statute's narrow focus on transactions and movement means the law does not criminalize many forms of forced labor. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the government did not effectively enforce the law due to lack of resources and financial interests of the elite, many of whom supported such forms of labor; once in exile authorities could not enforce the law. There were numerous reports of such practices

in both urban and rural areas. In some instances employers forced children into domestic servitude and agricultural work (see section 7.c.) and women into domestic servitude or prostitution. Migrant workers were vulnerable to forced labor conditions.

See also the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits child labor, but the government-in-exile was unable to implement its regulations effectively. Poverty, disruption of services due to conflict, and lack of resources posed a serious challenge to this law. There is no monitoring mechanism to observe the implementation of the child labor law.

There were inconsistencies in the law with regard to the minimum age for work and hazardous work, and there were inconsistencies in the law with regard to the minimum age for work and hazardous work. The Combating Child Labor Unit (CCLU) within the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs was responsible for implementing and enforcing child labor laws and regulations.

Current regulations reportedly do not clearly specify a minimum work age, but common practice is 14 or 15 years. The International Labor Organization (ILO) characterizes the country's minimum work age as "the minimum age for admission to employment which is free of any hazards may not be lower than the age of completion of compulsory education and may not be less than 14 years."

Children under 18 with formal contracts may work no longer than six hours a day, with a one-hour break after four consecutive hours, on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. The law prohibits children under age 18 from engaging in hazardous work based on job, work conditions, and health circumstances, rather than by specific sectors or industries.

Child labor was common, including its worst forms. According to a 2013 ILO study, more than 1.3 million children participated in the workforce, including 469,000 children between ages five and 11. The results of the country's 2012 national child labor survey indicated that 17 percent of 7.7 million children in the five to 17 age group and 11 percent of those between ages five and 11 were involved in child labor. In 2014 the director of the CCLU estimated informal minimum wages paid by private-sector businesses to children ranged between 430 and 650 rials (\$2 to \$3) per day.

By November school attendance ranged from 20 to 50 percent in most parts of the country, according to UNICEF (see section 6, Children). Many children of school age worked instead of attending school, particularly in areas where schools were not easily accessible or closed due to conflict. In rural areas family poverty and traditional practice led many children to work in subsistence farming. In urban areas children worked in stores and workshops, sold goods, and begged on the streets. Children also worked in some industries and construction. According to the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs, small factories and shops sometimes employed children outside the family, particularly in rural areas. Continued weak economic conditions forced hundreds of children to seek work in the hazardous fishery sector. Children also reportedly worked in dangerous conditions in construction, offshore fishing, mining, and waste dumps. According to

UNICEF up to a third of fighters in armed groups were children frequently used to man checkpoints and carry weapons (see section 1.g., Child Soldiers).

Although penalties existed to punish the worst forms of child labor, the penalties were not sufficient to prevent violations, and the government made minimal enforcement efforts. No information was available on arrests, investigations, or prosecutions for child labor offenses. The 160 child labor inspectors did not travel to carry out their work during the year. If inspectors found child labor violations, authorities resolved most cases between inspectors and employers with a verbal warning and by working with the employer to change the child's job to remove the child from danger.

See also the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment or Occupation

Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination with regard to race, sex, color, beliefs, language, or disability, and specifically state, "Women shall be equal with men in relation to conditions of employment and employment rights." The law does not address sexual orientation, political opinion, national origin, social origin, gender identity, HIV status, or other communicable diseases. Authorities did not consistently enforce the laws, and discrimination based on race, gender, and disability remained a serious problem in employment and occupation.

Women's rights activists and NGOs reported discrimination was a common practice in the public and private sectors. Women experienced discrimination in areas such as employment, credit, pay, owning or managing businesses, education, and housing. Despite the government's goal of increasing the role of women in the economic sector, women and girls ages 15 and older represented only 25 percent of the formal workforce, largely due to barriers to education and social traditions that precluded women from seeking and gaining employment. Cultural barriers also restricted the exercise of women's property rights. In most rural areas, social norms largely prevented women from owning land.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There was no established minimum wage in the private sector. The minimum civil service wage was 21,000 rials (\$98) per month; government agencies implemented it. The labor law provides equal wages for public sector workers employed in joint ventures between the government and the private sector.

The law specifies a maximum 48-hour workweek with a maximum eight-hour workday, although many workshops and stores operated 10- to 12-hour shifts without penalty. The 35-hour workweek for government employees was nominally seven hours per day from Sunday through Thursday. The law requires overtime pay, paid holidays, and leave, and prohibits excessive or compulsory overtime.

The law prescribes occupational, safety, and health standards. It states every employer must provide safe and healthy conditions for workers. The law recognizes the right of workers to remove themselves from dangerous work situations, and workers may challenge dismissals based on such

actions in court. There were no reported instances of this during the year. The law provides for compensation in the event of work accidents or death. The safety law does not apply to domestic servants, casual workers, or agricultural workers.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Welfare's vocational safety department relied on inspection committees to conduct primary and periodic safety and health investigations. A lack of funding and resources, such as vehicles to travel to inspection sites, constrained such committees. The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs had 160 safety inspectors who also worked as child labor inspectors. Some foreign-owned companies and major manufacturers implemented higher health, safety, and environmental standards than the government requires. The Ministry of Oil has monitoring responsibility for oil-related businesses. There was no credible information available regarding work-related accidents or fatalities during the year. Government enforcement of labor law was weak to nonexistent. Working conditions generally were poor, and wage and overtime violations were common. Foreign migrant workers, youth, and female workers typically faced the most exploitative working conditions.