

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press briefing notes on Yemen

Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Marta Hurtado

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We are very concerned by the situation in Yemen where all parties to the conflict continue to engage in violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law with little regard for basic rule of law principles.

Across the country, civilians are paying a heavy price as armed groups control territory and exercise authority in complete disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law.

A recent example of this was on Saturday 18 September when the Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, publicly executed nine men, including one who reportedly was a minor when he was detained. The nine were accused of having participated three years ago in the assassination of Saleh Ali Al-Samad, president of the Supreme Political Council of the de facto authorities in Sanaa, who was killed in an airstrike.

The defendants were sentenced to death in a judicial process that violated their constitutional rights and did not comply with fair trial standards under international law.

They were reportedly tortured, and forced to sign confessions. In addition, they were denied their right to assistance from a lawyer at several stages of the proceedings. A request for a medical assessment of the youngest defendant to help to ascertain his age was denied, in violation of Yemeni legislation and human rights norms.

We oppose the use of the death penalty in all circumstances.

International law establishes very strict conditions for the application of capital punishment, including compliance with fair trial and due process standards. The execution of juvenile offenders is unequivocally prohibited under international law, regardless of the circumstances and nature of the crime committed. In the context of an armed conflict, carrying out execution without affording judicial guarantees is also a violation of international humanitarian law and amounts to a war crime.

Another source of concern is the repeated use of drones and missile attacks both by the Houthis and by the Saudi-led coalition, which have resulted in civilian casualties and damaged or destroyed civilian objects in Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday 18 September in Aqabat al Qanda', Upper Markha district, Shabwa governorate, an airstrike allegedly launched by the Saudi-led coalition hit a pick-up vehicle, killing five members of a family, among them two children. Preliminary information indicates that none of those killed was a member of an armed group or had directly participated in hostilities.

On 11 September, a drone and a missiles attack allegedly launched by the Houthis on the Al Makha seaport damaged several warehouses containing humanitarian aid, as well as houses and medical facilities.

We recall that any attack directed against civilian objects or civilians not directly taking part in the hostilities may amount to war crimes. We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and to conduct investigations with a view to holding to account those responsible for any violations.

Reports that security forces affiliated to the Southern Transitional Council authorities have used unnecessary and disproportionate force against demonstrators protesting against deteriorating living conditions and the lack of public services are equally worrying.

On 15 September, in several districts of Aden, law enforcement officers used live ammunition to disperse demonstrators after mostly peaceful protests turned violent. Two people, including a child, were shot dead and several others were injured after police indiscriminately opened fire when a grenade was thrown at them by an unknown person among the protesters.

We remind the authorities that live ammunition can only be used as a last resort and only against individuals representing an imminent threat to life or of serious injury. Only law enforcement officials trained in the policing of assemblies, including on the relevant human rights standards, should be deployed for that purpose and all law enforcement officials responsible for policing assemblies must be suitably equipped.

In another disturbing incident, on 8 September, a young man, who had just returned to Yemen from the US, was robbed and shot dead at a checkpoint set up by a unit affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council in Lahj Governorate.

We reiterate that an armed conflict or any declared state of emergency or curfew do not exempt the Government or de facto authorities from their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

END

ecoi.net summary:



Continuing violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict (public execution of 9 men by Houthi rebels; civil casualties in drone strikes and air strikes by Saudi military coalition)

Country:

Yemen

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