The Universal Periodic Review

Mid-Term Report

August 2026

"Collaborative submission from the Yemeni Network for Victims Associations (YVN)"



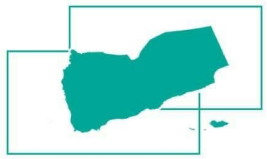






















Table of Contents

Purpose ***3***

Overview ***4***

Background information ***5***

Mid-term submission: structure and content ***6***

Methodology ***7***

Scope of International Obligations and Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanisms: Enforced Disappearances and Missing Persons ***8***

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux* 8

YVN's position 9

Recommendations 10

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Arbitrary Detention and Prisoner Exchanges ***11***

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux* 11

YVN's position 12

Recommendations 13

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Support for Transitional Justice ***14***

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux* 14

YVN's position 17

Recommendations 19

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Enhancing Victims' and Women's Participation in Political Talks and in Peace Negotiations ***19***

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux* 19

YVN's position & recommendations 21

Purpose

The Yemeni Network for Victims Associations (YVN) respectfully submits this mid-term report on the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Yemen during the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). More concretely, the mid-term report provides an overview of the progress made by the Yemeni government on four key issues: enforced disappearances and missing persons; arbitrary detention and prisoner exchanges; support for transitional justice; and enhancing victims' and women's participation in political talks and in peace negotiations. This report details the progress made with regards the implementation of the peer recommendations made and accepted in the last UPR cycle in these four key areas. In addition, it makes suggestions that can help the Yemeni state fulfil its human rights obligations and implement recommendations in the remaining time until the next periodic review.

The YVN is a group of 12 affiliated organizations[1], federations, and trade unions based in eight major regions of the country[2]. It was formed following a workshop conducted by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), involving a number of victim groups and Yemeni civil society organizations in March 2023 in Beirut, Lebanon. Since then, the YVN has documented instances of human rights violations by all warring parties and has actively engaged in monitoring the government's progress in implementing the recommendations put forth in the third cycle of the UPR. The majority of the data in this report is sourced from documentation work carried out by various institutions, associations, and YVN members, along with other relevant organizations.

The YVN expresses its gratitude to the ICTJ, which played a significant role in the formation of the network, enhancing the capacity of its members, and facilitating the making of this report.

[1] (1)Abductees' Mothers Association, (2)Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, (3) Yemeni Teachers Syndicate-Taiz, (4) HOCO-Hemaya (Protection) Organization for Civil Orientation, (five) The Civil Commission for House Bombings Victims, (6) Resalty Foundation for Women Development, (7) Rasd Center for Rights and Development, (8) The National Union for the Development of the Poorest Groups (NUDP)-Yemen, (9) Musawah Organization for Rights and Freedoms, (10) The Yemen Association for Landmine Survivors, (11) The Association of Residential Complexes Families of Martyrs, Wounded, Aggrieved and Victims in Mokha, (12) Hajour Victims Association.

[2] Some organizations have nationwide representation and cover all of Yemen, rather than focusing on a specific governorate, such as Mothers of Abductees, the Teachers' Syndicate, the Journalists' Syndicate, the Civil Commission for House Bombings, and the National Union for the Development of the Poorest Groups.

Overview

After almost two years since the adoption of Yemen's outcomes under the fourth UPR cycle, the YVN notes its serious concern about the lack of implementation of the majority of recommendations accepted by Yemen with regards the four areas surveyed in this report. In previous UPR cycles, the state justified many of the difficulties it had faced with regards outcome implementation by referring to the severe impact that conflict and violence in Yemen have had on state institutions and on their ability to function and deliver effectively to citizens. The YVN is well aware of these difficulties given the work it carries out in support of vulnerable populations, namely victims and survivors of violations. However, the YVN remains persuaded that exceptional as the current state of affairs in Yemen may be, it should not be used in derogation of the state's obligations *vis-à-vis* victims of violations. In addition, there are practical steps which the government can take that help prevent these and strengthen the protection of human rights in the country.

For the YVN one of the greatest obstacles impairing the ability of the state to prioritize justice and redress for victims of violations is not the absence of measures as much as the institutional reliance since 2014 on the adoption of *ad hoc* measures. Even though these may provide some measure of assistance to victims, they are clearly inadequate to meet victims' needs which require a comprehensive approach that prioritizes their dignity and safety. The inadequacy of the measures taken so far is also related to nature of the problems they seek to address. Many of the issues surveyed in this report – such as enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention – are structural and pre-date the current conflict. Therefore, they demand a deep and long-lasting approach that considers the root causes of conflict and violence in Yemen, including the state's failure to address grievances, promote societal healing and combat systemic impunity. YVN's concern about the *ad hoc* nature of measures also extends to the different systems and mechanisms put in place by the state for martyrs and their families. The majority of measures taken provide provisional solutions. In addition, they vary across the country, reflecting conflict parties' narratives and their decisions to prioritize those perceived as loyal to the group. Of equal concern is the fact that despite the ongoing conflict and previous cycles of conflict and violence in the country, Yemen continues to miss a legal definition of victim – not in the sense of violations of domestic criminal law which clearly is provided under the country's different legal frameworks but instead from the perspective of international law and in particular its branch dealing with the protection of human rights in peacetime and during armed conflict. The result - the lack of a clear distinction between martyrs and victims - not only makes it very difficult to establish accountability for violations but it also creates

serious obstacles for victims seeking to obtain redress and reparation for the violations suffered.

The conflict and violence in Yemen have made many government officials sceptical about transitional justice measures or other measures providing justice and redress for victims of violations for as long as the conflict persists and without a comprehensive settlement in the near horizon. This mid-term report is an attempt to outline key issues – and suggest possible steps to overcome obstacles to the implementation of UPR recommendations in the realm of victims and more broadly with regards transitional justice. The YVN is persuaded about the role of civil society organizations in Yemen as critical actors that can bring robust support to the Yemeni state to engage in an effective manner on transitional justice and support the protection and fulfilment of human rights for victims and survivors.

The YVN acts in an advisory capacity vis-à-vis the government and provides independent, impartial and professional knowledge and expertise on victims and other transitional justice matters in the Yemeni context.

Background information

In September 2023, the YVN submitted a joint report about Yemen's human rights record in the context of the fourth cycle of the UPR. The submission followed a three-tier structure organized according to (1) basic information and framework; (2) cooperation with human rights mechanisms; (3) implementation of human rights obligations. The first section provided *inter alia* an overview of Yemen's ratification status of core human rights treaties and their implementation. The second section provided an update of the cooperation between Yemen and treaty bodies as well as of the relationship between the Government of Yemen and special procedures mandate holders. Finally, the third section focused on the implementation of human rights obligations in Yemen. Each of the three sections included a summary of recommendations addressed to the Government of Yemen and where pertinent to other actors in Yemen. The YVN also participated with the support of the organization UPR Info in the pre-session of the UPR that took place at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in February 2024. This participation focused essentially on the establishment of a national human rights institution according to the Paris Principles; on the cooperation between the Yemeni government and special procedures mandate holders; on the establishment of a specialized court in Yemen to address human rights violations; and on the inclusion of victims and survivors in peace negotiations.

During the fourth UPR cycle in May 2024, reviewing states made a total of 256 recommendations to Yemen. One of the major differences with the third cycle was the increase of recommendations made about victims of human rights violations. Recommendations by reviewing states focused on: (1) guaranteeing victims access to effective judicial remedies and comprehensive reparations through strengthening legal frameworks; (2) strengthening support services for certain categories of conflict-related victims and survivors, including survivors of gender-based violence. Reviewing states also highlighted the (3) role of victims in the peace process, namely by recommending their involvement in the negotiations and talks and also by emphasizing the need for a peace process that promotes accountability and ensures victims' right to justice, including reparations. Another area of noted increase were the recommendations made with regards women. Women were the most mainstreamed topic by peer-reviewing states: some references to women appeared in connection to steps towards a victim-centred transitional process, while the bulk of recommendations focused on including women at all stages of the peace-building process – namely in peace negotiations – as well as in ensuring their representation in the country's public and political life.

The Yemeni state accepted all recommendations without exception made on the topic of victims, both in relation to transitional justice measures as well as with regards peace process negotiations. The Yemeni state also accepted all recommendations made with regards the contributions of women to the peace negotiations and their participation in the country's political life. With regards other recommendations made in previous UPR cycles – as is the case with the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), the Government of Yemen accepted the recommendations made during the fourth cycle with regards the ratification of the ICPPED. The Government also accepted recommendations to ending arbitrary arrests and detentions and release unjustly detained people.

Mid-term submission: structure and content

This document constitutes YVN's mid-term UPR report. It provides information about steps and measures taken by the government in Yemen in areas falling under its control and authority in the field of human rights after September 2024[3]; and it looks at the extent to which these measures contribute to the recommendations made during the last UPR cycle.

[3] "Decision adopted by the Human Rights Council on 30 September 2024 – Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review," Human Rights Council, 11 October 2024, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session57/res-dec-stat

More specifically, YJN's mid-term review focuses on four key topics: (1) enforced disappearances and missing persons; (2) arbitrary detention and prisoner exchanges; (3) contributions to the transitional justice process; (4) the participation of victims and women in peace efforts in Yemen. As noted above, YVN's UPR submission made in September 2023 covered a broader range of topics than those included in this mid-term report. The YVN is expecting to provide a comprehensive update of all the points during the upcoming UPR cycle and it will also include inputs related to YVN's UPR-related advocacy activities such as strategic engagement with local authorities and coalition building with other Yemeni civil society organizations working on victims' and transitional justice issues in the country.

Methodology

This report results from YVN's dedicated engagement with Yemen's review under the UPR's fourth cycle and the Network's commitment to enhancing the promotion of human rights in the country. The majority of information draws from the activities carried out by the YVN's individual organizations and from their work with victims and survivors of the conflict in Yemen. The YVN also relied on open sources for the elaboration of this mid-term report. On certain occasions, the YVN was able to benefit from meetings and exchanges with government representatives[4], including with the government's technical committee that is in charge of the drafting and submission of reports according to the treaties ratified by Yemen. However, it should be noted that there is no institutionalized and regular consultation mechanisms between the Government of Yemen and civil society organizations, notably on technical issues concerning human rights issues and transitional justice matters. It is also important to note that despite repeated recommendations made to Yemen's government to establish a National Human Rights Institution according to the Paris Principles – not limited to the UPR – the government has not yet taken this measure into effect. The YVN hopes that the cabinet re-shuffle at the beginning of 2026 and the restructuring of ministerial files and portfolios can strengthen civil society participation to improve government action in the realm of human rights including the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution.

[4] References made in this report to the government refer to the internationally-recognized government of Yemen (IRGY). The IRGY is led by the Presidential Leadership Council, headed by its Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi. The IRGY represents Yemen at the United Nations and other international forums as well as conducts formal diplomacy with foreign states.

Scope of International Obligations and Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanisms: Enforced Disappearances and Missing Persons

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux*

During the fourth UPR cycle, Yemen accepted a total of eight recommendations made with regards ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). The government also accepted recommendations that called for concrete steps to combat arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment[5].

With regards the ratification of the ICPPED, the YVN refers to the workshop organized in 2023 by the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Human Rights in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to mark the international day against enforced disappearances. One of the recommendations issued during the workshop was the ratification of the ICPPED at the earliest meeting of the House of Representatives.

Unfortunately, due to the current circumstances in the country, the House of Representatives has not managed to meet[6]. Even if the parliament were to meet in the near future, there would be no guarantees that it would be able to ratify the Convention or adopt any other legislative acts since the parliament is not able to reach quorum. The only solution to this situation would be the organization of parliamentary elections. However, this is not a feasible scenario for the time being due to the ongoing conflict and the political instability inside the country.

Another measure taken – in line with the discussions held at the 2023 workshop mentioned previously- was the formation of a committee headed by the Public Prosecution to conduct visits to places of detention and release detainees who had been arrested without any charges. The then Ministry of Human Rights and Legal Affairs supported this decision by preparing a bill for approval by the Cabinet in Yemen to form a permanent committee with

[5] "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Yemen," Human Rights Council, 24 June 2024, https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2026-01/A_HRC_57_9_E.pdf; "Decision adopted by the Human Rights Council on 30 September 2024 – Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review," *Supra* no. 3

[6] The last time the Yemeni parliament met was in April 2022. Media channels also reported a consultative virtual meeting to discuss a parliamentary fact-finding report related to corruption. No other meetings were reported since September 2023. See "The Obstructed Authority – a Reading of the Present and Future of the Yemeni Parliament," Mokha Center for Strategic Studies. Available online: https://mokhacenter.org/en/5958/

civil society representatives to assess prison conditions and submit what must be done to address shortcomings and violations.

More recently, in January 2026, the President of Yemen, Rashad Al Alimi, ordered the closure of illegal prisons and detention centres in Southern Yemen[7]. The Presidential Directive also ordered the preparation "of an urgent plan to shut down these facilities and ensure the transfer of detainees to official, legally sanctioned institutions, or their release in cases where no lawful charges are proven against them."[8]

YVN's position

The YVN welcomes the measures above which constitute important steps to address the situation of detainees held arbitrarily as well as those held in irregular situation. The YVN considers that these measures also contribute to addressing the broader issue of enforced disappearances in the country.

One of the biggest obstacles in this regard has been the lack of a functioning judiciary. In addition to the serious disruptions that the conflict has caused (court closures, destroyed/damaged infrastructure, backlogs of cases, etc), the judiciary also suffers from persistent internal problems, such as judicial strikes, collapsing salaries and inadequate judicial budgets. For instance, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Aden) supported recently the Prison Authority by providing a budget to transfer detainees to trial. However, regular judicial strikes kept this measure from reaching its full potential.

In addition to that, many of the places of detention where detainees are believed to be held arbitrarily operate under the authority of different security actors. These places of detention have limited judicial oversight, and detainees have very limited possibilities to seek redress in courts. Moreover, there is a lack of unified leadership with regards security actors and their agencies. This claim is supported by the findings of the National Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Human Rights Violations (NCIAHRV). According to the Commission's thirteenth periodic report (2025), "the areas controlled by the legitimate government suffer from (…) a lack of unified leadership (…). Each party affiliated with the legitimate government has monopolized control over a number of areas,

[7] "Al Alimi orders closure of illegal prisons in Southern Yemen", 13 January 2026, Asharq al Awsat. Available at: https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/5229138-al-alimi-orders-closure-illegal-prisons-southern-yemen
[8] "President of Presidential Council orders closure of illegal prisons, release of unlawfully held detainees," 12 January 2026, https://presidentalalimi.net/en/news1536.html

with an almost complete lack of coordination between these parties"[9]. This situation has had disastrous consequences for citizens' rights of freedoms and has led to a surge in arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances.

Even though the recent decision by the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council helps address arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, as the previous paragraph points out it has many limitations because of the existence of places of detention that fall outside of the remit of any kind of executive and judicial oversight. For this reason, an important number of civil society organizations have called for the disclosure of the fate of all forcibly disappeared persons **before** the closure of prisons takes effect[10]. According to the concerned organizations, closing illegal places of detention without first clarifying the fate of the disappeared would be a missed opportunity to establish the full extent of illegal detention places, not limited to unofficial facilities but including all kinds of unrecognized locations such as transit zones, unconventional sites repurposed for detention (warehouses, hotels, guesthouses/villas, etc) amongst others. Civil society organizations have also stressed the importance of documenting all types of places of detention for accountability purposes and for future truth-telling efforts[11].

Recommendations

The YVN believes that regardless of existing obstacles, there are steps that can be taken now that contribute to meeting Yemen's obligations vis-à-vis enforced disappearances under customary international law and that can also help Yemen ratify the ICCPED in the future and contribute to its successful implementation. Above all, the YVN considers that enforced disappearances in Yemen and the countless numbers of missing persons in the country constitute a pressing humanitarian imperative and that the state in Yemen should take all possible measures within its current capacities to end enforced disappearances and to assist families in Yemen in determining the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones.

The recommendations of the YVN are:

[9] "Thirteenth Periodic Report on the work of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights from August 1, 2024 to 31 July 2025," National Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Human Rights Violations, https://www.nciye.org/reports/ThirteenthReport/ThirteenthReport-en.pdf
[10] "Protest demands disclosure of the fate of the forcibly disappeared before any steps to close prisons," Mothers of Abductees Association, 1 February 2026, https://ama-ye.org/protest-demands-disclosure-of-the-fate-of-the-forcibly-disappeared-before-any-steps-to-close-prisons/
[11] Ibid.

- The government should disclose the fate of all forcibly disappeared persons before closing illegal places of detention.
- The government should organize a follow-up to the 2023 workshop on missing persons and enforced disappearances. Key objectives should include taking stock of the steps taken since August 2023 to address enforced disappearances, identify achievements as well as shortcomings. Future workshops should also take into consideration the new structure of the government and distribution of ministerial portfolios responsible for missing file. Finally, future workshops should include representatives of civil society organizations and families of missing persons.

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Arbitrary Detention and Prisoner Exchanges

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux*

Since the start of the conflict in 2014, prisoner exchanges have been an integral part of peace-building efforts in Yemen. Many different actors in Yemen play a role in the exchanges, from tribal leaders, community actors and also civil society representatives including women. With the Stockholm Agreement (2018), prisoner exchanges became an integral component of the efforts led by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESGY) to enable the resumption of a Yemeni-led political transition process and support peace and stability efforts in the country[12]. The two key parties to the conflict that are part of the prisoner exchanges negotiated through the Special Envoy's good office are the Government of Yemen and Ansarallah/Houthis. Each have put in place negotiating teams that are responsible for the preparations of detainees' lists and for other technical details. Since the Stockholm Agreement was signed in December 2018, close to 2000 prisoners have been exchanged through agreements facilitated by the OSESGY and by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). However, many Yemenis insist that localized agreements, negotiated and overseen by local actors have proven more successful in negotiating and securing the release of detainees than UN-sponsored efforts[13]. Their main argument is that the Stockholm Agreement has not managed to treat the prisoner file as a

[12] OSESGY mandate, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, https://osesgy.unmissions.org/en/osesgy-mandate

[13] Salah Ali Salah, "UN-backed prisoner swap negotiations in Yemen locked in stalemate," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, 7 June 2021, https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/14314

humanitarian concern, as had been announced[14]. Instead, prisoner exchanges have often stalled due to political disagreements[15]. One recent example took place with the preliminary agreement reached in December 2025 between the Government and the Houthis to exchange close to 3000 detainees. Soon after the important announcement, disagreements between the parties led to a delay in the negotiations. Mutual accusations were exchanged concerning the existence of fake names amidst the lists exchanged. Civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations expressed regret over the "unjustified delays", noting that they constituted a breach of the humanitarian objectives informing prisoner exchanges under the Stockholm Agreement, in addition to the suffering that is exacerbated for thousands of detainees and their families[16]. On 14 May 2026, representatives of the internationally-recognized government and of the Houthi movement signed a new agreement to exchange more than 1,600 detainees[17]. According to the news reported, the new deal followed more than three months of negotiations after the parties had reached an initial agreement in December 2015[18].

YVN's position

The YVN welcomes the government's commitment to prisoner exchanges and to ending the suffering of detainees and of their families. Since the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council in April 2022, Yemen's President, Rashad Al Alimi, has affirmed on numerous occasions his and the cabinet's commitment to "ending all detainees' suffering" through the release of detainees, abductees and enforced disappearances allegedly held in Houthi jails. He has also stressed the importance of restoring family links and of putting an end to "this protracted humanitarian suffering"[19].

Despite this important commitment from the country's executive, the YVN would like nevertheless to offer the following observations as a counterpoint to the steps and initiatives taken by the Government of Yemen:

---

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] "Rights Centre warns of repercussions of stalled implementation of prisoner exchange agreement in Yemen," Yemen Monitor, 29 January 2026, https://www.yemenmonitor.com/en/Details/ArtMID/908/ArticleID/162944
[17] "Yemen gov't, Houthis to release more than 1600 POWs in 'largest' swap," Al-Jazeera, 14 May 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/14/yemen-govt-houthis-to-release-more-than-1600-pows-in-largest-swap
[18] Ibid.
[19] "President al Alimi affirms commitment to ending all detainees' suffering," 29 March 2023, https://presidentalalimi.net/en/news64.html

The YVN is aware of the existence of many hundreds of civilian detainees in places of detention across Yemen, not limited to the authority of one specific party to the conflict. Civilians who are detained with no connection to the conflict should be released. According to international humanitarian law, civilians who are detained who are not directly participating in hostilities and have no connection to the conflict should not be detained. If detained, they must be treated humanely and released as soon as the reasons for their detention cease to exist[20]. In addition, Yemeni law prohibits arbitrary arrest and illegal detention. The country's Penal Code, the Criminal Procedural Code and other laws also limit the detention period for individuals to a maximum of 24 hours. After the 24-hour term expires, detainees must be referred to the prosecution or brought to trial if there is a legal justification for their detention.

From this perspective, civilian detainees should not be included in prisoner exchanges. Doing so places them outside the legal framework – and of the guarantees and safeguards it provides to protecting individual rights - and it contributes to legitimizing their arbitrary arrest and illegal detention. In addition, it also encourages the parties to the exchange to treat civilian detainees as "commodities" or "pawns" in order to obtain leverage to secure the release of their own detainees.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the YVN reflect its position as explained in the previous sub-section, as follows:

- All persons detained with no connection to the conflict should be released unconditionally and independently of UN-led negotiations that support parties to reach agreements with a view to exchanging detainees.
- The government's team for prisoner exchanges should include representatives of other national authorities, such as the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Public Prosecution, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Justice. These entities would help ensure the legality of prisoner exchanges and uphold the judicial guarantees of those detained, in particular of civilian detainees. The government's team should also consider including representatives of families of missing persons and/or victim associations in order to ensure that negotiations abide by humanitarian goals and do no harm principles.

[20] "Detention and IHL: rules of international law relating to the protection of persons in detention," Diakonia, https://www.diakonia.se/ihl/resources/international-humanitarian-law/detention-and-ihl/.

- The government should consider supporting released detainees with financial assistance and other forms of support that can help detainees have access to medical services including mental health and emotional support.

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Support for Transitional Justice

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux*

The YVN takes note of the increased number of recommendations on transitional justice made by reviewing states. From the first through the fourth cycle, the number of recommendations has increased from zero to 16 recommendations. Moreover, since the third cycle, more states have addressed the importance of promoting the participation of women and victims in the peace process. In a general manner, the Yemeni state has accepted the recommendations on transitional justice. With regards victims, recommendations accepted in the fourth cycle included facilitating judicial remedies for victims of conflict-related violations and guarantee them reparations.

Since the outcomes of the Yemen universal periodic review were adopted in September 2024[21], the government of Yemen has not undertaken any specific measures to promote victims' access to judicial remedies and reparations. In its 2022 report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the government had pledged to establish a compensation and reparation fund for human rights violations[22]. However, to the knowledge of the YVN, no concrete action has been taken to implement this measure.

There is also no comprehensive system in place currently to address the needs of victims and meet their right to reparation and justice. What exists is instead a system made of *ad hoc* measures. While the YVN is aware of their importance for victims due to the temporary relief they provide, they do not substitute the need for a structured and long-term plan that provides redress to victims of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations and that also addresses the root causes of violations. According to information

[21] "Decision adopted by the Human Rights Council on 30 September 2024 – Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review: Yemen," Human Rights Council, *Supra* no. 3.
[22] "Replies of Yemen to the list of issues in relation to its third periodic report," Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 30 December 2022, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FYEM%2FRQ%2F3&Lang=en.

made available to the YVN, the government has put in place at different times certain measures of support for victims of violations. These include:

Monthly allowances for the families of martyrs

According to Yemen's national report submitted in November 2018 under the third cycle of the UPR[23], the government informed that it provided care to the families of martyrs in the form of monthly allowances and procedures to guarantee ongoing education for children and relatives[24].

Authority for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and Combatants of the Yemeni Revolution

According to the national report submitted by the government to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2022, the government refers cases involving civilian victims to the Authority for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and Combatants of the Yemeni Revolution. This authority is considered a government body supervised by the Office of the President of the Republic that provides an income for families of the fallen[25].

Other support measures

There currently exist two authorities for martyrs, one in Sana'a[26] and the other in Aden[27]. In addition, almost every conflict party – not limited to the IRG and to the Houthis - has adopted measures for whom they consider to be martyrs, which can range from pecuniary assistance in the form of grants, to Eid gifts and food baskets amongst other types of support.

One aspect that has been observed by YVN members is that not only do these measures vary across conflict parties, but that they are also provided in an *ad hoc* manner, offering very little continuity for victims and survivors of violations. For instance, after the Mokha

[23] "National Report," Human Rights Council, 8 November 2018, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1655276?v=pdf
[24] Ibid.
[25] *Supra* no. 22.
[26] Ansarallah relies on the Martyrs Foundation to organize public commemorations for fallen fighters as well as other activities such as distribution of in-kind and cash gifts. Ansarallah also has reactivated and restructured the General Authority for the Care of Martyrs' Families in order to provide financial support to families of "martyrs."
[27] The Authority for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and Combattants of the Yemeni Revolution.

powerplant airstrikes in July 2015[28], approximately 600 residential units were built as compensation for the families whose houses had been destroyed, amongst other support measures for the families of the deceased. In reality, however, these measures were not put into effect. Instead, according to what the YVN was able to document, the new housing units were seized and then occupied by the Western Coast forces loyal to Tareq Saleh[29]. In addition to this, the residential units that had been spared destruction and/or damage during the July 2025 airstrikes were also seized by forces loyal to Tareq Saleh. Despite repeated requests from families, they have been prevented from returning to the Mocha residential complex and reclaim their homes. After 11 years they remain displaced and unable to access their property. Regarding the families who were expected to move into the new residential units, they also remain displaced and unsupported despite the announcement of compensation and other types of support measures.

Another measure that was brought to the attention of the YVN concerns the provision of assistance to families whose children have been abducted by the Houthi movement. This measure was initiated by the Ministry of Human Rights in 2016. However, it has been discontinued due to budgetary restrictions and lack of funds.

In addition to these measures, there are others that have been adopted since the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council in April 2022. In 2023, Rashad Al Alimi announced his decision to address the situation of tens of thousands of army, security and civil sector public servants who had been forcibly dismissed after the 1994 civil war. According to media and other industry sources, the decision sought to settle the conditions of approximately 52,000 thousand persons, including their reinstatement, promotions, settlements and wage increments[30]. In 2024, the Chairman of the PLC instructed the government to provide reparation to the families of those who died and/or were injured by house-bombings in Al-Hufrah (Al-Rada'a district, Al-Baida governorate)[31]. More recently, following the assassination of Iftihan al Mashari, Director General of the

---

[28] "Rights Watch: Saudi-le Raid on Yemen Plant appears Unlawful," Reuters/Voice of America, 28 July 2015, https://www.voanews.com/a/rights-watch-says-saudi-led-coalition-may-have-committed-war-crimes-in-yemen/2881394.html. According to one of the organization that is part of the YVN, a total of 1460 persons were affected by the airstrikes – which include killed, injured as well as persons affected by the destruction of private and personal property.

[29] The YVN also received allegations that some housing units were distributed to the families of Tareq Saleh's servicemen who had died in the line of duty.

[30] "Yemeni Presidential Council Settles Issue of Over 52,000 thousand employees," Asharq al Awsat, 21 May 2023, https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/4339306-yemeni-presidential-council-settles-issue-over-52000-dismissed-employees

[31] "President al Alimi convenes a meeting of Facts Findings Panel about Houthi militias' offense in Al Baidha," SabaNews, 20 March 2024, https://www.sabanew.net/story/en/108564#:~:text=General%20Ibrahim%20Haidan%20and%20Legal,at%20national%20and%20international%20level

Cleaning and Improvement Fund in Taiz Governorate on 18 September 2025, Chairman Al Alimi combined symbolic measures with others seeking to bring to justice those responsible for the assassination. The measures adopted included honoring Iftahan al Mashari with a duty medal for her public services. Chairman al Alimi also instructed the local authorities to arrest the suspects of the crime and to "hold accountable any parties found complicit or negligent."[32]

YVN's position

In a general manner, the existing system can be described as a set of fragmented assistance measures. As a result of this, it is not always clear to the YVN which of the measures/mechanisms established by the government are still in place and whether victims can benefit from more than one measure. As noted previously, while the YJN is not opposed to the measures adopted and understands that they may provide the only form of relief possible to victims in the country's current circumstances, their *ad hoc* character carries a significant amount of unreliability for victims.

The majority of support measures adopted for victims are the result of long and persistent engagement efforts led by victims' associations and civil society actors. They are not actions initiated by public authorities on their own volition. Even so, despite the mobilization led by victims' associations, in many situations the measures have failed due to poor execution – often because of the government's failure to ensure the availability of financial resources and also due to political instability and shifting ministerial and political priorities leading to lack of commitment to ensure durable measures for victims and survivors. The lack of stable financial resources and of political commitment intensifies the strains on both victims/families of victims and on the organizations attempting to support them, further causing delay to access to justice and redress.

With regards measures for martyrs, the YVN would like to note its concern about their selectivity and about the lack of clear criteria about different categories of martyrs and also about the differences between martyrs and victims. For instance, the Authority for the Care of Martyrs and Their Families does not provide a definition of martyr nor does it stipulate the criteria used to define the different degrees of eligibility for assistance.

[32] "The Chairman of the Leadership Council awards the late Aftahan al Mashari the Medal of Duty in recognition of her public service sacrifices," Yemen TV English, 23 October 2025, https://en.yementv.tv/the-chairman-of-the-leadership-council-awards-the-late-aftahan-al-mashhari-the-medal-of-duty-in-recognition-of-her-public-service-sacrifices/

Furthermore, the understanding of who constitutes a martyr has evolved since the start of the conflict in 2014. The figure of martyr enjoys broad social acceptance in the Yemeni context due to the association with acts of courage, sacrifice, devotion and selflessness which constitute important national values. However, the conflict in Yemen has turned the concept of martyr into a subjective one that reflects the narratives of the parties to the conflict. This helps explain why parties' support to martyrs differs and why in some instances some categories of martyrs have been excluded from the purview of the measures adopted. For instance, for the Government the notion of martyr includes prisoners or civilians injured by shelling or mines. However, those tortured and/or deceased in Houthi or Southern Transitional Council (STC) places of detention are not considered martyrs, which in turn can lead to the exclusion of their families from the purview of the Authority for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and Combatants of the Yemeni Revolution.

One of the most flagrant illustrations of "martyr selectivity" concerns the situation of abductees and detainees who die under torture in places of detention. Despite significant outreach and public awareness campaigns conducted by some of the members of the Yemen Victim Network, mortal victims of torture and ill-treatment in detention in Yemen are not officially recognized as martyrs. In addition to the discriminatory character of this approach, the exclusion of these victims from the category of martyrs has many negative implications. More concretely, it normalizes deaths in custody instead of approaching those situations as the result of serious human rights violations which require investigation under international law. Finally, the exclusion of these victims from the status of martyrs also has many negative consequences for their families, who are unable to reclaim any support measures from the state such as financial assistance, social security protection and medical support, as well as obtain reparation amongst other transitional justice measures.

Another issue of concern to the YVN is the lack of a definition of victimhood. The YVN is not opposed to the provision of assistance to martyrs but it is concerned with the overlap between victims and martyrs. According to international law, "victims are persons who individually or collectively suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or serious violations of international human rights law, or serious violations of international humanitarian law"[33]. While martyrs possess many of these characteristics,

[33] "Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law," Human Rights Council, 16 December 2005, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation

one of the main differences between the two is that victims of international law violations are legally entitled to reparations defined as measures – symbolic and material – that promote justice and deliver redress to victims.

Recommendations

Consistent with existing literature and policy recommendations on transitional justice in Yemen, the YVN emphasizes the need for a victim-centered approach that prioritizes victim and survivor participation at all stages of design and implementation of transitional justice measures in the country. Given the lack of a unified government vision regarding support and assistance to victims of the conflict and the risk of overlap between victims with other categories of conflict-affected persons – such as martyrs –, the YVN recommends the establishment of a forum for dialogue or a framework for engagement between the government including key ministries such as the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, and Yemeni civil society organizations in order to promote structured dialogue and technical exchanges on key transitional justice issues[34].

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Enhancing Victims' and Women's Participation in Political Talks and in Peace Negotiations

UPR 2024 update & *état de lieux*

After the developments occurred in Southern Yemen in December 2025 and January 2026, Saudi Arabia announced the decision to host talks in Riyadh aimed at bridging the divides among different southern factions. The so-called Riyadh Conference for Yemeni Southern Dialogue has so far focused on resolving the rift between the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the Presidential Leadership Council as the STC's role in the government remains uncertain[35]. Another important objective concerns the role of the STC as a political force

[34] "Opening Space for Transitional Justice in Yemen," International Center ofr Transitional Justice, March 2025, https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/ICTJ_Report_Yemen-TJ_0.pdf

[35] "Yemeni separatists to attend Saudi talks after losing key southern sites," Al Jazeera, 6 January 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/6/yemeni-separatists-to-attend-saudi-talks-after-losing-key-southern-sites

representing southern interests. The STC is not the only Southern actor with political and military capabilities. The "Southern landscape" remains very fragmented, with many unresolved old grievances that continue fueling resentment and conflict. It is not clear to the YVN the extent to which the South-South talks happening in Riyadh are addressing any transitional justice topics as part of broader discussion of "Southern grievances".

In the February 2026 monthly briefing to the Security Council, the UN's Special Envoy for Yemen highlighted the potential of the Southern Dialogue as "an opportunity to begin addressing long-term grievances and build consensus on issues important to Southerners and all Yemenis"[36]. With regards the peace process, notwithstanding Yemen's internal political developments, the Special Envoy insisted on the importance of making progress towards a "wider negotiated political settlement to the conflict" and of "exploring pathways to restart an inclusive political process"[37].

At the beginning of February 2026, President Al Alimi formed a new government. From the perspective of transitional justice, the main changes introduced include the re-organization of the former human rights and legal affairs portfolio into two different ministries. For the first time in Yemen's history, the Ministry of Legal Affairs is headed by a woman[38], who was formerly a commissioner with the National Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Human Rights Violations. In July 2026, a woman was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, becoming the first woman in the nation's history to hold this position[39]. A third female minister was also appointed to head the Ministry of Women Affairs. This is the first time since 2020 that the government includes women in its ranks. Even though it constitutes a very important achievement, it remains nevertheless below the 30% quota for ministerial appointments and public decision-making positions that had been agreed to at the National Dialogue Conference (2013-2014).

With regards the participation of women in the intra-Yemeni political process and in the peace negotiations, the national report submitted by the government in November 2025 regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

[36] "Briefing by UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, to the Security Council," 12 February 2026, https://osesgy.unmissions.org/en/news/briefing-un-special-envoy-yemen-hans-grundberg-security-council-0
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Women return to front-line Yemeni politics in new Prime Minister Al Zindani's Cabinet," 7 February 2026, Arab News, https://www.arabnews.jp/en/middle-east/article_163636/.
[39] "Yemen re-shuffles cabinet, appoints first woman as foreign minister," 24 July 2026, https://middle-east-online.com/en/yemen-reshuffles-cabinet-appoints-first-woman-foreign-minister

Discrimination Against Women[40] refers to governmental efforts that seek to integrate a gender equality perspective into the on-going political process in order to strengthen women's participation accordingly. Despite this, no known concrete steps have been taken to support the implementation of this measure. As reported by the government, the last time a Yemeni female representative participated in peace consultations and political negotiations was in the 2018 Sweden consultations[41]. The government recognizes the important role played by women in protecting victims, promoting restorative justice and documenting violations. However, the YVN finds that this acknowledgement has not yet translated into concrete measures promoting Yemeni women's representation in political negotiations and in the peace process.

Furthermore, since the adoption of Yemen's UPR outcomes in September 2024, no steps have been taken by the government to promote victim inclusivity in the peace talks and also in Yemen's political process. The YVN has also noticed that in a general manner official government documents make few references to victims, notably in the context of peace negotiations and political process. With regards the UN Special Envoy, there have been no concrete steps towards victim inclusivity in the peace talks. The YVN nevertheless is aware of a series of consultations led by the Office of the Special Envoy in the last quarter of 2025 with representatives of political parties in Yemen in order to assess their level of commitment vis-à-vis transitional justice matters and create actionable policy recommendations for the integration of transitional justice in the peace efforts led by the Special Envoy. The YVN welcomes these consultations, which complement recent civil society-led initiatives, such as the webinar organized by the DT Institute with representatives of different political parties (July 2025) for a discussion about transitional justice, exploring party's expectations and challenges, and identifying entry points for a shared narrative on transitional justice; and the panel organized during the Yemen International Forum (Amman, February 2025) with representatives of political parties for a discussion about inclusion mechanisms for victims and about the engagement of political actors in a transitional justice process.

YVN's position & recommendations

The YVN welcomes the nomination of three female ministers and believes that their combined knowledge and experience can lead to important progress and concrete steps in

[40] "Combined Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh National Report on the Level of Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)," 12 March 2026, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=En&CountryID=193
[41] Ibid.

the field of transitional justice issues including in the frame of political talks and peace negotiations. With regards the Envoy, the YVN is hopeful that the Envoy's emphasis on "inclusive peace"[42] can translate into concrete commitments towards empowering victims and survivors to becoming critical contributors in the political process and in the peace process. The YVN considers Yemen's political process and the peace negotiations very important forums to advance victims' interests and pursue broader transitional justice goals in Yemen. However, it is not always clear for the YVN what are the actors involved, how the two processes overlap and also where one process ends and another one begins. This lack of clarity has detrimental consequences for victims and survivors, who in the majority of times find themselves at the margins of negotiations. Moreover, they also have to navigate complex technical and political issues that further reinforce the perception that negotiations prioritize the interests of political elites in Yemen at the expense of victims' and survivors' needs for justice, redress and healing.

Given this situation, the YVN considers as important to clarify of the differences between the two processes in order to promote the inclusion and participation of victims and survivors and support transitional justice goals in on-going national and international efforts to achieve long-lasting peace for Yemen. The political process refers to the efforts led by Yemeni political actors with the support of the international community including the UN Special Envoy for Yemen aiming at the country's transition according to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (2013-2014). With the start of the conflict in 2014, the political process was repurposed towards achieving a comprehensive settlement to the conflict. However, it remains bound by the three frameworks mentioned previously, including the transitional justice outcomes reached during the 2013-2014 national dialogue.

The mandate of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen includes enabling the resumption of a Yemeni-led political transition process according to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, its Implementation Mechanism and the Outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference as well as support peace and stability in Yemen[43]. Over the years the UN Envoy has engaged actively in mediation efforts to reach a political solution to the conflict. His mandate includes supporting a "comprehensive political process that ends the conflict ushers in a just and sustainable peace"[44]. The Envoy's support for a Yemeni-led political transition

[42] "Yemeni perspectives on the peace process and inclusivity," Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, 8 March 2024, https://osesgy.unmissions.org/en/news/yemeni-perspectives-peace-process-and-inclusivity

[43] OSESGY Mandate, *Supra* no. 12.

[44] "Statement by the Special Envoy for Yemen on recent military escalation," Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, 5 March 2026, https://osesgy.unmissions.org/en/news/statement-special-envoy-

process is bound by the transitional justice outcomes achieved at the national dialogue. The Envoy is also bound by United Nations policy about transitional justice in peace processes, including guidance from the UN Secretary General such as the 2023 Guidance Note on transitional justice[45].

In a general manner, the intertwining of the two processes - the political process and the peace process – has not worked favorably towards transitional justice and towards victim inclusivity. Even though transitional justice was considered a key feature of Yemen's political transition and had a dedicated working group during the 2013-2014 national dialogue, throughout the years it has become increasingly marginalized and today it is practically absent from the political process in Yemen and also from the purview of UN-led peace efforts in the country. It is important to note that the sidelining of transitional justice has occurred in parallel to the political disenfranchisement of women in Yemen and their participation in the country's political dialogue and in formal peace talks.

The YVN firmly believes that transitional justice should constitute a central component of the political process in Yemen and of on-going efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement to the conflict. The inclusion of victims and survivors should be a feature of the government's engagement in political talks and of the UN Envoy-led peace negotiations. The priorities identified by the YVN in this regard include as a starting point reaching a common understanding with the government about fundamental transitional justice principles in the peace talks; reaching a common position with the government about key mechanisms of victim participation in the peace talks; reaching a common agreement with the government about access to information about political negotiations and peace talks; reaching a common position with the government about protective measures for victims and survivors in order to ensure their physical security, legal protection and confidentiality and prevent reprisals and re-traumatization.

With regards women, the YVN urges the government to guarantee a 30% female participation quota in the peace negotiations, including in the government's different negotiation teams and also in the technical committees established to provide overall support and technical expertise for the negotiators. The Yemeni government has not followed a fixed or institutionalized formula for its negotiation teams. Instead it has relied

---

yemen-recent-military-escalation#:~:text=Statement%20by%20the%20Special%20Envoy%20for%20Yemen%20on%20recent%20military%20escalation,-05%20March%202026&text=Amman%2C%205%20March%202026%20–%20Special,Yemeni%20people%20above%20all%20else

[45] "Guidance Note of the Secretary General: Transitional Justice: a strategic tool for people, prevention and peace," Human Rights Council, 11 October 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/transitionaljustice/sg-guidance-note/2023_07_guidance_note_transitional_justice_en.pdf

on a combination of different profiles and roles as well as different team structures, including ministers/former ministers, figures from key political parties, presidential advisors, amongst others. Historically, the Yemeni government has also not sufficiently guaranteed female representation in political and in peace negotiations. The same can be said about representatives from civil society, victims' associations, members of vulnerable communities, amongst others. The recommendation to guarantee a 30 percent representation quota for women in the peace negotiations does not only set an important target for the inclusion of Yemeni women but it also helps address substantive albeit overlooked issues in the negotiations – such as transitional justice and human rights considerations – as well as help ensure a much broader representativity of societal issues at the negotiating table(s).