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# Arbitrary Execution

Report documenting death sentences issued against 17  
civilians following a sham trial on November 22, 2025





## About Us

### **Who are we?** } **SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties**

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SAM is an independent, non-profit Yemeni human rights organization that began its activities in January 2016 and obtained a license to operate in December 2017. The organization aims to document human rights violations in Yemen, work to stop violations through advocacy in partnership with local and international organizations, raise human rights awareness through societal rights development, and hold human rights violators accountable in Yemen in collaboration with international mechanisms and human rights organizations.



This report systematically documents the judgments issued by the Specialized Criminal Court, under the control of the Houthi group, against seventeen Yemeni citizens. Through direct testimonies and available documentation, it highlights a pattern of sham trials characterized by enforced disappearances, torture, denial of the right to defense, and the transformation of the judiciary into a tool of political repression. The report provides a detailed account of the violations suffered by the victims and offers a legal analysis demonstrating the incompatibility of these measures with Yemeni law and international standards for fair trial, while also underscoring the broader humanitarian impact of these sentences on Yemeni society. The report concludes with urgent recommendations to ensure accountability and halt arbitrary executions.

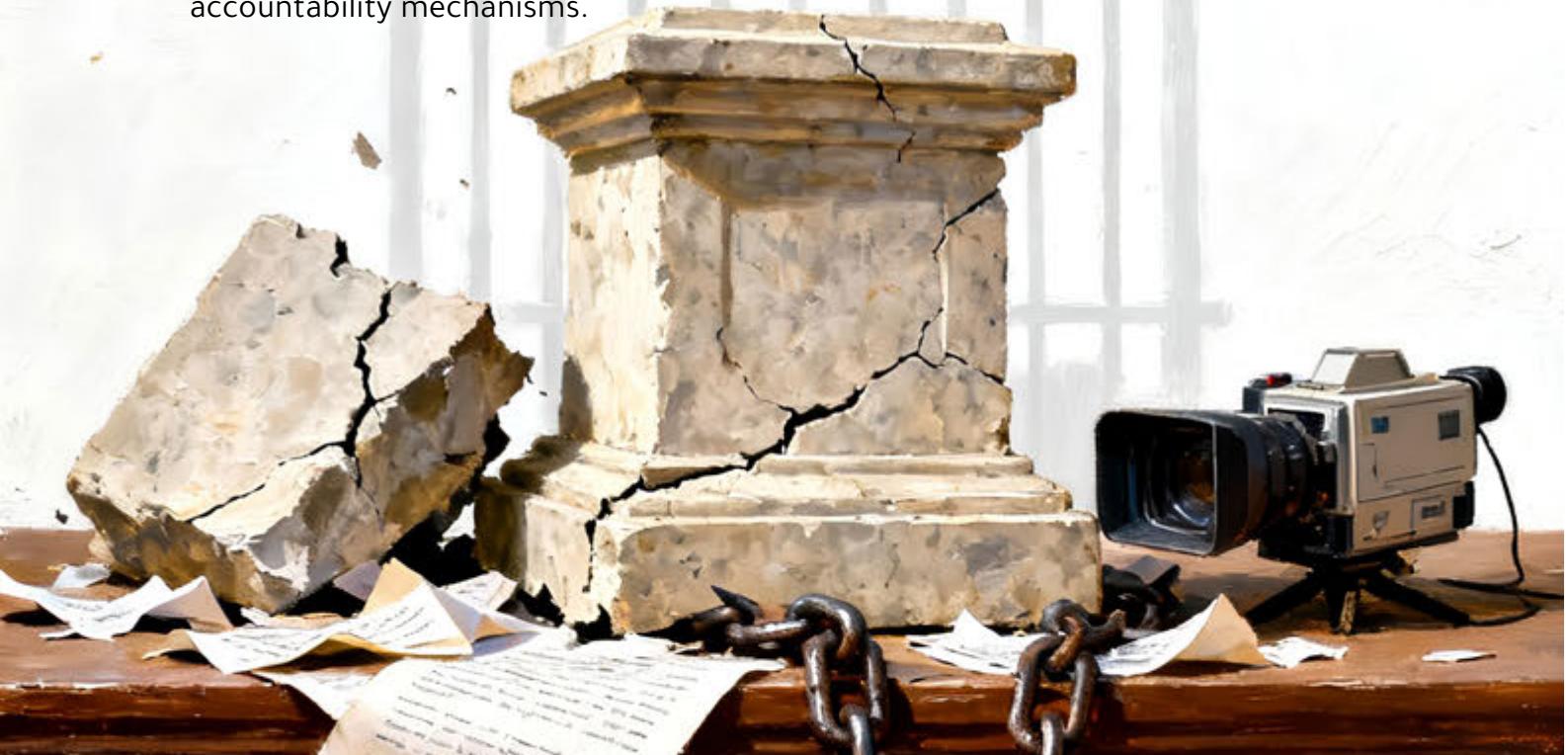


## Introduction

This report is issued to document and analyze one of the most alarming judicial cases in the context of the Yemeni conflict, following the issuance of death and imprisonment sentences against seventeen citizens before the Specialized Criminal Court under the control of the Houthi group in Sana'a. The information collected from the families of the victims, lawyers, and case documents reveals that these trials did not comply with the basic standards of due judicial process, and that they were characterized by an urgent and superficial nature, relying on confessions extracted under torture, and conducted in complete absence of the legal safeguards guaranteed by the Yemeni Constitution and international law.

What this report documents is not limited to recounting the details of the violations suffered by the victims during arrest, interrogation, and trial, but also seeks to analyze the legal and political context that led to these rulings, and to show how the judicial apparatus in areas under the group's control has transformed into a tool of control and domination instead of being a means to achieve justice. The report also highlights the systematic violations that affected the rights of the detainees, including enforced disappearance, torture, deprivation of the right to defense, and broadcasting recorded confessions before the start of the trial—practices that undermine the presumption of innocence and violate Yemen's international obligations.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis based on intersecting testimonies, documents, and evidence, in order to enhance the understanding of the international community and specialized organizations regarding the nature of this case and the risks arising from the continuation of this pattern of trials. It also seeks to establish the legal responsibility of the parties involved, and to identify the wide-ranging impacts of these violations on Yemeni society and on the future of justice and the rule of law in the country, ultimately leading to practical recommendations that can contribute to halting the violations and strengthening accountability mechanisms.



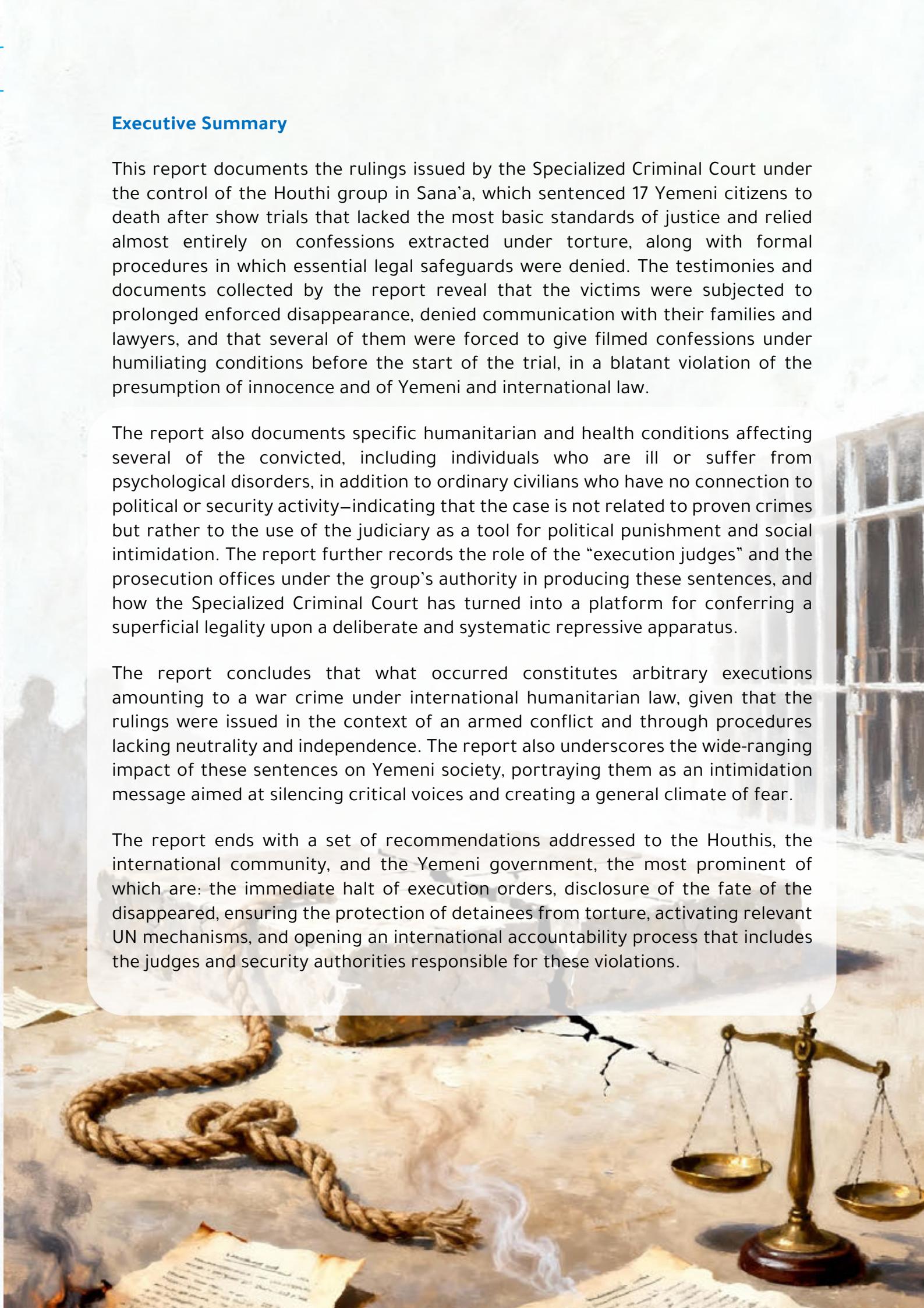
## Executive Summary

This report documents the rulings issued by the Specialized Criminal Court under the control of the Houthi group in Sana'a, which sentenced 17 Yemeni citizens to death after show trials that lacked the most basic standards of justice and relied almost entirely on confessions extracted under torture, along with formal procedures in which essential legal safeguards were denied. The testimonies and documents collected by the report reveal that the victims were subjected to prolonged enforced disappearance, denied communication with their families and lawyers, and that several of them were forced to give filmed confessions under humiliating conditions before the start of the trial, in a blatant violation of the presumption of innocence and of Yemeni and international law.

The report also documents specific humanitarian and health conditions affecting several of the convicted, including individuals who are ill or suffer from psychological disorders, in addition to ordinary civilians who have no connection to political or security activity—indicating that the case is not related to proven crimes but rather to the use of the judiciary as a tool for political punishment and social intimidation. The report further records the role of the “execution judges” and the prosecution offices under the group’s authority in producing these sentences, and how the Specialized Criminal Court has turned into a platform for conferring a superficial legality upon a deliberate and systematic repressive apparatus.

The report concludes that what occurred constitutes arbitrary executions amounting to a war crime under international humanitarian law, given that the rulings were issued in the context of an armed conflict and through procedures lacking neutrality and independence. The report also underscores the wide-ranging impact of these sentences on Yemeni society, portraying them as an intimidation message aimed at silencing critical voices and creating a general climate of fear.

The report ends with a set of recommendations addressed to the Houthis, the international community, and the Yemeni government, the most prominent of which are: the immediate halt of execution orders, disclosure of the fate of the disappeared, ensuring the protection of detainees from torture, activating relevant UN mechanisms, and opening an international accountability process that includes the judges and security authorities responsible for these violations.



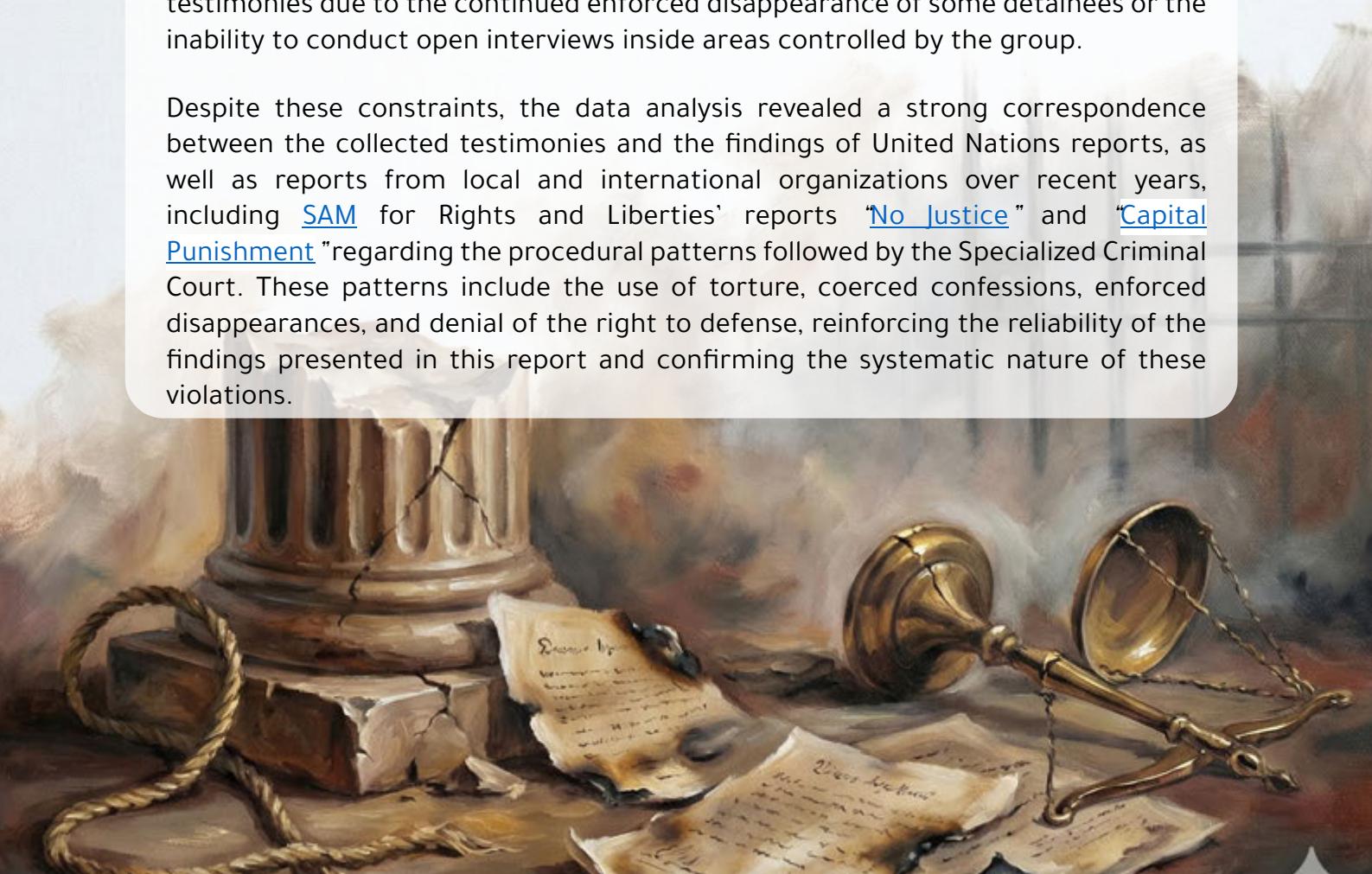
## Methodology of the Report

This report is based on a rigorous human-rights documentation methodology designed to ensure the highest possible degree of accuracy and reliability, relying on multiple and cross-checked sources of information. Data was collected through direct testimonies from the families of victims, interviews with lawyers and journalists who followed the proceedings of the cases, in addition to reviewing video clips broadcast by media outlets affiliated with the Houthi group. The report also relied on analyzing previous data documented by the organization over the past years regarding patterns of arrest, torture, and show trials in areas under the group's control.

The report covers 17 cases for which the Specialized Criminal Court issued death and prison sentences, including cases involving ordinary civilians, patients, and individuals suffering from psychological disorders, in addition to women and young people who were arrested without judicial warrants. Each case was analyzed separately, then compared to the overall pattern of exceptional trials previously documented by the organization, in order to determine the extent of consistency and recurrence of the violations.

The documentation team faced a number of challenges and constraints, the most significant of which were the difficulty of accessing detainees and places of detention, the prevention of lawyers from communicating with them, as well as security risks related to the safety of victims' families who may be subjected to pressure or retaliation. The team also relied in some instances on indirect testimonies due to the continued enforced disappearance of some detainees or the inability to conduct open interviews inside areas controlled by the group.

Despite these constraints, the data analysis revealed a strong correspondence between the collected testimonies and the findings of United Nations reports, as well as reports from local and international organizations over recent years, including [SAM](#) for Rights and Liberties' reports "[No Justice](#)" and "[Capital Punishment](#)" regarding the procedural patterns followed by the Specialized Criminal Court. These patterns include the use of torture, coerced confessions, enforced disappearances, and denial of the right to defense, reinforcing the reliability of the findings presented in this report and confirming the systematic nature of these violations.



## Background on the Events

The death sentences issued against eighteen Yemeni citizens occur within the context of a methodical and gradual escalation adopted by the Houthi group over the past two years. This escalation began with widespread arrests, followed by the establishment of parallel security and judicial apparatuses, and later intensified in response to regional developments and Israeli airstrikes targeting Houthi leadership. It culminated in sham trials and mass death sentences based on confessions extracted under torture.

The escalation initially involved a series of arrests targeting activists and ordinary citizens, before extending to social and political leaders, under the group's absolute control over the judiciary, prosecution, and investigative bodies through a network of newly established security institutions. Prominent among these was the "Security and Intelligence" apparatus, formed through the merger of the National and Political Security agencies, alongside the enactment of restrictive legislation, including the "Law on the Classification of Enemies from States, Entities, and Individuals," introduced in response to the U.S. designation of the group as a terrorist organization. This law has become a primary tool for punishing political opponents.

Over the past year, the group carried out a wide-ranging crackdown in September against anyone participating in or attempting to commemorate the 26 September Revolution. Dozens of citizens were arrested in Sana'a, Dhamar, Ibb, and Amran; homes were raided; national flags were confiscated; and celebrations symbolizing historic resistance to the Imamate were prohibited. This campaign marked a pivotal shift from a policy of restriction to one of open political punishment, with public commemoration of September treated as a "hostile act" warranting detention.

Simultaneously, journalists and media professionals were targeted. Journalist Mohammed Al-Miyahi has been detained for two years, along with several young journalists, for their opinions expressed on social media platforms. The group also abducted journalists Majid Zaid and Auras Al-Eryani as part of a broader wave of repression against independent media voices. Some were subjected to prolonged enforced disappearances and denied contact with their families or lawyers, reflecting a systematic effort to silence professional voices reporting realities contrary to the group's narrative. In recent months, attacks against activists and UN personnel have escalated, including physical assaults, confiscations, threats, and prolonged interrogations aimed at extracting confessions or coercing pledges to refrain from media work.

Amid increasing regional military pressures, particularly Israeli airstrikes targeting prominent Houthi leaders, the group tightened its internal security grip, targeting anyone suspected of sympathizing with its opponents, criticizing its policies, or merely expressing independent opinions. The group used these airstrikes as a



pretext to justify widespread repression under the banner of “countering security infiltration,” while dozens of citizens were accused—without evidence—of collaborating with “foreign entities,” charges readily employed to justify arbitrary detention and harsh sentences.

This escalation was accompanied by the arrest of UN and international organization personnel in Sana'a, Hodeidah, and Ibb, including both Yemeni and foreign staff, who were secretly detained with no communication allowed with the UN or their families. This represents a dangerous shift in the group’s approach toward the international community, signaling its readiness to use detention as a tool for political leverage.

As these events accumulated, the group referred dozens of detainees to State Security courts under its control, holding closed trials that failed to meet minimum standards of justice. Defendants were deprived of the right to defense, lawyers were denied access to case files, and confessions were extracted under torture and threats.

In this context, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a issued death sentences on 22 November 2025 against seventeen citizens on charges of collaborating with the “aggressors”—specifically the British, American, Israeli, and Saudi forces. The sentenced individuals included: Emad Shaye' Aziz Al-Sultan, Ali Muthanna Nasser Al-Hazri, Abdulrahman Adel Dhomran, Dhaif Allah Saleh Zoqam, Ali Ahmed Al-Siyani, Farouq Ali Hizam Al-Adhri, Bashir Ali Mahdi Saifan, Khaled Qasim Al-Saedi, Nasser Ali Al-Shaibah, Anas Ahmed Salman Al-Wasabi, Mujahid Mohammed Ali Rajeh, Ali Ali Ahmed Al-Samadi, Hamoud Hassan Hamoud Al-Surihi, Majdi Mohammed Hassan Al-Abed, Nayef Yassin Abdullah Al-Athouri, Basem Hussein Saleh Al-Habashi, and Sinan Abdulaziz Ali Saleh Al-Washaza.

Additionally, ten-year prison sentences were issued for Huda Ali Nasser Al-Mazna'i, and three-year sentences for Bakil Abdullah Al-Masawi, following expedited trials based on investigation records prepared in detention centers and confessions extracted under duress, without examination of evidence or the opportunity to hear exculpatory witnesses.

This background indicates that the recent death sentences were not isolated events but the final stage in a sustained escalation of political and judicial repression. It began with arrests, expanded through the creation of parallel institutions, was influenced by regional developments, and included the detention of journalists, activists, and September celebrants. The escalation culminated in mass death sentences designed to instill fear, consolidate control over society, and send a deterrent message to all independent voices.



### **General Analysis of the Events**

The documented facts in this report reveal that the violations linked to the trial of the 17 citizens are not isolated incidents or procedural mistakes, but rather part of a systematic pattern that reflects a comprehensive policy adopted by the Houthi group since it tightened its control over the judicial and security apparatus in Sana'a. The repeated targeting through enforced disappearance, the extraction of confessions under torture, the denial of the right to defense, and the preparation of pre-fabricated case files are all clear indicators that a political decision preceded the trial, and that the role of the judiciary was limited to granting this decision a formal framework that suggests legitimacy. Thus, the Specialized Criminal Court was transformed from an institution meant to protect the law into a direct tool for manufacturing fear and suppressing the public sphere, where the goal becomes sending deterrent messages rather than achieving justice or examining evidence.

This methodology is clearly evident in the detailed examples of the cases included in the rulings. The case of Dr. Mujahid Rajeh—who returned to Yemen after a series of complex surgical operations, was then abducted at dawn while in critical health, and was forcibly disappeared for four months—was presented as a ready-made file without any consideration for his medical condition or his right to defense, confirming that the court was not concerned with examining the circumstances as much as with affirming a pre-determined verdict. The same pattern extends to the case of Nayef Yaseen Al-Athwari, a poor young man who works installing satellite dishes, whose simple profession was turned into evidence of “espionage” despite the absence of any material proof. His case illustrates how political charges are used to justify severe sentences intended to create a deterrent model for the public.

The case of Imad Shayea Al-Sultan—who appeared in court suffering from partial paralysis, and another defendant showing clear psychological distress—reflects the extent to which the court went in disregarding the basic rules of justice, as the law requires halting any trial of a person who is incapable of perception or defense. Including him on the list makes clear that the aim was to inflate the security narrative rather than to enforce the law. Meanwhile, the case of the young woman Huda Ali Nasser, who was arrested merely for renting a car belonging to a person listed in the case file, shows how accusations are built on marginal associations devoid of any legal value, turning ordinary personal details into grounds for harsh judicial treatment in trials that lack serious investigation or objective evaluation.

These rulings are directly connected to the political and military context, as they come at a time of rising public discontent in areas under Houthi control, worsening economic conditions, and ongoing military tension. This makes the court one of the tools used to fortify the internal front by manufacturing fear and silencing any potential voice of opposition. This is evident from the choice of cases that include the sick, the poor, workers, women, and young people, meaning that the message is directed at society as a whole, not the victims alone. In this way, the judicial process itself becomes a political act aimed at re-engineering the public sphere and



producing a submissive citizen who fears expressing opinions or participating, which directly affects the human rights environment in Yemen and closes what remains of civil and human-rights spaces.

Accordingly, it becomes clear that these rulings are not merely violations, but part of a broader system that works to turn the judiciary into a façade for security decisions, reshaping the relationship between authority and society in a direction that serves the consolidation of control and the spread of fear, in flagrant violation of Yemeni and international law, and within a political context that makes such violations repeatable in a systematic manner that threatens civilians' lives and their fundamental rights.



### **Repeated Charges**

The information documented in this report indicates that the court under the control of the Houthi group in Sana'a issued, on 22 November 2025, death sentences against 17 Yemeni citizens following a hasty trial that lacked the minimum standards of justice and relied primarily on confessions extracted under torture and on superficial procedures that turned the judicial process into a tool for defamation and intimidation. A review of the case files shows that the charges brought against the victims—such as “spying for Saudi Arabia,” “working for the United States,” and “links to Israel”—were not based on any material evidence. Instead, they followed a recurring pattern in which the judiciary is used to criminalize political dissent and to turn legitimate political disagreement into an act of treason.

The adoption of this approach places millions of Yemenis under the logic of repression rather than the logic of law, and turns civilians—especially independent opponents—into potential targets of arbitrary execution. These facts affirm the urgent need for serious international action to consider these rulings arbitrary executions and to exert pressure to open effective accountability mechanisms, including placing the judges and officials involved in these violations on international sanctions lists to ensure they do not escape accountability.



## Citizens, Not Defendants

The organization explained, based on field information and intersecting testimonies from journalists and activists – among them journalist Fares Al-Himyari – that part of those sentenced are nothing more than ordinary citizens with no link to political or security activity, and no connection to the cases the group claims to be examining through its judicial bodies. The organization traced the backgrounds of several of them in search of any connection that could justify including them in these cases, only to confirm through more than one source that these individuals were listed as victims, not defendants, within a broad climate of fear and intimidation imposed by the group on the residents of the capital, Sana'a, under the banner of “confronting aggression,” when in practice it aims at tightening control over society through fear and its various tools.

For example, Dr. Mujahid Rajeh (born in 1978, from Amran Governorate) had endured a difficult journey with illness before his life turned into an even greater tragedy. He was not merely a health employee performing his work in Amran; he was a man silently struggling with a diaphragmatic hernia – that painful condition which makes breathing difficult, movement heavier, and turns the body into a field of inflammation and unending pain. As his condition worsened, he traveled in late 2024 to Egypt seeking treatment to ease his suffering. He underwent several delicate surgeries there, one after another, performed by specialized consultants, and remained under medical observation for a long period due to the sensitivity of his condition and the possibility of relapse at any time.

Mujahid returned to Yemen in March 2025 exhausted, weak, carrying the marks of the surgeries on his body, and in need of rest, medication, and continuous follow-up. His doctor instructed him not to exert any effort, to avoid stress, and to focus solely on recovery and regaining the ability to breathe and sleep without pain. But the return he hoped would be the beginning of healing became the beginning of a new tragedy.

At dawn on 20 June 2025, the neighborhood awoke to armed vehicles surrounding his home. The man was unable to move quickly or resist the raid; his body, freshly out of the operating room, was fit only for rest. Yet he was dragged violently from his home – ill, weak, exhausted. Mujahid was forcibly disappeared for a full four months without medication, without medical follow-up, and without any regard for his health condition. Meanwhile, his family lived in daily anxiety, asking: *Is he getting treatment? Is he breathing normally? Is he in pain? Is he still alive?*

When Mujahid finally appeared for the first time in recordings broadcast by the group after months of disappearance, he was seen with a pale face, an exhausted body, and the features of a man who had lost two battles: one against illness... and the other against those who violated his rights. He did not appear as a suspect, but



as a human being worn down by surgeries, torture, isolation, and deprivation of medicine.

At the very moment he needed a clinic, a hospital, and regular doses of treatment, he found himself before a sham court preparing an execution sentence in advance, with no regard for his medical condition or the disappearance and torture he had suffered. Thus, a treatment journey was transformed into a journey toward an unjust sentence, a threatened life, and rights stripped from a man who sought nothing but to breathe without pain.

What was even more bitter was that the family received news of the execution sentence before the actual session was convened. The lawyer was not allowed to discuss the evidence, request a medical report, or even present his client before the court. Everything had been prepared in advance. On 8 November, Mujahid appeared for the first time on a Houthi-affiliated channel, wearing a prison uniform, in a recorded video that reflected coercion more than it reflected a “confession.”

On 22 November 2025, the sentence to execute him – along with 16 others – was issued. No consideration was given to his treatment journey, his medical condition, or his enforced disappearance. His fate was predetermined, turning his story from the suffering of a patient into the tragedy of a man abducted from his home and delivered to the execution platform without a real trial.

As for *Naif Yaseen Al-Athwari*, who was also sentenced to death, the story of this young man who had not yet completed his twenty-sixth year summarizes what thousands of Yemenis face today in areas under Houthi control: poor young men, living by their daily labor, suddenly finding themselves accused of treason and trapped within a judicial system that recognizes neither justice nor humanity.

Naif was the sole provider for his mother and siblings after his father’s death. He worked installing television signal receivers, moving across rooftops to fix the reception, barely managing to cover rent and his family’s daily needs. But poverty was not the only burden he carried; life in Sana'a had become heavier than anyone could endure. Salaries were cut, opportunities were scarce, and despair filled every corner.

In the last days of Ramadan, a security force raided the place and arrested Naif along with his younger brother. They disappeared completely – five full months without contact, without visits, without a single answer for their mother, who went from prison to prison and office to office carrying her son’s photo and asking: “*Where is Naif?*”

No one answered. Only silence kept her company through the nights.



When the first news finally reached them after all that suffering, it was not about his location or his health condition, but a heavy accusation: "*A spy sending coordinates.*" The accusation relied on nothing but his daily climbing of rooftops during his ordinary work improving internet service. A simple job had been turned into a charge that destroyed a young man's life and broke his mother's heart.

During the trial, the family discovered that the case file was built on pre-prepared reports and extracted confessions, and that the Special Criminal Court in Sana'a treated the case as a settled matter – not as the case of a poor young man whose life was being judged, but as an opportunity to exhibit security control, in complete disregard of justice and basic legal procedures.

When the execution sentence was issued, the shock was unbearable. The mother collapsed upon hearing the news and suffered a medical crisis that has stayed with her to this day. The family continued moving between offices, organizations, and activists searching for hope, but doors closed one after another, leaving only hearts bearing witness to the pain.

As for *Imad Shaye' Ezzedine Al-Sultan*, who was also sentenced to death, he suffers from partial paralysis and walks only with difficulty. He is the son of the late prominent sheikh of Raymah, "Shaye' Ezzedine Al-Sultan," and his eldest brother serves as Chief Prosecutor of the Court of Appeals in Dhamar Governorate.

*Huda Ali Nasser*, 22 years old, from Haraz – home to the Ismaili community – and living with her family in Sana'a, was sentenced to ten years in prison on charges of participating in hostile acts against the country. Huda worked as a wedding photographer to support her family amid the harsh economic conditions imposed by the war. One day, a force from Houthi security and intelligence stormed her home without any judicial warrant and arrested her along with her brother, who was later released, while Huda remained in detention. The charge against her was that she "provided assistance to the defendants," simply because – due to her work – she had rented a car belonging to one of the individuals listed in the case file to return home after covering wedding events.

Despite the absence of any evidence of political or security activity, and despite the simplicity of her work, the Houthi court sentenced her to ten years in a swift trial that lacked the basic guarantees of justice. Huda's case stands as a clear example of how vague charges and superficial procedures become tools to punish the innocent and drag civilians into the circle of repression without cause.

Among those sentenced is *Major General Ali Ahmed Al-Sayyani*, who in May 2012 was appointed Advisor to the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces by former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Before that, he served as Director of the Military Intelligence Department at the Ministry of Defense, and he was one of the officers who participated in the early wars against the Houthis in Saada.



Also among them is *Anas Al-Wasabi*, from Wusab District in Dhamar Governorate, who sells and cooks fish for a living and uses an old mobile phone that does not even allow him to stay in regular contact with his family in the village.

Other defendants include individuals working simple jobs: a farmer, a taxi driver, as well as government employees whose only demand was to receive their salaries. The group also included a young man with a clear psychological disorder, who during one hearing repeatedly claimed that former President Ali Abdullah Saleh would return to power and uttered statements unrelated to the court proceedings.



## Systematic Torture and Denial of Defense

SAM said that when the testimonies of the victims' families were matched with previous testimonies heard by the organization, they confirmed that the victims were subjected to multiple forms of torture in Houthi detention centers. These are the same systematic methods the group uses against most detainees and forcibly disappeared individuals in its prisons. They include severe beatings with sticks and cables, verbal humiliation, solitary confinement, physical and psychological coercion, deprivation of family contact, and denial of meeting their lawyer after being arrested in violation of the law. Many relatives of the detainees reported that they could not learn the fate of their loved ones until three months after their disappearance.

For example, the family of [Gazi](#) Mohsen Al-Ahwal – Secretary-General of the General People's Congress (Sana'a faction) – managed to learn of his whereabouts only after three months of his abduction and enforced disappearance on 20 August.

One relative of a detainee said:

“They did not allow him a lawyer, and we did not see him until seven months later. There were clear signs of torture on his body.”



## Engineering the Judiciary... the Authority of Executions

SAM confirms that the Houthi group restructured the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Sana'a in a manner intended to place it under the group's full control, through selecting judges who are ideologically loyal and whose backgrounds align entirely with its orientations. The organization notes that the court has effectively come to be run by a group of judges known within human rights circles as "the execution judges," due to the large number of discretionary death sentences they issued in cases that were purely political.

At the top of this list is Judge Abdu Rajeh, who previously headed the court and issued broad death sentences, including in the case of the 36 academics, before being transferred to the Court of Funds, which is charged with confiscating the property of opponents. Alongside him are Judge Mujahid Al-'Amadi, Judge Ibrahim Al-'Azani from Rada', Judge Ismail Al-Sheibah, Judge Hussein Al-Qa'l—all from areas near the capital—along with Judge Yahya Al-Mansour, who belongs to a Hashemite family with clear loyalty to the group.

Also prominent is Judge Mohammed Muflih Al-Hajjaji, originally from Hamdan, who for years was active in the "Believing Youth" organization—the ideological nucleus of the Houthis—and who contributed to their entry into Sana'a. Videos published by the group's media show him participating in supporting the frontlines with money and men, which reflects—according to SAM—the dangerous overlap between the role of a judge and his function as a "fighter" or "mobilizing preacher."

According to SAM's monitoring, these judges rotate between the Specialized Criminal Court—where political figures, journalists, and activists are tried—and the Court of Funds, which is used to confiscate the properties of those who have fled or oppose the group, transferring them to what is called the "judicial custodian." The organization notes that this rotation reflects the existence of a single judicial system operating along one trajectory: politically condemning the opponent and then stripping him economically.

In a parallel move, the group restructured the Specialized Criminal Prosecution and appointed Dr. Khaled Al-Mawari as its head, while deputy prosecutors—such as Sarem Al-Din Mufaddal, Abdullah Zahra, Nasr Al-Qasimi, Waddah Al-Qurayshi, and Ahmed Al-Shami—took over drafting indictments that lawyers described as "pre-prepared and ready-made," and often lacking any criminal evidence.

The journalist Abdulkarim Al-Jubayhi recounts the nature of these trials, stating:



"They took me to a court inside the prison. The judge held a session that did not exceed nine minutes, during which the prosecutor demanded my execution because I wrote a research paper on Yemen's relationship with Iran. The lawyer wanted to defend me, but the judgment had already been prepared."

SAM considers this testimony not an isolated case but a repeated model for how the court operates, as the judgment is issued before the trial even begins, and the procedures are used as a theatrical scene rather than a genuine judicial process.



### **Fair Trial Violations... Violating the Presumption of Innocence**

SAM indicated that the Houthi group's broadcasting of recorded videos of what it called the defendants' "confessions" before the trial began constitutes a grave violation of the presumption of innocence, which is one of the absolute principles of international human rights law, as articulated in Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This provision obliges any judicial or security authority to refrain from presenting the accused to the public as guilty before a final judicial ruling is issued. SAM affirms that forcing detainees to wear "prison uniforms" during filming, under inhumane detention conditions, is not only psychological pressure and an affront to human dignity, but also a deliberate attempt to persuade the public of a "presumed guilt," which also contradicts UN principles concerning the role of media in fair trials—principles that prohibit authorities from using media to influence judicial outcomes or shape public opinion against defendants.

SAM adds that the appearance of the defendants in these videos in a visibly weakened state—showing agitation, loss of concentration, and physical and psychological distress—reinforces suspicions of torture or coercion used to extract these confessions, which is completely prohibited under Article 15 of the Convention Against Torture, which affirms the invalidity of any confession obtained through coercion or threats. The organization also notes that filming the defendants in such a state and then broadcasting the footage across the group's media platforms constitutes a compounded violation that entails exploiting the victim and permanently stigmatizing him.

This coincided—according to SAM—with major inconsistencies in the narratives presented by the group's media regarding the nature of the alleged "networks" and "security operations," which reveals the absence of any professional or methodical investigation, and indicates that the case was built on a pre-fabricated media narrative rather than a legal investigation. There was also an abnormal speed in moving from the moment of arrest to the investigation stage and then to the issuance of the verdict—practices similar to the show trials documented by the United Nations in authoritarian systems, where recorded confessions are used to create a public perception that "guilt is established" before the court even begins reviewing the case. This undermines judicial independence and turns the trial into a mere formal procedure intended to legitimize a pre-determined decision.



SAM believes that these practices—ranging from broadcasting confessions to announcing incoherent “networks” and issuing verdicts at an unreasonable speed—embody the collapse of the justice system and the transformation of the judiciary into a political and security tool used to intimidate opponents and send broad messages of deterrence. The group seeks to turn the judiciary into a political stage rather than a platform for achieving justice, in clear violation of international fair trial standards, particularly the “[Bangalore](#) Principles of Judicial Conduct” and procedural standards against show trials, which warn against any behavior intended to restrict or influence judicial independence through propaganda or political pressure.



### Sentencing Sessions: A Scene of Collapse and Eruption

SAM reported that during the sentencing session, the victims appeared convinced that the outcome was predetermined. One of them shouted at the judge:

“Take your rulings and vaporize them!”

—an expression that captured their indifference to the verdict, their defiance, and the overwhelming sense of oppression and injustice they had endured.

In a previous session, another detainee shouted from behind the bars:

“We are not informants... pay our salaries, you thieves!”

This scene reveals the depth of the sense of injustice and the fragility of the official narrative.

At the gates of the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a—run by the Houthis—some relatives of the victims were gathered, waiting to hear what the judge would pronounce regarding their loved ones who had been arrested from their homes and workplaces, with fabricated charges brought against them, and who for long periods were denied communication with their families, with many of them not being assigned a lawyer to defend them, according to journalist Faris Al-Himyari.

Al-Himyari adds: Those among the families who wished were allowed to enter the courtroom; some were brave and resilient enough to do so, while others could not bear to enter and see their relatives in the defendants' cage. They chose instead—forced—to remain by the outer gate of the court, gathered tightly as though trying to shield one another from the weight of the moment, their eyes fixed on the courtroom door.

When they were informed of the court's ruling, the tragedy unfolded: 17 individuals were sentenced to discretionary execution—firing squad to death in a public place—while others received long-term prison sentences.

The mother of Anas Al-Wasabi, the man who works at a fish shop in the Shumaila area of Sana'a and one of those sentenced to death, collapsed in tears as his brother tried to support her, his own tears flowing heavily down his cheeks.

Other mothers wept bitterly, wives lost the strength to stand from the shock, and men wiped their tears as they tried to stand by their relatives in that moment.

According to those present, the scene of the families outside the court was shocking and heartbreaking—the air felt too heavy to breathe, and the terror of the moment robbed them of words to console one another.



### Sentences Amounting to "Unjust Execution"

SAM confirmed that the verdicts issued by the exceptional court affiliated with the Houthi group fall under what is known internationally as "unjust execution," as they rely on coerced confessions, denial of defense, and the absence of judicial impartiality.

The organization said:

"Any death sentence based on a confession obtained under torture is an unlawful killing, even if issued under judicial cover."

It added that both Yemeni and international law invalidate the probative value of confessions extracted under coercion, and that the Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibit the use of such evidence in any trial.

SAM affirms that Houthi courts systematically violate the standards of fair trial prescribed in customary international law, including the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty, and the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary. SAM's findings indicate that the procedures followed in the cases documented by the organization clearly contradict these standards, turning the trial into a tool of repression rather than a mechanism of justice.

In the context of armed conflict, trying the accused without judicial guarantees and carrying out death sentences against them amounts to a war crime, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This also applies to the torture and cruel treatment inflicted on detainees who do not take part in hostilities.

One lawyer stated that the first grave violation lies in the complete disregard for the presumption of innocence, as detainees are treated as convicted in advance, subjected to enforced disappearance for months or even years, placed in solitary confinement, and coerced into testifying against themselves. He noted that the court's failure to investigate cases of enforced disappearance undermines its impartiality and violates customary international law binding on all parties to the conflict.

Furthermore, the victims in Sana'a were deprived of their right to appear before an independent and impartial court, as the Specialized Criminal Court lacks legal legitimacy following the transfer of its jurisdiction to Marib by a decision of the judiciary council affiliated with the internationally recognized government.



### **Detainees of UN Agencies, Politicians, and the Unknown Fate**

These sentences raise serious questions regarding the fate of other abducted personnel from relief agencies, international organizations, and foreign embassies, whose whereabouts remain completely unknown. The Houthi group continues to refuse to disclose the locations of many of these detainees or to allow their respective UN agencies access since the moment of arrest.

This group includes staff working for UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in addition to local employees who had been working with the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, according to [U.S. Embassy](#) records. Despite repeated appeals from the United Nations—including a [statement](#) issued in the name of the Secretary-General on its official website and [reports](#) from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights calling for the immediate and unconditional release of these personnel—the group continues to maintain total silence regarding their health and legal status, and refuses to provide any information to their families or to the relevant UN bodies.

Testimonies from families and monitors indicate that all communication with the detainees has been cut off since the day of their arrest, with unverified information suggesting that some of them have been subjected to torture and transferred between secret detention sites run by the Security and Intelligence Service. International organizations such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme fear that the detainees may be used as bargaining hostages or subjected to systematic ill-treatment in the absence of any independent oversight over detention facilities.

SAM considers that the continued detention of these employees under unknown conditions, despite repeated international statements, constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, of the conventions protecting UN personnel, and of obligations related to the prohibition of enforced disappearance. It places upon the international community an urgent responsibility to act to reveal their fate and guarantee their release without condition or delay.



## Wide-reaching impact: a pre-emptive punishment against millions of Yemenis

SAM stresses that the mass execution does not target the victims alone, but sends a repressive and intimidating message to the whole Yemeni society: merely thinking of opposing the group or voicing anything it deems inconsistent with its

The organization states that the repetition of executions on charges of "collaboration" or "espionage" imposes psychological surveillance on millions, and makes people afraid that a casual conversation, a phone call, or a post on social media might be read as "collaboration". SAM considers these sentences a pre-emptive punishment against Yemeni society, aimed at creating "a citizen who is silent, fearful, and stripped of will".



### Reactions and condemnations

The issuance of death sentences and the show trials carried out by the Houthi militia have sparked a wide wave of concern; the confessions extracted under torture and the absence of fair trial guarantees revealed a serious violation of the right to life and human dignity. Observers and international actors considered that what happened bears no relation whatsoever to any legitimate judicial process, but rather entrenches the use of the judiciary as a tool for repression and eliminating opponents.

The European Union expressed deep concern over these sentences in a [statement](#) on the "X" platform, and deemed them devoid of legitimacy and contrary to international standards, calling for an immediate halt to the executions and for ensuring that detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment.

The United States, in a [statement](#) published by its embassy in Yemen, strongly condemned the Houthi measures, affirming that they were based on coerced confessions and unfair trials, and it called for the immediate release of all abductees and an end to the use of the judiciary as a tool of intimidation.

France, in a [statement](#) published on the website of its embassy in Yemen, affirmed its absolute rejection of the death penalty in this case, and described the sentences as arbitrary steps aimed at eliminating political opponents, calling for respect for the rights of the accused and for ensuring a fair trial.

The Embassy of the [United Kingdom](#) in Yemen condemned what it described as the arbitrary decision taken by the Houthis to subject Yemeni citizens to the death penalty, noting that these show trials and unjust convictions once again highlight that the Houthis can only rule through fear and intimidation. The statement added: "We reiterate our condemnation of the arbitrary arrests committed by the Houthis, and we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all staff of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and diplomatic missions who are being held by them."

The Yemeni government, in a [statement](#) published by the Minister of Information Muammar al-Eryani on his page on the "X" platform, described these sentences as a crime with all its constituent elements and a grave violation of the constitution and the law, calling on the international community to take a firmer stance to stop the executions and protect civilians from arbitrariness.

Human rights organizations, for their part, considered that this incident comes in the context of a systematic pattern of arbitrary arrests and extracting confessions under torture, and called for urgent international intervention to prevent the implementation and to hold all those involved accountable.



### Call for international accountability

SAM stresses that the absence of accountability is one of the most dangerous reasons for the expansion of violations in Yemen, in light of the lack of effective national mechanisms and the retreat of the international role in monitoring the situation. It affirms that the absence of deterrence has allowed violations to become entrenched and to turn into systematic practices.

At the national level, the Yemeni constitution imposes clear safeguards for detainees, such as bringing them before the judiciary within 24 hours, prohibiting torture, and guaranteeing the right to defense and compensation. However, the cases documented by SAM show that these safeguards are continuously violated without accountability, while the division of the judiciary exacerbates its inability to provide redress to victims or protect their rights.

The organization considers that the National Commission to Investigate remains an important official mechanism, but it does not enjoy broad acceptance, and the files it refers to the judiciary are not followed up seriously. Therefore, SAM calls for the establishment of a specialized court and prosecution for human rights violations, in addition to creating an independent national body to monitor violations, investigate torture, and review judicial procedures.

SAM believes that Yemeni and international civil society must play a greater role in compensating for the absence of official institutions, through dialogue with the judicial authority and pressure towards respecting international standards of fair trial, especially in areas under government control.

SAM also points to the urgent need to activate the United Nations special procedures, such as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteurs on torture, the independence of judges and lawyers, and executions. Victims may also submit individual complaints to treaty bodies, despite Yemen not having ratified the optional complaint mechanisms under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.

SAM further warned that the continuation of international technical understandings with the de facto authorities - whether related to maritime corridors, salaries, or truces - cannot continue in the presence of a "judicial killing machine" that operates without interruption.



### Expanded background

Since 2015, areas under the control of the Houthi group have witnessed a systematic expansion in political and security arrest campaigns, where arrests have become a central tool for imposing control over society and subjugating the public sphere. Over the past years, these campaigns have evolved from targeting activists and opponents to include state employees, journalists, academics, and those working in the humanitarian and diplomatic sectors, under vague charges such as “collaboration” and “working for foreign parties”, in the absence of any independent judicial process or fair trial guarantees.

Arrests have also targeted local staff working with United Nations agencies and international relief organizations, in a pattern documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights through [official statements](#) which confirmed that staff were taken from their homes, forcibly disappeared, and that UN bodies were prevented from accessing them.

These cases have included staff from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and some of them were falsely accused of passing information or cooperating with foreign entities, despite the absence of any material evidence.

In the same context, the U.S. Department of State [documented](#) a campaign that targeted at least 11 local employees who had worked with the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, where they were arrested without judicial warrants and transferred to secret detention sites run by the Security and Intelligence Service, and were prevented from contacting their families and denied legal representation, as stated in the Department's human rights reports.

These reports confirmed that the arrests were linked to the use of torture and pressure to extract confessions that were later used in official media.

Testimonies by families, survivors, and independent lawyers indicate that the conditions of detention in these cases are characterized by cruelty and arbitrariness, including being held in undisclosed locations, subjected to physical torture (such as beatings, electric shocks, and hanging), and psychological torture (such as threats against family members, solitary confinement, and sleep deprivation), in addition to denial of medical care and prevention of contact with lawyers. Consistent accounts show that many of the confessions later broadcast on the group's media were obtained under coercion and threats.

These arrests have been accompanied by a central role played by the Specialized Criminal Court and exceptional courts, which have turned into a platform for providing a “judicial” cover for violations. These courts have issued more than 550 death sentences and hundreds of decisions confiscating property in recent years, in hearings that sometimes last less than ten minutes inside prison yards, without



allowing defendants to have a lawyer or to defend themselves. International human rights organizations indicate that these trials are entirely show trials and fail to meet any of the requirements of procedural justice.

Human rights experts believe that the aim of these arrests is to re-engineer the humanitarian and diplomatic space in areas under the group's control, by intimidating local staff, controlling relief programs, imposing security conditions on targeting mechanisms and beneficiary lists, and turning local employees into tools of pressure or "bargaining hostages". The charge of "collaboration" also serves a political and propaganda function aimed at building a narrative that mobilizes internal support and justifies repression under the banner of "confronting an external conspiracy".



## Legal Responsibility and Legal Analysis

This report is based on the Yemeni and international legal framework that governs procedures of arrest, investigation, and trial, and that prohibits torture and enforced disappearance and guarantees the right to defense and a fair trial. The Yemeni Constitution, in particular Article (48), constitutes the foundation that requires bringing a detainee before the prosecution within 24 hours, enabling them to communicate with their family and lawyer, and prohibiting any coercion or confession extracted by force. These are guarantees that are reaffirmed by the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Crimes and Penalties Law, including the nullity of coerced confessions and the prohibition of trying persons who are incapable of understanding due to illness or psychological disorder.

However, the facts documented in this report reveal that the trial of the 17 citizens before the Specialized Criminal Court controlled by the Houthi group fundamentally violated these rules. The defendants were subjected to enforced disappearance and torture, were prevented from communicating with their lawyers, and the court relied on confessions extracted under duress. In addition, patients and detainees suffering from psychological disorders were tried in the complete absence of guarantees of justice. This renders these trials null and void under Yemeni law and renders the coerced confessions unlawful under Article (15) of the Convention against Torture.

International human rights law, particularly Article (14) of the International Covenant, affirms that a trial must take place before an independent and impartial court and that the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, broadcasting detainees' confessions before trial undermines the presumption of innocence and constitutes a clear violation of this Covenant. In the context of an armed conflict, the Houthi group, as a de facto authority, is bound by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits executions without a fair trial and prohibits torture and outrages upon personal dignity. This makes these sentences akin to arbitrary executions that may rise to the level of a war crime.

Under customary international law, the Houthi group remains obliged to respect the treaties ratified by Yemen, and the absence of political recognition does not exempt it from responsibility for grave violations, including torture, enforced disappearance, and depriving defendants of their right to defense. This places upon it clear obligations regarding legal accountability.



## Conclusion

In areas under the control of the Houthi group, the judiciary has, according to the documentation of SAM, been transformed from a platform for delivering justice into a systematic tool for political repression and the elimination of opponents. These collective death sentences reveal a dangerous pattern in which vague and repetitive political charges such as “spying” and “treason” are used to criminalize any dissident or independent voice, thereby placing millions of Yemenis under the logic of repression rather than the logic of law. Sources indicate that these expedited trials lack the minimum standards of fairness and rely almost entirely on confessions extracted under torture and coercion, which constitutes killing outside the law even if carried out under a judicial cover. The court’s disregard for clear humanitarian situations—such as the case of Dr. Mujahid Rajeh, who was ill and exhausted and was abducted from his home; the case of Imad Al-Sultan, who suffers from a severe psychological disorder; and the case of the poor young man, Naif Al-Athwari, who was arrested merely for working in repairing television signals—confirms that the trials are reduced to a mere formal procedure to legitimize a pre-determined decision.

This collapse of the justice system extends beyond the direct victims themselves. Collective death sentences and sham trials are used to send a general message of intimidation to Yemeni society as a whole. These practices create a form of “preemptive punishment” aimed at producing a citizen who is fearful, silent, and stripped of will, where merely thinking about opposition or criticism becomes tantamount to facing the risk of execution. This is accompanied by the continued enforced disappearance of staff of UN agencies and foreign embassies, whose fate is unknown and whose lives are at risk, in grave violation of international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, the absence of international accountability has allowed these violations to take root and turn into systematic practices. Therefore, human rights organizations call for urgent action to classify these sentences as arbitrary executions and to halt their implementation immediately, and to exert pressure to open international accountability mechanisms that include placing the “execution judges” on sanctions lists. The continuation of international understandings in the presence of a “judicial killing machine” operating without interruption must be met with a much firmer stance to halt these crimes and ensure the protection of civilians from arbitrariness. These practices embody the collapse of judicial independence and turn the judiciary into a political stage that does not achieve justice but rather legitimizes repression and deepens division.



## **Urgent Demands**

### **First: To the Houthi Authorities (the De Facto Authorities in Sana'a)**

The demands directed to the Houthi authorities focus on halting the arbitrary practices that transform the judiciary into an instrument of political repression and intimidation, and on ending the violation of the citizens' basic rights:

- Halting the implementation of death sentences and sham trials:

There must be an immediate halt to all death sentences issued by courts controlled by the group, especially those pronounced following trials that lacked the minimum standards of fairness and relied on confessions extracted under torture. Sham trials of civilians on the basis of repetitive political charges that lack legal evidence must also be stopped.

- Releasing detainees and disclosing their fate:

There must be immediate and unconditional release of all abductees, including local staff members of UN agencies (such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and the International Organization for Migration) and staff of diplomatic missions (such as the US and UK embassies). There must also be a demand to disclose their fate, end the complete silence regarding their health and legal conditions, and allow their UN agencies to access them.

- Prohibiting torture and guaranteeing the right to defense:

Protection of detainees from torture, ill-treatment, and cruel treatment must be guaranteed. The right of defendants to defense must be respected, including allowing them to meet with their lawyers after their arrest in a lawful manner, and ensuring that confessions extracted under coercion or threat are not used as evidence in any trial, as Yemeni and international law both invalidate the probative value of confessions coerced by force.

- Respecting the presumption of innocence:

The authorities must refrain from broadcasting video recordings that are labeled as "confessions" of defendants before a final judicial ruling is issued, as this constitutes a grave violation of the presumption of innocence. The use of the media to shape public opinion against defendants and convince the public of their "prior guilt" must cease, as it undermines judicial independence.

### **Second: To the International Community and Regional States and Organizations**

The international community and influential states must take decisive measures to halt systematic violations and achieve accountability, especially since the continued detention of UN staff and humanitarian workers constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law.



- International accountability and investigation:

States and international and regional organizations must exert pressure to open international accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms include:

- Establishing independent commissions of inquiry into death sentences and sham trials.

- Opening an international investigation into the torture and enforced disappearance suffered by detainees.

- Placing execution judges and those responsible for these violations on international sanctions lists.

- Diplomatic and political pressure:

Urgent action is required to clarify the fate of detainees and ensure their unconditional release. The sentences issued must also be recognized as arbitrary executions of political opponents and innocent people. The Yemeni government has called on the international community to adopt a firmer stance to halt executions and protect civilians from arbitrariness.

- Linking violations to negotiations:

The issue of death sentences and sham trials must be included in any negotiations concerning the future of Yemen. There must also be a clear warning against continuing technical international arrangements (whether related to maritime corridors, salaries, or ceasefires) while a “judicial killing machine” continues to operate unchecked.

### Third: To the United Nations, Its Mechanisms, and Its International Organizations

The United Nations and its competent bodies must activate their monitoring and legal role to ensure the protection of civilians and the independence of the judiciary:

- Independent monitoring and observation:

A UN independent mission must be dispatched to monitor prosecutors' offices and courts in Sana'a.

- Activation of special procedures:

The UN special procedures must be activated to address violations, such as:

- The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

- The Special Rapporteurs on torture.

- The Special Rapporteurs on the independence of judges and lawyers and on executions.

- Supporting accountability efforts:

Victims can submit individual complaints to treaty bodies. International humanitarian organizations (such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme) and



the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must continue to exert pressure and demand the immediate release of their staff.

#### Fourth: To the Yemeni Government (the Internationally Recognized Authorities)

The Yemeni government must take steps at the national level to strengthen human rights safeguards and establish effective mechanisms for accountability:

- Establishing national mechanisms for investigation and accountability:

Work must be undertaken to establish a specialized system for addressing human rights violations, including:

- Establishing a specialized court and prosecution office for human rights violations.
- Establishing an independent national body to monitor violations, investigate torture, and review judicial procedures.

- Activating the National Commission of Inquiry:

The cases referred by the National Commission of Inquiry to the judiciary must be followed up seriously to compensate for the absence of functioning official institutions.

- Supporting the civil and judicial community:

The Yemeni government and Yemeni and international civil society must play a greater role in exerting pressure to ensure respect for international standards of fair trial in areas under the control of the government.





# Arbitrary Execution

Report documenting death sentences issued against 17 civilians following a sham trial on November 22, 2025