

## YEMEN:

# Constrained response to protection needs of IDPs and returnees

A profile of the internal displacement situation

22 July, 2009

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Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

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### **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre**

Norwegian Refugee Council  
Chemin de Balxert 7-9  
1219 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 799 07 00  
idmc@nrc.ch

[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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## OVERVIEW

### Constrained response to protection needs of IDPs and returnees

*Fighting between government forces and followers of the late Sheikh Badr Eddin al-Houth have led to displacement in northern Yemen at regular intervals since 2004, peaking during the latest round of conflict in June and July 2008. Though many returned to their places of origin following the end of hostilities in July 2008, large numbers were unable to return home.*

*An estimated 100,000 people remain internally displaced as result of the Sa'ada conflict, including some who have gone back to places of origin. In June and July 2009 the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) increased by several thousand as intermittent fighting continued.*

*Though access to affected areas has improved since the conflict, it has remained limited. Attacks on humanitarian personnel have included kidnapping and recently killings.*

### Background: Fragile state, natural disasters and ongoing conflicts

Yemen faces a number of severe economic and political challenges. In recent years the government has faced intermittent internal armed conflict in Sa'ada in northern Yemen, a growing southern separatist movement, and resurgence of terrorist groups including *al-Qaida* (USDoS, September 2008). It is the poorest state in the Arab world, with high unemployment and an estimated 35 per cent of the population below the poverty line; it faces food insecurity, widespread water scarcity and depletion of its natural resources including oil (WB, April 2009). The country also hosts over 152,000 refugees, most of them Somali (UNHCR, June 2009).

Several incidents of internal displacement have resulted from internal conflicts and disturbances as well as natural disasters. Recent natural disasters have included widespread flooding and slow-onset disasters such as drought and land erosion. Several thousand were displaced in Al Mahwit governorate since 2007 by droughts, and in October 2008 flooding in the eastern governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahara caused the displacement of 20,000 to 25,000 people (WFP, December 2008; OCHA, November 2008).

#### *Conflict in the south*

Until 1990, Yemen was divided into two states; the northern Yemen Arab Republic and the more secular People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south (HRW, October 1994; USDoS, 2007). The two fought three short wars, in 1972, 1979, and 1988. In 1990, national reconciliation led to the unified Republic of Yemen with Sana'a as its capital, but differences were never resolved (HRW, October 1994) and civil war broke out in 1994. The 70-day war led to the displacement of 53,000 people, mainly from the governorates of Aden, Lahj, Tai'z and Abyan, where most of the fighting took place (HRW, October 1994).

Tensions have since persisted, with southerners protesting against political exclusion, harrassment, and the presence of military camps and checkpoints (MERIP, July 2005). Numerous protests have taken place since 2006, most recently in May 2009 in Lahj, Hadramout and Abyan (Al Jazeera, April 2009 and May 2009). In May 2009 around 200 families were

reportedly temporarily displaced in Lahj following violent clashes (IDMC interview, May 2009; IRIN, May 2009).

### *Conflict in the north*

In the northern governorate of Sa'ada, a group referred to as "Al-Huthis" after the family name of the leader of the rebellion, has since early 2004 engaged in an armed conflict with the Yemeni army and government-backed tribes. Husain Badr al-Din al-Huthi founded "Believing Youth" (*al-shabab al-mu'min*) primarily to promote Zaydi Shi'ia religious education, but it developed into an opposition movement. The conflict began with isolated clashes in Sa'ada but by mid-2008 extended to the rest of the governorate, in addition to Amran, Sana'a, and Jawf governorates. As of June 2009, Saqayan, Haydan, Razih, and Ghamar districts in Sa'ada were contested or under Huthi control.

There have been five rounds of conflict: from June to September 2004; from March to April 2005; from July 2005 to February 2006; from January to June 2007; and from May to July 2008 (HRW, November 2008; UN Inter-Agency Report, May 2007). The intensity of the conflict has increased in each round. The government has reportedly used fighter jets, helicopters, tanks and artillery to attack Huthi positions, mostly in rural areas but also in heavily populated towns. The Huthis have also reportedly used heavy artillery and anti-aircraft guns, and have also been accused of violations of humanitarian and human rights law (HRW, November 2008). Both sides have reportedly used landmines (IRIN, September 2008 and April 2007).

Estimates of the number of casualties since 2004 have ranged from several thousand to tens of thousands killed or injured (MERIP, July 2005; IDMC interview, May 2009). Local human rights groups have reported that thousands of people have been arrested, that more than a hundred have been victims of forced disappearance, and that some are still being detained (IRIN, July 2008; HRW, October 2008). Though the government announced a unilateral ceasefire in July 2008, intermittent violence has continued in Sa'ada governorate. Recent reports of increasing violence and mobilisation by both parties have raised concerns of a sixth round of conflict (Yemen Times, June 2009; IRIN, June 2009).

### **Profile and geographical distribution of IDPs**

In contrast to the extensive information available on displacement resulting from natural disasters, information on people displaced by the conflict in the north has been limited by access difficulties and the lack of a profiling exercise.

There was consensus amongst the United Nations and international agencies in July 2009 that an estimated 100,000 people remained displaced (UNHCR July, 2009; WFP July 2009). The World Food Programme (WFP), UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have however different operational figures related to their mandates and geographical areas of operation. In June 2009, WFP was assisting almost 83,000 IDPs including formerly registered IDPs who were able to access distribution sites (WFP, July 2009). UNHCR had registered 25,000 IDPs by June 2009 in accessible areas in Sa'ada and Bani Houshesh in Sana'a governorate, and was waiting to be able to conduct a full profiling exercise (UNHCR, June 2009).

In Sa'ada, registered IDPs were principally located in and around Sa'ada city and al Mahaleet town in Al Dhahr district. There were 6,800 in four camps in Sa'ada city (three camps had closed following the conflict), and 8,100 people located with hosts (UNHCR, June 2009). In Mahaleet, more than 6,700 IDPs were living in small dispersed makeshift settlements of mudbrick shelters, as well as occupying several schools; and there were over 600 IDPs in Bani Houshesh (UNHCR, June 2009).

At the height of the conflict in July 2008, OCHA estimated that 130,000 people were displaced or affected, many of whom had repeatedly been displaced by previous rounds. 77,000 of them had found refuge in Sa'ada city and were receiving assistance from humanitarian agencies. 15,000 to 20,000 of them were living in seven IDP camps located in and around Sa'ada city, while the rest were sheltering with host communities. Between 60,000 and 70,000 were believed to be displaced in remote rural areas where limits in access were preventing the delivery of assistance (OCHA, July 2008; IDMC interview, July 2009). Following the end of hostilities, many of the IDPs in Sa'ada city reportedly returned to their areas of origin (IRIN, September 2008).

New displacement has followed intermittent fighting. Fighting from March 2009 between Huthi and pro-government tribes in Ghamar, Razih, Saqayen, and Haydan districts displaced people within these districts and towards Sa'ada city and Mahaleet town (IDMC interview, May 2009; IRIN, June 2009). In June 2009, WFP and UNHCR registered 5,000 newly displaced people, and WFP was continuing the registration of an estimated 5,000 IDPs (WFP, July 2009).

However, the total number of people still displaced by the conflict is likely to be higher. In May 2009, several IDP communities in Sana'a city, possibly comprising a hundred or more households, had not been registered by the humanitarian community (IDMC interview, May 2009; Al Nadaa, March 2009). In inaccessible areas, particularly in war-affected areas of Sa'ada and Amran governorates, there is very little information on the number and profile of IDPs and many people displaced by previous rounds of conflict, including IDPs who have returned since July 2008, are unlikely to have found durable solutions.

The Sa'ada conflict caused the displacement principally of poor rural farming communities. In addition, members of public institutions have been displaced from Huthi-controlled areas on the basis of their allegiance to the state, and others due to their membership of tribes or clans that have assisted the government in the conflict. Meanwhile, people have left areas under government control for fear of being labelled as sympathetic to the Huthis (IDMC interview, May 2009).

70 per cent of IDPs were estimated in January 2009 to be women and children (UNICEF, January 2009). However in certain localities such as the district of Bani Houshesh in Sa'na, the percentage of women and children was initially higher with many men and some boys having been reportedly arrested or detained during the conflict; many of them are still reportedly detained (IDMC interview, May 2009).

Sa'ada is principally Shi'ia of the Zaydi doctrine with a sizeable Sunni population. The majority of IDPs in the north are Shi'ia, though Sunni have also been displaced as well as a small Jewish community of 65 people which the government resettled to Sana'a in January 2007 after threats were made against them (Yemen Times, February 2009 and April 2009).

### **Protection of IDPs**

There is scant information available on the protection concerns of IDPs or returnees. Few UN or other agencies have publically advocated or reported on protection issues due to their sensitivity. Even in accessible areas, protection assessments have been lacking due to restrictions or lack of resources, raising concern that significant protection gaps have not been addressed.

#### *Physical security and integrity*

There are no clear indicators of the violence faced by IDPs. Though IDPs in Sa'ada city and Mahaleet reportedly live in security from conflict, intermittent violence in several districts in Sa'ada governorate has continued to put hosts and IDPs in those districts at risk (IDMC interview, May 2009). Improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance have reportedly caused a number



of deaths and injuries among returnees and host communities following successive rounds of fighting (IRIN, April 2007; Yemen Times, August 2008).

During the conflict and possibly since, civilians including IDPs have reportedly been arbitrarily arrested, detained, based on their alleged political sympathies or have disappeared (HRW, October 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009). In Bani Houshesh, many men and boys were arrested following the end of hostilities and as of May 2009 many remained in detention and faced prosecution on the grounds of supporting the opposition (IDMC interview, May 2009; Yemen Times, July 2009; Yemen Hurr, July 2008).

Restrictions on freedom of movement were still evident in May 2009, although they were fewer than at the height of the conflict in June and July 2008. Tribal, government or Huthi checkpoints were in evidence on main access routes. Since 2008 there have been reports of IDPs being injured, arrested or having possessions taken when crossing checkpoints to flee conflict-affected areas, retrieve possessions or bring trapped relatives to safety (IDMC interview, May 2009; HRW, October 2008 *and* November 2008).

The extent to which displaced children have been affected is unclear. Though no census has been made, many children, whether displaced or not, are reported to be missing a parent, separated from parents, or orphaned following the conflict (IDMC interview, May 2009). Recruitment of children as young as 12 has been reported by Huthi as well as government and pro-government factions (IRIN, January 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009; Child Soldiers, December 2008; Yemen Hurr, July 2008). The trafficking of children for forced begging, unskilled labour or sexual exploitation has reportedly risen in the last four years and is a source of concern to displaced and non-displaced alike; Sa'ada is one of the main access points to neighbouring countries (Elaph, January 2007; IDMC interview, May 2009; USDoS, January 2009). Child labour (such as begging, smuggling, collection of refuse), which is also prevalent in Yemen, is evident among displaced children in camps and also in vulnerable IDP households in Sana'a (IDMC interview, May 2009).

According to national UN implementing partners, the exposure of women and children to violence has led to high rates of trauma and anxiety among them (IRIN, February 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009). There is no clear information on their levels of exposure to gender-based violence.

#### *Accessing basic needs and livelihoods*

During the fourth and fifth rounds of fighting many IDPs could not access essential items. The access of humanitarian agencies to Mahaleet and Sa'ada city has since improved, as well as to other districts of Sa'ada subject to restrictions, but some needs remain unaddressed. Malnutrition levels have improved, though IDPs registered in camps and those staying with host families and in non-camp situations in Mahaleet still require WFP food assistance to meet their basic needs (IDMC interview, May 2009).

Several humanitarian agencies have assisted registered IDPs in areas accessible in Sa'ada and Mahaleet town by providing potable water, sanitation, health care and shelter. Though humanitarian agencies have reported that minimum requirements are adhered to, IDPs in camps, despite the humanitarian assistance, have voiced concerns regarding water availability, appropriate sanitation, and adequate health facilities (YRCS, January 2009; Yemen Times, March 2009; IDMC interview, May and July 2009). In the dispersed informal settlements in Malaheet, humanitarian actors have sought to address the lack of safe drinking water and sanitation (IDMC interview, May 2009).

IDPs also report difficulties in finding appropriate housing, employment and assistance (IDMC interview, May 2009). Many in Sana'a and Sa'ada live in rented buildings without basic amenities.

Relatives and other families have also struggled to host IDPs in overcrowded households (IDMC interview, May 2009). Levels of income have fallen due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen (UNICEF, January 2009). While some IDPs have savings or as public sector employees have retained salaries, most are unemployed and rely on income from daily labour (IDMC interview, May 2009). The access of IDPs to land is limited and some cope through illegal activities such as trafficking (IDMC interview, May 2009).

IDPs and national media have reported that assistance has sometimes depended on tribal affiliation or place of origin (IRIN, September 2008). Several media outlets have reported allegations against the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) of such uneven provision and treatment (News Yemen, April 2009; Yemen Times, January 2009 and March 2009). IDPs from Bani Houshesh have also reported facing discrimination; they remained in May 2009 fearful of harassment or arrest (Yemen Times, June 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009).

In war-affected areas where access is limited, IDPs and returnees reportedly faced harsh living conditions and a shortage of basic needs (Yemen Times, June 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009). IDPs and returnees reportedly live in makeshift shelters, damaged homes, schools and homes left vacant by others who have fled the conflict. The vulnerability of IDPs and returnees has been amplified by the extensive destruction of housing, schools, and medical centres (SRF GoY, April 2009).

Children also face numerous obstacles to their education, with many having reportedly missed up to two years of school as the conflict and the lack of financial means or necessary documentation have prevented their access (IDMC interview, May 2009). As a result of advocacy efforts, in January 2009, school authorities accepted approximately 1,000 internally displaced children in schools, regardless of their lack of documentation, for the first time since the beginning of the conflict in Sa'ada (UNHCR, February 2009).

#### *Return and property concerns*

Following the 2008 ceasefire, the government encouraged IDPs to return to places of origin, providing cash incentives, transportation, food and non-food items (ICG, May 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009). Pressure was also reportedly exerted on IDPs, particularly those in the camps, to return, and simultaneously on humanitarian agencies to reduce assistance (IDMC interview, May 2009). It is estimated that over 50,000 IDPs returned from Sa'ada city to their places of origin following the ceasefire, though an estimated ten per cent of them quickly went back to their place of displacement (IDMC interview, May 2009).

Information on conditions in areas of origin is limited due to lack of access. Damage to people's homes, continuing insecurity, fear of reprisals, and the lack of livelihood opportunities and basic services have all presented obstacles to return. IDPs seeking to return to Huthi-controlled areas reportedly have to give an oath of loyalty and allegiance (IDMC interview, April 2009). IDPs who have been unable to return have spoken of expropriation of property, including housing, land and belongings. In certain cases land has been allegedly redistributed or cultivated by other residents, and the produce sold in local markets (IDMC interview, May 2009). Meanwhile, IDPs who returned to Razih, Ghamar, Saqayen, and Haydan have reportedly experienced or risked secondary displacement due to clashes there.

The government assessment following the conflict revealed extensive damage to infrastructure. The Sa'ada Reconstruction Fund (SRF) assessed affected areas in Sa'ada, Sana'a and Amran governorates from August to December 2008 and identified over 10,000 buildings destroyed, including over 8,280 houses, 1,440 farms, 102 schools, 295 mosques, and scores of other private and public buildings (SRF GoY, April 2009; IRIN, April 2009).

## **Access of humanitarian agencies**

Humanitarian agencies have faced a range of challenges in gaining access to IDPs and other civilians. In the fourth and fifth rounds of the conflict, the government imposed a total information blackout on Sa'ada governorate, while checkpoints set up along the main access routes and fighting in Harf Sufian restricted movement in and out of the governorate and other affected areas. During the nine-month interval between the fourth and fifth rounds, humanitarian agencies also found it impossible to access most parts of Saa'da governorate, and were confined mainly to Sa'ada city. When the conflict reached Bani Hushaish district, 20 kilometres away from the capital, the government imposed a blockade on the entire district (HRW, November 2008).

Most humanitarian agencies first began working in Sa'ada after the end of the fourth round of conflict in 2007, with the UN undertaking its first rapid assessment in Sa'ada city in May (HRW, November 2008; UN Inter-Agency Report, May 2007). Few organisations other than WFP, ICRC and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) maintained a presence in Sa'ada during the fifth round, and MSF temporarily withdrew its international staff in June 2008 (MSF, June 2008).

Following the end of hostilities and protracted negotiations, access gradually improved, but as of July 2009 it remained limited and sporadic due to bureaucratic controls and restrictive government, tribal and Huthi checkpoints as well as increasing insecurity and intermittent fighting. Though ICRC, MSF, Médecins du Monde and YRCS operated with more flexibility, undertaking assessments or distributions in Al Razih, Haydan, Dahyan, Majz, Sahar and Al Safra, such obstacles continued to impede access and limit capacity of interventions. National and international humanitarian agencies have faced security incidents including diversion and targeting of convoys, hijacking of vehicles, and recently kidnappings (HRW, November 2008; ICRC, March 2007 *and* May 2007; IRIN, June 2009). In June 2009, after a series of kidnappings, three humanitarian workers were found killed (IRIN, June 2009) and several were still missing as of July.

## **National and international responses**

There is no national policy on IDPs or returnees, nor is there a ministry or government body specifically mandated to address IDPs or returnees, though various ministries such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health address issues relevant to IDPs and returnees within their mandates. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation coordinates the activities of humanitarian agencies. The lack of a national institution with a specific mandate to address the situation of the displaced, and the ongoing tensions between the government, tribal elements and Huthi, continues to render any response vulnerable to an array of competing interests.

As part of reconciliation efforts, the government established inclusive national committees for mediation and reconstruction in July and August 2008, to resolve disputes and to assess and allocate funds for reconstruction and compensation in war-affected areas (ICG, May 2009; SRF GoY, April 2009). However, reconciliation efforts have since been strained by the slow pace of reconstruction, continuing tensions in Sa'ada and the shortfall in funds.

The government from the onset placed considerable emphasis and pressure on return, while providing incentives and promising rapid reconstruction. It has provided compensation and technical support for reconstruction through the Sa'ada Reconstruction Fund (SRF), which had reportedly completed 960 homes by April 2009 (SRF GoY, April 2009). The SRF has faced numerous difficulties, including insecurity and also Huthi criticism for the lack of impartiality of its assessments and for having begun construction in government-controlled areas (ICG, May 2009). The reconstruction committee faces a considerable shortfall in funds, with only an estimated 50

per cent of the funding required to address the needs of all those affected (IRIN, April 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009).

In September 2008, the government called on the humanitarian community to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the needs of war-affected areas and appealed to the international community for funds (IRIN, September 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009). The government has regularly appealed to humanitarian actors to continue to provide assistance to IDPs, and undertake projects in war-affected areas. However, as of June 2009, the inter-agency assessment group had still not been granted access.

The active involvement of states in the region has contrasted with the broad silence of the wider international community. For example, Qatar mediated a joint ceasefire in June 2007 which led to a peace accord in February 2008, while only in July 2008 did the United States and European Union call for improved humanitarian access, a call which may have contributed to the subsequent ceasefire (ICG, May 2009; HRW, November 2008; EU, June 2008; ECHO July 2008; US EoY, June 2008). Though the diplomatic and humanitarian communities have advocated directly with the Yemeni government, the lack of public advocacy at the international level is regrettable in view of the influence it may have had on reconciliation efforts (ICG, May 2009; IDMC interview, July 2009).

The lack of international involvement is reflected in the limited funding available for Sa'ada compared to the other humanitarian concerns which Yemen faces (OCHA Financial Tracking, June 2009). International and regional donors are reportedly wary of funding the response due to the political sensitivity surrounding Sa'ada and the risk of further conflict (ICG, May 2009). There is no consolidated appeal for Sa'ada, and the separate WFP (2007-2009) and UNHCR (2009) appeals face shortfalls of 32 per cent and 80 per cent respectively (WFP, June 2009; UNHCR, April 2009).

The UN and humanitarian community have avoided public advocacy which might put at risk their already limited access or ability to address sensitive issues. The UN has coordinated the humanitarian response through its Emergency Response and Preparedness Team (EPRT) in Sana'a, in which UN agencies and NGOs are represented (there is a parallel NGO forum). WFP chairs the EPRT and is the de facto lead agency for the IDP response. UNHCR as protection lead also chairs a protection working group which was established in late 2008 and brings together various NGOs and UN agencies in Sana'a; and UNICEF in June 2009 established a child protection network among several agencies in Sa'ada.

The UN agencies in Sa'ada – WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF – have found their movements limited due to insecurity and UN security rules requiring military escort, and apart from WFP, mainly operate through national implementing partners. Several international agencies are present, including Islamic Relief, MSF, and ICRC, and national agencies including YRCS, Al-Amel Association, and Sa'adah Women Charitable Association, many of which require resources and capacity building to adequately address protection and humanitarian needs. YRCS has had a significant role in providing assistance in Sa'ada city and other districts affected by conflict, though its close association with the government has had an impact on its perceived neutrality (News Yemen, April 2009; Yemen Times, January 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009).

Humanitarian agencies working in consultation with government ministries have targeted IDPs, returnees and war-affected communities where accessible. The humanitarian assistance has included the provision of food, non-food items, temporary shelter, response to water and sanitation needs in IDP camps and in Mahaleet and other accessible areas; psycho-social support for IDP women and children, improving access to education, particularly for children in Sa'ada without documents, and medical assistance to IDPs in the camps and other people

affected by the conflict (WFP, June 2009; ICRC, May 2009; UNICEF, January 2009; UNHCR, July 2008; MSF June 2009).

# CAUSES AND BACKGROUND

## General Introduction

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### General Introduction of Situation of Displacement

- Recent history has witnessed conflict-induced displacement as result of civil war in 1960s, and subsequent civil war in 1994, and more recently as result of internal conflict in northern governorate of Saada since 2004 to 2008.
- There is little information as to previous displacements attributed to the civil conflicts in 1960s and mid 1990s. The contemporary focus on displacement relates to the conflict in Saada and neighbouring governorates which at its height in mid 2008 had led to the displacement of 100,000 to 130,000 displaced.
- The number of displaced in Saada is estimated at 100,000 including IDPs estimated in inaccessible areas. There is however little information as to the exact number of IDPs in areas which are not easily accessible, or in which registration of those displaced has not taken place, as no comprehensive profiling exercise has been possible.
- Recent tensions in the south of Yemen in 2009, has also entailed displacement although such displacement has been quite limited to (several hundred households) to date and reportedly temporary. Little is known on the situation of those displaced.
- Lack of information, or lack of access to regions of displacement both in north and south, has been recurring issue. In both instances, the Yemeni Government has initiated a black out on information, and access particularly with regards to Sa'ada remains restricted due to intermittent violence and other obstacles.
- Further displacement has been due to tribal conflict particularly in northern Yemen. Such conflict induced displacement remains quite limited, affecting scores of families, and nature and type of displacement and protection concerns are quite different from conflict in the north or the south.
- Yemen has also faced natural disasters-affected displacement. Recently in fall of 2008, floods displaced over 20,000-25,000, and caused extensive damage. This is the most extensive form of displacement after Saada.

## Yemen historical timeline

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### Yemen modern history and context

- Egyptian Sunni caliphs occupied much of north Yemen throughout the 11th century. By the 16th century and again in the 19th century, north Yemen was part of the Ottoman Empire, and in some periods its Imams (Zaydis) exerted control over south Yemen. In 19th century southern Yemen came under British occupation.
- In 1918 Turkish forces withdrew from the north, and Imamate strengthened its control over north Yemen. Yemen became a member of the Arab league in 1945 and the United Nations in 1947.

- In 1962, the Imamate (Zaydis) in northern Yemen, was deposed by revolutionary forces, which took control of Sanaa and created the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) igniting a civil war between royalists and republicans which continued until 1968.
- Following years of insurgency against British rule, southern Yemen was declared independent in 1967, and was renamed the People's Republic of South Yemen. In June 1969, a Marxist faction gained power establishing the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).
- In May 1988, the YAR and PDRY governments came to an understanding that considerably reduced tensions. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) was declared on May 22, 1990.
- Conflicts within the coalition intensified until civil war broke out in early May 1994 until July 1994. Almost all of the actual fighting in the 1994 civil war occurred in the southern part of the country.
- In early 2000, Yemeni government embraces counter-terrorism policies of US in its war on terror against Islamic militant organisations, and specifically Al Qaida. This followed on successive terrorist actions against western institutions.
- In 2004, conflict erupted in northern governorate of Saada between supporters of al Houthi movement and Government of Saana.
- There have been five rounds of conflict in the north: from June to September 2004; from March to April 2005; from July 2005 to February 2006; from January/February to June 2007; and from May to July 2008. (HRW, November 2008; UN, May 2007)
- In 2007-2008, numerous protests are witnessed in several governorates such as Lahj, Hadramout, Abyan protesting against perceived inequalities and discrimination.
- In February 2008, the government and Al-Houthi opposition met in Doha to sign a peace accord through Qatari mediation, however hostilities soon erupted leading to the 5th conflict between May 2008 to July 2008.
- In July 2008 the latest internal conflict was brought to an end by unilateral ceasefire by Government. Intermittent fighting has continued in Saada throughout the latter part of 2008, and until mid 2009 with concerns of war imminent.
- In October 2008, flooding in eastern governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahara cause the displacement of 20,000 to 25,000 persons.
- In April 2009, in a context of tensions, and intermittent violence in the north, the Parliament agreed to suspend parliamentary elections for a period of 2 years.
- In April-June 2009, increasing tensions in southern Yemen with northern government in 2007-2008 led to disturbances in several governorates most recently in Lahj, Hadramout, Abyan in May 2009.

### **US Department of State, 2007**

"Yemen was one of the oldest centers of civilization in the Near East. Between the 12th century BC and the 6th century AD, it was part of the Minaean, Sabaeen, and Himyarite kingdoms, which controlled the lucrative spice trade, and later came under Ethiopian and Persian rule. In the 7th century, Islamic caliphs began to exert control over the area. After this caliphate broke up, the former north Yemen came under control of Imams of various dynasties usually of the Zaidi sect, who established a theocratic political structure that survived until modern times. (Imam is a religious term. The Shi'ites apply it to the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, his sons Hassan and Hussein, and subsequent lineal descendants, whom they consider to have been divinely ordained unclassified successors of the prophet.) Egyptian Sunni caliphs occupied much of north Yemen throughout the 11th century. By the 16th century and again in the 19th century, north Yemen was part of the Ottoman Empire, and in some periods its Imams exerted control over south Yemen.

**Former North Yemen** Ottoman control was largely confined to cities with the Imam's suzerainty over tribal areas formally recognized. Turkish forces withdrew in 1918, and Imam Yahya strengthened his control over north Yemen. Yemen became a member of the Arab league in 1945 and the United Nations in 1947. Imam Yahya died during an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1948 and was succeeded by his son Ahmad, who ruled until his death in September 1962. Imam Ahmad's reign was marked by growing repression, renewed friction with the United Kingdom over the British presence in the south, and growing pressures to support the Arab nationalist objectives of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser. Shortly after assuming power in 1962, Ahmad's son, Badr, was deposed by revolutionary forces, which took control of Sanaa and created the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Egypt assisted the YAR with troops and supplies to combat forces loyal to the Imamate. Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported Badr's royalist forces to oppose the newly formed republic. Conflict continued periodically until 1967 when Egyptian troops were withdrawn. By 1968, following a final royalist siege of Sanaa, most of the opposing leaders reconciled; Saudi Arabia recognized the Republic in 1970.

**Former South Yemen:** British influence increased in the south and eastern portion of Yemen after the British captured the port of Aden in 1839. It was ruled as part of British India until 1937, when Aden was made a crown colony with the remaining land designated as east Aden and west Aden protectorates. By 1965, most of the tribal states within the protectorates and the Aden colony proper had joined to form the British-sponsored federation of south Arabia.... In 1965, two rival nationalist groups--the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and the National Liberation Front (NLF)--turned to terrorism in their struggle to control the country. In 1967, in the face of uncontrollable violence, British troops began withdrawing, federation rule collapsed, and NLF elements took control after eliminating their FLOSY rivals. South Arabia, including Aden, was declared independent on November 30, 1967, and was renamed the People's Republic of South Yemen. In June 1969, a radical wing of the Marxist NLF gained power and changed the country's name on December 1, 1970, to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). In the PDRY, all political parties were amalgamated into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), which became the only legal party. The PDRY established close ties with the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and radical Palestinians.

**Republic of Yemen** In 1972, the governments of the PDRY and the YAR declared that they approved a future union. However, little progress was made toward unification, and relations were often strained. In 1979, simmering tensions led to fighting, which was only resolved after Arab League mediation. The northern and southern heads of state reaffirmed the goal of unity during a summit meeting in Kuwait in March 1979. However, that same year the PDRY began sponsoring an insurgency against the YAR. In April 1980, PDRY President Abdul Fattah Ismail resigned and went into exile. His successor, Ali Nasir Muhammad, took a less interventionist stance toward both the YAR and neighboring Oman. On January 13, 1986, a violent struggle began in Aden between Ali Nasir Muhammad and the returned Abdul Fattah Ismail and their supporters. Fighting lasted for more than a month and resulted in thousands of casualties, Ali Nasir's ouster, and Ismail's death. Some 60,000 persons, including Ali Nasir and his supporters, fled to the YAR.

In May 1988, the YAR and PDRY governments came to an understanding that considerably reduced tensions .... In November 1989, the leaders of the YAR (Ali Abdullah Saleh) and the PDRY (Ali Salim Al-Bidh) agreed on a draft unity constitution



originally drawn up in 1981. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) was declared on May 22, 1990. Ali Abdullah Saleh became President, and Ali Salim Al-Bidh became Vice President.... A unity constitution was agreed upon in May 1990 and ratified by the populace in May 1991. It affirmed Yemen's commitment to free elections, a multiparty political system, the right to own private property, equality under the law, and respect of basic human rights. Parliamentary elections were held on April 27, 1993. ... Conflicts within the coalition resulted in the self-imposed exile of Vice President Ali Salim Al-Bidh to Aden beginning in August 1993 and a deterioration in the general security situation as political rivals settled scores and tribal elements took advantage of the unsettled situation.... Continuous negotiations between northern and southern leaders resulted in the signing of the document of pledge and accord in Amman, Jordan on February 20, 1994. Despite this, clashes intensified until civil war broke out in early May 1994.

Almost all of the actual fighting in the 1994 civil war occurred in the southern part of the country despite air and missile attacks against cities and major installations in the north. Southerners sought support from neighboring states and received billions of dollars of equipment and financial assistance. ...Various attempts, including by a UN special envoy, were unsuccessful in bringing about a cease-fire. Southern leaders declared secession and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY) on May 21, 1994, but the DRY was not recognized by the international community. Ali Nasir Muhammad supporters greatly assisted military operations against the secessionists and Aden was captured on July 7, 1994. Other resistance quickly collapsed and thousands of southern leaders and military went into exile. Early during the fighting, President Ali Abdullah Saleh announced a general amnesty, which applied to everyone except a list of 16 persons. Most southerners returned to Yemen after a short exile....

In 1994, amendments to the unity constitution eliminated the presidential council. President Ali Abdullah Saleh was elected by Parliament on October 1, 1994 to a 5-year term. In April 1997, Yemen held its second multiparty parliamentary elections. The country held its first direct presidential elections in September 1999, electing President Ali Abdullah Saleh to a 5-year term in what were generally considered free and fair elections. Constitutional amendments adopted in the summer of 2000 extended the presidential term by 2 years, creating a seven-year presidential term. ....In September 2006, citizens re-elected President Saleh to a second term in a generally open and competitive election, although there were multiple problems with the voting process and use of state resources on behalf of the ruling party."

### **MERIP, July 2005**

"Prior to 1990, the Republic of Yemen was divided into two states, the Yemen Arab Republic (or North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (or South Yemen). The Sunni former south and its largest city, Aden, had been a part of the British Empire since 1839. Not long after the British were removed in 1967, the state declared itself Marxist. The large majority of the Sunnis of Yemen follow the moderate Shafi'i school of jurisprudence. Although there was a small Sunni majority in the former north, rulers have almost always been of the Zaydi sect. Since 1962, only one Sunni president has held office (1967-1974). In the unified republic that exists today, Zaydis account for roughly 20-25 percent of the population but continue to dominate the country's political system, Salih being the salient case in point.

Along with religious leaders, the Zaydi northern tribes have, since the 1962 revolution against the imamate and the end of the resulting civil war in 1970, generally formed the

other major base of support for northern governments. Shortly after the Egyptians withdrew from the war in 1967, the northern tribes began to consolidate their position in the military and extend their political influence, giving them unprecedented power. The northern tribal confederations (particularly the Hashid confederation) fought for the Salih regime against the south before unification and afterward during the 1994 civil war. The divisions in national Yemeni politics are not religious sectarian divisions per se, but are based on a complex web of tribal, social, religious and politically expedient alliances."

## **Conflict in the South 1960s and civil war in 1994**

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### **Conflict in the South 1960s and civil war in 1994**

- The two Yemens were both different and similar. The YAR remained a deeply religious Islamic society. Two major, heavily armed tribal confederations, Hashid and Bakil, exercised political influence. In contrast, the south, especially Aden city, was relatively more secular. (HRW, October 1994)
- South Yemen, after 130 years of British rule centered on its capital Aden, embarked on a radical revolution that helped win independence in 1967 and later brought what was to become the Yemeni Socialist Party to power in Aden. (HRW, October 1994)
- Like the north, the south was prone to political repression and violence. In January 1986, after two weeks of fratricidal bloodletting within the YSP, would lead 10,000 to 60,000 civilian and military supporters to flee to the north. (US DoS, 2007; HRW, October 1994)
- Sana'a and Aden fought three short wars, in 1972, 1979, and 1988. Each ended in a draw. Following the decline of the cold war, national reconciliation would lead to national unity in May 1990 however difficulties between both parties were never fully resolved. (HRW, October 1994)
- In 1994 the 70 day war between government forces and separatist southern army would lead to the displacement of in excess 53,000 mainly from the south where most of the conflict took place.
- In the first six weeks of the war some 20,000 people were displaced from the conflict zones around Aden to the city center. Another 25,000 were displaced in Lahj and Taiz governorates and 8,000 in Abyan governorate. Shelling destroyed many deserted homes, shops, workshops, and livestock, and many families returned in July to find their property and livelihoods in ruins. (HRW, October 1994; UNDP, June 1994)
- Government army would win a military victory over separatists, and presided over the destruction of institutions and property of the former government institutions of the south.

### **HRW October Report 1994**

"During the Cold War North Yemen, or the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), and South Yemen, or the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), were as different as west and east. The north leaned toward the West while the PDRY was the closest Soviet ally in the Arab world. These differences were the product of two Yemeni revolutions in the 1960's. The north's conservative theocracy was overthrown in 1962 by a group known as the Free Officers who established the YAR. The son of the last ruling *imam* (religious leader) secured refuge in and backing from Saudi Arabia for an ill-fated six-year war against the Egyptian-backed republican officers. In 1970 the YAR produced a constitutional civilian government, but in 1974 a military "corrective movement" suspended the constitution. After two presidential assassinations within a year, then-Lt.

Col. 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih came to power in Sana'a on July 17, 1978. He has been in power ever since.

South Yemen, after 130 years of British rule centered on its capital Aden, embarked on a radical revolution that helped win independence in 1967 and later brought what was to become the Yemeni Socialist Party to power in Aden. Like the north, the south was prone to political repression and violence. In January 1986, after two weeks of fratricidal bloodletting within the YSP, then-president 'Ali Nasir Muhammad was ousted by the faction of the YSP led by 'Ali Salim al-Bayd. 'Ali Nasir and no fewer than 10,000 of his civilian and military supporters fled to the YAR, and their homes and positions were taken over by the victorious wing of the YSP.

The two Yemens were both different and similar. The YAR remained a deeply religious Islamic society. Two major, heavily armed tribal confederations, Hashid and Bakil, exercised political influence. In contrast, the south, especially Aden city, was relatively more secular, as evidenced by a strong policy in favor of women's rights. In the 1970's, the PDRY nationalized major foreign and domestic enterprises and other property. Both economies were primarily agricultural, with farm earnings supplemented by remittances from about a third of each labor force that migrated to Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf countries. Both were also heavily dependent on foreign aid -- Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries for the YAR, and the Soviet bloc for the PDRY. In 1984, commercially significant quantities of petroleum were discovered near Marib in the YAR near the PDRY border. In the next few years, further oil and gas finds around Shabwa and Hadramawt, both in the south, promised eventually to replace migrants' remittances as the major source of foreign exchange earnings for both regions.

As a by-product of the Cold War and a function of internal politics, Sana'a and Aden fought three short wars, in 1972, 1979, and 1988. Each ended in a draw. Salih also fought -- and won in 1982, with the support of northern tribal and political-Islamist elements and Saudi Arabia -- a domestic uprising in the southern YAR led by the National Democratic Front (NDF), a progressive unificationist movement allied to the YSP. Most of the weapons in the PDRY arsenal came from the USSR. North Yemen also received most of its arms from the Soviet Union, but was supplied as well by China, the United States, and other Arab and East and West European nations. Ironically, each short border war between north and south led to agreements in principle to unify the two countries. By the late 1980's this long-standing proposal became a pressing political and economic concern for both sides. Each government faced declining remittances (not yet offset by oil earnings) that made havoc of already weak economies and increased political dissent and pressures for liberalization. Changes in the international arena reduced Soviet support for Aden and Saudi backing for Sana'a. Salih and YSP leader al-Bayd resorted to the ever-popular cause of Yemeni unity to solve their political and economic problems.

After nearly two decades, unity negotiations accelerated rapidly between November 1989 and May 1990, when the accord was sealed. When the Republic of Yemen was officially declared on May 22, 1990, the new government, headed by Salih, included all ministers, parliamentarians, civil servants, and soldiers from both the YAR and the PDRY. But many issues regarding division of power and setting of policy remained to be resolved through parliamentary elections set for late 1993. The most salient of the unresolved issues was the merger of the two armies and security establishments. Instead of merger, as a show of faith there was a partial exchange of army divisions.

Although ten million northerners far outnumbered the fewer than three million southerners, power was shared more or less equally during the three-year transition period. As the situation degenerated, independents took the lead in forming a National Dialogue of Political Forces that hammered out a comprehensive reform proposal built around three key points: defining executive power, merging the military and security forces, and decentralizing administration. Salih, al-Bayd, and Parliamentary Speaker al-Ahmar signed the Document of Accord and Agreement in Amman, Jordan, on February 20, 1994. But neither side was prepared to implement a document that would limit their control of budgetary resources and armed forces.

The major battles of the seventy-day war were fought at and south of the sprawling al-'Anad military base north of Aden (in Lahj province near Bir Nasir), which controlled access to the junction of the two paved roads to Aden from the north; and east of Aden in Abyan province, the second major approach to that port city. Both are fairly flat semi-desert locations. Villagers and then separatist defenders retreated from these areas into Aden, followed by the northern army, some of the previously (pre-1986) PDRY troops, and irregular Hashid and Islamist volunteers recruited by Islah. Heavy fighting occurred around the Aden airport in Khor Maksur, and in the Dar Saad and Madinat al-Sha'b suburbs. During the war, several truces were called and broken. Cut off by land in the Aden peninsula, the separatist leadership escaped from Aden late on the night of July 6; many of them had evacuated weeks earlier to Mukalla, the port city of Hadramawt governorate, as the siege of Aden tightened. Aden fell without the feared and expected house-to-house resistance; when the last of the separatist leadership evacuated, its troops faded away. Within one or several days after Aden's July 7 fall, the southern leaders fled Mukalla by sea or air to Djibuti or Oman, followed by 10,000-15,000 other Yemenis, including separatist combatants and their families. Northern troops entered three important locations -- al-Dala' in Radfan, al-Ataq in the Shabwa oil region, and finally Mukalla -- without resistance. At the United Nations, the government announced a general amnesty, which apparently had already been announced in Yemen on May 23, 1994.....

In other rural areas, despite heavy artillery and mortar fire, civilian casualties were minimized because women and children fled at the first sign of fighting, followed by the men. In the first six weeks of the war some 20,000 people were displaced from the conflict zones around Aden to the city center. Another 25,000 were displaced in Lahj and Taiz governorates and 8,000 in Abyan governorate. Shelling destroyed many deserted homes, shops, workshops, and livestock, and many families returned in July to find their property and livelihoods in ruins. After southern separatist forces retreated from their large military base at Anad through the town of Subr, the Subr women and children fled. The men stayed behind for a week to guard the houses. They left two days after the government forces entered the town on foot and in tanks. Although these soldiers reassured the civilian men, the men too fled when rebel forces began to bomb the government tanks. After many civilians left, there was heavy fighting in Subr, which is on the main road from Kirsh through Anad, Lahj, Subr, Bir Nasir and Sheikh Othman to Aden. Apparently the government took, lost and retook Subr by June 6.47 Many houses and offices were damaged and livestock lost.

The Subr women and children took refuge in the al-Wa'ara village slightly to the north. The separatist forces were there when the displaced arrived but these troops soon abandoned their camp at al-Wa'ara and headed south to Bir Nasir. At about 6:30 A.M. on the morning after their withdrawal from al-Wa'ara and despite the fact that they had

seen numerous displaced civilians in that village, the separatists fired a Katyusha rocket at the village, killing three displaced girls from Subr village. This was a violation of the rule requiring attackers to take utmost care to avoid civilian casualties. From al-Wa'ara the villagers were evacuated to Taiz, behind government lines, where they spent the rest of the war in schools tended by the Islah Social Welfare Association.

Villagers who fled conflict areas suffered economic losses, including destruction of shops and death of livestock. While it is not now possible to determine whether this destruction was militarily necessary, or whether it was a violation of the rules of war, its impact on civilians was tremendous. According to shop-keepers interviewed at Subr, for instance, virtually every business along the main road was destroyed. Moreover, most of the thousands of families that evacuated villages were forced to abandon their sheep and goats and other livestock. Most of the livestock perished from thirst or other causes. For instance, one young man at the village of Bir Ahmad lost twenty of his flock of twenty-two sheep and goats, and he estimated that 2,000 of the 3,000 animals in the village were dead when inhabitants returned after the war. This was a grave loss for the young man and his neighbors. Many said they would only be able to repair their shelled homes if the government provided compensation..... The proportion and number of civilian casualties in Aden and the pattern of intensive shelling of urban areas crowded with displaced as well as residents indicates that, especially after June 19, government forces were not complying with their duty to take measures to avoid civilian casualties, and that this attack on Aden was indiscriminate.....

Pillage and extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity occurred during and after the war, primarily in Aden after government forces gained control of that last rebel-held city, but also in many other cities that changed hands during the war. When the war was over many northern officials, foreigners, and others went or returned to Aden; those who arrived quickly observed looting by civilians and northern forces. Observers estimated that 25-30 percent of the looting was well organized and on a large scale; looters arrived in trucks and larger vehicles and loaded up equipment and machinery from the port and elsewhere, using cranes to lift the heavier pieces. Large numbers of vehicles were engaged in this effort even though there was a shortage of vehicles for the water emergency. The property destruction seemed to target mainly the records, property, and institutions of the former PDRY, now technically the property of the Republic of Yemen. This destruction was tolerated and often authored by government forces.

**See Also:**

United Nations Development Program, "Report of the Interagency Assessment Mission to Taiz and Lahj Governorates in the Republic of Yemen from 13-15 June 1994

## **Sa'ada conflict 2004-2009**

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### **Saada conflict 2004-2009**

- Since early 2004, a group referred to in Yemen as "the Huthis" after the family name of the leader of the initial rebellion, have engaged in an armed conflict with the Yemeni military and

government-backed tribal fighters in the country's northernmost governorate, Sa'da (population of 700,000).

- Zaydis make up about 45 percent of the population, Sunnis 53 percent and there are also tiny minorities of other Shia groups - the Ismaili and Twelver communities. Al-Houthi Zaydis are estimated to be about 30 percent of the population. (IRIN, July 2008)
- The movement led by the Huthis originated as "Believing Youth" (al-shabab almu'min). Husain Badr al-Din al-Huthi founded the movement, which numbered between 1,000 and 3,000 in the mid-1990s, mainly to promote religious education in Sa'da governorate. (MERIP, July 2005)
- The conflict began as isolated clashes of the Believing Youth movement (Huthis) with the army in Sa'da. Thereafter, anti-Israel and anti-US demonstrations led by Huthis in San'a, Yemen's capital, which embarrassed the government after it had embraced US counter-terrorism efforts, led to arrests of Huthis and further clashes with them.
- The five rounds of armed conflict, or five wars, took place between the following dates which relate to official government declarations and ceasefires: (1) June 18, 2004 to September 10, 2004; (2) March 19, 2005 to April 12, 2005; (3) July 12, 2005 to February 28, 2006; (4) February 27, 2007 to June 14, 2007; (5) May 5, 2008 to July 17, 2008. (HRW October 2008)
- At the height of the conflict in July 2008, UN OCHA estimated 130,000 were displaced or affected by the conflict. By July 2009, estimated number of IDPs in accessible areas was 25,000 to in excess of 54,000. (UNHCR June 2009, WFP May 2009)
- There are no clear estimate of the number of casualties in the last four years, though some estimate range from 15,000 to 30,000. (UN OCHA, July 2008; Interview IDMC, April 2009)
- Local human rights groups say thousands of people have been arrested during the four-year conflict and that some are still being detained despite the president's declaration that the conflict is over. (IRIN, July 2008 )

### **HRW, November 2008**

"Almost all Yemenis are Muslims. The majority are Sunnis, following the Shafi'i school and mainly living in the center and south of the country and along the Red Sea coast. Most of the remainder are Zaidi Shi'a, mainly living in the northern highlands. Since early 2004, a group referred to in Yemen as "the Huthis" after the family name of the leader of the initial rebellion, have engaged in an armed conflict with the Yemeni military and government-backed tribal fighters in the country's northernmost governorate, Sa'da, that has been largely invisible to the outside world. The conflict has comprised five main rounds of armed conflict; the most recent officially ended by government announcement on July 17, 2008. Between these main periods of conflict, low-level fighting continued.

The movement led by the Huthis originated as "Believing Youth" (al-shabab almu'min). Husain Badr al-Din al-Huthi founded the movement, which numbered between 1,000 and 3,000 in the mid-1990s, mainly to promote religious education in Sa'da governorate. The governorate is populated mainly by Zaidi Muslims, that is, people who follow the Zaidi branch of Shi'a Islam. Zaidi Muslims believe that leadership of the Muslim community should rest with direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad—sada (singular sayyid). Zaidi doctrine holds that only certain sayyids—with characteristics such as courage, erudition, and piety—may be leaders (imams) of their community. Zaidi imams led the Yemeni "imamate" for over 1000 years, until Yemen's military led revolution deposed them in 1962. After the advent of multi-party elections in 1990, the Hizb al-Haqq (Party of Truth) represented the Zaidi, and often sayyid, interests in parliament. The party accepted the existence of the Yemeni republic and, contrary to claims made by the government after the 2004 conflict erupted, explicitly renounced the

reintroduction of a Zaidi imamate in Yemen. Following the violent death of Husain al-Huthi in unclear circumstances in 2004, his brother Abd al-Malik al-Huthi assumed the leadership.

Tribal conflict is a regular occurrence in Yemen's northern governorates, and has complicated the conflict between the government and the Huthis. Since armed conflict erupted in 2004, the government has recruited thousands of northern tribesmen. A government declaration in July 2008 that it intended to recruit a "popular army" of 27,000 tribesmen led to fears of protracted, small-scale conflict fuelled by revenge killings in the tribal settling of scores.

The Huthis have never issued clear demands of the Yemeni government, although leading Huthi figures have referred to a range of possible explanations for their ongoing decision to take up arms. 15 These include a wish to protect and promote the Zaidi religious identity, opposition to the government because of its cooperation with the United States, economic neglect of Sa'da governorate, and defending themselves against what they view as unjustified government military operations.16 The government has publicly characterized the Huthis as "terrorists." In the early 1990s, the Believing Youth movement set up schools teaching Zaidi doctrine. The government—which originally supported these schools—decided around 2000 that they represented a Zaidi revival that might threaten its power base in northern tribal areas. The government started shutting down Zaidi schools, a process that is still ongoing. Many observers believe that this prompted the clashes between the military and the Believing Youth.

Another factor behind the government's clampdown on the Believing Youth movement was its adoption of anti-Western political positions. During the Gulf War in 1990-91, after the Yemeni government sided with Iraq in its invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia deported over one million Yemeni workers, on whose remittances millions of Yemenis depended. Gulf countries and the United States cut all aid to Yemen. After 9/11, however, the government openly supported the United States, a position it maintained despite the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and despite the presence in Yemen of many Yemeni and other Arab veterans of the wars in Afghanistan. Western counter-terrorism analyses regularly refer to Yemen as effectively a rear base of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, making the country vulnerable to US military intervention. In 2003, the Huthis raised the slogan "Allah is Great. Death to America. Death to Israel. Curse on the Jews. Victory to Islam" during demonstrations following Friday

### **IRIN, July 2008**

"Since 2004 hundreds of people have been killed and thousands displaced as a result of fighting between Shia rebels and government forces in the northern governorate of Saada. The Shia al-Houthi rebels take their name from their leader, Hussein Badraddin al-Houthi, who was killed in September 2004, and succeeded by his brother, the current leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. Whereas most lowland Yemenis in the south of the country are Sunni, Yemenis in the northern, more mountainous areas are Shia - specifically, followers of the Zaydi doctrine.

The Zaydis ruled Yemen for 1,000 years up until 1962. During this time they ferociously defended their independence and fought off foreign powers (Egypt, the Ottomans) who controlled lower Yemen and tried to extend their rule to the north. However, crucial to an understanding of the present conflict is that while the al-Houthi rebels are Zaydis, by no

means all Zaydis support the al-Houthi rebels - something that has been exploited by the government, which has persuaded rival Zaydi clans, backed by government forces, to lead the fighting against them in the mountain fastnesses of northern Yemen. Zaydis make up about 45 percent of the population, Sunnis 53 percent and there are also tiny minorities of other Shia groups - the Ismaili and Twelver communities. Al-Houthi Zaydis are estimated to be about 30 percent of the population, according to Hassan Zaid, secretary-general of the al-Haq opposition party.

... Over the past four years the government has recruited thousands of northern tribesmen - mainly Zaydis and Salafis who are Sunni - to fight the rebels. Analysts say this has extended the conflict, which recently spread to Harf Sufian in Amran Governorate and Bani Hushaish, a district 20km northwest of Sanaa city. Aysh said the tribal coalition was effective and fought on the front line, with support from government troops. There are dozens of tribes, clans and sub-clans in northern Yemen but just two powerful tribal coalitions, the Hashid and Bakil (both Zaydi). The government persuaded tribes from the former to fight against the rebels (Bakil). Hashid tribes have long been known as supporters of the state. ...In early July President Saleh met various tribal leaders with a view to forming an anti-al-Houthi "popular army" of 27,000 tribesmen. Some Saada 'sheikhs' also wanted to participate in the "popular army" as their interests in Saada had been damaged in the fighting that broke out in May 2008.

The government accuses the rebels of trying to install an Islamic Imamate government based on Zaydi doctrine. It has variously described the group as "extremist", "terrorist", "backward" and "apostate". The al-Houthis, meanwhile, say they have been defending themselves from a "dictatorial, corrupt power" that had tried to "eliminate their doctrine". In 2007 and 2008 Qatar mediation efforts succeeded in brokering short-lived ceasefires, but in the last few weeks fighting has flared up again. However, on 17 July, without mentioning if his troops had defeated the rebels, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh declared the conflict over, saying dialogue was better than bloodshed. "The war in Saada ended three days ago and, God willing, it will never return."

Evidence of the gradual radicalisation of Zaydis in Saada Governorate comes from Hassan Zaid, an intellectual living in Sanaa who prefers not to reveal his doctrinal or tribal identity for security reasons, who said that in 1992 a Shia movement known as Believing Youth, was founded in Saada.

He said Believing Youth was led by Mohammed Salem Azzan and Abdul-Karim Jadban, who had contacts among some Shia figures in Iran and Lebanon. ... Although Hussein al-Houthi, who was killed in 2004, had no relation with Believing Youth, according to Zaid, he contributed to the radicalisation of some Zaydis by persuading them - after the US-led occupation of Iraq in 2003 - to chant anti-American and anti-Jewish slogans in mosques. ...

Yahya al-Houthi, another brother of the current rebel leader, said in early July that Saudi Arabia had put pressure on Saleh to fight the rebels in Saada. He alleged that the Saudi authorities had supported the government campaign with US\$25 billion. The allegations were denied by the Yemeni authorities. Saudi Arabia has made no official statements on the issue. ... The Yemeni government has accused Iran and Libya of supporting the rebels - something the rebels themselves say is not true. At the same time President Saleh has developed close relations with Saudi Arabia, which recently ceded land to Yemen in a long-standing border dispute.



Local human rights groups say thousands of people have been arrested during the four-year conflict and that some are still being detained despite the president's declaration that the conflict is over. Abdul-Rashid al-Faqih, head of Hiwar Forum, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), said about 3,000 people had been arrested by the authorities for supporting al-Houthi. Of these, 500 detainees are known. The rest are unidentified because their families are scared of reporting their fate. Their whereabouts are unknown, he told IRIN. He said that during the recent fighting - known as the fifth war - about 60 people were arrested in Sanaa city alone. They included 16 students from Saada Governorate accommodated at Sanaa University. Radiyah al-Mutawakel, a human rights activist, said the detainees were from the Zaydi sect. "Such practices have played a role in extending the war. The first thing they think when they are set free is how to go and support the al-Houthi group," she told IRIN. Analysts are divided over whether the conflict is sectarian or tribal in nature, but it is certainly political, and many innocent people have suffered and are suffering."

### **ICG, May 2009**

"The destruction of villages and infrastructure by army shelling, air bombardment and indiscriminate military and police violence<sup>84</sup> has amplified grievances among not only Hashemites generally and Zaydi revivalists in particular but, more broadly, civilians in all northern governorates (Saada, al-Jawf, Amran and Hajja). Even many who originally did not sympathise with Husein al-Huthi sided with the rebels, in some instances taking up arms in solidarity with fellow villagers, relatives or tribesmen harmed in the fighting. A parliamentarian said, "the Huthis are getting stronger and stronger with each round. Renewed fighting will only increase the rebels' influence and broaden the combat zone". A General People's Congress member of the Consultative Council echoed this: "The Huthis seem to have a lot of followers, not for religious reasons but because the population feels discriminated against and excluded from development policies. Unfortunately, the destruction of villages has not helped fight that impression".

Likewise, the rebels have helped fuel anger, engaging in brutal acts, looting and kidnapping, including of soldiers and allied tribesmen, even as they adamantly - Rebel violence was highlighted [by foreigners living in Saada: "We trusted Husein al-Huthi and knew that he would not attack foreigners, but we now feel less confident with the new, more ideological, militants". Crisis Group interview, Sanaa, 18 January 2009. A humanitarian worker said, "Lack of access to the field is not solely due to government policies. We have been experiencing problems in some of the areas controlled by the rebels as well. The Huthis are seen by the population as very brutal. They intimidate people they consider neutral, including through kidnapping". deny resorting to arbitrary violence. The presence of thousands of displaced persons long after the conclusion of the fifth round suggests persisting problems, including damage to homes and fear of retaliation by either rebels, groups sympathising with them or progovernment tribes.

Driven by group solidarity, growing involvement of tribal militias alongside government or rebel forces has further inflamed the conflict and contributed to its endurance. By some accounts, the war has turned into a tribal conflict between the pro-government Hashid and pro-rebel Bakil confederations, the north Yemeni highlands' two largest. In December 2008, skirmishes between tribes belonging to the two confederations threatened a new round of fighting,<sup>92</sup> as did January 2009 tribal clashes in Amran governorate, south of Saada, and al-Jawf governorate, east of Saada. Rebels and others claim the Hashid set up checkpoints targeting Huthis and their supporters and aimed, apparently, at pressuring the government to adopt a harder stance. These along

with other incidents reflect how tribal vendettas (*thar*) have become a new, critical variable in the conflict. Government officials express alarm that tribal warfare may be taking on a life of its own.....

Belligerents as well as independent observers agree on one thing: under current conditions, a sixth round is only a matter of time. The prospect of parliamentary elections in April 2009 was cause for some relief; many observers believed the government would wish to avoid renewed confrontation ahead of polling. On 22 February, however, President Salih and the opposition jointly announced a two-year postponement of the vote, removing a possible obstacle to war.<sup>197</sup> Fears heightened as rumours swirled of a \$1 billion arms deal with Russia which, if true, would reinvigorate the army.<sup>198</sup> At the same time, Huthi leaders demonstrated their ability to mobilise large numbers. During the January Gaza war, they staged anti-Israel demonstrations in Saada replete with the Believing Youth's standard slogans. On the Prophet's birthday in March, rebels organised a rally reportedly attended by tens of thousands and at which Abd-al-Malik al-Huthi denounced Yemen's alliance with the U.S., warning the government it would lose if it were to launch an attack. Also in March, rebel spokesman Salih Habra declared that "the war is in no one's interest" but went on to accuse the government of preparing a sixth round. Two weeks later the army's official media outlet referred to the Huthis as a "seditionist and subversive group" and charged them with pursuing "terrorist activities" and "oppressing communities and households". Serious skirmishes broke out in early April between rebels and army units in Saada's Ghamir and Razih districts<sup>202</sup> and persisted for weeks. Each party promptly accused the other of violating the peace agreement. Several steps are required to forestall renewed war".

## **Natural disasters Floods and Draughts.**

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### **Natural disasters Floods and Draughts.**

- There have been several natural disasters that have caused displacement. This includes slow onset disasters such as drought and land erosion, as well as widespread flooding which has caused immediate displacement.
- Yemen is prone to floods (particularly during the monsoon season), landslides and earthquakes. (Yemeni Times, April 2009) Water shortage is acute and chronic in most parts of the country. Since late 2007, according to local officials in the Governorate of Al Mahwit located southwest from Saana, extensive drought has caused the displacement of thousands of household from mountainous villages in the governorate. (OCHA, November 2008)
- From October 24-25, 2008, widespread flooding swept over eastern Yemen. The desert areas of Hadramout and Mahra were most affected and declared disaster areas by the Yemeni Government. Flash floods and surging waters killed 80 persons and forced an additional 20,000 to 25,000 people into displacement.
- Preliminary estimates reported thousands of mud brick houses were totally destroyed while hundreds of others were left uninhabitable. In addition, several health facilities and estimated 170 schools were damaged or destroyed, and more than 40,000 acres of cultivated soil was eroded and some 600,000 palm trees destroyed.
- Hadramout governorate sustained the most flood damage both to homes and livelihoods especially in the rural areas particularly in the districts of Qatun, Mukalla, Tareem,, while damage to coastal urban areas in Hadramout was mainly to homes rather than livelihoods.

Extensive damage was found in rural areas of Al Mahra, principally in Al Masila district where over 1,400 homes were destroyed. (WFP, December 2008)

- In total, 4,349 households had their homes completely destroyed, 6,399 partially damaged, and over 5,100 households lost means or assets contributing to their livelihoods. (WFP, December 2008) The level of destruction had caused 20,000 to 25,000 displaced with over 100,000 affected by the flooding.
- The floods received considerable assistance through bilateral and multilateral actors. This contrasted quite distinctively with the situation in Sa'ada in which limitations in access, and prevailing security situation would substantially reduce the response. Though there was a CAP appeal for the floods, this would not be the case for the situation in Saada. (IDMC, interview May 2009)

### **OCHA CAP, November 2008**

Widespread flooding swept over eastern Yemen after a tropical storm (category three) and drenched the country with heavy rains on 24 and 25 October. The desert areas of two easternmost governorates, Hadramout and Al Mahra, have been most heavily affected. As of 31 October, the GoY estimated that some 20,000 to 25,000 people have lost their houses, while the overall number of persons whose livelihoods have been destroyed or badly affected by the floods may reach up to 700,000. The floods resulted in the death of 73 persons; an additional 17 persons are missing.... The floods are the largest natural disaster in Yemen since 1996. The disaster has been sudden and severe, and affected a large area (one-third of the country). While the authorities are in control of the situation and much of the immediate needs have been covered by the bilateral assistance received from neighbouring countries, damage to housing and livelihoods may require provision of humanitarian assistance for a period of two to six months, as well as early recovery programmes and subsequent, prolonged, multi-year recovery programmes. The information and analysis below are based on the assessment of the Hadramout Governorate and information received from the Al Mahrah Governorate authorities.

The damages caused by the floods to houses, the agriculture sector and infrastructure have been extensive. The landscape of eastern Yemen is dominated by rugged mountains and dry river valleys (wadis). The main valley of the area, Wadi Hadramout, is densely populated and has been worst affected (70% of the damaged area), where the flood surge reached up to six meters in some areas. Some areas, notably the Sah district, were hit by flash floods, while other towns received an alert call through the civil defence units. Damage further downstream and in the coastal areas has been less extensive, yet many coastal districts of Hadramout and Al Mahrah Governorates recorded considerable damage....

Displacement and Shelter: The IDPs made homeless by the floods took shelter in schools, mosques, clubs and other public premises, with host families, and in camps close to their houses. According to the UN/IOM Rapid Assessment Mission, the IDPs are scattered in some 113 settlements, which include 48 school buildings. In Al Mukalla town (population 250,000), some 1,000 IDPs are hosted in five buildings, mainly schools. The local customs are not compatible with a situation in which men and women from various families are forced to share common premises. The GoY intends to move many IDPs to tented settlements in vicinity of the villages, but final decisions on the issue have not been taken yet. Many of the local residents prefer to stay close to and guard their houses. Those displaced by the floods may be in need of winterisation assistance (temperatures drop to 10°C during the winter). Housing reconstruction may be long and

expensive, and according to the local officials, many houses may have to be built in new, less flood-prone locations, which may bring the unit cost up to \$20,000 per dwelling. Many local villagers are now afraid of living in the mud-brick houses and would like to build permanent structures of brick and mortar, which may alter the historic nature of the Wadi Hadramout area. As of 31 October, the GoY had not announced any compensation plan.

**IRIN, April 2009**

An official has warned that delays in restoring the severely flood-affected agriculture sector in Hadhramaut Governorate, southeastern Yemen, will prompt farmers to abandon their jobs and seek work in other sectors, affecting food security in the impoverished country. “Agricultural infrastructure was severely damaged [in the floods] and many of our farmers are jobless now. We fear that this will lead to migration from agriculture to other sectors, which will create a serious problem,” Omar Muhaiwer, director of the Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramaut Valley, told IRIN in Seyoun District. Calling for a quick revival of this sector, Muhaiwer said: “When you go to Seyoun you will find many people who used to work in agriculture now working as porters.” He added that because farm work is physically demanding, many young people are lured to other kinds of work. nOn 24 and 25 October 2008, rain fell on two million hectares of land for about 30 hours continuously, amounting to a total rainfall of some two billion cubic metres of water, said Muhaiwer. “The amount of water was twice the capacity of the waterways in the valley, causing flooding that destroyed the agricultural land and washed away the soil and crops,” he said. The floods killed 47 people and displaced 25,000 others, according to the government. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation estimated the total damage to agriculture in the main valley area at more than 72 billion Yemeni Riyals (about US\$360 million). Muhaiwer said that 70 percent of the residents in the valley - about 600-700,000 people -work in agriculture or are connected to it in some way.

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Loss and damage   | Yemeni Riyal                |
| Crops, livestock and bees   | 21.03 billion               |
| Wells, pumps, ground water irrigation networks, agriculture equipment and buildings | 10.74 billion               |
| Spate irrigation infrastructure and soil erosion                                    | 40.56 billion               |
| Total   | 72.33 billion<br>(US\$360m) |
| Source: Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramaut Valley                      |                             |

**IRIN, April 2009**

Delays in recovery efforts in the flood-hit governorates of Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah, southeastern Yemen, are putting the lives of thousands of survivors in jeopardy, aid workers have said. Giancarlo Cirri, World Food Programme (WFP) country director for Yemen, said recovery efforts since the October 2008 floods were insufficient, and that

this was prolonging the emergency period unnecessarily. ....The floods left 80 dead and displaced 25,000, mainly in Hadhramaut Governorate, according to the government and confirmed by a UN rapid assessment mission. They said an estimated 111,832 people had been affected by the floods in one way or another.

The 25,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been receiving regular food assistance since immediately after the floods. But a recent WFP food security assessment found that another 18,000 flood victims, including displaced and non-displaced people, should also be registered to receive food assistance. Ali Sabih, a member of the local council in Tarim District in Hadhramaut, said the problem was that the government teams tasked with assessing damage did not register all flood victim families. .... Local council member Sabih said there was no evidence of any reconstruction work on the ground, and flood victims were worried. ....WFP's Cirri said an estimated US\$3 million was needed to provide food for the newly registered 18,000 flood victims in Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah governorates.

# POPULATION FIGURES AND PROFILE

## Figures

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### Profile of displacement in Yemen

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#### Figures of Displacement in Yemen

- There are no clear figures on displacement in Yemen at national level. There is no Government institution specifically addressing displacement, nor is there UN agency having adequate access to determine exact figures of displacement in conflict affected areas. This is largely due to limitations in access to areas in which conflict affected displacement is reported, and to Yemeni government imposition of blackout information on situations of displacement.
- There are several situations of displacement in Yemen and stages of displacement: Conflict induced displacement in southern Yemen in 1980s and 1994; conflict induced displacement in Sa'ada from 2004 to 2008. There are also more minor situations displacement linked to recent clashes or disturbances in number of southern governments in 2009; religious tensions of Yemeni Jewish community in northern Yemen, as well as reoccurring tribal clashes.
- There has also been substantial displacement due to natural disaster. This is most recently witnessed in the flash floods in October 2008 in southern Governorates, as well as displacement that has occurred due to slow onsetting disasters as result of draughts.
- The principle cause of contemporary conflict induced displacement is linked to the conflict in Sa'ada and subsequent geographical extension of this conflict to Amran, Jawf, and San'a governorates. The UN Emergency Preparedness Response Team has identified a figure of 100,000 IDPs
- WFP, UNHCR and the ICRC have however different operational figures related to their mandates and geographical areas of operation. In June 2009, WFP was assisting almost 83,000 IDPs including formerly registered IDPs who were able to access distribution sites. UNHCR had registered 25,000 IDPs by June 2009 in accessible areas in Sa'ada and Bani Houshesh in Sana'a governorate, and was waiting to be able to conduct a full profiling exercise.



Fratricidal conflict in PDRY in 1986 would lead to displacement of supports to the North of







The civil war which lasted 70 days in 1994 would lead to temporary displacement of over 54,000



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Northern Yemen, Saada conflict, 2004-2009

100,000 (ICRC,  
An estimated 100,000 – 130,000 people were  
displaced or affected at peak of conflict. Following  
July 2008 ceasefire, the government reported that  
90,000 had returned. Limited access has made

it difficult to verify figures, and in view of estimated needs the UN EPRT has identified an



Northern Yemen, religious-minority tensions

Religious tensions in northern governorate of Saada and Amran have led to the displacement of members of the Yemeni Jewish minority in these locations. There is no clear figure on the







There is little information on displacement due to intra/inter-tribal conflict. The numbers however are thought to be quite limited affecting several households at a time. Tribal conflicts principally





Flooding in the southern governorates of Hadramout and Al Mahara caused the displacement of



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## Profile of displacement in Yemen

- There is little information on the profile of conflict induced displacement from southern governorates in 1980s and 1990s. Equally so restrictions in access to areas affected by conflict in Saada, has prevented any profiling of the displaced community outside of Saada city, the capital of Saada governorate, nor has there been any registration of IDPs in other locations including Saana. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Yemenis displaced in 1986 including Yemenis closely associated with political faction and involved civilian as well as military personnel, including their respective households. During the 1994 civil war displacement included rural and urban communities displaced principally from conflict areas around urban centers such as Aden, and from governorates of Lahj, Taiz, and Abyan. (HRW, October 1994)
- Recent displacement as result of Saada conflict principally affect rural communities that have been displaced as result of the conflict between tribes or government and Houthi opposition, or pro-governmental tribes and Houthi opposition. This includes areas in Saada, Amran, Saana and Jawff governorates. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Though the majority are rural communities, this also includes Yemenis displaced for imputed political allegiances with one party or another to the conflict either by political affiliation or belonging to tribe affiliated with the conflict. This has included employees and members of local administrations affiliated to the government as well as alleged Houthi sympathisers. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- The governorate of Saada is principally Shi'ia and most displaced are Shi'ia, though this has also included Sunni. Members of the Yemeni Jewish minority residing in Saada have also been displaced in 2007, though the numbers are quite limited. The majority in Amran have sought to remain in places of residences. (Yemen Times, April 2009)
- Of the estimated displaced 70% are women and children of those registered as displaced by the humanitarian community. In certain localities such as Bani Houshesh, the percentage of women and children is higher after the latest conflict with many men having not returned for fear of arrest, or having been arrested. (Yemen Times, June 2008; IDMC interview May 2009)
- Profile of those displaced from natural disasters includes rural and semi-urban communities. Rural and urban communities in Hadramout and Al Maher were heavily affected by the floods in October 2008, while slow onsetting draughts have affected principally rural communities. (WFP, December 2008)

### HRW, October 1994

In other rural areas, despite heavy artillery and mortar fire, civilian casualties were minimized because women and children fled at the first sign of fighting, followed by the men. In the first six weeks of the war some 20,000 people were displaced from the conflict zones around Aden to the city center. Another 25,000 were displaced in Lahj and Taiz governorates and 8,000 in Abyan governorate. Shelling destroyed many deserted homes, shops, workshops, and livestock, and many families returned in July to find their property and livelihoods in ruins. After southern separatist forces retreated from their large military base at Anad through the town of Subr, the Subr women and children fled. The men stayed behind for a week to guard the houses. They left two days after the government forces entered the town on foot and in tanks. ....The Subr women and children took refuge in the al-Wa'ara village slightly to the north. The separatist forces



were there when the displaced arrived but these troops soon abandoned their camp at al-Wa'ara and headed south to Bir Nasir. .... Villagers who fled conflict areas suffered economic losses, including destruction of shops and death of livestock. ...According to shop-keepers interviewed at Subr, for instance, virtually every business along the main road was destroyed. Moreover, most of the thousands of families that evacuated villages were forced to abandon their sheep and goats and other livestock. Most of the livestock perished from thirst or other causes. ....The proportion and number of civilian casualties in Aden and the pattern of intensive shelling of urban areas crowded with displaced as well as residents indicates that, especially after June 19, government forces were not complying with their duty to take measures to avoid civilian casualties, and that this attack on Aden was indiscriminate.....

### **IRIN, July 2008**

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### **UNICEF, January 2009**

"The conflict in Sa'ada Governorate, which is 240 kilometres from the capital Sana'a, started in 2004 and has been ongoing despite many mediation efforts. The latest ceasefire was declared in June 2008. Of the Governorate's population of 700,000, it is

estimated that over 130,000 are displaced throughout the region, mainly in seven camps or with host families within and around Sa'ada. Women and children comprise a high percentage (over 70 per cent) of those affected and dwelling in the camps. With the destruction of many basic facilities, such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate, access to services is affected. Opportunities for many livelihoods have diminished due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen."

## **Geographical distribution of displacement**

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### **Geographical distribution of displacement**

- The Saada conflict has progressively involved larger areas – initially confined to the district of Majz, by June 2008 during the fifth round of conflict, it included nearly all 15 districts in Saada governorate, as well as Bani Sufiyan in Amran governorate, and Bani Hushaish in Saana governorate, and certain localities in Jawff governorate. There were concerns that conflict could extend farther afield to governorates of Hajjah and Dhamar.
- The geographical spread and nature of the conflict entails that IDPs were and remain quite dispersed. IDPs were forced to flee to the border areas with Saudi Arabia, and as far south as Sana'a city. Many were also reported displaced within the areas affected by conflict unable or unwilling to flee further afield. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- There are principally two areas in which main groupings of displaced are located in the governorate of Saada. This includes Saada city of Saada district, and al Mahaleet town of Adh Dhahir district. These consist of IDPs estimated between 25,000 to 54,000 which are assisted by the humanitarian community. (UNHCR June 2009; WFP March 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009)
- There are currently four IDP camps in Saada city including which consist of several thousand households. Several hundred families are also located within host community, relatives or in rented accommodation within Saada city.
- There are reports and testimonies of displacement within districts affected by conflict since late 2008 include Razih, Ghamar, Saqayan, Haydan, and certain areas of Sahar, and Majz. These are locations which are contested or under de facto control by the opposition, though not clearly delineated. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- In these locations and others which have been heavily affected by previous rounds of fighting and subsequent destruction, displacement is more dispersed where an unknown number of IDP and returnee households (of September 2008) have found refuge with host community or in makeshift shelters and damaged homes.
- There are reports that some of these are at risk of displacement due to ongoing intermittent violence and the risk of new round of conflict erupting between government and Houthi opposition. (Yemen Times, June 2009)
- There are also displaced found within various urban centres south of Saada including reported in excess of hundred households in Saana itself. There is very little information on the profile or number of those located in Saana or other cities. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Natural disaster including flooding and draughts has resulted in displacement in different localities. Floodings caused displacement in governorates of Hadramout and El-Mahara southeast of Yemen, and draughts have affected the governorate of al Mahlawit. (WFP, December 2008)

**Yemen Times, June 2009**

Tribal leaders in the Sa'ada governorate said that the security situation is worrying and that most citizens, particularly those living in tense areas, are preparing to leave their houses and look for safe shelters. Sources said people became fearful when they saw the daily mobilization of the Yemeni military. Soldiers moved into new sites, set up Catoosa rockets, bombardiers, and artillery, as well as mobilizing tanks in many areas. ... Sheikh Saleh Habra, a representative of Abdul Malek Al-Houthi's office, said that army forces are conducting unprecedented mobilizations in several areas, in a phone interview. ...."Some of these forces have already started launching artillery shells in intervals against a number of areas, including civilian plantations and safe villages in the Asfal Marran area. Farmers are no longer able to go to their plantations, in fear of the sudden and repeated attacks that government's forces launch in order to force citizens to stay in their homes and hideouts."

**Yemen Times, June 2008**

"This is especially evident in Harf Sifyan, located between Sa'ada and Amran governorates, and Bani Hushaish just outside of Sana'a, where the conflict has left a wake of both personal and property damage. Dozens of families in these restive areas now are homeless and hundreds of formerly healthy individuals now are handicapped due to the continuous fighting. This is the case for some 700 families who evacuated their homes in Harf Sifyan and approximately 100 families forced to evacuate their homes in Sa'ada's Bani Suraim and Houth districts, fleeing to the surrounding villages of Al-Eshah, Jabal Eial Zaid, Maswar and Amran city, in addition to other remote areas."

**ICRC, November 2008**

"By the end of October, the population in the camps hosting internally displaced people in Sa'ada had declined to less than 7,000, which made it possible to close two of the six camps. Nevertheless, many displaced people are still staying with host families in Sa'ada town, as they cannot yet return to their home areas. Many of those who do return find their houses damaged or destroyed by the fighting and need emergency assistance to re-start their lives."

**IRIN, August 2008**

"IDPs had not been able to return home as their houses had been destroyed during the fighting in Harf Sufian. "Their villages have turned into heaps of stones," he told IRIN. Taha said the IDPs were living in the nearby districts of Houth, Bani Sarim, Khamer, Eyal Suriah and Eyal Yazid. "The standard of living there has deteriorated a lot. They do not have tents. They did not take anything with them when they were displaced... diseases such as diarrhoea have spread among them," he said. Taha added that the government [damage assessment committee](#) had not been able to begin work in Harf Sufian. ... Since May, an additional 300 displaced families have arrived in Amran Governorate, according to the YRCS's Madram. They fled Saada Governorate after the fighting in May, he said. "They live in districts such as Kharef, Dhieben and Khamer. Their situation is no better than in Harf Sufian," he said. Madram said these IDPs, too, were living mainly in abandoned buildings, and that they had not received any relief assistance."

## PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

### Displacement in Saada and surrounding governorates 2004-2009

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- Since early 2004, there have been five rounds of armed conflict, which relate to official government declarations and ceasefires: (1) June 18, 2004 to September 10, 2004; (2) March 19, 2005 to April 12, 2005; (3) July 12, 2005 to February 28, 2006; (4) February 27, 2007 to June 14, 2007; (5) May 5, 2008 to July 17, 2008. (HRW, November 2008)
- At the height of the conflict in July 2008, UN OCHA estimated 130,000 were displaced or affected by the conflict. (UN (OCHA, July 2008) There are no clear estimate of the number of casualties in the last four years, though some estimate range from 15,000 to 30,000. (IDMC, interview April 2009)
- Shortly following the latest round of conflict which ended in July 2008, the majority of those displaced would return to places of origin following government declaration of end of the war and through indirect pressure by government authorities and assistance.
- The level of destruction in areas affected by the conflict such as Saqin, Ghamer, Dhayan, Maithan in Saada governorate, Bani Houshesh in Saana goverorate or Harf Soufyan in Amran, have entailed that many returnees have reportedly returned to situations of displacement.
- There are currently an estimated 25,000 to 56,000 IDPs located in 4 IDP camps in Saada, and within host community in Saada city and neighbouring areas. This includes IDPs located in dispersed areas in and around Mahaleet town in Dahar district. There is an undocumented number of displaced reported in conflict affected areas however lack of access has meant inability to identify and assess situation of displaced. Several hundred families are located in Saana city and other urban areas.
- Intermittent conflict since declared end of the conflict has entailed displacement in several districts in Saada, leading to Yemenis seeking refuge in the city of Saada and Malaheet, as well as ongoing reported displacement within districts in which conflict occurred. (IDMC May Interview)
- Through early 2009, conflict between Houthi and government forces, and progovernment tribes was reported in Ghamer district, Saqayn, and in/near Marran and Malaheet resulting in displacement of civilians seeking refugee away from conflict areas within districts, and to Saada city as well as Malaheet. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- In May-June, some 3,500 IDPs newly displaced were registered in Saada and Mahaleet having fled intermittent conflict in various districts in Saada including Razeh, and Saqayen, and Haydan. (IRIN, June 2009; IDMC interview May 2009)
- There has been rising public concern that increasing clashes between the opposing parties and reports of further military preparations by both parties, and threatening declarations are precursors to a 6th war. (Yemen Times, June 2009)

IRIN, June 2009

The security situation in Saada Governorate, northern Yemen, has been deteriorating in the wake of sporadic clashes between government forces and a group of Shia rebels since May, aid workers say. On 16 June Rabab al-Rifai, an International Committee of

the Red Cross (ICRC) spokesperson, told IRIN the recent clashes had displaced over 500 families (some 3,500 people) who have now fled to Saada City. "We are still assessing the situation and based on the result we will see how best to respond to the needs of the people who have recently fled their homes," she said, adding that the families had been provided with essential household items to help them cope with their new situation. On 15 June the information office of rebel leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi issued a statement saying government troops had attacked houses in Razez District, Saada Governorate, killing some civilians and wounding others. The government refuses to comment on its operations in Saada, but it has said al-Houthi followers are trying to block peace efforts in the governorate. .

### **HRW, November 2008**

By July 17, 2008, an estimated 17,000 to 20,000 IDPs (of whom about 80 percent were women and children) were living in seven camps managed by the Yemeni Red Crescent. The camps are located in and around Sa'da town, the capital of Sa'da governorate. An estimated 40,000 IDPs were also living with relatives or friends in Sa'da town....Humanitarian access to rural areas in Sa'da governorate was almost non-existent in the first half of 2008, and remained limited after July 17, when President Saleh declared an end to the fighting. There are only estimates of the total number of IDPs in Sa'da's rural areas. Humanitarian NGOs estimated that by June 30 the conflict had displaced 14,700 people to rural areas throughout the governorate and 15,200 to neighboring 'Amran and al-Jawf governorates. In June 2008, the UN estimated that the conflict had displaced a total of 130,000 persons throughout the country, including the 60,000 known to be in Sa'da town. This suggested that up to 70,000 IDPs had been displaced in rural areas or urban areas other than Sa'da town. An estimate by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in May 2008 that 100,000 civilians were "directly affected" by the war, of whom 40,000 were estimated at the time to be in Sa'da town, supports this figure.

Persons displaced in the first half of 2008 and who were unable to reach Sa'da town tried to find shelter with relatives or friends. For example, during the fifth round of fighting, around 500 newly displaced who could not reach Sa'da town were living with relatives in Bakil Amir on the Saudi border. Other IDPs, unable to find help, became refugees by crossing the border into Saudi Arabia. In Sa'da town, residents reported that 60 or more persons lived in houses that before the displacement had 20 family members.

Many IDPs only found shelter in mosques, schools, tents, caves, or on farmland under open skies. One displaced person told Human Rights Watch that he had seen other IDPs living in caves in a number of areas including in Rughafa, Dhahiyan, Sanam and al-'Aridh.<sup>76</sup> A displaced person from Harf Sufyan told Human Rights Watch that in May 2008 he and 3,000 other inhabitants had fled the town after the community leaders warned them that the military would carry out aerial bombardment. They ended up living without any shelter on nearby mountains. An international NGO confirmed that in May and June, some 2,000 IDPs from Harf Sufyan fled to neighboring al-Jawf governorate to the east.

Two weeks after the official end of fighting, on August 5, 2008, the Yemeni Red Crescent reported that 9,000 people remained in Sa'da town's seven camps, down from

as many as 20,000. Of the up to 40,000 IDPs living in Sa'da town with relatives, the ICRC in June estimated that 15,500 IDPs lacked access to clean water and medical care; the local government disputed this number, saying that most of the displaced families had returned home.<sup>80</sup> Other organizations found that a number of IDPs had returned to their villages during the last week of July 2008 only to find their properties completely destroyed, leaving them with no option but to return to the camps.<sup>81</sup> In mid-August 2008, international aid agency staff told Human Rights Watch that IDPs who left Sa'da town for home returned after some Huthis told them they were not welcome because they had fled during the fighting, indicating that they opposed the Huthis.

According to information given to Human Rights Watch by a person who had recently visited Malahit, many IDPs who left Malahit town in late July to go home then returned to Malahit after Huthis in control of their home villages told them they would only be allowed to stay if they signed a statement that they would support the Huthis and not the government if another war broke out.<sup>83</sup> Also in mid-August, the Yemeni Red Crescent reported that 1,100 families who had escaped intense fighting in Harf Sufyan district in 'Amran governorate in May 2008, and in Sa'da governorate between May and July 2008, were living in various districts of 'Amran governorate in abandoned houses, schools, and mosques, and were in serious need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>84</sup> As noted above, a community leader from Harf Sufyan confirmed in mid-August that 1,800 families could not return to their villages because fighting had completely destroyed their houses. According to a humanitarian agency staffer, some residents who had gone back to their homes in response to government encouragement subsequently returned to the IDP camps "because their houses were destroyed or because they were forced to make pledges to the Huthis."

#### [Yemen Times, July 2008](#)

This is especially evident in Harf Sifyan, located between Sa'ada and Amran governorates, and Bani Hushaish just outside of Sana'a, where the conflict has left a wake of both personal and property damage. Dozens of families in these restive areas now are homeless and hundreds of formerly healthy individuals now are handicapped due to the continuous fighting. This is the case for some 700 families who evacuated their homes in Harf Sifyan and approximately 100 families forced to evacuate their homes in Sa'ada's Bani Suraim and Houth districts, fleeing to the surrounding villages of Al-Eshah, Jabal Eial Zaid, Maswar and Amran city, in addition to other remote areas....

"Many homes were destroyed and looted after residents left their farmlands and businesses. We now live in a miserable and unsettled situation," the man said, adding that the fighting prevented his four sons, who left school, from returning to take their exams. Another 40-year-old man requesting anonymity for security reasons recounted that his wife and children were fear-stricken after a fighter jet destroyed their home and surrounding property on the first day of the most recent outbreak of fighting..... Some residents of the war-torn areas allege that their properties were looted and their homes subjected to air strikes without prior notification by government forces, who promised to evacuate the areas they decided to raid....

Obaid Mardam, director of Amran's Yemeni Red Crescent Association, notes that more than 7,000 residents were evacuated due to confrontations between Yemeni army forces and Houthi loyalists in Sa'ada and Harf Sifyan regions. He explains, "These people urgently need food and others suffer the same problem, but we can't reach them because armed groups looted three Red Crescent relief campaigns on May 25 in the

Ghamr area of Amran governorate's Houth district." According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the war in Sa'ada has directly affected approximately 100,000 people. .... Approximately 40,000 people were evacuated from Sa'ada in total, nearly 8,000 of whom are living in camps while others are living with host families or relatives elsewhere, according to Muanqar. The Sa'ada war has gone on for four years with spurts of intense violence throughout, which also has resulted in the deterioration of the governorate's infrastructure. Because of this, access to potable water and health services are poor and infrequent, according to the ICRC, which maintains an office in Sa'ada governorate.

#### **Yemen Times, June 2008**

Since the beginning of the clashes between the security forces and Houthi followers in the district [Bani Houshesh] in mid-May, the tension in the area has risen to such a high level that frantic and extreme measures are imposed by security in order to regain control of the Houthi rebellion. The increased security measures even reached the outskirts of Sana'a City, where random security checks take place and pedestrians are now asked to show their identification. ....Many families from the so-called "troubled areas" who could afford to leave abandoned their homes because of the armed clashes and moved to Sana'a temporarily. However, they too have been having a difficult time because of their background. "We left our homes, farms and everything to secure our women and children but we are shocked that we cannot find a place to rent. Landlords refuse to rent to us because we are from Bani Hushaish district," said a man from the area who has taken his family out of the village and is trying to settle down in Sana'a until peace is restored. The Ministry of Interior and the Sana'a Security Office refused to comment on this issue.

#### **UNHCR, March 2008**

The latest violence erupted in December 2006 and January 2007, resulting in the displacement of an estimated 42,000 people who moved from rural areas to the town of Sa'adah and other secure areas within the Governorate. Since January 2007 negotiations between the Government and Al-Shabab Al-Momen, chaired by the Government of Qatar, were ongoing, and a cease fire agreement was signed in early August 2007. This encouraged many internally displaced persons to return to their places of origin. However, towards the end of the year, the situation further deteriorated as the Al-Shabab Al-Momen fighters and the army clashed in the district of Haydan, in Sa'adah Governorate, resulting to new displacements within Sa'adah city and the opening of a third IDPs camp in the city. Progress in the peace negotiations chaired by the Qatar team was realized at the beginning of 2008, and a peace agreement was signed between the two parties in January 2008.

The majority of IDPs took refuge with relatives and friends within Sa'adah Governorate and city, while some ten per cent fled to established IDP camps in and around Sa'adah city. The affected population is made up of mainly poor labourers and their extended stay with host families represents a significant burden on the hosts in continuing to provide food and shelter. The affected population numbers 77,000 persons, including IDPs, returnees and conflict-affected people. Two camps accommodate approximately 300 families, although an increasing number of families are living in tents inside the city, most of whom are not willing to move to the camps due to the easy access to services in the city. Security remains a problem for the majority of IDPs living outside the city of Sa'adah, and access by relief agencies is limited.

### **IRIN, November 2007**

In June, a Qatari government reconciliation team engineered a peace agreement under which the government was to reconstruct war-affected areas of Saada on the condition that rebels came down from the mountains and surrendered their weapons. The government was to facilitate the safe return of some 56,000 people displaced by fighting, reconstruct destroyed houses and release detainees from Saada. The peace agreement soon collapsed with both sides claiming the other was not living up to its commitments. The Qatar team left Yemen in mid-August expressing dismay with both sides. Sporadic clashes resumed. In addition, a national committee formed to supervise the peace agreement stopped working immediately after the Qatar team left. "There is no official information [on the Saada peace process] and no continuation of the committee's efforts. We just hear there are sporadic clashes between the two warring parties," Aidarous al-Naqeeb, a member of mediation committee, told IRIN. Al-Naqeeb said that his committee had made much progress in restoring stability to the area, allowing many of the displaced to return home, but warned that without full compliance from both sides civilians would continue to suffer. Of the 56,000 displaced, the majority have returned home, according to Medical Charitable Association (MCA), a local NGO. MCA added that about 7,500 people are still displaced, of whom 2,100 live in camps and the rest with host families. The International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme, and a number of local NGOs have been delivering aid to Saada since February.

### **IRIN, July 2007**

Eman Mo'ankar, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yemen, told IRIN that some 8,000 families - about 56,000 people - had been displaced by the fighting. Mo'ankar said the ICRC, together with the Yemeni Red Crescent Society (YRCS), had so far assisted 5,300 families - roughly 37,100 people - out of the 5,700 displaced families currently in Saada town. "ICRC and YRCS teams are working closely to assist the rest of them with emergency aid," Mo'ankar added. Mo'ankar said the ICRC was concerned about the fate of displaced families in remote areas, particularly an estimated 2,800 families (about 20,000 people) in areas difficult to access owing to security constraints. "However, the ICRC/YRCS had been able to provide emergency aid to 7,617 displaced persons in remote areas," she said. Emergency relief, including tents, groundsheets, jerry cans, mattresses, blankets and hygiene supplies, is being provided to residents and displaced people, Mo'ankar said. "However, after several months of displacement other needs are arising such as the need for proper medical care and food," she added.

## **Displacement in South & Risks of displacement**

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- The Yemen Arab Republic (north) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (south) unified in 1990, to form the Republic of Yemen. But the unitary state was threatened when civil war broke out in 1994, with southern leaders calling for secession. Thousands were killed in fierce fighting which ended with the defeat of the southern leaders represented mainly by the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). (MERIP, July 2005)
- Several hundred thousand southerners held protest rallies in March 2008 and there have been numerous other protests since 2006. Two key issues have kept southern grievances alive - land grabs by powerful officials from the north following the 1994 war, and the exclusion of southern civil and military officials from top government jobs. (MERIP, July 2005)
- The grievance which are still valid today, include harrasments and arbitrary detention, employment discrimination, exclusion from the political process, presence of military camps and checkpoints, and below sustenance pensions; more than 100,000 civil and military workers reportedly lost their livelihoods following the 1994 war.(MERIP, July 2005; IRIN, May 2009)
- Following recent violence in the south in May 2009 around 200 families were reportedly displaced in Lahj Governorate – allegedly a significant number of them are of northern origin. There have been increasing tensions against Yemenis of northern orgine including reports of intimidation, harrasement, and killings. (IRIN, May 2009; IDMC Interview, May 2009; Yemeni Times, July 2009)
- Currently, according to observers there is a strain of southern sentiment that maintains the PDRY was not unified with the North, but rather was illegally occupied by Yemeni government northern forces following the civil war. (World Press, May 2009; and November 2008)
- In recent months, April-May 2009, the Government imposed a media blackout on events in southern Yemen, shutting 7 newspapers and prosecuting number of journalists on grounds of sedition. (Yemeni Times, May 2009; Amnesty International, July 2009)

### **IRIN, May 2009**

"In the past few days, thousands of protesters have taken to the streets in the governorates of Lahj, al-Dhalei, Hadhramaut and Abyan, chanting anti-government slogans and calling for secession and the withdrawal of "the northern occupation". Scores were killed in clashes between protestors and security forces, and a number of soldiers were killed when armed groups attacked security checkpoints. The violent demonstrations were the worst in the south since late 2006.

The Yemen Arab Republic (north) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (south) unified in 1990, to form the Republic of Yemen. But the unitary state was threatened when civil war broke out in 1994, with southern leaders calling for secession. Thousands were killed in fierce fighting which ended with the defeat of the southern leaders represented mainly by the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP).

Two key issues have kept southern grievances alive - land grabs by powerful officials from the north following the 1994 war, and the exclusion of southern civil and military officials from top government jobs. Several hundred thousand southerners held protest rallies in March 2008 and there have been numerous other protests since 2006. The grievances, which are still valid today, include political murders and arbitrary detention, employment discrimination, exclusion from the political process, omnipresent military camps and checkpoints, and below sustenance pensions; more than 100,000 civil and military workers lost their livelihoods following the 1994 war.

Civil and military pensioners from the south started protests in 2006 demanding equal rights, but the government has refused to respond. According to a 2008 report by the London-based think-tank Chatham House, underlying these separatist gestures was the perceived exclusion of southerners from northern patronage networks in business, politics and military. Yemen's oil resources are in the south, but southerners complain that the Sanaa regime is hogging the profits, the report said.

The South Movement (SM), led by former disgruntled military officers from the south, is the main focus for those opposing the regime. It recently gained momentum after a number of southern sheikhs joined it. Last month Sheikh Tareq al-Fadli, a prominent tribal leader in Abyan Governorate and a former ally of President Saleh, announced he was joining SM. He described northern leaders as "invaders of the earth and wealth", and called for the internationalisation of the south's case....

Nasser al-Khabji, one of the SM leaders, told IRIN that during the latest protests the military had bombed some areas, causing panic. "Around 200 families were displaced [in Lahj Governorate]... Life came to a standstill; students were not able to go to schools; shops were closed," he said. The mobilisation of hundreds of southern pro-government civilians by the government against SM had aggravated the situation, he added. Parliamentary elections originally scheduled for 27 April 2009 were in February postponed for two years, following a long campaign by opposition groups to boycott them."

#### **Al Sahwa, May 2009**

"Military forces have withdrawn from recent-occupied positions at Lahmrain mountain and surrounding areas and returned to its former positions. A committee led by the former minister of the Local Administration Abdul-Kader Hilal supervised the withdrawal. Meanwhile, presidential and parliamentary committees are set to arrive in Radfan district in the next few days to see concerns of the citizens and their needs. Armed protests had broken out in southern Yemen and left at least eight people dead and dozens injured in the past weeks."

#### **Al Sahwa, May 2009**

"The European Union has voiced deep concern over the recent incidents of political violence in the South of Yemen, calling all parts to abandon violence . EU urges government , political parties, civil society organization and Yemeni citizens to engage in dialogue in order to identify issues of concern and take urgent action to address legitimate grievances. It further criticized the recent restrictions on newspapers in the wake of news coverage of events in the south , calling the Yemeni government to stand by the freedom of media and access to information as fundamental rights. " The European Union recognizes and welcomes the role of the GCC in supporting Yemen's development, as expressed at the 19th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial meeting on 29 April in Muscat" It added .

#### **Yemeni Times, May 2009**

"Sami Ghalib, editor-in-chief of Al-Nida', said to the Yemen Times that he, Shae' Al-Abd, Fuad Musad and Abdulaziz Al-Magidi from the same newspaper, and another twenty journalists from targeted newspapers faced charges of "spreading hatred among Yemenis and calling for breaking up national unity."He pointed out that the government considers any coverage of the current social unrest in Yemen's southern governorates as inciting towards insurrection and threatening the supreme interest of the nation.

"Instructions went given to imams to welcome closure of the newspapers in their Friday sermons," said Ghalib. "The government is campaigning against journalists""

### **World Press, Novembre 2008**

"A significant development is South Yemen's rejection of the entire political process. Yearlong regional protests were met with bullets and tanks, prompting southern Yemen to self-organize a representative political mechanism advocating. The election of the Southern Arabian Liberation Council may have been the first "free and fair election" in Yemeni history. Its platform advocates a peaceful struggle for independence. The election results were announced in Yafi' on November 14. The body consists of a president (Hassan Ba'oum), a ten member cabinet, 25 administrative officers and 352 National Council members. The 1994 north-south civil war ended with the military victory of President Saleh's northern forces. Since then, southerners claim, the south has been looted as the spoils of war. Southerners perceive themselves as treated as third class citizens who face institutionalized discrimination and exclusion from the central government, which is firmly in the grip of the President and his family. Public protests began in the south in May 2007. Dozens of demonstrators were shot by police, hundreds injured and over a thousand arrested. The regime's response to the civil unrest consisted of a schizophrenic mix of violence, arrests and defamation sprinkled with fleeting allusions to wrong-doing by regime officials and superficial remedies to discriminatory policies. Thousands of troops reinforced the areas of greatest unrest. As government failed to remedy or even address the inequality, the response of the populist protest movement was to organize."

## **Displacement due to tribal conflicts and religious discrimination**

### **Displacement due to tribal conflicts and religious discrimination**

- The divisions in national Yemeni politics are not religious sectarian divisions per se, but are based on a complex web of tribal, social, religious and politically expedient alliances. The northern tribal confederations (particularly the Hashid confederation) fought for the Salih regime against the south before unification and afterward during the 1994 civil war.
- Some commentators have underlined the tribalisation of the conflict in northern governorates. This refers to increasing involvement of tribes affiliated to the government. The tribalisation of the conflict has added a new dynamic to the conflict including the notion of revenge killings and tribal retribution. (ICG, May 2009)
- Displacement due to tribal conflicts as a separate category makes reference to tribal conflicts which are not related to ongoing wider conflicts. Mindful however that the government has throughout modern history relied on tribes to support government intervention, whether this be in the conflict in South, or in Saada and Amran governorates. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Tribal conflicts are a source of displacement though such displacement has generally been quite limited unlike wider conflicts that Yemen has witnessed. Though figures are unavailable, analysts comment that tribal conflicts may entail displacement of several households or none. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Tribal customs and norms however also function to mitigate the impact of conflict on civilians, through elaborate conflict mediation strategies to resolve impending conflicts or protection of civilians such as practice of providing of safe havens. Analysts however note that such traditional practices are increasingly under pressure. (IDMC Interview May 2009) There are

also instances of displacement resulting from abuse of traditional norms linked to class/rural exploitation. (IRIN March 2008)

- As many as 1,500 Yemeni are believed killed in tribal disputes every year. (Yemen Times, January 2004) The government has set up a committee to sort out such problems. Conflicts in tribal areas have a cost beyond those directly killed or wounded: children are unable to attend school, the ill are unable to access medical care, resources are destroyed and development projects or services (such as vaccination campaigns) are interrupted. (NDI, March 2007)
- In study undertaken by NDI of tribal conflicts in 3 governorates in the north, indicate that in the last 5 years there were approximately 158 deadly conflicts. The longest duration of an unresolved conflict reported by the sheikhs was 92 years. (NDI, March 2007)
- Religious minorities have also been target of displacement. This is particularly the case of the Yemeni Jewish minority in Saada, and Amran Governorates. (Yemen Times, April 2009) In January 2007, Yemeni government relocated 65 Yemeni Jews from Saada following threats against the community to Saana for their protection. In Amran, numbering in excess of 400, the Yemeni Jewish minority has faced risk of displacement due to harassment from extremist religious groups. (IRIN, March 2009; Yemen Times, February 2009 and April 2009)
- Reports differ as to the instigators of violence against Yemeni Jews. In certain cases reporting that such harassment, intimidation, including violence is instigated by members of Houthi opposition in Saada, or Salafi religious extremists in Amran. IDPs also voice facing discrimination and limited assistance in areas of resettlement or displacement. (IRIN, March 2009; Yemen Times, February 2009; Al Jazeera, April 2009)

#### **NDI, March 2007**

The sheikhs' reports indicate that in the last 5 years there were approximately 158 deadly conflicts involving their tribes in the 3 governorates. 21% of the conflicts began in the period 2001 through 2005. 79% of the conflicts discussed by the sheikhs began before 2001. The longest duration of an unresolved conflict reported by the sheikhs was 92 years. As noted in the methodology section, when discussing tribal conflict, tribal leaders in their discussions tend to conflate all violence with revenge killings, therefore focusing primarily on the question of compensation, the payment of "blood money". "Blood money" is compensation in place of revenge for a death. There are standard amounts assigned based upon gender, age, and the conditions under which the killing took place. The actual amount a family or tribe commits to pay in place of "blood" often is negotiated.; the government also tends to focus on blood money compensation when discussing tribal conflict. NDI rarely heard references to other causes of violence in these areas. ....

An extremely broad variety of factors were identified by the sheikhs as the initial cause of the conflicts in all three governorates. The most commonly cited initial cause of a conflict was dispute over land, ninety-two of the sheikhs (about 58%) reported that the initial dispute arose over the use of land. Land disputes were also the most frequently cited cause of the conflicts that started in the last five years, but a smaller percentage of these new conflicts were reported to have stemmed from these sorts of disputes. Fourteen (39%) of the recent conflicts were said to have been caused by a dispute over land, although 35 other causes were also mentioned. Only 9 (6%) of the sheikhs cited competition over resources such as water, livestock, government services, etc. as the initial cause of conflict. None of the non-resource related answers – which included party-related conflict, accusation of killing, interpersonal (such as debt, inheritance, or a power struggle), "black shame", social status – stood out. Even in Shabwa where conflict is often thought to be party-related, only three sheikhs reported that party-related disputes were the initial cause of conflict.

The sheikhs reported that a total of 612 deaths occurred as a result of these conflicts during the period 2000-2005. 410 of these deaths were reported to be associated with conflicts that the sheikhs said had started before the year 2000, and 202 were related to conflicts that started only in the last five years. Conflicts in these tribal areas have a cost beyond those directly killed or wounded: children are unable to attend school, the ill are unable to access medical care, resources are destroyed and development projects or services (such as vaccination campaigns) are interrupted.

#### **Yemen Times, January 2004**

Tribal and government efforts have succeeded to end armed clashes between tribes in Amran governorate that erupted last week, claiming the lives of 12 and injuring more than 20. An official source in Amran told the Yemen Times that the clashes between the tribes of Thu Jabir and Thu Suda on one side and Thu Mukaitab on the other were stopped after tribal Sheikhs and military figures interfered, and as the government took hostages from the two tribes to also help the end of fighting. Military and security people were deployed to Kafila district, 170 km to the north of Sana'a. However, according to the official source at the local council in Amran, the problem is not yet sorted out, and the fight might resume. The fight claimed the lives of 12 persons from the two fighting tribes, including two women and two children. The tribes used heavy weapons including artillery. Governor of Amran Taha Hajir accused some tribal sheikhs of standing behind the fighting, to achieve personal interests. The fight has been reported to have erupted due to a 4-year old tribal feud when Sheikh Ghalib Bin Suda was killed and some people from the other tribe were accused of operating the murder. Every now and then, problems between the two sides erupt, but this time it was most violent. As many as 1,500 Yemenis are believed killed in tribal disputes every year. The government has set up a committee to sort out such problems but to no avail.

#### **IRIN, July 2008**

... Over the past four years the government has recruited thousands of northern tribesmen - mainly Zaydis and Salafis who are Sunni - to fight the rebels. Analysts say this has extended the conflict, which recently spread to Harf Sufian in Amran Governorate and Bani Hushaish, a district 20km northwest of Sanaa city. Aysh said the tribal coalition was effective and fought on the front line, with support from government troops. There are dozens of tribes, clans and sub-clans in northern Yemen but just two powerful tribal coalitions, the Hashid and Bakil (both Zaydi). The government persuaded tribes from the former to fight against the rebels (Bakil). Hashid tribes have long been known as supporters of the state. ...In early July President Saleh met various tribal leaders with a view to forming an anti-al-Houthi "popular army" of 27,000 tribesmen. Some Saada `sheikhs' also wanted to participate in the "popular army" as their interests in Saada had been damaged in the fighting that broke out in May 2008".

#### **Yemen Times, April 2009**

"The Yemeni security and judicial apparatuses ignore the suffering of the Jews and refuse – directly or indirectly – to provide them with protection," said Khaled Al-Anisi, director of the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms or HOOD. "These incumbent bodies fully realize the identification of extremists who harm Jewish citizens."... "Yemeni Jews only have two options: immigration or subjection to death under the current intimidation and extreme hatred by some ignorant extremists," said Al-Marhabi. "Additionally, we are subjected to negligence and indifference by rulers of the country....."

Rabbi Yahya Yusuf of Sa'ada who lives currently in Sana'a told newsyemen.net last Wednesday that "the 65 Jews living in Tourist City in Sana'a after they were moved from Bani Salem in Sa'ada live in a very bad situation since the beginning of this year." The reason is that "the administration of Tourist City is not committed to paying their financial aid or food which the president allocated to them since they were moved during the Sa'ada war between Houthis and the government. "Since they arrived here, they were lodged in six apartments in Tourist City," continued Yusuf, who has three daughters and two sons. "These apartments are not enough, and if someone wants to get married he can't because of crowding."

He demanded that the president form a committee to conduct field visits to the city to consider their situation. He said that these families live in vacuum. "Some of us can forge silver and work in carpentry, blacksmithing, and mechanics. But we don't have enough money to establish our own projects," he pointed out. "We had all these capabilities when we were living in Sa'ada but all our property was looted." Last Wednesday, Yusuf visited the Yemen Times and recounted the ordeals that Jewish families living in Sana'a are suffering from. "Now, food, cooking gas, and funds have been cut off for three months in spite of the directives of the president, the prime minister, and the Minister of Finance. They gave the funds to the manager of the Yemeni Economic Corporation to supply us with these things, but the latter is still refusing the directives," he said. "We appeal to the president of the Republic and the prime minister as we are approaching Passover, which is the biggest occasion for us. We don't have food, cooking gas, or money to buy the needs of this occasion, including meat and clothing."....

Many Jews living in Amran confirmed that they received repeated threats of murder after Al-Nahari was killed. They said that they try to hide their religious affiliation when they go to the market and that they avoid gatherings. The murderer, Al-Abdi, who is proud of his act, confirmed that Yemeni Jews have to embrace Islam or leave the country. Otherwise, they will be subject to death.....Under the current conditions in which many civil society organizations accuse the government of negligence regarding the provision of protection and security to the Jews and the unjust procedures that the court takes against the murderer of the Jewish citizen, the fate of protecting the Jewish community in Yemen remains a social and official duty for everyone.

## **Displacement due to Natural Disasters**

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### **Displacement due to Natural Disasters**

- There have been several natural disasters that have caused displacement. This includes slow onset disasters such as drought and land erosion, as well as widespread flooding which has caused immediate displacement. (IFRC, December 2005; IRIN September 2008; IRIN October 2008)
- Yemen is prone to floods (particularly during the monsoon season), landslides and earthquakes. Water shortage is acute and chronic in most parts of the country. Since late 2007, according to local officials in the Governorate of Al Mahwit located southwest from Saana, extensive drought has caused the displacement of thousands of household from mountainous villages in the governorate. (OCHA, November 2008)

- From October 24-25, 2008, widespread flooding swept over eastern Yemen. The desert areas of Hadramout and Mahra were most affected and declared disaster areas by the Yemeni Government. Flash floods and surging waters killed 80 persons and forced an additional 20,000 to 25,000 people into displacement.
- Preliminary estimates reported thousands of mud brick houses were totally destroyed while hundreds of others were left uninhabitable. In addition, several health facilities and estimated 170 schools were damaged or destroyed, and more than 40,000 acres of cultivated soil was eroded and some 600,000 palm trees destroyed. (WFP, December 2008)
- Hadramout governorate sustained the most flood damage both to homes and livelihoods especially in the rural areas particularly in the districts of Qatun, Mukalla, Tareem, while damage to coastal urban areas in Hadramout was mainly to homes rather than livelihoods. Extensive damage was found in rural areas of Al Mahra, principally in Al Masila district where over 1,400 homes were destroyed. (WFP, December 2008)
- In total, 4,349 households had their homes completely destroyed, 6,399 partially damaged, and over 5,100 households lost means or assets contributing to their livelihoods. (WFP, December 2008) The level of destruction had caused 20,000 to 25,000 displaced with over 100,000 affected by the flooding.
- Response to floods in eastern Yemen was considerable both by neighbouring countries as well as United Nations and humanitarian actors in contrast to other situations such as Saada conflict. A Consolidated Appeal Process was launched in November 2008 while significant assistance was received through bilateral assistance. In 2009, a Parliamentary committee was appointed to investigate allegations of fraud and diversion of assistance. (OCHA, November 2009; IDMC interview May 2009)
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### **OCHA CAP, November 2008**

Widespread flooding swept over eastern Yemen after a tropical storm (category three) and drenched the country with heavy rains on 24 and 25 October. The desert areas of two easternmost governorates, Hadramout and Al Mahra, have been most heavily affected. As of 31 October, the GoY estimated that some 20,000 to 25,000 people have lost their houses, while the overall number of persons whose livelihoods have been destroyed or badly affected by the floods may reach up to 700,000. The floods resulted in the death of 73 persons; an additional 17 persons are missing.... The floods are the largest natural disaster in Yemen since 1996. The disaster has been sudden and severe, and affected a large area (one-third of the country). While the authorities are in control of the situation and much of the immediate needs have been covered by the bilateral assistance received from neighbouring countries, damage to housing and livelihoods may require provision of humanitarian assistance for a period of two to six months, as well as early recovery programmes and subsequent, prolonged, multi-year recovery programmes. The information and analysis below are based on the assessment of the Hadramout Governorate and information received from the Al Mahrah Governorate authorities.

The damages caused by the floods to houses, the agriculture sector and infrastructure have been extensive. The landscape of eastern Yemen is dominated by rugged mountains and dry river valleys (wadis). The main valley of the area, Wadi Hadramout, is densely populated and has been worst affected (70% of the damaged area), where the flood surge reached up to six meters in some areas. Some areas, notably the Sah district, were hit by flash floods, while other towns received an alert call through the civil defence units. Damage further downstream and in the coastal areas has been less

extensive, yet many coastal districts of Hadramout and Al Mahrah Governorates recorded considerable damage....

Displacement and Shelter: The IDPs made homeless by the floods took shelter in schools, mosques, clubs and other public premises, with host families, and in camps close to their houses. According to the UN/IOM Rapid Assessment Mission, the IDPs are scattered in some 113 settlements, which include 48 school buildings. In Al Mukalla town (population 250,000), some 1,000 IDPs are hosted in five buildings, mainly schools. The local customs are not compatible with a situation in which men and women from various families are forced to share common premises. The GoY intends to move many IDPs to tented settlements in vicinity of the villages, but final decisions on the issue have not been taken yet. Many of the local residents prefer to stay close to and guard their houses. Those displaced by the floods may be in need of winterisation assistance (temperatures drop to 10°C during the winter). Housing reconstruction may be long and expensive, and according to the local officials, many houses may have to be built in new, less flood-prone locations, which may bring the unit cost up to \$20,000 per dwelling. Many local villagers are now afraid of living in the mud-brick houses and would like to build permanent structures of brick and mortar, which may alter the historic nature of the Wadi Hadramout area. As of 31 October, the GoY had not announced any compensation plan.

#### **IRIN, April 2009**

An official has warned that delays in restoring the severely flood-affected agriculture sector in Hadhramaut Governorate, southeastern Yemen, will prompt farmers to abandon their jobs and seek work in other sectors, affecting food security in the impoverished country. "Agricultural infrastructure was severely damaged [in the floods] and many of our farmers are jobless now. We fear that this will lead to migration from agriculture to other sectors, which will create a serious problem," Omar Muhaiwer, director of the Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramaut Valley, told IRIN in Seyoun District.

Calling for a quick revival of this sector, Muhaiwer said: "When you go to Seyoun you will find many people who used to work in agriculture now working as porters." He added that because farm work is physically demanding, many young people are lured to other kinds of work. nOn 24 and 25 October 2008, rain fell on two million hectares of land for about 30 hours continuously, amounting to a total rainfall of some two billion cubic metres of water, said Muhaiwer. "The amount of water was twice the capacity of the waterways in the valley, causing flooding that destroyed the agricultural land and washed away the soil and crops," he said.

The floods killed 47 people and displaced 25,000 others, according to the government. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation estimated the total damage to agriculture in the main valley area at more than 72 billion Yemeni Riyals (about US\$360 million). Muhaiwer said that 70 percent of the residents in the valley - about 600-700,000 people - work in agriculture or are connected to it in some way.

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Loss and damage   | Yemeni Riyal  |
| Crops, livestock and bees                                   | 21.03 billion |
| Wells, pumps, ground water irrigation networks, agriculture | 10.74 billion |



|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| equipment and buildings  |                             |
| Spate irrigation infrastructure and soil erosion               | 40.56 billion               |
| Total  | 72.33 billion<br>(US\$360m) |
| Source: Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramaut Valley |                             |

### **IRIN, April 2009**

Delays in recovery efforts in the flood-hit governorates of Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah, southeastern Yemen, are putting the lives of thousands of survivors in jeopardy, aid workers have said. Giancarlo Cirri, World Food Programme (WFP) country director for Yemen, said recovery efforts since the October 2008 floods were insufficient, and that this was prolonging the emergency period unnecessarily. ....The floods left 80 dead and displaced 25,000, mainly in Hadhramaut Governorate, according to the government and confirmed by a UN rapid assessment mission. They said an estimated 111,832 people had been affected by the floods in one way or another.

The 25,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been receiving regular food assistance since immediately after the floods. But a recent WFP food security assessment found that another 18,000 flood victims, including displaced and non-displaced people, should also be registered to receive food assistance. Ali Sabih, a member of the local council in Tarim District in Hadhramaut, said the problem was that the government teams tasked with assessing damage did not register all flood victim families. .... Local council member Sabih said there was no evidence of any reconstruction work on the ground, and flood victims were worried. ....WFP's Cirri said an estimated US\$3 million was needed to provide food for the newly registered 18,000 flood victims in Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah governorates.

## PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

### Protection of IDPs during Saada Conflict 2004-2008

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#### Protection of IDPs during last five rounds of conflict 2004-2008

- Yemeni press during the 4th and 5th war reported that the government used fighter jets, helicopters, tanks and artillery to attack Huthi positions mostly in rural areas but also in heavily populated towns in Saana, Saada and Amran Governorates, while Huthi have also reportedly used heavy artillery and anti aircraft guns. (HRW, November 2008)
- Both sides have reportedly used landmines during the conflicts, the presence of which and unexploded ordances has reportedly made number of civilians victims during intervals in the conflict. (Yemen Times, November 2005; Al Jazeera, April 2007; Yemen Times, April 2008)
- In the latest rounds of conflict level of destruction in various districts of Saada such as Haydan, Kittaf, Sahar, Saqeen, Baqem, Magz, al-Safra, have caused thousands of displaced leaving villages as ghost towns during the height of the conflict. The districts of Bani Hushaish in Saana Governorate, as well as Harf Sufyan in Amran Governorate have been extensively affected. (SRF GoY, April 2009)
- Throughout the conflict there have been instances of indiscriminate fighting with civilian areas heavily affected by the parties to the conflict, including pillage, and destruction of private property.(IDMC interview, May 2009) In Harf Sufyan for instance it was reported that the villages of 'Ayan, Mijzan, Saifan, andWajba were completely destroyed and that the nearby village of Haira was bombed for three consecutive days. (IRIN, April 2007)
- The latest round of fighting which officially ended in July 2008, was the most destructive to date. The government led Saada Reconstruction Committee, which from August 2008 to December 2008 assessed damaged or destroyed infrastructure during the lastest round of fighting, identified over 10,000 buildings, including over 7,000 homes, demolished in Saada, Saana and Amran. (SRF GoY, April 2009)
- Restrictions in freedom of movement were in evidence due to ongoing fighting as well as military, tribal and houthi checkpoints. The opposition reported presence of hundreds of such checkpoints in the interval between 4th and 5th conflict. (IRIN, April 2008) The Yemeni government reportedly imposed a near-complete blockade on the travel of persons and goods in and out of Sa'da governorate, principally by closing the main road connecting Saada to San'a via 'Amran. (HRW, November 2008)
- For a limited period during the 5th war, movement in and out of Sa'ada city from surrounding districts were inaccessible, effectively denying access to civilians from rural areas. An unofficial curfew in effect in Sa'da governorate during the fifth round of fighting precluded civilians traveling after dark for any reason limiting movement of those fleeing conflict. (HRW, November 2008)
- Similar restrictions in movements of persons and principally goods were placed to and from Bani Houshesh in response to the conflict and reportedly as collective punishment to quell the opposition. (Yemen Times, June 2008; HRW, November 2008) Many residents of Bani Houshesh particularly, boys and men, fled or were arressted on allegations of being part of the opposition. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Limited access had a considerable impact on the level of humanitarian assistance provided to IDPs. During 4th, and 5th round of conflict humanitarian assistance was limited with intermittent access. There were estimated 130,000 displaced with roughly 70,000 within Saada city and estimated 50,000-60,000 in inaccessible areas. (OCHA July 2008)

- IDPs sought refuge as far north as Baqim district and south towards Saana. In inaccessible areas, IDPs reportedly sought refuge in makeshift shelters, schools, demolished homes, or with relatives or hosts with basic assistance and protection needs unmet. There is limited information as to the situation of IDPs during the conflict in these areas.
- Persons displaced have been reported arbitrarily arrested, detained, or disappeared during and following the conflict based on alleged sympathies with either party. (HRW, October 2008; US DoS, December 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009) The number of IDPs arbitrarily detained or missing during the conflict is not known.
- Estimates of the numbers of persons (including IDPs) disappeared or detained vary—Yemeni human rights organizations have documented tens of enforced disappeared, and hundreds arbitrarily arrested with a high of 1,200 estimated at various stages since 2004. (IRIN, August 2008) Human rights organizations referred to the Saada arrests as a "revolving door" policy. Local NGOs accused the government of illegal and inhumane treatment of these detainees. (US DoS, December 2008)

### Saddah Fund for Reconstruction, April 2009

The SFR began its activities in assessing the situation in Saddah based upon Republic Order 130 in 2007 issued on 28th July 2008.

| District  | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |                |        |                          |        |       | Total |
|-----------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|           | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health<br>unit | Police | Government,<br>and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Sahr      | 3564              | 949  | 15    | 26               | 0              | 0      | 0                        | 72     | 1     | 3621  |
| Magz      | 3160              | 178  | 4     | 15               | 2              | 1      | 0                        | 38     | 3     | 3421  |
| Al Sa'ia  | 436               | 279  | 1     | 3                | 1              | 0      | 0                        | 21     | 0     | 741   |
| Razah     | 396               | 0    | 0     | 3                | 0              | 0      | 1                        | 10     | 4     | 314   |
| Kitaf     | 46                | 0    | 1     | 1                | 0              | 0      | 0                        | 1      | 0     | 49    |
| Gha'na    | 15                | 0    | 1     | 3                | 0              | 1      | 1                        | 0      | 3     | 22    |
| Qstaabi   | 63                | 2    | 0     | 3                | 0              | 0      | 1                        | 0      | 3     | 79    |
| Al Thahra | 0                 | 0    | 0     | 14               | 0              | 0      | 1                        | 0      | 0     | 15    |
| Shazeia   | 0                 | 0    | 0     | 3                | 0              | 0      | 1                        | 0      | 0     | 3     |
| Saqern    | 356               | 1    | 0     | 3                | 2              | 1      | 1                        | 27     | 0     | 396   |
| Haydar    | 1348              | 12   | 54    | 18               | 3              | 1      | 0                        | 78     | 1     | 1515  |
| Total     | 7248              | 1421 | 76    | 94               | 8              | 4      | 8                        | 267    | 14    | 9176  |

| District        | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |                |        |                          |        |       | Total |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                 | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health<br>unit | Police | Government,<br>and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Haef<br>Soufvan | 722               | 0    | 2     | 3                | 1              | 0      | 0                        | 15     | 4     | 749   |

| District        | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |                |        |                          |        |       | Total |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                 | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health<br>unit | Police | Government,<br>and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Ban<br>Housheeb | 316               | 20   | 1     | 3                | 1              | 0      | 0                        | 13     | 0     | 354   |

|                |       |       |    |     |    |   |   |     |    |        |
|----------------|-------|-------|----|-----|----|---|---|-----|----|--------|
| Grand<br>Total | 8,286 | 1,441 | 79 | 102 | 10 | 4 | 8 | 295 | 18 | 10,279 |
|----------------|-------|-------|----|-----|----|---|---|-----|----|--------|

### United States Embassy, December 2008

During the year, fighting continued between the government and the al-Houthi rebels of Saada in the conflict that initially began in 2004. The conflict spread in May to Bani Hushaish, a village on the outskirts of the capital. The government repeatedly used

heavy force in an attempt to suppress the rebels' uprising, which was suspended with a fragile ceasefire in July. The government also reportedly used excessive force to suppress southern demonstrations during the year. A leading human rights organization claimed there were more than 200 cases of arbitrary arrests of individuals linked to these internal issues during the year....

There were no reliable estimates of numbers of rebels and civilians killed at year's end. An estimated 1,000 government troops were killed and 3,000 wounded in May. International NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in Saada estimated there were approximately 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Saada conflict. In the wake of the Saada conflict, fighting broke out in November between the al-Osaimat tribe and al-Houthi-aligned Harf Sufian tribe in Amran governorate and continued through December. According to unsubstantiated local reports, half or more of the fighters were children ranging from 12 to 15 years of age.

Despite the July pause in hostilities, security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest persons from the conflict areas. Since 2004, an estimated 130,000 persons have been displaced from their homes in the northern governorates, although some may have returned since July. Displaced persons in the capital remained extremely fearful of arrest. Earlier in the year the government arrested persons who had attempted to visit recent conflict areas to assess damage to their property or to bring trapped relatives to safety. In 2007 approximately 100 individuals from Saada were reportedly arbitrarily arrested and detained for suspected links with the al-Houthi movement. Authorities forcibly removed approximately 45 individuals, including some minors, from Saada and imprisoned them in the neighboring governorate of Hajja. There were reportedly 50 Saada detainees in Sanaa and 22 in Dhamar at the end of 2007. During the year, many of these were released, but others were arrested. Human rights organizations referred to the Saada arrests as a "revolving door" policy. Local NGOs accused the government of illegal and inhumane treatment of these detainees....

#### **HRW, November 2008**

Usually citing anonymous sources, the Yemeni press has reported that the government used fighter jets, helicopters, tanks and artillery to attack Huthi positions in mostly rural areas but also in heavily populated towns, most recently in Bani Hushaish, Dhahyan, Haidan, and Harf Sufyan.<sup>43</sup> Some media reported that the Huthis used heavy artillery and anti-aircraft guns.<sup>44</sup> Several people, including staff from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), told Human Rights Watch that both sides have used landmines. The Huthis have been keen to provide journalists with information about the civilian impact, often claiming high numbers of civilian casualties in specific incidents, which some websites and newspapers have reported.<sup>46</sup> Arab media have cited anonymous sources when referring to Huthi military tactics and to government aerial bombardment of Huthi positions and areas still inhabited by civilians, referring to individual incidents in which dozens of civilians have been killed. <sup>47</sup> If accurate, these reports suggest that four years of war have killed hundreds—if not thousands—of civilians, as well as Huthi fighters and government military personnel.

The fighting in Dhahyan began on May 11, 2008. I spoke to my brother who fled the town that day. He told me that 10 people who had fled a different place and sought refuge in Dhahyan were killed by aerial bombardment that hit the house they were staying in. Government aerial bombardment reportedly destroyed many parts Harf Sufyan district, in 'Amran governorate, 150 kilometers northwest of the capital on the

road to Sa'da.<sup>55</sup> A local journalist who had been to the region told Human Rights Watch that the villages of 'Ayan, Mijzan, Saifan, and Wajba were completely destroyed and that the nearby village of Haira was bombed for three consecutive days.<sup>56</sup>

### **HRW, October 2008**

Enforced disappearances, even when only temporary, are taking place within a context of hundreds, if not thousands, of arbitrary arrests and detentions. In August, officials spoke of 1,200 political detainees remaining in jail, while announcing the release of 70 Sa'da residents being held as prisoners of war. On August 31, President Saleh ordered the release of 131 detainees arrested in the context of the Sa'da war. In early September, the government promised the release of 120 more political detainees, some in relation to the Sa'da conflict. On September 24, a credible NGO reported that at least 63 persons remained arbitrarily detained as a result of the Sa'da conflict. Human Rights Watch has not managed to establish the accuracy of this figure....

Among those detained in violation of international law were persons effectively taken hostage—arrested to pressure a wanted family member to surrender to the security forces or cease their human rights work. Hashemite adherents of Zaidi Shi'ism make up a second category of persons arbitrarily arrested. While there is no clear indication that the security forces target Hashemites merely for their religious affiliation, there are a sufficient number of cases to indicate that security forces arrest those active in religious study or instruction. Third, security forces also arrest Zaidis going to or returning from areas of recent fighting or otherwise suspected of sympathizing with the Huthis. Another group of persons arrested in the context of the conflict are those whom the government suspects of having contact with Huthis or of sympathizing with the rebels.

Persons fleeing from or returning to a conflict zone may arouse suspicions the authorities deem sufficient for an arrest. The specific reasons for arbitrary arrests of Hashemites are less clear, though almost all those arrested are Zaidi. The number of those arrested as sympathizers is possibly the largest group of arbitrary arrests. One Hashemite intellectual with ties to negotiators told Human Rights Watch that an exchange of prisoners between the Huthi rebels and the San'a government was part of a verbal truce mediated by the government of Qatar ending the fourth war in June 2007.

...

Three separate groups of internally displaced persons from Sa'da governorate declined to meet with Human Rights Watch, saying they feared for their own safety because the government was arresting displaced persons and others divulging information. One human rights worker said that in mid-June 2008 "15 persons were arrested from Bani Hushaish, simply for being from there."<sup>105</sup> Walid, a resident who had fled fighting in Harf Sufyan in the most recent fighting told Human Rights Watch that "since 2004, there has been pressure by the military on Harf residents. They broke into houses, scared children, and arrested fathers and young men."<sup>106</sup> After Walid returned to Harf Sufyan and cooperated with the soldiers occupying his house there, he said he had "received personal threats from Political Security," which did not like his engagement for returning displaced persons.<sup>107</sup> Even brief visits to the conflict zone can lead to arrests. After Ghalib drove from San'a to Bani Hushaish to evacuate family members from the conflict zone, he came under surveillance, his sister Amina reported:

Five days after he returned, they arrested him. The local chief of our street summoned Ghalib after work and they went to the local police station. The police questioned him:

"Who are the people you took from Bani Hushaish?" The police detained him at the station for one month, and then transferred him to Political Security.<sup>108</sup> Amina told a similar story of Husain, whose enforced disappearance following an attempted trip to Bani Hushaish to visit relatives is discussed above. One week after soldiers turned him back from a checkpoint, he was arrested. His whereabouts are currently unknown.<sup>109</sup> Soldiers in mid-July 2008 arrested Husain's uncle, 'Issa, from his house in Bani Hushaish. 'Issa had been mentally deranged since undergoing an operation five years ago and had refused to leave his house during fighting, Amina said. His family does not know his whereabouts.<sup>110</sup> Tight government control over information about the conflict has been a particular feature of the fighting in 2008. In the view of one journalist, the government's tactics changed as the Huthi rebels began to increase their media efforts in 2007.

The government imposed a near-complete blockade on the travel of persons and goods in and out of Sa'da governorate, principally by closing the main road connecting Sa'da to San'a via 'Amran. Occasionally, persons fleeing fighting and destruction were able to move south. The government also attempted to prevent news about the details of the conflict from becoming public by preventing journalists and humanitarian workers from going to the conflict zone, by disconnecting all but a select number of mobile telephone numbers, by threatening journalists not to report on the conflict, and by arresting persons who transmitted information about the impact of the fighting, or who could have such information because they had recently left the area. Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qurbi told Human Rights Watch, "We have to differentiate between freedom of expression and journalistic crimes. In any case, we have to accept a court's verdict." An international humanitarian aid worker told Human Rights Watch that "a number of ministries told us that the government doesn't want foreigners to report on what is happening there."

### **IRIN, July 2008**

Since 2004 hundreds of people have been killed and thousands displaced as a result of fighting between Shia rebels and government forces in the northern governorate of Saada. The Shia al-Houthi rebels take their name from their leader, Hussein Badraddin al-Houthi, who was killed in September 2004, and succeeded by his brother, the current leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. Whereas most lowland Yemenis in the south of the country are Sunni, Yemenis in the northern, more mountainous areas are Shia - specifically, followers of the Zaydi doctrine. ....Local human rights groups say thousands of people have been arrested during the four-year conflict and that some are still being detained despite the president's declaration that the conflict is over. Abdul-Rashid al-Faqih, head of Hiwar Forum, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), said about 3,000 people had been arrested by the authorities for supporting al-Houthi. Of these, 500 detainees are known. The rest are unidentified because their families are scared of reporting their fate. Their whereabouts are unknown, he told IRIN. He said that during the recent fighting - known as the fifth war - about 60 people were arrested in Sanaa city alone. They included 16 students from Saada Governorate accommodated at Sanaa University. Radiyah al-Mutawakel, a human rights activist, said the detainees were from the Zaydi sect. "Such practices have played a role in extending the war. The first thing they think when they are set free is how to go and support the al-Houthi group," she told IRIN. Analysts are divided over whether the conflict is sectarian or tribal in nature, but it is certainly political, and many innocent people have suffered and are suffering.

### **IRIN, April 2007**

The humanitarian situation in Yemen's northern province of Saada is worsening with reports that the army is laying anti-personnel mines in the area, say sources with access to the region. According to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity at the Saudi-built al-Salaam Hospital in Saada city, at least 60 people have been admitted to the hospital in recent weeks with injuries caused by landmine explosions. It is not clear, however, what type of mines government forces have been deploying in the region. For the past few weeks, the army has been flying several sorties a day in attacks against suspected hideouts of anti-government fighters loyal to radical Shia leader Hussein al-Houthi. There have been hundreds of casualties on both sides and thousands of people have been displaced from their homes, say residents and local NGOs. The fighting between the two sides has reportedly intensified recently with the government enlisting the voluntary support of tribesmen in the region and al-Houthi followers widening their area of operations. There are reports that the al-Houthi fighters are now operating in Ghamar district, close to the border with Saudi Arabia. Fighting had been raging in a number of Saada districts - Haydan, Kittaf, Sahar, Saqeen, Baqem, Magz, al-Safra - as well as in Dhahian city. Some villages and districts have been turned into 'ghost towns' as residents have fled the intense fighting, according to a Western aid official who declined to be identified.

#### **Yemen Times, 22 June 2008**

An official at the Sana'a Governorate Office, who asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitive subject matter, confirmed these steps and their use as a means to put pressure on both the locals and Houthis in Bani Hushaish area. "The way Yemeni society is structured in tribal areas would never allow state control without the locals' acceptance. By creating this siege, we are pushing the locals to understand that they must cooperate with the state against the Houthis even if they are their relatives or neighbors," said the Sana'a Governorate Office source. "When they begin to starve and their source of income is interrupted, they will eventually hand over the Houthis in their area. Also, we try to prevent any ammunition or supplies from reaching the Houthis in Bani Hushaish in order to weaken them," he added.....

Since the beginning of the clashes between the security forces and Houthi followers in the district in mid-May, the tension in the area has risen to such a high level that frantic and extreme measures are imposed by security in order to regain control of the Houthi rebellion. The increased security measures even reached the outskirts of Sana'a City, where random security checks take place and pedestrians are now asked to show their identification. "We ask them to show their IDs because we have a list of wanted Houthi followers, and we have strict security measures to ensure that no Houthis enter the capital city. If the person's ID shows he is from troubled areas but is not in our list, we interrogate him until we are sure he is not up to mischief. We have to do this in order to protect our country," said a security officer in Al-Rawdha area, on the outskirts of Sana'a.

#### **Yemen Times, November 2005**

The latest victim of the armed conflict among government forces and Alhouthi followers is toddler Dhiafalla Al-balawi, who died last week, after his sister found a grenade in their whereabouts of her goats near their home, left by the governmental forces which were in the area, the grenade fell from the sister's hand onto the ground, injuring her and killing her toddler brother. Haidan district in Saada witnessed sever fighting with Alhouthi insurgents and the government forces, resulting in polluting the area with mines, explosive and other hazardous materials. Social personalities in the area which witnessed the conflict demanded a formation of a specialized committee to collect the

mine and other explosives left over by the army. These are left scattered in mountains and valleys, endangering the lives of many people and children in the area. They have also invited international organizations and the press to have first hand experiences on the suffering of the elderly, women, children, and livestock as a resulting of their districting almost becoming a minefield.

### **MERIP, July 2005**

Although accurate figures are impossible to obtain, the government claimed in May that the number of soldiers and civilians killed in two rounds of fighting had been 525, with 2,708 wounded. The real figure is likely to be much higher than this, and does not include the number of rebels killed. Amnesty International reports that civilian targets have been attacked by "security forces reportedly [using] heavy weaponry, including helicopter gunships." A large number of houses have been destroyed during the conflict, some intentionally and others as a result of indiscriminate shelling.

The first round of fighting was centered in Saada, where al-Huthi and his followers were able to pound away at government troops from mountainous redoubts, inflicting many casualties. Mass arrests were carried out in the province, and Amnesty International reports that an unknown number of suspected al-Huthi followers remain held incommunicado by the government. Hussein al-Huthi was killed in the fighting in September 2004. Tensions eased during the six months following al-Huthi's death, whereupon the leadership of the Believing Youth was passed on to his elderly father Badr al-Din.

## **Child Protection concerns 2004 - 2009**

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### **Child protection in 2004 - 2009**

- In Yemen, according to UNICEF statistics overall the situation of children is precarious with higher than 40 per cent suffering malnutrition, an estimated 54 per cent attendance rate in primary school, an estimated 22 per cent birth registration rate, and high rates of child labour – an estimated 11 per cent of children are in the labour force. Early marriages are also quite common in Yemen at national average of 32% with no clear legal prohibition. (UNICEF, January 2009)
- Children – 12 to 15 years of age - have been allegedly recruited in tribal conflicts and in Saada conflict by all parties opposition as well as pro governmental tribes and government forces. (IRIN, January 2009; Yemen Hurr, September 2008) Yemen is also source country for children trafficked internally and to Saudi Arabia for forced begging, unskilled labor, street vending, or for sexual exploitation and continues to be prevalent despite government efforts to fight such trafficking. (US DoS, December 2008; Elaph, January 2007)
- The extent to which displaced children have been affected is unclear but is a protection concern for children affected by the conflict whether displaced or not. Though no census has been made, many children, whether displaced or not, are reported to be missing a parent, separated from parents, or orphaned following the conflict (IDMC interview, May 2009). Child labour (such as begging, smuggling, collection of refuse), which is also prevalent in Yemen, is



evident among displaced children in camps and also in vulnerable IDP households in Sana'a mainly as result of high rate of unemployment amongst adults and limited income (IDMC interview, May 2009).

- According to available information, women and children comprise over 70 per cent of those displaced. With destruction of basic facilities such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate of Saada and in other localities, access to services for women and children have been severely affected. (UNICEF, 2008) According to Saada Reconstruction Fund over 100 schools and over 10 health centres were destroyed in Saada, Amran and Saana Governorates as result of the conflict. (SRF GoY, February 2009)
- Children and women have been more vulnerable to limited access to health facilities and poor water and sanitation in areas of displacement. Access to health facilities have been restricted due to the conflict, and limited availability of primary health care services in rural areas affected by the conflict. Exposure to violence have also indicated high rates of trauma and anxiety have also been reported amongst children and women. (IRIN, February 2008; and September 2007) There is no available assessment of SGBV including the practice of early marriages within the community displaced. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Yemen is signatory to Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Convention 182, Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, ILO Convention 29, Forced Labour, ILO Convention 105, Abolition of Forced Labour. Yemen is not signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Armed Conflict, nor to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons

### **UNICEF, January 2009**

The conflict in Sa'ada Governorate, which is 240 kilometres from the capital Sana'a, started in 2004 and has been ongoing despite many mediation efforts. The latest ceasefire was declared in June 2008. Of the Governorate's population of 700,000, it is estimated that over 130,000 are displaced throughout the region, mainly in seven camps or with host families within and around Sa'ada. Women and children comprise a high percentage (over 70 per cent) of those affected and dwelling in the camps. With the destruction of many basic facilities, such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate, access to services is affected. Opportunities for many livelihoods have diminished due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen.....

The global trend of increasing food prices during 2008 has severely affected Yemen – one of the poorest countries in the region. This situation is exacerbated by key health and nutrition indicators for women and children, which are already some of the worst in the world. The Family Health Survey (2003) showed stunting at 53 per cent, wasting at 12.4 per cent (120,000 children under age five are severely wasted) and underweight at 45.6 per cent. The 2006 World Food Programme/ UNICEF survey conducted in five districts indicated anaemia to be 81.5 per cent among children under age five; 73.1 per cent among pregnant women; and 83 per cent among lactating women. Children under age five are the most vulnerable segment of the population and are more at risk of malnutrition when availability and access to food are compromised at the community level.

### **IRIN, January 2009**

Hundreds of children are engaged in heavy fighting between two tribes in Amran Governorate, northern Yemen, and a number of them have been killed or injured in the past three months, says the Seyaj Organisation for Childhood Protection, a local NGO. It said almost half the combatants were under 18. "Forty percent of the victims are children

aged 14-15," Ahmed al-Qurashi, head of the Seyaj Organisation, told IRIN. The armed conflict between the al-Osaimat and Harf Sufian tribes began in November 2008. Al-Qurashi said both tribes treated the boy fighters as men. "They are regarded as responsible men who are able to carry guns and fight." "At the same time, these adolescents feel they are grown-ups. And a large number of them are pushed into armed fighting, but end up as victims. We have pictures of them to prove that," he said. Abdul-Rahman al-Marwani, chairman of the Dar al-Salaam Organisation to Combat Revenge and Violence, a local NGO, told IRIN as many as 500-600 children per year ended up killed or injured. "Manhood is linked with bearing arms. A man would feel proud to see his son carrying a gun and shooting," he said, adding that the participation of children in armed conflict was regarded as normal. He said there was pressure to recruit child soldiers when the number of adult fighters was insufficient, and it was also a way of inculcating tribal hatred at an early age. Almost half of Yemen's 21 million people are under 15, according to the UN Development Programme. According to Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, the Yemeni army used child soldiers against the al-Houthi-led Shia rebels in Saada Governorate in 2007.

### **Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers , May 2008**

The constitution made no direct reference to conscription, but stated that "[t]he law shall regulate general mobilization which shall be announced by the chairman of the Presidential Council following the approval of the House of Representatives" (Article 36). In 2001 Yemen's National Defence Council abolished compulsory military service, relying instead on volunteers to fill posts in the military and security forces.<sup>6</sup> Article 149 of Law No. 45 (2002) on Child Rights stated that "persons under the age of 18 cannot participate in armed conflicts or be recruited". The law forbade all exploitation of children as child soldiers. Although Yemen's laws specified 18 as the minimum recruitment age, under-age recruitment to the armed forces reportedly remained common. The recruitment system was disorganized and birth registration was irregular. Joining the army was highly sought after, since other employment opportunities were extremely limited. Parents sometimes agreed to the recruitment of their children into the armed forces because of their poor economic situation. During fighting between the Yemeni armed forces and the Faithful Youth in January–March 2007, the Yemeni military reportedly used child soldiers. Children as young as 15 were allegedly given weapons by the armed forces and sent to the front with no training.... Yemen's paramilitary force was about 70,000 strong. Approximately 50,000 constituted the Ministry of Interior's Central Security Organization; they were equipped with a range of infantry weapons and armoured personnel carriers. An additional 20,000 were the forces of armed tribal levies. There was no available information on whether children were part of paramilitary groups.... According to 2004 reports, children were widely involved, often forcibly, in tribal and family conflicts, and were often at risk of being killed,<sup>11</sup> but no further information was obtained.

### **IRIN, February 2008**

Aid workers say children and adolescents in Saada Governorate, northern Yemen, have experienced high levels of psychological trauma as a result of prolonged fighting between government forces and a Shia rebel group. Their assertion is based in part on the results of a UN Children's Fund-funded survey carried out by the Medical Charitable Association (MCA), a local non-governmental

organisation. The psycho-social assessment survey covered all 15 of Saada's districts in August-October 2007. Some 1,400 respondents were selected, 630 of whom were children and adolescents. Some 92.4 percent of the sampled children and adolescents had been exposed to armed conflict; 5.7 percent were evacuated temporarily from their villages during armed conflict; 44 percent were forced to hide to save their lives; 43.4 percent saw the destruction of their or their friends' houses; 28 percent felt they were about to die during the conflict; 15 percent were injured; 13.8 percent had at least one family member killed; and 10 percent had one family member missing. Mohammed al-Maqrami, technical coordinator of the Psychosocial Support Project, told IRIN that 53.2 percent of respondents ranked high on major depressive symptoms, and 49.2 percent on post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "Saada locals, according to the findings, had high levels of PTSD symptoms - on a par with traumatised populations in post-conflict areas like Nepal, Palestine and Iran," he said. According to al-Maqrami, symptoms included depression, anxiety, behavioural and aggression problems, and physical symptoms (like nausea, headaches and tremors). The Saada Governorate has only seven health facilities, and a population of some 700,000. There is no specialist facility for psychological cases.

#### **United States Embassy in Yemen, December 2008**

In the wake of the Saada conflict, fighting broke out in November between the al Osaimat tribe and al-Houthi-aligned Harf Sufian tribe in Amran governorate and continued through December. According to unsubstantiated local reports, half or more of the fighters were children ranging from 12 to 15 years of age.

#### **United States Department of State, January 2009**

Yemen is a country of origin and, to a much lesser extent, transit and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Yemeni children, mostly boys, are trafficked across the northern border with Saudi Arabia or to the Yemeni cities of Aden and Sana'a for forced labor, primarily as beggars, but also for domestic servitude or work in small shops. Some of these children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in transit or once they arrive in Saudi Arabia. To a lesser extent, Yemen is also a source country for girls trafficked internally and to Saudi Arabia for commercial sexual exploitation. Girls as young as 15 years old are exploited for commercial sex in hotels, casinos, and bars in the governorates of Mahweet, Aden, and Taiz. ....The Government of Yemen does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Despite these significant efforts, the Yemeni government did not show

evidence of progress in prosecuting and punishing trafficking offenders or in preventing sex trafficking over the last year; therefore, Yemen is placed on Tier 2 Watch List. The government reported no trafficking investigations, prosecutions, or convictions during the reporting period, and took no steps to address trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. It continued, however, to provide protection and reunification services to child victims repatriated from Saudi Arabia and made notable strides in raising awareness of child labor trafficking.

## **Protection of Displaced 2008-2009**

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### **Protection of IDPs in latter conflict and post conflict 2008-2009**

- The difficulties of access to areas affected by conflict outside of Saada city including in Amran and Saana Governorate has entailed that there has been no systematic profiling of the displaced community one year after the conflict. There is no registration of IDPs in locations other than Saada governorate despite the presence of IDPs in other urban areas including Saana. (IDMC Interview May, 2009)
- Registration with breakdown of age, gender and place of origin remains an important tool for the assistance and protection of IDPs. Such registration is undertaken within accessible areas however it remains unclear what is the true number displaced or breakdown. (IDMC Interview May, 2009)
- Intermittent violence in several districts in Saada including Ghmar, Razih, Haydan, and Saqayen continues to place at risk host community and persons displaced due to preceding and ongoing violence. Most recently this has entailed the displacement of over 5,000 persons during the months of April-June. (UNHCR, July 2009; WFP, July 2009)
- There are number of instances of displaced, or returnees having been reportedly injured or faced risks of arrest, or harassment while attempting to flee areas of conflict. (IDMC interview, May 2009) IEDs and UXOs reportedly have caused number of death and injuries amongst returnees and host community. (Yemen Times, August 2008; and April 2008; Al Jazeera, April 2007)
- IDPs located in Saada, and Saana have cited fear of arrest, injury, revenge killings linked to tribal allegiances in returning to place of origin or areas under Houthi defacto control. There are anecdotal examples of arrests of displaced and returnees based on imputed political sympathies by government authorities following the conflict. (HRW October 2008; IDMC interview May, 2009). In fall 2008, the government arrested persons who had attempted to visit recent conflict areas to assess damage to their property or to bring trapped relatives to safety. (HRW, October 2008; IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Restrictions in freedom of movement due to tribal, governmental or Houthi checkpoints continue to be in evidence. Several instances IDPs have reported property being confiscated or appropriated crossing such checkpoints. Such checkpoints have reportedly increased as the intermittent violence between parties to the conflict continues. (IDMC interview, May 2009) Tribal checkpoints have reportedly been used to limit access to opposition areas, as well as pressure government to take action against the Houthi opposition. (ICG, May 2009)
- Persons displaced from places under de facto Houthi control have referred to expropriation of property including housing, personal belongings and access to agricultural land, imposition of sharia law including zakat, and restrictions in freedom of movement. This however appears to vary from one district to another. (IDMC Interview May, 2009)
- IDPs cite many obstacles to return. Amongst the main obstacles to return are lack of livelihood opportunities as well as basic services, and extensive damage to homes and

infrastructure. For many IDPs return to now Houthis controlled areas includes fear of reprisals due to tribal affiliation to pro-governmental tribes. (US, December 2008; IDMC interview May 2009)

- IDPs located in Saada have voiced inadequate attention to displacement needs, referring to lack of adequate assistance including NFIs, and food assistance, and underlying that the humanitarian community does not adequately monitor the situation. Number of IDPs cite discrimination in the application of assistance from government affiliated organisations such as Yemeni Red Crescent Society based along tribal lines and places of origin. (IDMC, interview May 2009; IRIN, September 2008; News Yemen, April 2009; Yemen Times, October 2008, and March 2009)
- In Saana, where several hundred IDPs are reportedly still present, IDPs from Bani Houshesh - many men including elderly and adolescents had been detained by authorities during the 5th round - remained in fear of arrest and was reportedly still facing difficulties obtaining access to livelihoods, shelter and assistance due to their origins a year following the end of the conflict. (IDMC, interview May 2009; HRW November 2008)

### **ICG, May 2009**

The destruction of villages and infrastructure by army shelling, air bombardment and indiscriminate military and police violence<sup>84</sup> has amplified grievances among not only Hashemites generally and Zaydi revivalists in particular but, more broadly, civilians in all northern governorates (Saada, al-Jawf, Amran and Hajja). Even many who originally did not sympathise with Husein al-Huthi sided with the rebels, in some instances taking up arms in solidarity with fellow villagers, relatives or tribesmen harmed in the fighting. A parliamentarian said, “the Huthis are getting stronger and stronger with each round. Renewed fighting will only increase the rebels’ influence and broaden the combat zone”. A General People’s Congress member of the Consultative Council echoed this: “The Huthis seem to have a lot of followers, not for religious reasons but because the population feels discriminated against and excluded from development policies. Unfortunately, the destruction of villages has not helped fight that impression”.

Likewise, the rebels have helped fuel anger, engaging in brutal acts, looting and kidnapping, including of soldiers and allied tribesmen, even as they adamantly - Rebel violence was highlighted [by foreigners living in Saada: “We trusted Husein al-Huthi and knew that he would not attack foreigners, but we now feel less confident with the new, more ideological, militants”. Crisis Group interview, Sanaa, 18 January 2009. A humanitarian worker said, “Lack of access to the field is not solely due to government policies. We have been experiencing problems in some of the areas controlled by the rebels as well. The Huthis are seen by the population as very brutal. They intimidate people they consider neutral, including through kidnapping”. deny resorting to arbitrary violence. The presence of thousands of displaced persons long after the conclusion of the fifth round<sup>89</sup> suggests persisting problems, including damage to homes and fear of retaliation by either rebels, groups sympathising with them or progovernment tribes.

Driven by group solidarity, growing involvement of tribal militias alongside government or rebel forces has further inflamed the conflict and contributed to its endurance. By some accounts, the war has turned into a tribal conflict between the pro-government Hashid and pro-rebel Bakil confederations, the north Yemeni highlands’ two largest. In December 2008, skirmishes between tribes belonging to the two confederations threatened a new round of fighting, as did January 2009 tribal clashes in Amran governorate, south of Saada, and al-Jawf governorate, east of Saada. Rebels and others claim the Hashid set up checkpoints targeting Huthis and their supporters and

aimed, apparently, at pressuring the government to adopt a harder stance. These along with other incidents reflect how tribal vendettas (*thar*) have become a new, critical variable in the conflict. Government officials express alarm that tribal warfare may be taking on a life of its own.

### **HRW, October 2008**

Persons fleeing from or returning to a conflict zone may arouse suspicions the authorities deem sufficient for an arrest. The specific reasons for arbitrary arrests of Hashemites are less clear, though almost all those arrested are Zaidi. The number of those arrested as sympathizers is possibly the largest group of arbitrary arrests. One Hashemite intellectual with ties to negotiators told Human Rights Watch that an exchange of prisoners between the Huthi rebels and the San'a government was part of a verbal truce mediated by the government of Qatar ending the fourth war in June 2007.

...

Three separate groups of internally displaced persons from Sa'da governorate declined to meet with Human Rights Watch, saying they feared for their own safety because the government was arresting displaced persons and others divulging information. One human rights worker said that in mid-June 2008 "15 persons were arrested from Bani Hushaish, simply for being from there."<sup>105</sup> Walid, a resident who had fled fighting in Harf Sufyan in the most recent fighting told Human Rights Watch that "since 2004, there has been pressure by the military on Harf residents. They broke into houses, scared children, and arrested fathers and young men."<sup>106</sup> After Walid returned to Harf Sufyan and cooperated with the soldiers occupying his house there, he said he had "received personal threats from Political Security," which did not like his engagement for returning displaced persons.<sup>107</sup> Even brief visits to the conflict zone can lead to arrests. After Ghalib drove from San'a to Bani Hushaish to evacuate family members from the conflict zone, he came under surveillance, his sister Amina reported:

Five days after he returned, they arrested him. The local chief of our street summoned Ghalib after work and they went to the local police station. The police questioned him: "Who are the people you took from Bani Hushaish?" The police detained him at the station for one month, and then transferred him to Political Security.<sup>108</sup> Amina told a similar story of Husain, whose enforced disappearance following an attempted trip to Bani Hushaish to visit relatives is discussed above. One week after soldiers turned him back from a checkpoint, he was arrested. His whereabouts are currently unknown.<sup>109</sup> Soldiers in mid-July 2008 arrested Husain's uncle, 'Issa, from his house in Bani Hushaish. 'Issa had been mentally deranged since undergoing an operation five years ago and had refused to leave his house during fighting, Amina said. His family does not know his whereabouts.<sup>110</sup> Tight government control over information about the conflict has been a particular feature of the fighting in 2008. In the view of one journalist, the government's tactics changed as the Huthi rebels began to increase their media efforts in 2007.

### **IRIN, September 2008**

~~Sheikh Bakil Hubaish, head of the ruling General People's Congress and a prominent tribal leader in Harf Sufyan, said food and non-food items would be distributed to 6,000 households in the area, including flour, rice, sugar, oil, blankets and 400 tents. Distribution would start on 6 September, although the tents had yet to arrive. "The condition of the war-affected families is deplorable. The priority will be given to the~~

displaced families and also the families of pro-government tribesmen [who were killed while fighting al-Houthi supporters]," Hubaish told IRIN. Armed groups that supported Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, a Shia rebel leader based in Saada Governorate, which borders Harf Sufian, fought army units trying to enter Saada in May. The rebels also closed the Sanaa-Saada highway, which resulted in fierce clashes. Several villages were totally destroyed by air bombardments after the rebels took refuge in them, according to citizens.....A team of specialists has also been tasked with removing landmines in Harf Sufian. Some were planted on unpaved roads and in houses. According to Hubaish, the landmines were planted by al-Houthi followers.

## **IRIN, July 2008**

Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Saada Governorate, northern Yemen, have not been able to return home after their houses were destroyed in recent fighting between government forces and Shia rebels, local sources have said. The long running conflict, which started in 2004, has left hundreds dead and thousands displaced. "There are still thousands displaced because their houses were destroyed," Salem Mohammed, an IDP in Saada city, told IRIN. He said some IDPs were worried fighting could flare up again and preferred to stay in the six IDP camps which have been set up in and around Saada city, or with host families. The destruction of farms and infrastructure during the recent fighting, which began in May and lasted 70 days, had also driven many farmworkers from the land, aid agencies said. Most government officials in Saada were unwilling to comment, but Saada Governor Hassan Manna said 70 percent of the displaced families had returned to their homes over the past few days...

Meanwhile, some people in Saada city told IRIN minor clashes had erupted between followers of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the Shia rebel leader, and government forces in the mountains. Al-Houthi's Information Office on 26 July said the army had opened fire on a pregnant woman and killed her as she tended sheep in Allaf Valley. In a separate statement on 24 July, it said the army had opened fire on displaced families returning to their homes, killing one person and injuring another. The army had also shot dead a child while he was tending sheep in Bani Moaath District, it said. The Information Office has denied press reports that two Sunni mosques were destroyed by al-Houthi fighters in Dahyan District. According to local media, the two mosques were destroyed on 23 July by armed men. The authorities have not commented on the destruction of the mosques.

## **Religious and Minority tensions.**

### **Religious and Minority tensions**

- Essential aspect to the conflict in Saana is societal abuse and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief or practice. Tensions refer to growing sense of extremism by Zaidi Shi'ia adherents and Salafy Sunni extremism however this remains only one aspect of the conflict wherein a simplification of the conflict into a Sunni – Shi'ia divide misrepresents the wide array of other factors also involved tribal and political affiliation. (MERIP, July 2005)
- Nevertheless, there have been noted account of reports of displaced with imputed linkages to the Houthi movement facing discrimination and fearing arrest or harrassement in areas of displacement. This for instance refers to communities displaced from Bani Houshesh of Saana governorate, or other localities of Saada governorate located in Saana. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Certain IDPs within Saada city have also underlined discrimination based on tribal or place of origin in terms of access to humanitarian assistance from government actors, particularly with regards to the Yemeni Red Crescent Society, and alleged affiliation of the displaced to pro or anti government tribes. (IDMC interview, May 2009) There reports of assistance skewed in favour of pro-government tribes (IRIN, September 2008)
- Similiarly, IDPs displaced from areas under Houthi de facto control fear reprisals upon return to places of origin due to tribal affiliation. According to some testimonies, IDPs upon return are required to give an oath of allegiance to the Houthi movement upon return, while those who are affiliated with pro-government tribes risk retribution, or reprisals upon return. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Yemeni Jewish minority, formerly forming a significant percentage of the population in early 20th century, has been affected indirectly or directly by internal conflict in the Saada Governorate as well as elsewhere in Amran governorate. Jewish residents numbering approximately 400 residing in Rayda and Bait Harrash in Amran have experienced increased harrassement and intimidation allegedly by Salafi extremists. (Yemeni Times, December 2008; and February 2009)
- In January 2007, the Jewish community of Saada was displaced with Yemeni government support to Saana after allegedly being threatened by Al Houthi members, though the Al Houthi movement denies such involvement. The displaced community continues to reside in Saana. (US DoS, December 2008; IRIN March 2009)
- Another minority of concern are the Akhdam [servants in Arabic] who are, as the rest of Yemen's population, Arabic-speaking Muslims but because they do not belong to any of the three main Arab tribes that make up traditional Yemeni society, they are the lowest social caste in the country. According to legend, they are the descendants of Ethiopian invaders who briefly occupied Yemen some 1,500 years ago. (IRIN, November 2006)
- Among the victims of the October 2008 floods in southeastern Yemen about 100 Akhdam families (700 individuals) were among the most vulnerable people affected by the floods. (IRIN, May 2009) There is also concern about the situation of the Akhdam community located in Saada, and what may have been the implications on their situation as result of the conflict and whether these have been or are at risk of displacement. (IDMC interview May 2009)

### **US DoS, December 2008**

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, but the Government generally supported religious freedom. Jewish residents of Rayda and Bait Harrash in Amran Governorate reportedly experienced increased harassment by a small group of their Muslim neighbors. Government officials reportedly could not intervene because of a lack of witnesses to the harassment. In one case a bullet was fired into a water tank on the roof of one of the community's homes while a member of the family was on the roof. Government authorities investigated the case and arrested the perpetrator, who remained incarcerated at the end of the reporting period. The displaced Saada Jewish community continued to reside in Sana'a, under



government protection and care, after being threatened by al-Houthi rebels in January 2007. In April 2008 a large group of men entered, ransacked, and destroyed two homes in Saada Governorate belonging to a member of the Jewish community now living in Sana'a. The attack was believed to have been the work of al-Houthi rebels. In early June a college student in Aden reported that he had been beaten by what was described as "religious men," for walking with a group of his female classmates. There were no reported incidents of violence or discrimination between the adherents of Zaydi and Shafa'i Islam, the two main orders of Islam practiced in the country. Religiously motivated violence was neither incited nor tolerated by the Muslim clergy, except for a small, politically motivated clerical minority, often with ties to foreign extremist elements.

#### **IRIN, September 2008**

Sheikh Bakil Hubaish, head of the ruling General People's Congress and a prominent tribal leader in Harf Sufian, said food and non-food items would be distributed to 6,000 households in the area, including flour, rice, sugar, oil, blankets and 400 tents. Distribution would start on 6 September, although the tents had yet to arrive. "The condition of the war-affected families is deplorable. The priority will be given to the displaced families and also the families of pro-government tribesmen [who were killed while fighting al-Houthi supporters]," Hubaish told IRIN.

#### **Yemen Times, February 2009**

Despite numerous government assurances and presidential instructions to protect and relocate the Jewish minority in Raidah village, Amran governorate, the some 400 Yemeni Jewish citizens fear for their lives today more than ever. After the murder of a prominent figure among the Jewish community, Masha Al-Nahari, 30, the remaining members expressed their concern at the fact that the trial of the murderer has stalled while his tribe is threatening to eliminate the Jews who remain in Yemen. The majority of the Jewish men in Amran work in trade and vocational jobs such as cobblers or silversmiths. However, for the last two months they could not practice their usual routine and their children are no longer going to the community school fearing that they will be targeted by extremists from the neighboring villages. Afraim Al-Nahri, a member of the community, explained that they had been living in peace with their Muslim neighbors until the recent event. The recent war in Gaza increased hatred towards Yemeni Jews ...As a response to their demand for protection directly from President Saleh, the president instructed that the Jews relocate to Sana'a governorate. .... "How are we expected to start all over again?" said one of the Jews in the community about the suggested plan. "Even if they give us the lands, who will build the homes for us? And who will buy our homes and lands in the village at a decent price? It all seems very unreal and highly unpractical. Instead of protecting us in our own village, they are asking us to leave."

#### **Yemen Times, December 2008**

"Until the rigid Salafi group infiltrated our community and spread extremist ideas, we lived in peace and as members of the same community," said a tribal source from the area referring to the recent problems caused by the fundamentalists and their targeting Jewish minorities and harassing their children in school.

#### **Yemen Times, April 2009**

Yemeni Jews are subject to pressure and intimidation which causes them to think of immigration to any other country in the world, even though they still love their land where

their ancestors have lived for thousands of years. "The Yemeni security and judicial apparatuses ignore the suffering of the Jews and refuse – directly or indirectly – to provide them with protection," said Khaled Al-Anisi, director of the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms or HOOD. "These incumbent bodies fully realize the identification of extremists who harm Jewish citizens."....

Rabbi Yahya Yusuf of Sa'ada who lives currently in Sana'a told newsyemen.net last Wednesday that "the 65 Jews living in Tourist City in Sana'a after they were moved from Bani Salem in Sa'ada live in a very bad situation since the beginning of this year." The reason is that "the administration of Tourist City is not committed to paying their financial aid or food which the president allocated to them since they were moved during the Sa'ada war between Houthis and the government....

Concerning the situation of the Jewish community in Amran, located some 50 kilometers southwest of Sana'a, Abraham Yahya Yusuf told the Yemen Times that the 400 Jews in Raida district have been imprisoned inside their own houses since Masha Ya'esh Al-Nahari, a Jewish citizen, was killed last December. They are afraid that they might be subjected to similar incidents. "We are still awaiting the president's promises to provide us with protection and security, grant every Jewish family a piece of land in Sana'a, and provide temporary residence for those who desire to move to Sana'a," said Abraham.

#### **IRIN, May 2009**

Among the victims of the October 2008 floods in southeastern Yemen who have received aid from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) are a marginalised community known as Akhdam ("servants"). About 100 Akhdam families (700 individuals) were among the most vulnerable people affected by the floods.... They have received durable shelters from UNHCR. The provision of such shelters for flood-victims in Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah governorates, southeastern Yemen, began about seven months after the floods, which left 80 dead and 25,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), mostly in Hadhramaut Governorate, according to the government and a UN rapid assessment mission. "The Akhdam were living in houses made of mud, sticks, stones, cardboard and plastic. But they were destroyed by the floods," Knight told IRIN.

#### **IRIN, November 2006**

Akhdam [servants in Arabic] are, as the rest of Yemen's population, Arabic-speaking Muslims but because they do not belong to any of the three main Arab tribes that make up traditional Yemeni society, they are the lowest social caste in the country. They are marginalised and face economic hardship although the government says that it does not discriminate against them. Most of them live in mud-straw houses, tents, tin shacks and some are homeless. The majority are illiterate and are unemployed in the poverty-stricken country. In most cases, Akhdam men, women and children survive by begging. Those with jobs work as road sweepers, porters, cobblers and shoe polishers. Mainstream Yemeni society see them as slaves. According to legend, they are the descendants of Ethiopian invaders who briefly occupied Yemen some 1,500 years ago. With the abolition of slavery in Yemen in 1962, the Akhdam [singular khadem] are now all free but face widespread discrimination. It is estimated that there are some 500,000 Akhdam in Yemen [total population about 21.5 million]. Some 100,000 of Akhdam live on the outskirts of Sana'a.

## SUBSISTENCE NEEDS

### Subsistence needs of displaced during conflict 2004-2008

#### Subsistence needs of displaced during conflict 2004-2008

- There were difficulties in access to subsistence needs during the height of the conflict. Restrictions and security situation prevented humanitarian assistance reaching displaced communities in areas under conflict in Saada, including intermittently areas such as Saada City where a large number of displaced were located, (Harf Sufyan) Amran and (Bani Houshesh) Saana. (HRW, November 2008)
- Difficulties in access was often recurrent in the conflicts in the last four years though more salient in the later two wars which saw a substantial increase in the number of civilians affected. In 4th war which had entailed the displacement of an estimated 56,000 by some sources, a substantial number estimated at 20,000 remained in accessible owing to security constraints. (IRIN, January 2008)
- In the latest conflict, would lead to displacement estimated at 130,000, access continued to limit response to subsistence needs of displaced communities, particularly those inaccessible outside of Saada city and other locations such as Mahleet in southern Saada, and Baqim in north bordering on Saudi Arabia. These areas were also intermittently inaccessible during the conflict to these areas. (OCHA July 2008)
- MSF reported the difficulties of access during the 5th war and the impossibility of accessing civilians affected by the conflict in its areas of operation. (MSF, June 2008) WFP which is the main organization systematically distributing food to the camp/town IDPs in Saada city was unable to deliver assistance from May-July 2008 due to increased clashes and road blockage. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- In Harf Sufyan of Amran governorate an estimated 800 displaced families (10,000-12,000) were reported in living in miserable conditions without basic needs addressed, living in abandoned houses, schools and mosques with no humanitarian assistance reaching the community. (IRIN, August 2008; Al Shar'a, February 2008) This may have reflected the fate of many displaced in Saada districts affected by the conflict as well as Bani Houshesh district in Saana which underlined lack of access to food and appropriate medical care, and other basic needs. (Yemen Times, June 2008)
- Intensity of the conflict and restrictions in access would entail that national and international actors would not be able to respond to health or other requirements of displaced. (MSF, June 2008) In certain cases such difficulties in access were compounded by fears of possible reprisals or arrests by seeking refuge or assistance government run hospitals. (HRW, October 2008) The situation of subsistence needs of displaced communities is difficult to identify as needs of displaced communities could not systematically be collected with only a few humanitarian actors operating during the conflict including MSF, ICRC, WFP and several other actors. (UN, May 2007; HRW, November 2008)
- Situation of displaced communities in last two conflicts indicates considerable pressure on limited resources such as shelter and capacity in the camps in Saada city - initially 4 camps at the 4th war then 7 during the latest conflict, with concerns on potable and sufficient water access, and sanitation facilities, high concerns of water born affected diseases, hepatitis as result of bad hygiene conditions in the camps. (UN, May 2007; IRIN, April 2007; Al Ishtiraqi, May 2008)
- These had severe implications on situations of IDPs such as malnourishment arising due to inavailability of food were also reported. Sample surveys of IDPs in camps shortly after the

conflict reveal high levels of malnourishment. (IDMC, interview May 2009) High costs of food during the conflict and limitations in food delivery would have significant impact on already very fragile levels of food security and nutrition levels amongst the IDP community. Several coping strategies were reported by vulnerable displaced such as skipping certain meals on daily basis, going without food for an entire day, or reducing quantities and lower quality of food.

### **ICRC, August 2008**

The conflict escalated at the beginning of May 2008, bringing a new wave of displaced persons to Sa'ada city. The ICRC has worked closely with the YRCS to set up three additional camps to accommodate these people, bringing the total number of IDP camps in Sa'ada to six. Between the beginning of May and the end of June 2008, the ICRC also distributed food to people displaced by the fighting in Haydan, Rازه, Assaher and Al-Talh, and to people living near Sa'ada town. The food included flour, rice, vegetable oil, beans, sugar and salt. In addition, the ICRC distributed such essential items as tents, jerrycans, kitchen sets and hygiene kits to the 8,000 families (60,000 people). Water and sanitation remain priority issues. The ICRC has been providing 280,000 litres of drinking water a day to displaced persons in Sa'ada, and has increased water storage capacity. The organization has also built more than 400 latrines. Over 2,400 people living in Al-Aredah and Al-Asaifi received drinking water, and the ICRC has installed new water pumps at these locations. The ICRC had to postpone repairs because of renewed fighting, both in these areas and in Dahyan, where the ICRC had scheduled urgent work that would have provided over 14,000 people with clean water. The organization provided water filters to over 1,000 displaced families in the Malaheet area and in Hajjah Governorate. These will help to prevent diseases caused by contaminated or stagnant water.

Between April and June 2008, an ICRC surgical team based in Sa'ada treated more than 500 people who had been injured in the fighting and were unable to obtain proper medical care because of the hostilities. Most patients were treated at the Al-Jumhuriyah Government Hospital in Sa'ada city, where about a fifth required surgery. Others received treatment at the Dahyan Health Centre. The ICRC also provided primary health care for displaced persons and vulnerable residents through the YRCS and the Ministry of Public Health and Population. Three mobile clinics have opened in the newly built Sa'ada city IDP camps, bringing to seven the number of such clinics run by the YRCS with support from the ICRC. Over 17,000 consultations have been carried out at the clinics. YRCS staff continued to provide women and children living in the camps with health education, helping to prevent disease.

### **HRW, November 2008**

Yemeni and international medical staff working in Sa'da town's Republican Hospital continued to work during the fifth round of fighting. However, the San'a-Sa'da road closure meant that no supplies reached the hospital between early May and late July 2008, leading to shortages, particularly in the hospital's laboratory. The town's second hospital, the Saudi funded Al-Salam Hospital, was closed to civilians in early May 2008 to cope with the high number of military casualties. As a result, the 30-bed Republican Hospital had to cope with an increased number of civilians seeking help. At times staff had to turn people away because of lack of capacity. Since early in the war, possibly around 2005, the government instructed Ministry of Health staff across Sa'da governorate to report wounded persons seeking help in a government health facility.

During the fifth round of fighting some wounded civilians as well as those with other medical needs opted not to seek medical help, refused transfer between health facilities, and fled health facilities for fear of arrest for being a Huthi rebel or Huthi supporter; some were arrested inside health facilities.

For a limited period during the fifth round of fighting, only locals from Sa'da town could access Republican Hospital. An unofficial curfew in effect in Sa'da governorate during the fifth round of fighting precluded civilians traveling after dark for any reason, effectively denying access to civilians from rural areas. Many people did not even try to reach Sa'da town for emergency medical care, leading, for example, to miscarriages by women with no access to midwives. The Islah Charitable Society, a Yemeni NGO related to the Islah Party and working in the health sector, such as with malnourished women and children, carried out limited work in Sahar, al-Zhahir, and Malahit districts in Sa'da governorate between January and May 2008, but was unable to access these areas when armed conflict resumed in May 2008.<sup>134</sup> In June 2008, this NGO was also unable to access a number of "informal gatherings" of IDPs in Bani Sa'd district displaced from the previous (fourth) round of fighting, whom they had been able to reach in early 2008. Although MSF national staff, working side-by-side with government staff, remained in all of its healthcare projects in Sa'da governorate throughout the fifth round of fighting, the organization evacuated its international staff from Sa'da governorate on June 17, 2008, and published the following article on its website:

#### **IRIN, August 2008**

The IDPs were forced to leave their homes in the governorate's Harf Sufian District due to fighting between the rebels and the army in May 2008. Obaid Madram, head of the Yemeni Red Crescent Society (YRCS) office in Amran, said 800 displaced families (10,000-12,000 people), were living in miserable conditions. "Their humanitarian situation is deteriorating. They have no income and only very few are government employees," Madram told IRIN on 17 August. There was no camp for the internally displaced persons [IDPs]. "They live in abandoned houses, schools and mosques," he said. In late May, a YRCS aid convoy heading for the IDPs in Harf Sufian was attacked by pro-government tribes in Houth District. "That particular incident adversely affected and hampered aid work. No relief assistance has been sent to the area since then," he said. The convoy was carrying mattresses, blankets, water filters and kitchen utensils, he said, adding that none of these materials had been recovered and no-one arrested.

#### **MSF, June 2008**

Since 10 May, we had been unable to deploy our assistance in satisfactory conditions, whether for treating injured, or assisting displaced persons. It is difficult to know precisely what is happening in the areas of fighting, or areas controlled by the rebellion: access is prohibited for security reasons, there are no independent observers present, and most communication networks are severed. No numbers are available concerning dead or injured. However, the use of heavy weapons, aerial bombardment of villages, and information from other sources all leads to concern over civilian casualties. Yet most civilians have no access to adequate care structures. Civilians cannot always get to a hospital, either on account of the danger of travelling through the fighting, or because they fear being accused of supporting the rebellion, therefore of being arrested. Even for medical staff, access to hospitals and health centres is complicated, sometimes impossible—this compounds the problems of access to care for the injured...

Furthermore, where we did receive precise information concerning injury victims requiring treatment, we found it impossible to bring them in: this was notably the case at Dhahyan, a village under rebel control, located a ten-minute drive from Al Tahl [al-Talh] (which lies in the government zone). On 11 May, our Yemeni team treated 25 women and children there, who had been injured in shelling. Since their condition demanded evacuation, two ambulances left Al Tahl [al-Talh] to pick them up, after obtaining permission from the authorities. However, on account of heavy firing in the vicinity, the team was unable to evacuate them. The injured were aware that the ambulance had gone back. MSF later learned that seven of these patients died over the next 24 hours. Another consequence of the war, the most visible so far, is the number of people streaming out towards Saada or Malahit [towns] ... where MSF teams have been able to assess the situation.... [However], we were unable to provide assistance to [these] IDPs for safety reasons and because our discussions with the authorities and other aid agencies in situ were not successful.

### **IRIN, April 2008**

The Charitable Social Society for Welfare (CSSW) has started a one-year project funded by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) aimed at identifying and treating malnourished children under five, and educating mothers on the importance of breastfeeding and nutrition. The project targets 1,500 children and their mothers in three camps and elsewhere in Saada city, al-Dhafer, Sahar and al-Safra districts. Mohammed Salem, manager of CSSW's office in Saada, told IRIN most of the displaced families were malnourished, and he warned that malnutrition indicators (wasting and underweight) will increase if they do not receive enough food assistance. "Imagine when the displaced families came from their homes and farms to settle in tents. A tent is never like home," he said, adding that the food assistance they get is not sufficient. He said it was only after displacement that these children had become malnourished. Before they were displaced, families in Saada in need of food were helped by other families who had more. During the fighting some families used to sell their assets to buy food when it was in very short supply. Locals said that after the fighting between government forces and rebels, all markets in Saada, including several big ones, witnessed severe food shortages. Several farms were also destroyed during the fighting, adversely affecting the income of many families. Saada Governorate is well-known for the cultivation of fruit (pomegranates, grapes, apples and oranges). The cultivation of 'qat', a mild narcotic, is also common, while grains are rarely planted. Wheat and sugar reach Saada mainly from other parts of the country. The displaced families are getting food assistance, including wheat, rice, sugar and cooking oil, from international organisations such as the World Food Programme as well as from local NGOs, including CSSW. ... Isam Addin Awadh, who is in charge of the project, said the CSSW conducted a survey early this year among 1,029 under fives. "The survey found that the rate of severe malnutrition was 3.8 percent, while moderate malnutrition stood at 11.8 percent," he told IRIN.

### **Yemen Times, June 2008**

An official at the Sana'a Governorate Office, who asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitive subject matter, confirmed these steps and their use as a means to put pressure on both the locals and Houthis in Bani Hushaish area. "The way Yemeni society is structured in tribal areas would never allow state control without the locals' acceptance. By creating this siege, we are pushing the locals to understand that they must cooperate with the state against the Houthis even if they are their relatives or neighbors," said the Sana'a Governorate Office source. "When they begin to starve and their source of income is interrupted, they will eventually hand over the Houthis in their

area. Also, we try to prevent any ammunition or supplies from reaching the Houthis in Bani Hushaish in order to weaken them," he added. Since the beginning of the clashes between the security forces and Houthi followers in the district in mid-May, the tension in the area has risen to such a high level that frantic and extreme measures are imposed by security in order to regain control of the Houthi rebellion. The increased security measures even reached the outskirts of Sana'a City, where random security checks take place and pedestrians are now asked to show their identification. Many families from the so-called "troubled areas" who could afford to leave abandoned their homes because of the armed clashes and moved to Sana'a temporarily. However, they too have been having a difficult time because of their background. "We left our homes, farms and everything to secure our women and children but we are shocked that we cannot find a place to rent. Landlords refuse to rent to us because we are from Bani Hushaish district," said a man from the area who has taken his family out of the village and is trying to settle down in Sana'a until peace is restored.

### **IRIN, September 2007**

Aid workers in Yemen say they are working to assist residents in the northern province of Saada who have developed psychological problems in the aftermath of clashes between government forces and supporters of rebel leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. There are no precise data on the number of destroyed houses or basic needs requirements as the government has not yet assessed the damage. However, there has been a psychological impact, aid workers said. "The situation of the displaced families is so hard. There are psychological cases among them. Even children fear going to school," Mahfoud al-Kadam, an information officer at the Medical Charitable Association (MCA), a Yemeni non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Sanaa, said, adding that the necessary medication for basic needs had been distributed among local people. According to al-Kadam, it is difficult to be specific about the psychological problems at this early stage as survey results have yet to come in.

### **IRIN, July 2007**

Eman Mo'ankar, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yemen, told IRIN that some 8,000 families - about 56,000 people - had been displaced by the fighting. Mo'ankar said the ICRC, together with the Yemeni Red Crescent Society (YRCS), had so far assisted 5,300 families - roughly 37,100 people - out of the 5,700 displaced families currently in Saada town "ICRC and YRCS teams are working closely to assist the rest of them with emergency aid," Mo'ankar added. Mo'ankar said the ICRC was concerned about the fate of displaced families in remote areas, particularly an estimated 2,800 families (about 20,000 people) in areas difficult to access owing to security constraints. "However, the ICRC/YRCS had been able to provide emergency aid to 7,617 displaced persons in remote areas," she said. Emergency relief, including tents, groundsheets, jerry cans, mattresses, blankets and hygiene supplies, is being provided to residents and displaced people, Mo'ankar said. "However, after several months of displacement other needs are arising such as the need for proper medical care and food," she added. Displaced families are vulnerable to diseases. The ICRC, in partnership with the YRCS, has started a primary health care programme that will address the needs of 30,000 displaced. "The ICRC is providing treatment for the most common diseases affecting displaced civilians, especially children under five who suffer the most in this kind of situation. Without this basic health care, common diseases could progress to become severe," Mo'ankar said. She added that since 25 June clinics in different areas had provided consultations to over 2,000

individual internally displaced persons. "In severe and complicated medical cases, the ICRC is taking the sick to hospital in Saada and covering the cost of treatment."

### **IRIN, April 2007**

Sheikh Bakil Hubaish, head of the ruling General People's Congress and a prominent tribal leader in Harf Sufian, said food and non-food items would be distributed to 6,000 households in the area, including flour, rice, sugar, oil, blankets and 400 tents. Distribution would start on 6 September, although the tents had yet to arrive. "The condition of the war-affected families is deplorable. The priority will be given to the displaced families and also the families of pro-government tribesmen [who were killed while fighting al-Houthi supporters]," Hubaish told IRIN. Thousands of internally displaced people have been moved to places far from their homes. Some are with families but many, including women and children, are living in tents. New areas have also been set up for them in Baqem, near the border with Saudi Arabia, according to media reports. The ICRC says that it has provided assistance to 2,900 families (about 21,600 individuals). Up to last week, it had distributed 800 tents, 1,500 tarpaulines, 21,000 blankets, 20,000 mattresses and 6,000 water jerry cans. Hicham Hassan, an ICRC official, told IRIN that his organisation was concerned that there could be an outbreak of hepatitis as a result of bad hygiene in the camps. "Already, we have started to notice cases of diarrhoea among children. This could exacerbate," he said. For the moment, ICRC doctors treat patients in tents and transfer emergency cases to Saada's main hospital. Medication is paid for by ICRC, said Hassan. At al-Anad camp for the displaced, the ICRC has built 24 latrines and installed water tanks, which they fill every second day. "Because of the shortage of clean potable water, our water engineer is checking the possibility of dragging water from two nearby water sources directly to the camp to avoid refilling the tank every second day," added Hassan. Islamic Relief, Care International and other national NGOs have distributed supplies, including food and non-food items such as cooking pots and other utensils.

## **Subsistence Needs of Displaced 2008-2009**

### **Subsistence Needs of Displaced 2008-2009**

- Despite the ceasefire in July 2008, as of May 2009 access for humanitarian actors continued to be limited making it impossible to provide a comprehensive assessment of the needs of displaced communities outside areas such as Saada city or Mahleet district. Restrictions imposed by the government in terms of access and insecurity have prevented humanitarian agencies from determining the full extent of the conflict's impact on civilians, and their needs in the aftermath. (HRW, November 2008; IDMC interview May 2009)
- Following the conflict the number of displaced would in Saada city and Mahleet significantly reduce as displaced persons returned as well as being encouraged to return by government authorities. However many are feared to have returned to situations of displacement in locations to which humanitarian actors have no or limited access. Ten per cent of those who initially left following the hostilities ended are reported to have come back. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- UN agencies currently identify 100,000 IDPs as the operating figure which is based on field estimates of the vulnerability of those who reportedly left the camps to return to places of origin, and existing number of displaced accessible. Intermittent conflict and restrictions have placed a hold on efforts to provide a full profile of these displaced.



- In areas accessible, IDPs in camps rely on food assistance provided by WFP and those staying with host families and in non camp situation in Mahaleet also rely food assistance to meet their most basic needs. Malnutrition levels in these areas have improved following humanitarian assistance provided by WFP amongst other actors.
- Though, food baskets distributed, while sufficient for small to average-sized families, and larger families are not enough to cover minimum food needs for families between 7 to 14 members. The current registration mechanism does not take into account family size, reportedly due to difficulties in verification when IDPs lack proper documentation. (IDMC interview May 2009)
- Sanitation and water needs, access to health services remain of concern. Though water quality and quantities improved in camps and reported by YRCS and humanitarian actors to be sufficient, IDPs have voiced concerns regarding availability of water, adequate sanitation, and non-food items, and medical assistance. In Mahaleet informal settlements, IDPs water availability and sanitation is of concern. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- It is also underlined that prolonged displacement, effects of the conflict, and continued insecurity has also added additional burdens to hospitals and clinics, as well as other public services available in and around Saada town including primary health care clinics, hospitals and other services such as schools. (IDMC interview May 2009)
- IDPs and national media have reported that assistance has sometimes depended on tribal affiliation or place of origin (IRIN, September 2008). Several media outlets would report allegations against the Yemen Red Crescent Society of such uneven provision and treatment against IDPs (IDMC interview, May 2009; News Yemen, April 2009; Yemen Times, December 2008 and March 2009).
- There is no clear assessment of needs of communities residing in the host community in Saada city or in Saana and other urban centres. Many IDP communities live in rented buildings that also usually lack basic amenities and cannot be sustained for prolonged periods of displacement by displaced persons as resources are being depleted with limited means of livelihood. Still others live with relatives and host families, which places a great burden on these hosts. (Interview IDMC, May 2009)
- In Saana, particularly vulnerable community are those displaced from Bani Houshesh as well as other localities. IDPs have reported difficulties in finding appropriate housing, employment and assistance noting that persons from such areas as Bani Houshesh face discrimination due to imputed political opinion or simply by association. (Yemeni Times, June 2008; Interview IDMC, May 2009)
- Many displaced reported in Haidan and Saqayen districts of Saada, and Harf Soufyan, and Bani Houshesh in other governorates for example are said to be experiencing harsh living conditions with marked shortage of basic needs. (Yemen Times, August 2008; News Yemen, April 2009; IDMC interview May 2009) Assistance during the height of the conflict has not reached many rural areas, where many displaced persons, are reportedly located residing in poor conditions with little access to basic needs. (HRW October 2008; IDMC interview May 2009)

### **UNHCR, July 2009**

UNHCR undertook a 3 days monitoring mission to Malaheet in order to assess IDPs situation, including new arrivals due to conflict in Saqayan, Razeh and Ghamer Districts. IDPs complained of poor health services due to lack of essential drugs at the Health Center, inadequate water and lack of income generating opportunities. Additionally, 20 IDP families occupying three schools have refused to evacuate due to available facilities, including water and electricity in the school. They are requesting the government to provide permanent shelters, equipped with all facilities for their relocation.

### **Yemen Times, March 2009**

IDPs are provided with essential items necessary for their survival. More precisely, families are supplied with tents, groundsheets, mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and cooking items. They receive a regular supply of soap and washing powder, and replacement of or additional items when necessary. Moreover, ICRC and the YRCS insure a regular supply of drinking water of a minimum of 20 litres per person per day via water-trucks, have set up distribution networks and water points, built brick latrines in each section for women and for men, and continue to help maintain the camps in terms of waste-management. Healthcare is also a crucial service available in all four camps. Healthcare units come in the shape of a tent equipped with basic materials and medicine, and women and men may consult the clinic on alternative days. For medical conditions that require further attention, two ambulances are on stand-by to transfer patients to hospitals in Sa'ada and the treatment is charged to the ICRC and the YRCS. "It is important to remember that the health services provided for any population [IDPs included] is, in the first place, the responsibility of the concerned authorities, and that the YRCS and the ICRC support is only a temporary solution." Food rations are usually supplied to the IDPs by the World Food Programme (WFP) on a monthly basis. ICRC stepped in on one occasion during the last round of fighting in 2008 when the WFP's supply was interrupted and distributed food to the inhabitants of the camps. Otherwise, ICRC is concentrating its food assistance to conflict-affected populations outside Sa'ada town. ICRC has a food warehouse that was used to provide the emergency food when the WFP supply was interrupted. Food supply today is provided through this warehouse which is used to stock supplies from WFP. During winter time, the ICRC and the YRCS replaced one hundred tents in November last year and another one hundred in January this year. The organizations also supplied the IDPs with 7,000 additional blankets in November and another 6,500 in Dec. 2008.

### **ICRC, February 2009**

Thousands of conflict victims in northern Yemen still need humanitarian assistance. In Sa'ada, more than 6,700 internally displaced people were still sheltering at the end of December in four camps. As temperatures drop, at times to less than two degrees Celsius, people need decent shelter. Difficult weather conditions have also put additional strain on many small communities scattered throughout the mountains. As a result of the conflict, water-treatment services are not as widely available as in the past, and getting clean and potable water has become a daily challenge for most ordinary people. Several basic health-care facilities have been abandoned because of the lack of security, and others have been destroyed. Those that are still operating often lack the equipment and supplies they need....Clean water continues to be a serious concern for Yemen as a whole, and especially for conflict-affected people in the north. Many communities do not have direct access to water because tanks and pumping stations have been damaged or destroyed....For displaced people in camps and in remote areas in the north, access to health care is difficult because some facilities were damaged or destroyed in the conflict. The ICRC is providing medical supplies for primary health-care facilities and other providers of health care in conflict areas with the help of the Yemen Red Crescent and the Ministry of Public Health and Population.

Yemen Times, January 2009

A number of people living in Sa'ada refugee camps as a result of the war between the government and the Houthis in the governorate have complained to the Yemen Times about some members of the Yemeni Red Crescent Association's staff (YRCA) and the

organizations that support it. The refugees said that camp staff mistreat them and deprive them from aid donated by foreign humanitarian organizations including food and blankets, particularly during the winter. They added that they lack medical services in the four camps of Al-Anad, Ahmed Talh, Al-Ahsa and Sam.... A tribal source in Sa'ada said in a statement to the Yemen Times that prostitution has spread notably among the youth in the nearby areas of some camps. The source said that the reasons behind that include families' poverty and hunger, particularly as their children lack the minimum level of food. "YRCA staff keeps the aid which it receives from different humanitarian associations for itself and to serve influential figures from the ruling party. They don't deliver 10 percent of the aid," said the source. "The employees hide blankets and cooking utensils from the displaced people and offer them only a little which is not enough. Two men died due to severe cold by the advent of winter," said the source

### **UNICEF, January 2009**

The conflict in Sa'ada Governorate, which is 240 kilometres from the capital Sana'a, started in 2004 and has been ongoing despite many mediation efforts. The latest ceasefire was declared in June 2008. Of the Governorate's population of 700,000, it is estimated that over 130,000 are displaced throughout the region, mainly in seven camps or with host families within and around Sa'ada. Women and children comprise a high percentage (over 70 per cent) of those affected and dwelling in the camps. With the destruction of many basic facilities, such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate, access to services is affected. Opportunities for many livelihoods have diminished due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen.... After a rapid assessment undertaken in Sa'ada Governorate by a joint UN team during cessation of hostilities in May– June 2007, UNICEF worked through local and international NGOs on the ground in the areas of nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection. Partners included the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW), Yemeni Red Crescent, Islamic Relief, the Charitable Society of Yemeni Doctors, and Sa'ada Women's Association.

### **ICRC, November 2008**

By the end of October, the population in the camps hosting internally displaced people in Sa'ada had declined to less than 7,000, which made it possible to close two of the six camps. Nevertheless, many displaced people are still staying with host families in Sa'ada town, as they cannot yet return to their home areas. Many of those who do return find their houses damaged or destroyed by the fighting and need emergency assistance to re-start their lives. An old sheikh, Mohammed Aidheh, now displaced in Sa'ada, said: "the conflict destroyed our homes and deprived us of our land; we lost everything... We receive humanitarian assistance from organizations and people of good will, but this cannot compensate for our loss..." "These people have lost everything because of the conflict. We may not be able to give them back the lives they once had, but we can try to make their present lives better by alleviating their pain and sorrow," said Klaus Spreyermann, the ICRC's head of sub-delegation in Sa'ada. The ICRC has been assisting the victims of the conflict since February 2007. However, poor security conditions and fighting have often made it difficult to reach those most in need of help. Since September, the ICRC has been able to expand its activities to areas outside Sa'ada town.

### **HRW, November 2008**

This situation is echoed by media reports in late August 2008, according to which members of the government's reconstruction committee stated that "many displaced residents in Haidan and Saqain districts are experiencing harsh living conditions because relief agencies and charitable organizations are concentrating on those refugees living in tents in the suburbs around the provincial capital [Sa'da town]," and that the majority of the displaced were living far from Sa'da town.<sup>144</sup> By September 2008, the government had not granted international agencies access to either Haidan or Saqin districts because of what the authorities said were ongoing skirmishes between the Huthis, tribes, and government forces.<sup>145</sup> In other areas there was some expansion of humanitarian access. In late August 2008 the government granted access to international agencies working in Malahit and Dhahyan town and districts, and to Razih and al-Talh towns. As of late October, however, access to rural areas was extremely limited at best, because of security concerns, restrictive checkpoints, and uncertainty about which areas are under control of government forces, Huthi rebels, or tribesmen from the area.

### **Yemen Times, August 2008**

The majority of Sa'ada residents who fled their homes due to fighting between Yemeni government troops and Houthi gunmen are suffering starvation and lack of basic services, tribal sources from the war-torn governorate said Sunday. They noted that except for a few sporadic individual violations, the governorate's security situation is calm, adding that many refugees now have returned to their homes. Other refugees whose homes and farmlands were destroyed during the fighting have been forced to remain in tents and caves, where they experience both want and starvation and fear unknown consequences because they aren't receiving sufficient aid, foodstuffs or medicine and they lack blankets to shield them from dust and cold.

Various organizations claiming to media outlets that they are providing aid to these refugees know nothing about the delivery of aid they've allocate for them. They only know about aid that has reached those refugees living in tents near the highway or the provincial capital. Concerning reconstruction projects the government has alluded to, the same tribal sources maintain that the government committees designated to assess the war's damages are making slow progress in Haidan district, Sa'ada governorate's worst hit area.

The sources add that the committees have encountered numerous difficulties while performing their duties, noting that some 33 reconstruction engineers ceased assessing war-related damages in protest against the Yemeni government for not paying them. One government committee concerned with damage assessment and compensation previously stated to media outlets that, "Many displaced residents in Haidan and Saqain districts are experiencing harsh living conditions because relief agencies and charitable organizations are concentrating on those refugees living in tents in the suburbs around the provincial capital." The majority of displaced residents are sheltering in remote areas far from Sa'ada city, where they are experiencing a marked shortage in basic services.

...

### **Yemen Times, July 2008**

This is especially evident in Harf Sifyan, located between Sa'ada and Amran governorates, and Bani Hushaish just outside of Sana'a, where the conflict has left a

wake of both personal and property damage. Dozens of families in these restive areas now are homeless and hundreds of formerly healthy individuals now are handicapped due to the continuous fighting. This is the case for some 700 families who evacuated their homes in Harf Sifyan and approximately 100 families forced to evacuate their homes in Sa'ada's Bani Suraim and Houth districts, fleeing to the surrounding villages of Al-Eshah, Jabal Eial Zaid, Maswar and Amran city, in addition to other remote areas.... "The disaster that has befallen those in these warring areas is unforgettable," remarked another former Harf Sifyan resident in his 20s. "Several soldiers looted homes, taking everything inside – gold, guns, anything valuable." Some residents of the war-torn areas allege that their properties were looted and their homes subjected to air strikes without prior notification by government forces, who promised to evacuate the areas they decided to raid.... Obaid Mardam, director of Amran's Yemeni Red Crescent Association, notes that more than 7,000 residents were evacuated due to confrontations between Yemeni army forces and Houthi loyalists in Sa'ada and Harf Sifyan regions. He explains, "These people urgently need food and others suffer the same problem, but we can't reach them because armed groups looted three Red Crescent relief campaigns on May 25 in the Ghamr area of Amran governorate's Houth district."

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the war in Sa'ada has directly affected approximately 100,000 people. "The Sa'ada community has witnessed massive deterioration since the beginning of 2008 due to this war on one hand and food price hikes on the other," ICRC spokesperson Iman Muanqar notes. She adds, "We're concerned about affected families and their situations and we ask the two sides to facilitate aid." Thousands of Sa'ada residents have become dependent upon humanitarian aid just since the beginning of this year.... The Sa'ada war has gone on for four years with spurts of intense violence throughout, which also has resulted in the deterioration of the governorate's infrastructure. Because of this, access to potable water and health services are poor and infrequent, according to the ICRC, which maintains an office in Sa'ada governorate. Eleven international employees and 30 locals work there, in cooperation with the Yemeni Red Crescent Association, to provide humanitarian aid to IDPs. During the past six months, the Red Cross has assisted 80,000 area residents in the form of tents, furniture, air conditioners and household necessities. Relief groups daily provide drinking water to 5,000 IDPs in three different camps, which also have been outfitted with toilets. According to Muanqar, the ICRC also offers 56,000 Sa'ada residents health services via mobile medical teams. She adds, "Many people's homes and farms were destroyed, so we're now working to enable them to resume their normal lives."

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

### Access to Education

- In Yemen, according to UNICEF statistics overall the situation of children is precarious with higher than 40 per cent suffering malnutrition, an estimated 54 per cent attendance rate in primary school, an estimated 22 per cent birth registration rate, and high rates of child labour – an estimated 11 per cent of children are in the labour force. Early marriages are also quite common in Yemen at national average of 32% with no clear legal prohibition. (UNICEF, January 2009)
- According to available information, women and children comprise over 70 per cent of those displaced. With destruction of basic facilities such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate of Saada and in other localities, access to services for women and children have been severely affected. (UNICEF, 2008) According to Saada Reconstruction Fund over 100 schools and over 10 health centres were destroyed in Saada, Amran and Saana Governorates as result of the conflict. (SRF GoY, February 2009)
- Children face obstacles in accessing basic education – during the conflict displaced halted their education in areas of displacement due mainly to lack of accessible schools (in Mahleet or Al Tahl camp), lack of documentation inhibiting registration, and limited financial means. Many IDP camp children have missed up to 2 years of instruction during the conflict. In other, instances schools have also been occupied by IDPs or military factions. (IDMC Interview May 2009)
- The majority of displaced families living in the camps and town fled their homes, leaving behind school records and identification documents. As schools and authorities require academic records and birth certificates for enrolment, children have been deprived of access to education. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- The local authorities have been slow to respond to the education needs of IDP children missing identification/academic documents. In some schools children were able to unofficially audit classes, though they were denied certificates at the end of the term (despite passing exams), and thus dissuaded from continuing. More recently the Ministry of Education in association with UNICEF and UNHCR has however sought to increase access to education of IDPs and those lacking appropriate documentation. (IDMC, interview May 2009; UNHCR February 2009)
- Children are also compelled to work to complement family livelihoods such as begging, collection of refuse, and daily labour in local farms. Child labour and begging is on the rise among IDP children, particularly among camp families mainly as result of high rate of unemployment amongst adults and limited income. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)

### Yemen Times, June 2009

Secondary students in Sa'ada who missed the first day of exams due to ongoing conflict between the government and Houthis will be given the exceptional opportunity to sit their exams, said the Ministry of Education yesterday. "The students who couldn't attend the first day of exams in Sa'ada are not going to be deprived the chance to sit the missing exam," said Abdullah Al-Hamdi, vice minister of education. "We are going to give them another chance to take the exam, exceptionally, after the current examinations have ended." Up to 900 male and female ninth grade students in the three districts were prevented from taking their Islamic education test on June 20. Minister of Education Dr. Abdul Salam Al-Jawfi accused the Houthis of hindering examination committees from delivering examination papers for the ninth and twelfth grade last Saturday to Razeh, Shada and Saqain areas which Houthis control. For his part, Sheikh Saleh Habra,

political spokesman for the Houthis, told the Yemen Times that three army units, or around 10,000 soldiers, led by General Jawwass, were on their way to Al-Malahidh area last Friday evening, and that they raided Razeh and Shada areas located near the Yemeni-Saudi borders northwest of Sa'ada.

### UNHCR, July 2009

[In Mahaleet]... 20 IDP families occupying three schools have refused to evacuate due to available facilities, including water and electricity in the school. They are requesting the government to provide permanent shelters, equipped with all facilities for their relocation.

### SFR GoY, April 2009

The SFR began its activities in assessing the situation in Saddah based upon Republic Order 130 in 2007 issued on 28th July 2008.

| District     | Private Buildings |             |           | Public Buildings |                |          |                          |            |           | Total       |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
|              | House             | Farm        | Other     | School           | Health<br>unit | Police   | Government,<br>and other | Mosque     | Other     |             |
| Salh         | 3564              | 949         | 15        | 20               | 0              | 0        | 0                        | 73         | 1         | 3623        |
| Mazz         | 3160              | 178         | 4         | 15               | 2              | 1        | 0                        | 58         | 3         | 3423        |
| Al Sa'ad     | 436               | 379         | 1         | 3                | 1              | 0        | 0                        | 21         | 0         | 741         |
| Razah        | 396               | 0           | 0         | 3                | 0              | 0        | 1                        | 10         | 4         | 314         |
| Kitaf        | 46                | 0           | 1         | 1                | 0              | 0        | 0                        | 1          | 0         | 49          |
| Ghamra       | 15                | 0           | 1         | 3                | 0              | 1        | 1                        | 0          | 3         | 22          |
| Qstaabi      | 63                | 3           | 0         | 8                | 0              | 0        | 1                        | 0          | 3         | 79          |
| Al Thaher    | 0                 | 0           | 0         | 14               | 0              | 0        | 1                        | 0          | 0         | 15          |
| Shazeia      | 0                 | 0           | 0         | 3                | 0              | 0        | 1                        | 0          | 0         | 3           |
| Saqem        | 356               | 1           | 0         | 8                | 2              | 1        | 1                        | 27         | 0         | 396         |
| Haydar       | 1348              | 12          | 54        | 18               | 3              | 1        | 0                        | 78         | 1         | 1515        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>7248</b>       | <b>1421</b> | <b>76</b> | <b>94</b>        | <b>8</b>       | <b>4</b> | <b>8</b>                 | <b>267</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>9176</b> |

| District | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |                |        |                          |        |       | Total |
|----------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|          | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health<br>unit | Police | Government,<br>and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Haef     | 722               | 0    | 2     | 5                | 1              | 0      | 0                        | 15     | 4     | 749   |
| Soufyan  |                   |      |       |                  |                |        |                          |        |       |       |

| District        | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |                |        |                          |        |       | Total |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                 | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health<br>unit | Police | Government,<br>and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Ban<br>Housheeb | 316               | 30   | 1     | 3                | 1              | 0      | 0                        | 13     | 0     | 354   |

|                        |              |              |           |            |           |          |          |            |           |               |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>Grand<br/>Total</b> | <b>8,286</b> | <b>1,441</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>102</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>295</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>10,279</b> |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|

### UNHCR, February 2009

As a result of efforts made by UNHCR and UNICEF, school authorities accepted approximately 1,000 IDP children in schools, regardless of the lack of documentation for the first time since the beginning of the conflict in Saada. UNHCR is following up with the local education office in Sa'ada to ensure that all IDPs have access to education

### UNICEF January 2009

The conflict in Sa'ada Governorate, which is 240 kilometres from the capital Sana'a, started in 2004 and has been ongoing despite many mediation efforts. The latest ceasefire was declared in June 2008. Of the Governorate's population of 700,000, it is estimated that over 130,000 are displaced throughout the region, mainly in seven camps or with host families within and around Sa'ada. Women and children comprise a high percentage (over 70 per cent) of those affected and dwelling in the camps. With the destruction of many basic facilities, such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate, access to services is affected. Opportunities for many livelihoods have diminished due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen.

The global trend of increasing food prices during 2008 has severely affected Yemen – one of the poorest countries in the region. This situation is exacerbated by key health and nutrition indicators for women and children, which are already some of the worst in the world. The Family Health Survey (2003) showed stunting at 53 per cent, wasting at 12.4 per cent (120,000 children under age five are severely wasted) and underweight at 45.6 per cent. The 2006 World Food Programme/ UNICEF survey conducted in five districts indicated anaemia to be 81.5 per cent among children under age five; 73.1 per cent among pregnant women; and 83 per cent among lactating women. Children under age five are the most vulnerable segment of the population and are more at risk of malnutrition when availability and access to food are compromised at the community level.

#### **Yemen Times, July 2008**

Schoolteachers from outside the district complain that they have difficulty entering these areas every day on their way to schools in western Bani Hushaish. "Every time there's a new security official, we must go through the entire process of identifying ourselves again and our business in the district. They fear that every stranger might be a Houthi follower," complains Mohammed Abdullah, a math teacher working in Bani Hushaish. The problem is compounded by the fact that most teachers in rural areas don't have professional ID cards proving that they work at a particular school. Because of their situation, students where clashes between Yemeni army troops and Houthi loyalists are occurring were given passing grades without taking exams, particularly as the clashes erupted again in May, which is the end of the academic year and just a month before exams.



# ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## Issues of Self Reliance and Public Participation

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### Issues of Self Reliance and Public Participation

- With the destruction of many basic facilities, such as health, nutrition and education across the Governorate, access to services is affected. Opportunities for many livelihoods have diminished due to the conflict, and poverty levels have risen. (UNICEF, January 2009)
- Though there are no clear assessments there are reported high rates of unemployment amongst displaced community, and generally with very limited income. While certain categories of displaced benefit from savings or are employees in the public sector and retain salaries, many are unemployed and rely on daily labour to sustain their incomes. (IDMC, Interview May 2009)
- Displacement has entailed loss of property and means of livelihood. In number of instances, displaced were not able to leave with possessions, or such possessions were confiscated by various parties to the conflict. There are accounts of properties being looted by both parties to the conflict in all Governorates concerned. (HRW, November 2009)
- Prolonged periods of displacement aggravates the situation for many displaced communities in Saada, or in Saana where income and savings are being exhausted with minimal livelihood means available. (IDMC Interview, May 2009) Access to land for agricultural or pastoral activities remains limited, and vocational training remains lacking.
- Lack of livelihood opportunities have also compelled some IDPs to illest professions as coping mechanism such as trafficking along the Yemeni-Saudi Arabian border. Child labour, particularly from the camps, has also increased to respond to livelihood needs including begging, daily labour as well as involvement in smuggling.
- There is very limited information about the livelihood strategies for communities that have allegedly returned to places of origin. Accounts suggest that many have returned to face displacement given the extentof the destruction in the areas concerned. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- While there is no clear statistics on the number of livelihoods affected, the survey undertaken by the Saada Reconstruction Fund revealed over 8,200 houses and 1,400 farms destroyed as the result of the conflict indicating extensive reconstruction needs and investment for returnees. (SRF GoY, April 2009)
- The current heightened security situation, or intermittent violence as well as other related tribal conflicts in Amran, continues to affect livelihood strategies, access as well as fate of returnees and displaced alike particularly in areas in such as Ghamar, Saqayan, Razih, Ghamar, and Haydan. (IDMC Interview May, 2009)
- Income generating activities are promoted by UNHCR through natioanal implementing partners, though for lack of resources and capactiy affects only a limited number of those displaced. (UNHCR, December-July 2009)
- Yemeni Jews in Saana have also underlined the limited livelihood opportunities despite the assistance and shelter provided by the national government. (Yemen Times, April 2009)

### UNHCR, December 2008

To date, 300 IDPs have visited the Information and Counselling Centre (ICC) inquiring about available assistance and services. 180 were assisted, of whom 65 received NFIs,

24 received food assistance, 35 received medical referrals while 56 received counselling and legal services (49 psychosocial, 4 SGBV counselling, 3 legal).IDPs are reported to have succeeded with their businesses resulting from the training and grants provided to some 80 vulnerable IDPs in August 2008

### **Yemen Times, April 2009**

“The Yemeni security and judicial apparatuses ignore the suffering of the Jews and refuse – directly or indirectly – to provide them with protection,” said Khaled Al-Anisi, director of the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms or HOOD. “These incumbent bodies fully realize the identification of extremists who harm Jewish citizens.” Yemeni Jewish citizen Yahya Al-Marhabi who migrated to Israel along with his family around a decade ago told the Yemen Times that the Yemeni government provided his father and family, who came from Sa'ada to Sana'a, an apartment in Tourist City. However, the apartment is extremely small. “The apartment consists of only two rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom, which is not enough to accommodate a family of 19 members,” he said. “You can imagine how such a big family can live in two rooms which are only six square meters each.” Apart from an overcrowded apartment, Al-Marhabi said that his family suffers from financial difficulties as the government provided every member of the family with only YR 5,000 (USD 25) per month in addition to some food including wheat, rice, and oil. He pointed out that Jews in Yemen live in an ongoing crisis due to what is happening in Gaza, as they are unable to go to work lest they be subjected to intimidation or even death.

Rabbi Yahya Yusuf of Sa'ada who lives currently in Sana'a told newsyemen.net last Wednesday that “the 65 Jews living in Tourist City in Sana'a after they were moved from Bani Salem in Sa'ada live in a very bad situation since the beginning of this year.” The reason is that “the administration of Tourist City is not committed to paying their financial aid or food which the president allocated to them since they were moved during the Sa'ada war between Houthis and the government. He demanded that the president form a committee to conduct field visits to the city to consider their situation. He said that these families live in vacuum. “Some of us can forge silver and work in carpentry, blacksmithing, and mechanics. But we don't have enough money to establish our own projects,” he pointed out. “We had all these capabilities when we were living in Sa'ada but all our property was looted.”

### **Yemen Post, July 2008**

Women and children from Al-Sharbah, Al-Jumaimah, and some parts of Wadi Rujam left their houses following the fiercest battles that took place between the army and Houthi followers, subjecting their farms to dryness. In return, men who preferred to stay carried their guns and turned to be guards for what had remained of their grapes and qat farms. Mohammed Al-Rujami mentioned that a lot of people surrendered to gods will and left their houses and farms, leaving with their families to the capital Sana'a in search for security.

Domestic markets have been affected by the ongoing war in Sa'ada and some areas of Bani Hushaish; e.g. the Amari Qat and coming from Sa'ada to cover part of the Sana'a markets needs was banned from entering the capital. With exception to some smuggled quantities, the Hushaish Qat does enter the capital. The same applies to vegetables and fruits in places not affected by war as they are subjected to strict checking measures in more than 50 checkpoints on their way to Sana'a. Thus, grapes and other fruits lose their

quality and get decayed by the constant loading and unloading in military checkpoints. Banning farm products from Sa'ada entering Sana'a and other Yemeni cities have caused grape prices to increase to record levels, leaving middle-income and poor citizens incapable of buying them. One kilo of pomegranates is sold for YR 400 while one kilo of grapes is sold for YR 500, three times higher than last year's prices.

Several farms were destroyed by dryness and farmers lose their annual harvest, especially after the state imposed a diesel embargo for farmers of Bani Hushaish. This led dozens of fruits and vegetables to die of dryness. Essam Al-Magharbi hinted that their farms were subject to destruction despite their cooperation with army forces against Houthis, especially when combing included all farms from which bullets come. The internal problems and conflicts were part of this war as Al-Magharbi disclosed that some locals used the war to settle accounts with their enemies through firing from the enemy's farm against the army and causing the latter to bombard it. Thus, citizens were not even secured when resorting to their farms as they turned to be part of the war as one bullet comes from another farm. When this happens the army starts combing each corner of the farm with heavy bombardment, not knowing that it is hurting innocent civilians instead of Houthi loyalists.

#### **Yemen Times, June 2008**

He further notes that only Bani Hushaish residents must pay the YR 500 fee, as those at the checkpoints recognize them as locals from the district. On the other hand, security forces have increased their blockade against Bani Hushaish residents to prevent the entry of flour, fruits, vegetables and even animal fodder. "I'm a major in the army and I participated in the first three wars in Sa'ada. However, I'm now surprised that a group of soldiers prevents me from delivering flour to feed my small children and family simply because I'm from Bani Hushaish," the military official said, requesting anonymity. Several district residents maintain that one village sheikh was forced to dump a bag of flour on the road when soldiers didn't allow him to take it to his village. "The security forces are going too far, as they're preventing us from transporting fruit and animal fodder across the checkpoints. Do they think Houthis eat fodder?!" asked one Bani Hushaish resident.

According to security officials, Houthis previously have escaped by pretending to be women, disguising themselves under black abayas. Due to social conventions, these "women" would be allowed to pass without question or search. However, nowadays, female police officers are stationed at checkpoints to search women, while male personnel search men. "A Houthi wife once was caught attempting to smuggle out of the area. She was carrying a gun discovered by policewomen, who then questioned her and learned that she was from the Houthi inhabited area," explained a source, who was present at Bani Hushaish's western entry point about two weeks ago. He continued, "We took her aside and advised her that it would be better for her and her family if she disclosed her husband's location or convinced him to surrender himself to the authorities." He said she was released after the local sheikh guaranteed her compliance. She returned home and actually convinced her husband to surrender, which he did, and he remains in custody to date. According to the same source, numerous Houthi women are behind their husbands' surrender due to pressure from the government and seeking a safer life for their children.

# DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

## Documentation Needs and Citizenship

- There is limited information available on difficulties arising out of documentations or lack of. For IDPs documentation remains problematic on the grounds that many having fled places of origin do not have documentation (birth certificates, school enrollement documentation, national identification) and that in orther instances many are not necessarily in possession with identification documentation mindful that registration rmains quite limited in Yemen . (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- According to UNICEF statistics, there is only a 22 per cent national average rate of registration. This lack of registration has given rise to several difficulties. (UNICEF, Januray 2009) Presumably this will not faciliate identification of family sizes and implications this has on humanitarian response, has been an impediment to access to education, and presumably rendered more difficult to address issues linked to family unification. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- The principle difficulty that is encountered is with regards to access to education and subsequent registration in public schools in areas of displacement. The majority of displaced families living in the camps and town fled their homes, leaving behind school records and identification documents. As schools and authorities require academic records and birth certificates for enrolment, children have been deprived of access to education. In some schools children were able to unofficially audit classes, though they were denied certificates at the end of the term (despite passing exams), and thus dissuaded from continuing. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Local authorities have been slow to respond to the education needs of IDP children missing identification/academic documents, though most recently in early 2009 Ministry of Education has as result of advocacy by humanitarian actors, lifted such requirements for school attendance. However testimonies of some displaced reflect that this may not be uniformly applied. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Documentation is also of relevance regarding property compensation and restitution for displaced communities returning to places of origin or seeking compensation from the Government. According to SRF where documentation is not available, all compensation and restitution is verified in consultation with local and tribal authorities. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
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## ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

### Issues of Family Unity, Identity and Culture.

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#### Issues of Family Unity, Identity and Culture

- The nature of the conflict in Saada has entailed considerable pressure on family unity. Though the number is uncertain. Number of men and young boys have been detained on suspicion of being associated with the opposition. (HRW October 2008; Yemeni Times 2008) There are also instances of disappeared amongst displaced, and suspected enforced disappearances, as well as number of children that are separated from one or both parents. (HRW October 2008; IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- The conflict in Saada has entailed 3,00 to 5,000 orphans though there are no clear number certain numbers of which are assisted by charities and humanitarian organizations such as Islamic Relief International, and national associations such as Al-Islah. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- The extent to political and religious aspects of the conflict should be identified within a framework of competing identities is not clear. Though there are clear tensions between various sectarian groups, the conflict also seems to reflect competing political, tribal as well as religious identifies. (MERIP, September 1997, and July 2005; ICG, May 2009)
- Analysts have voiced increasing concern on influence of extremism by both parties between Houthis who are of Zaidi Shia community and Salafi wahhabist that are evident in northern Yemen, as well as the evident further tribalisation of the conflict, with its associated cycle of revenge killings. ( MERIP, September 1997, and July 2005; ICG, May 2009)
- The local authorities in Saada have restricted some religious practices, and has been accused of targetting Zaidi Shias on grounds of supporting the opposition. (US DoS, 2008) In Houthi areas, increasing policisation, including imposition of a system of administation, including specific curriculum being taught in houthi controlled areas also raises concern. (IDMC interview May 2009)
- There are also accounts of IDPs seeking to return being committed to provide a oath of loyalty and allegiance to Houthi opposition, whilst those whose tribe may have been progovernmental risk facing revenge should they return. (IDMC Interview, April 2009)
- There are also issues of identity and culture which affect number of other communities displaced in recent years including the Akhdam in Hadramout Governorates – an Akhdam community also is found in Saada - as well as Yemeni Jewish community in Amran and Saada Governorates. (IRIN, May 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Intimidation and violence has targeted Yemni Jewish community in Saada, leading to their displacement in 2007 due to threats, and in Amran where a larger Yemni Jewish community of 400 reside, Yemeni Jews have faced intimidation, harrasement, and violence. (US DoS, 2008; Yemeni Times, April 2009)

#### **US Department of State, January 2008**

Neither the Constitution nor other laws protect or inhibit freedom of religion; however, government policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and that Shari'a (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation. The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice; however, there were some restrictions. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this

report. Muslims and followers of religious groups other than Islam are free to worship according to their beliefs; however, the Government prohibits conversion from Islam and the proselytizing of Muslims. During the reporting period, there were reports of arrests of Christian converts and members of the Baha'i community.

Although relations among religious groups generally continued to contribute to religious freedom, reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice increased, particularly as related to the Jewish community in Amran Governorate and Zaydi Muslims. Jewish residents of Amran Governorate reportedly experienced increased harassment by a small group of their Muslim neighbors. Some prominent Zaydi Muslims reported they felt targeted by government entities for their religious affiliation. The continued, unresolved situation in Saada Governorate and increasing violence between government forces and rebels associated with the al-Houthi family, who adhere to the Zaydi school of Shi'a Islam, caused political, tribal, and religious tensions to grow during the reporting period.

Virtually all citizens are Muslims, predominantly belonging to either the Zaydi order of Shi'a Islam or to the Shafa'i order of Sunni Islam. While there are no available statistics, estimates are that the Zaydis make up 45 percent and the Shafa'is make up 55 percent of the population. There are a few thousand Ismaili Muslims who reside mainly in the north. There are reportedly 150 Baha'is. Jews are the only indigenous non-Muslim religious minority. Nearly all of the once-sizable Jewish population has emigrated. Fewer than 400 Jews remain in the northern part of the country, primarily in Amran Governorate. Since January 2007 the historic Saada Governorate community of 45 Jews has lived in Sana'a, under the protection and care of the Government, after abandoning their homes in the face of threats from al-Houthi rebels. The community has abandoned its synagogues in Saada. There is at least one functioning synagogue in Amran Governorate....

During the reporting period, an effort to revive a peace agreement between the Government and al-Houthi rebels in Saada Governorate failed and hostilities restarted. The Government maintains that the al-Houthis are adherents of Twelver Shi'ism, a variant of Shi'ism which differs from that of the country's predominant Zaydi-Shi'a. The al-Houthis follow the late rebel cleric Hussein Badr Eddine al-Houthi, who was killed during a 10-week rebellion that he led in 2004 against the Government in Saada. Some Zaydis continued to report harassment and discrimination by the Government because they were suspected of sympathizing with the al-Houthis. However, it appears the Government's actions against the group were politically, not religiously, motivated.

Government actions to counter an increase in political violence in Saada restricted some practice of religion. In January 2008, for the fourth year, the Government banned the celebration of Ghadeer Day (a holiday celebrated by Shi'a Muslims) in parts of Saada Governorate. During the reporting period, the Government also reportedly intensified its efforts to stop the growth of the al-Houthis' popularity by limiting the hours that mosques were permitted to be open to the public. The Government maintained that it was only enforcing existing tradition that mosques should be used primarily for prayer and not for political activities. The Government continued to close down what it claimed to be extremist Shi'a religious institutes, reassigning imams who were thought to espouse radical doctrine and continuing monitoring of mosque sermons.

During the reporting period, the Government continued its efforts to prevent the politicization of mosques and schools, as well as to curb extremism and increase tolerance. ....During the reporting period, the Government continued efforts to close unlicensed schools and religious centers. By the end of the reporting period, more than 4,500 unlicensed religious schools and institutions were closed. .... There were also credible reports from Zaydi scholars and politicians that authorities continued to ban the publishing of some materials that promoted Zaydi-Shi'a Islam. The Government denied that the media was subject to censorship by any security apparatus

Yemen Times, August 2008

Dozens of women whose husbands, sons, fathers, brothers or relatives were detained over alleged connections to Abdulmalik Al-Houthi during his fight with the army, protested in front of the Presidential Palace against continued detention of their relatives. During the sit-in that took place during last weekend, the female protesters recited verses from the Holy Quran. They exchanged accusations and quarreled with the Republican Guard Members in charge of safeguarding the Presidential Palace.

# PROPERTY ISSUES

## Property Issues

- Through the conflict 2004-2008 there has been extensive destruction of villages and infrastructure by army shelling, air bombardment and indiscriminate military targeting. There has also been reports by displaced and media of extensive looting of private property by all parties to the conflict including expropriation of private goods without compensation. (HRW, October 2008; IDMC interview, May 2009)
- Shortly following the announcement of the ceasefire in July 2008, the Saada Committee for Peace and Reconstruction (which would comprise the Saada Fund for Reconstruction and Mediation Committee) was established with the intended goal to survey the destruction, start reconstruction and dispense compensation in war-affected areas, as well as mandated to solve disputes between the various parties. (ICG, May 2009)
- By April 2009, the Social Fund for Reconstruction had completed the survey in the affected districts identifying 8,286 houses, 1,441 farms, 295 mosques, 102 schools, 10 medical centres, 4 police stations, 8 government facilities and 18 other structures been destroyed in the fighting or by air bombardments in Saada districts, Harf Sufyan, and Bani Houshesh. (SFR GoY, April 2009)
- First phase of reconstruction phase initiated in early January in districts which had been first assessed. By April 2009, the government claimed 960 private homes in districts of Razih and Sahar had been completed during the first reconstruction phase, and second phase was initiated. The SFR also reported the reconstruction number of public buildings including schools. (SFR, GoY, April 2009)
- So far, the Committee was able to pay the first installment of 20% to 940 families in Al Safra, Razeh and Sahar districts to assist them reconstruct their houses while plans are underway to commence 20% payment to additional 1,300 families Maigz and Qataber districts, and subsequent stages addressing remaining districts. (ICG, May 2009)
- Under the reconstruction program, public buildings are to be reconstructed through tenders while private building are to be reconstructed by owners through financial and technical assistance. Unlike previous reconstructions beneficiaries are paid in installements upon completion of stages in the construction of their residences with technical supervision provided by SFR. (SFR, April 2009)
- The members of the SFR have faced number of obstacles namely ongoing insecurity and intermittent conflict, equally difficulties in access and funding. Intermittent conflict has been obstacle to SFRs progress. At start of assessment, pro government tribes would place obstacles to SFRs work in Houthi controlled areas. (Yemeni Times, 2008) In early 2009 SFR engineers on field assignment were intimidated and kidnapped for a brief period. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- The SFR has been contested as not having been able to fully assess the damage in Huthi controlled regions which are reportedly to have suffered the most, and of playing greater role in areas under government control and support. IDPs such as from Ghowlan districts have criticized SFR for delays and failing to address their needs in favor of other regions. (IDMC, May 2009)
- According to the Committee, the government would be unable to assist all those affected and available government funding is estimated to consist of roughly 50% of total requirements as per assessment undertaken. There have also been reports on inability or late payments of the SFR to property owners in the initial stages. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)

## Saddah Fund for Reconstruction, April 2009



The conflict and terrorism which has affected the Governorate of Saada has left it into wake considerable destruction and damage to environment, public and private properties. The political leadership and the government has decided upon to establish this fund to address this conflict affected area. The SFR began its activities in assessing the situation in Sadaah based upon Republic Order 130 in 2007 issued on 28th July 2008.

| District  | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |             |        |                       |        |       | Total |
|-----------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|           | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health unit | Police | Government, and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Salih     | 3564              | 949  | 15    | 20               | 0           | 0      | 0                     | 72     | 1     | 3631  |
| Magg      | 3160              | 178  | 4     | 15               | 2           | 1      | 0                     | 58     | 3     | 3423  |
| Al Safaa  | 436               | 279  | 1     | 3                | 1           | 0      | 0                     | 21     | 0     | 741   |
| Razah     | 396               | 0    | 0     | 3                | 0           | 0      | 1                     | 10     | 4     | 314   |
| Kitaf     | 46                | 0    | 1     | 1                | 0           | 0      | 0                     | 1      | 0     | 49    |
| Ghanra    | 15                | 0    | 1     | 3                | 0           | 1      | 1                     | 0      | 3     | 22    |
| Qatabi    | 63                | 2    | 0     | 3                | 0           | 0      | 1                     | 0      | 3     | 79    |
| Al Thaher | 0                 | 0    | 0     | 14               | 0           | 0      | 1                     | 0      | 0     | 15    |
| Shazeia   | 0                 | 0    | 0     | 3                | 0           | 0      | 1                     | 0      | 0     | 3     |
| Saqem     | 356               | 1    | 0     | 3                | 2           | 1      | 1                     | 27     | 0     | 396   |
| Haydan    | 1348              | 12   | 54    | 18               | 3           | 1      | 0                     | 78     | 1     | 1515  |
| Total     | 7248              | 1421 | 76    | 94               | 5           | 4      | 3                     | 267    | 14    | 9176  |

| District     | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |             |        |                       |        |       | Total |
|--------------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|              | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health unit | Police | Government, and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Harf Soufran | 722               | 0    | 2     | 3                | 1           | 0      | 0                     | 15     | 4     | 749   |

| District    | Private Buildings |      |       | Public Buildings |             |        |                       |        |       | Total |
|-------------|-------------------|------|-------|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|             | House             | Farm | Other | School           | Health unit | Police | Government, and other | Mosque | Other |       |
| Ban Housheh | 316               | 20   | 1     | 3                | 1           | 0      | 0                     | 13     | 0     | 354   |

|             |       |       |    |     |    |   |   |     |    |        |
|-------------|-------|-------|----|-----|----|---|---|-----|----|--------|
| Grand Total | 8,286 | 1,441 | 79 | 102 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 295 | 18 | 10,279 |
|-------------|-------|-------|----|-----|----|---|---|-----|----|--------|

### ICG, May 2009

In the words of a parliament member, “without compensation and reconstruction, the war will never stop”.<sup>174</sup> Accordingly, less than a week after he officially “ended” the war on 17 July 2008, President Salih created the Saada Committee for Peace and Reconstruction. In parallel, he formed a local committee comprising notable Saada figures, such as Faris Manaa (a tribal sheikh, prominent businessman and brother of Hasan Manaa, Saada’s governor) and members of elected local councils. The presence in both committees of individuals perceived as close to the rebels, such as Sheikh Ali Nassir al-Qirsha, mollified Huthi leaders.<sup>175</sup>

The committees appeared to work cooperatively and were given access to a \$55 million special fund under the prime minister’s authority – a sum far less than anticipated or needed, but a start nonetheless. Their goal was to survey the destruction, start reconstruction and dispense compensation in war-affected areas. They also were mandated to solve disputes between the various parties. By late December 2008, the

committees reportedly had completed 80 per cent of the survey in the affected districts; they assessed that 7,180 houses, 1,412 farms, 267 mosques, 94 schools, eight medical centres, four police stations, three court buildings, three other government facilities and two religious centres had been destroyed in the fighting or by air bombardments.

By mid-March 2009, the government claimed it has rebuilt 960 private homes during the first reconstruction phase (focusing on Sahar and Razih districts) and completed the damage survey in Harf Sufyan and Bani Hushaysh. Local and international organisations simultaneously launched a humanitarian assistance drive in Saada immediately after the end of the fifth round. UN agencies and international NGOs carried out a joint rapid-needs assessment in August-September 2008, covering a range of sectors (including sanitation, health, education and civilian protection) and budgeting \$4.6 million to various implementing agencies to deal with the emergency between October and December 2008.

The Qatari Red Crescent Society, as well as the presidentially- established Salih foundation, distributed goods to refugees, while Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières, Médecins du Monde, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Islamic Relief pursued their own relief programs, including in zones that remained under rebel control. The government encouraged displaced persons to go home, providing cash incentives, transportation, food and other commodities to families willing to return to their villages, albeit with mixed results.

Although reconstruction officially is proceeding apace, it faces severe challenges that could jeopardise efforts to avert another round of warfare. Funding became an issue immediately after the fifth round in the context of the global economic meltdown and plummeting oil prices that forced the government to revise its already approved 2009 budget.<sup>186</sup> In response, Sanaa appealed to the international community for financial support. A senior government official said, “there is no external solution to the conflict, and the reconstruction committees must address the main grievances. But the government needs resources to fulfil its commitments”.

Although officials met with Western governments in the weeks following the proclaimed end to fighting, the donor community was cautious. In the words of a diplomat from an important donor country: There is a consensus in the international community that we should wait for guarantees before launching development projects in Saada. No one will invest in that region unless there is a guarantee that war will not resume. This is a way to put pressure on the government and elicit information on the reconstruction and conciliation process. Another diplomat explained that Western governments would be reluctant to financially back a government-controlled fund meant to repair what government forces themselves had destroyed and were likely to destroy again if another round erupted, unless conditions on the ground stabilised.

Persistent instability in the affected regions is another factor hindering reconstruction efforts. Since the July 2008 ceasefire, Saada governorate remains unstable principally due to skirmishes between pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal groups. In particular, the latter accuse the committees of bias, and, in retaliation, members of aggrieved tribes block roads and attack rival tribes. Regime hardliners who oppose reconciliation also criticise the committees’ work and take steps to undermine them. They might well be behind the forced resignation in mid-November 2008 of Abd-al- Qadir Hilal as minister of

local administration and head of the national reconstruction committee. Security officials had accused Hilal of excessive leniency toward the rebels.

For several independent observers, this was another sign of regime division and hesitation to end the war. Under his replacement as reconstruction committee head, Abd-al-Aziz Dhahab, the committee has lost dynamism and much of the credit it previously had gained. The Huthi leadership likewise has displayed ambivalence toward the reconstruction committees. Although international NGOs and UN agencies have been able to carry out programs in war-affected zones without apparent difficulty, access by national fund and committee members has been less smooth. Yahya al-Huthi has accused both governmental and local reconstruction committees of lying about their objectives as well as spying on the Huthis and their sympathisers. Moreover, he said, “the government is using the committees to convince foreigners that it is taking positive steps”. Others echoed al-Huthi’s message. As a result, relief officials assert, the national reconstruction fund has been unable to fully assess the damage in Huthi-controlled regions – reportedly those that suffered most from bombardments and fighting.

### **HRW November 2008**

In late July 2008, the government created a Sa’ada High Committee for War Damages Assessments to assess war damage to public and private property. During the first week of August 2008, the committee faced difficulties in accessing affected areas after pro-government tribes stopped its convoy and insisted they, and not “pro- Huthi villages,” should receive priority assistance to repair damaged property in exchange for having fought the Huthis. In mid-August 2008, in a statement that highlights the politicization of government development assistance in Yemen, the head of the High Committee, Minister of Local Administration Abd al-Qadir Ali Hilal, said that al-Zhahir district, on the border with Saudi Arabia, would receive priority for reconstruction and would benefit from the provision of electricity, water and paved roads, in recognition of the community’s support for the Yemeni army during its fight against Huthi rebels.

In other instances people described their property having been looted but could not ascertain who was responsible. A man from Harf Sufyan town told Human Rights Watch that some of his relatives had returned to the town after the fighting ended to find that their homes had been looted.<sup>64</sup> Another journalist told Human Rights Watch that his family had fled Harf Sufyan town in the second week of May 2008. When they returned after the fighting had died down, they found all of the village’s remaining houses had been looted, including furniture, electronic goods and jewelry. Possible Huthi involvement in looting cannot be dismissed. Two persons separately told Human Rights Watch that in 2004 and 2005, when Huthi fighters moved into a village they would assess the stock of local traders and fix a price for their wares, paying half in advance and the remainder after a battle. One person from a town where fighting had taken place in May 2008 said that the Huthis did not compensate locals. Many interviewees were reluctant to criticize the Huthis, and one person said that locals “willingly” gave supplies to the Huthis.

### **Yemen Times, August 2008**

A recently formed committee to reconstruct damage from the four-year fighting between the Yemeni army and Houthi loyalists has failed to make progress on the ground, despite the fact that it commenced working many days ago, tribal sources from Sa’ada governorate allege, noting that the committee’s failure to reconstruct damaged infrastructure has enraged tribesmen affected by the war. The sources continued,

reporting that pro-government tribesmen in Nishour area prevented the field committee from surveying the mass destruction in the home district of Houthi field leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi and former ruling party Member of Parliament Abdullah Al-Rizami. The angry tribesmen forced the committee to leave their area. Likewise, other local sources in the war-ravaged governorate told Al-Sahwa.net that tribesmen related to General People's Congress-affiliated MP Sheikh Fayez Abdullah Hames Al-Awjari prevented the committee from carrying out reconstruction work in Al-Rizami's area. The tribesmen demanded the committee begin reconstructing their areas, which were exposed to mass devastation during the war, pointing out that they are loyal to the Yemeni government and, as a result, it must give top priority to reconstructing their area. In related news, Houthi gunmen in Amran governorate's Harf Sifyan district now have released pro-government Sifyan tribesmen, who were arrested when clashes between Houthis and the Yemeni army first erupted in the district.

### **IRIN, August 2008**

A recently formed government committee has faced problems assessing damage to buildings and property in conflict-hit Sa'ada Governorate, northern Yemen. Committee members had to return to the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, after being intercepted in Mashor village Saada Governorate, by pro-government tribes who said they, not the al-Houthi rebels, should have priority when it came to government assistance. The pro-government tribes did not want the committee to start assessing the damage in "pro-al-Houthi villages", demanding instead that the government give them priority assistance as a reward for fighting on the government side. However, a few days later, on 6 August, the committee went back to another part of Saada Governorate on the orders of the Cabinet, to try and complete its assessment. Minister of Local Administration Abdul-Qader Hilal, who chairs the committee, said: "We will work in accordance with the president's orders and the state's strategy to promote peace and reconstruct Saada."

### **IRIN, July 2008**

Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Saada Governorate, northern Yemen, have not been able to return home after their houses were destroyed in recent fighting between government forces and Shia rebels, local sources have said. The long-running conflict, which started in 2004, has left hundreds dead and thousands displaced. "There are still thousands displaced because their houses were destroyed," Salem Mohammed, an IDP in Saada city, told IRIN. He said some IDPs were worried fighting could flare up again and preferred to stay in the six IDP camps which have been set up in and around Saada city, or with host families. The destruction of farms and infrastructure during the recent fighting, which began in May and lasted 70 days, had also driven many farmworkers from the land, aid agencies said. Most government officials in Saada were unwilling to comment, but Saada Governor Hassan Manna said 70 percent of the displaced families had returned to their homes over the past few days

### **IRIN, November 2007**

A government committee charged with assessing war damage in conflict-affected Saada province, in northern Yemen, said that its report has so far registered 3,375 cases of damage to public and private property in six out of Saada's 15 districts. Mutahar Rashad al-Masri, chairman of the committee and also governor of Saada, said it would continue to assess damage in three other districts of Saada and would finish its report by the end of November. He refused to give further details but analysts have expressed hope that a failed peace agreement might be revisited if the government completes this survey and begins reconstruction.

**Al Sahawa, July 2007**

Local sources in Saada governorate said to Alsahwa.net that al-Houthi gunmen in Dahian province have drove out teams of damage survey and held their cameras on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the committee formed to oversee the Qatari-mediated truce left Saada to Sana'a in order to meet the Qatari delegation which arrived Sana'a to continue its work. The Qatari delegation had left Saada to Qatar last Tuesday in the wake of obstacles and barriers that hindered the committee.

## **PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT**

### **Patterns of Return and Resettlement**

- Following the end of the conflict, the government in Saada encouraged displaced persons to return to places of origin, providing cash incentives, transportation through the provision of buses, food and other commodities to families returning to their villages. (ICG, May 2009; IDMC interview May 2009)
- There was nevertheless pressure exerted on IDPs particularly in the camps to return undermining the voluntariness of return. Simultaneously pressure was also reportedly applied to humanitarian actors to reduce humanitarian assistance provided. Moreover, the support provided by the government including cash incentives was allegedly by some accounts limited and not consistently applied. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Following the end of the conflict, the number of registered IDPs in Saada city and other access locations reducing from high of 77,000 to 20,000 by end of 2008. Nevertheless many IDPs were unable to return citing insecurity, lack of livelihood opportunities and basic services, and damage to homes as obstacles to return, and humanitarian community unable to access these locations has continued to identify an estimated figure of 100,000 IDPs. (UNHCR July 2009; WFP July 2009)
- Fear of reprisals for IDPs whose tribe was progovernmental has proven a considerable obstacle for many displaced due to risks of revenge killings upon return. For this latter group unless a comprehensive reconciliation is undertaken, which also takes note of tribal customary norms, then return to places of origin may not be feasible, with resettlement possibly being an alternative to return. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Though a substantial number of displaced would return, many would reportedly return to face secondary displacement, due to extensive destruction of private property, intermittent violence, and limited livelihoods. The extensive damage is also attested by the government assessments indicating the extent to which reconstruction is need for sustainable approaches. (SRF GoY, May 2009) Furthermore an estimated 10% of those had initially sought to return to places of origin would subsequently return to their place of displacement. (IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- Lack of access to places of return, and consequent inability of monitoring return of IDPs provides limited information on the conditions in the places of origin. There has as of July 2009 no overall independent assessment of the situation of IDPs who have returned in various governorates. In view of the high needs, these IDPs remain of concern to the humanitarian community.
- Return of Yemeni Jews displaced from Saada in 2007 is also quite contentious at present in view of prevailing security concerns – without adequate protection provided there appears little likelihood of possible return unless there is further reconciliation. Currently communities in Amran remain particularly under duress and at risk of displacement. (Yemeni Times, February and April 2009)

### **Yemen Times, February 2009**

Afraim Al-Nahri, a member of the community, explained that they had been living in peace with their Muslim neighbors until the recent event. The recent war in Gaza increased hatred towards Yemeni Jews ...As a response to their demand for protection directly from President Saleh, the president instructed that the Jews relocate to Sana'a governorate. He ordered money for the burial of Masha Al-Nahari and a piece of land in Sana'a (about 222 square meters) for each Jewish family. The president instructed that

they move to apartments in the tourist city in Sana'a while the families manage to sell their old houses in Amran and build new ones on the lands they are supposed to get. However, many Jewish families did not want to move because the apartments in tourist city are quite small compared to the size of their families. Moreover, many did not want to leave their home.

Abraham bin Yahya bin Yusif, a member of the community, explained that local Sheikh Yahya Mujahid Abu Shawarib, who is a deputy at the National Security Apparatus, wants to facilitate the selling of the Jews' homes and lands as well as their transfer to Sana'a where they can get better protection. "How are we expected to start all over again?" said one of the Jews in the community about the suggested plan. "Even if they give us the lands, who will build the homes for us? And who will buy our homes and lands in the village at a decent price? It all seems very unreal and highly unpractical. Instead of protecting us in our own village, they are asking us to leave." "We want to stay in Yemen because this is our fathers' land and we love it," said Moshe's father Yaish Al-Nahari.

### **IRIN, August 2008**

Mahmoud Taha, a local journalist based in Amran, said the IDPs had not been able to return home as their houses had been destroyed during the fighting in Harf Sufian. "Their villages have turned into heaps of stones," he told IRIN. Taha said the IDPs were living in the nearby districts of Houth, Bani Sarim, Khamer, Eyal Suriah and Eyal Yazid. "The standard of living there has deteriorated a lot. They do not have tents. They did not take anything with them when they were displaced... diseases such as diarrhoea have spread among them," he said. Taha added that the government damage assessment committee had not been able to begin work in Harf Sufian.

### **Yemen Times, August 2008**

Various organizations claiming to media outlets that they are providing aid to these refugees know nothing about the delivery of aid they've allocate for them. They only know about aid that has reached those refugees living in tents near the highway or the provincial capital. Concerning reconstruction projects the government has alluded to, the same tribal sources maintain that the government committees designated to assess the war's damages are making slow progress in Haidan district, Sa'ada governorate's worst hit area. The sources add that the committees have encountered numerous difficulties while performing their duties, noting that some 33 reconstruction engineers ceased assessing war-related damages in protest against the Yemeni government for not paying them. One government committee concerned with damage assessment and compensation previously stated to media outlets that, "Many displaced residents in Haidan and Saqain districts are experiencing harsh living conditions because relief agencies and charitable organizations are concentrating on those refugees living in tents in the suburbs around the provincial capital." The majority of displaced residents are sheltering in remote areas far from Sa'ada city, where they are experiencing a marked shortage in basic services. ...

### **Yemen Times, July 2008**

Khalid Al-Mowalad, Yemen Country Director at the Islamic Relief organization, explained that the situation is calm now, even in areas like Harf Syfian where a lot of the damage had been especially recently. "We have done extensive focus group discussions with men and women in the largest Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Al-Anad, where around 800 families are located," said Al-Mowalad. "During the last five days, some of the locals went to inspect the damage in their homes and returned to the camps

because there was nothing left for them back there,” he added. There are seven IDP camps in Sa’ada, containing a total of around 1,500 families who all need food, medicine, blankets and shelters. “Some people have fainted because of hunger, epidemics spread especially because of the four weeks siege, and now there is much help needed,” concluded Al-Mowalad.



## HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

### Lack of Humanitarian Access 2007-2009

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#### **Lack of Humanitarian Access 2007-2009**

- Since the armed conflict began in 2004, humanitarian agencies working in Sa'da governorate have faced a wide range of challenges in gaining access to the displaced and other civilians in need of assistance. Between the fourth and fifth rounds of violence and during the fifth war the government restricted aid agencies from traveling outside a limited number of towns, and during the conflict imposed an almost total prohibition on their movement throughout Sa'da governorate. (HRW, November 2008)
- Since that time, the government has granted access to international non-governmental agencies working in Malaheet and to Razih and al-Talh, and progressively for certain actors to other areas and districts including Safra, Sahar, Majz and Haydan districts but has continued to impose restrictions to areas it grants access to. (HRW, November 2008; ICRC, February and May 2009; MSF, June 2009; UNHCR June, 2009; Yemen Times, March 2009)
- Furthermore access when granted for INGOs and NGOs to rural areas remains limited at best, because of security concerns, restrictive checkpoints, and uncertainty about which areas are under control of government forces, Huthi rebels, or tribesmen from the area. The Huthi rebels have also failed to facilitate humanitarian access to areas under their control. (HRW October 2008; IDMC Interview May 2009)
- UN security requirements (Yemen is in Phase 3), has required UN to reduce operations for security reasons for a 'lighter footprint', and obtain security government escort when accessing Saada. These requirements, though standard operating procedures, has combined with restrictions imposed by the government circumscribed UN's access as well as strained existing resources.(IDMC Interview May 2009)
- Though the government would call upon the international community to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment of the situation in Saada and other affected areas in September 2008, the launching of inter-agency needs assessment would still not be granted by July 2009. (UNHCR, June 2009) The government has argued against the undertaking of assessments on grounds of insecurity and intermittent violence, it has also called for humanitarian community engagements to undertake projects in war affected areas. (IDMC Interview, May 2009; IRIN, September 2008)
- Furthermore, between February 2007 and July 2008 the government also imposed a total information blackout on Sa'da governorate, and has continued to place restrictions in information flow on the conflict in Saada and other related areas. In May 2009 journalists continued to face trial for information published on Saada conflict. (HRW, October 2008; IDMC Interview, May 2009)
- There have been several incidents and attacks against humanitarian actors involving loss of vehicle or materials throughout the conflict – including attack on ICRC and Yemeni Red Crescent Society convoy in May 2007; attack on YRCS convoy in Amran in May 2008 and in June 2008; hijacking of vehicles belonging to international NGOs in August 2008, and May 2009. (HRW, October 2008; IDMC Interview May 2009)
- In June, close to 30 medical staff were of Al Salam hospital in Saada were hijacked/kidnapped for a brief period. Several days later 9 humanitarian personnel were kidnapped; three were found dead shortly thereafter. (IRIN, June 2009) This has coincided with increasing intermittent conflict witnessed in several war affected governorates.

**UNHCR, June 2009**

With the exception of Malaheet, inaccessibility to IDPs and returnees outside Sa'ada City and Bani Hushaish is main concern for UN and other agencies.

**ICRC, February 2009**

Thousands of conflict victims in northern Yemen still need humanitarian assistance. In Sa'ada, more than 6,700 internally displaced people were still sheltering at the end of December in four camps. As temperatures drop, at times to less than two degrees Celsius, people need decent shelter. Difficult weather conditions have also put additional strain on many small communities scattered throughout the mountains. As a result of the conflict, water-treatment services are not as widely available as in the past, and getting clean and potable water has become a daily challenge for most ordinary people. Several basic health-care facilities have been abandoned because of the lack of security, and others have been destroyed. Those that are still operating often lack the equipment and supplies they need. The ICRC has been assisting the victims of the conflict in Sa'ada governorate since February 2007. However, poor security conditions and tribal fighting have often made it difficult to reach those most in need of help. In November, the ICRC increased its presence in the Amran governorate north of Sana'a, with the aim of better responding to the needs of people adversely affected by the last round of fighting. The ICRC is providing residents and displaced persons with food, essential household items, clean water and medical care. Aid distributions have recently taken place in Al-Mahdah, south of Sa'ada city, and in Dahyan and Al Humeidan, north-west of Sa'ada city. By the beginning of November 2008, almost 26,000 people had received dry food rations and more than 1,300 had received essential household items. The ICRC and the Yemen Red Crescent Society continue to assess the needs of the local population in the districts of Sa'ada governorate most affected by the fighting, in particular Haydan, Dahyan, Majz, Sahar and Al-Safra. Assessments have also been carried out in Al-Harf, a town in the Amran governorate on the main road between Sana'a and Sa'ada.

**HRW, November 2008**

Since June 2004 an armed conflict in northern Yemen all but ignored outside the country has displaced up to 130,000 people, a great many of whom remained out of the reach of humanitarian agencies as of October 2008. Caught between the government and an armed group known as the Huthis, these displaced civilians are among the invisible victims of war. Particularly since 2007, when international aid agencies sought to reach all parts of the northern Sa'da governorate, Yemeni authorities have severely restricted humanitarian access to tens of thousands of civilians in need. After a fifth round of fighting erupted in May 2008, the government blocked the movement of all commercial goods, including staple foods and fuel, an act that appears to constitute an illegal collective punishment....

With the beginning of the fourth round of fighting in February 2007, the Yemeni government imposed an information blackout on Sa'da governorate that remained in effect into October 2008 for most journalists, leading to a lack of information on the needs of war-affected civilians.<sup>36</sup> The authorities banned both local and foreign journalists from traveling anywhere in Sa'da governorate and cut off most subscribers from the mobile phone network covering that area; only a few government-vetted individuals were allowed to access the network.<sup>37</sup> Between the fourth and fifth rounds of violence (June 2007 to May 2008), the government prohibited aid agencies from traveling outside a limited number of towns. During the fifth war (early May to mid-July

2008), the government imposed an almost total prohibition on their movement throughout Sa'da governorate...

The government does not publish information about civilian casualties, humanitarian needs, or war damage to civilian property. In private, officials have accused the Huthis of committing atrocities such as summary executions. The government's information blackout and restrictions on movement throughout Sa'da governorate has prevented independent and reliable reporting on the impact of the fighting on civilians. Some of those persons the government arrested were said to be carrying photographs of civilian deaths and destroyed property.... Since the armed conflict began in 2004, humanitarian agencies working in Sa'da governorate have faced a wide range of challenges in gaining access to the displaced and other civilians in need of assistance. Precisely because the government has effectively prevented humanitarian agencies, journalists, and others from accessing most parts of the governorate, there is little evidence that on any given date the authorities' refusal to allow access was arbitrary, in contravention of international law.

Those restrictions have also prevented humanitarian agencies from determining the full extent of the conflict's impact on civilians, and their needs in the aftermath. The restrictions on access documented in this report show that the government broadly and systematically—and without transparent and persuasive reasons—prevented impartial national and international humanitarian agencies from reaching civilians to assess their needs and respond with assistance. What is clear is that the need is great, and that assistance has not reached rural areas, where many displaced persons remain camped, sometimes in the wild, and where government restrictions still prevent humanitarian agencies from providing assistance....

Three days after President Saleh declared an end to the fifth round of fighting on July 17, 2008, Minister of Interior Rashad al-Masri met with international humanitarian agencies and announced that they had full and unrestricted access to the whole of Sa'da governorate. The reality was considerably less open. Agencies had to ask the ministry for permission for each and every trip, a requirement that seriously restricted operational effectiveness.<sup>138</sup> By the end of August 2008, the ministry had permitted visits to very few areas, citing ongoing fighting and Huthi checkpoints as reasons for denying access.<sup>139</sup> WFP Yemeni contractors were able to transport food to Sa'da town on July 19, and the first international NGO received permission to travel to Sa'da town on July 27. By July 29, authorities gave the Yemeni Red Crescent permission to enter Sa'da town but nowhere else in the governorate.<sup>140</sup> Around July 20, the UN resident coordinator asked the government for permission for a joint UN agency assessment mission to travel, with armed escorts, to Sa'da town, including to camps on the outskirts of the town, and to Malahit town in al-Zhahir district in southwest Sa'da governorate.<sup>141</sup>

More than two weeks later the authorities granted permission, and the mission took place in mid-August. A humanitarian NGO told Human Rights Watch that at the time local government officials had told them that access to the rural areas near Malahit town was difficult as “even the security forces don't go there” because the Huthis had full control of parts of the surrounding area. On August 8, three weeks after the official end of fighting, the ICRC stated that “except in Sa'da city and its immediate vicinity, it remains difficult or impossible for the ICRC to operate in the conflict zones of northern Yemen.... [T]he ICRC has so far only provided basic emergency assistance mainly to displaced persons in camps close to the city [of Sa'da].”

This situation is echoed by media reports in late August 2008, according to which members of the government's reconstruction committee stated that "many displaced residents in Haidan and Saqain districts are experiencing harsh living conditions because relief agencies and charitable organizations are concentrating on those refugees living in tents in the suburbs around the provincial capital [Sa'da town]," and that the majority of the displaced were living far from Sa'da town. By September 2008, the government had not granted international agencies access to either Haidan or Saqain districts because of what the authorities said were ongoing skirmishes between the Huthis, tribes, and government forces. In other areas there was some expansion of humanitarian access. In late August 2008 the government granted access to international agencies working in Malahit and Dhahyan town and districts, and to Razih and al-Talh towns. As of late October, however, access to rural areas was extremely limited at best, because of security concerns, restrictive checkpoints, and uncertainty about which areas are under control of government forces, Huthi rebels, or tribesmen from the area.

**Attacks on humanitarian agencies** Due to the government's information blackout and aid agencies' understandable reluctance to report on incidents involving loss of vehicles or materials, there is little information available on the extent of attacks on humanitarian agencies. However, a number of incidents have been reported. On May 2, 2007, unidentified parties employed heavy gunfire against a 15-truck humanitarian convoy belonging to the ICRC and the Yemeni Red Crescent, clearly marked with the Red Crescent emblem, 18 kilometers north of Sa'da town. The convoy was carrying emergency supplies for 560 displaced families in Baqim district in northern Sa'da governorate. Two Red Crescent volunteers were injured.<sup>147</sup> In May 2008, pro-government tribes attacked a Yemeni Red Crescent convoy with non-food items in the Huth district of 'Amran governorate. The agency had agreed with the authorities in 'Amran governorate to set up three camps for displaced families. The Yemeni Red Crescent subsequently suspended all activities in 'Amran governorate and was only able to reach the displaced in August 2008.<sup>148</sup> Unidentified parties attacked the Yemeni Red Crescent when it tried to access 600 families in Harf Sufyan during the height of the fighting in June 2008.<sup>149</sup> During the second and third weeks of August 2008 – three weeks after the official end of the fifth round of fighting – unknown parties stole single vehicles from two international humanitarian agencies on the main road from San'a to Sa'da.<sup>150</sup>

### **HRW, October 2008**

Those arbitrarily arrested included a wide range of persons, including many who were not actively participating in hostilities against government forces. They can be grouped into three categories. First are persons effectively held hostage to pressure a wanted family member to surrender or end their human rights activities. Second are Hashemites, adherents of Zaidi Shi'ism who may have been targeted by the security forces on the basis of their religious activism. Third are Zaidis going to or returning from areas of recent fighting between the army and Huthi rebels, or who are otherwise suspected of sympathizing with them. A new and separate category which has emerged over the past two years is that of persons arbitrarily arrested for publishing information about the armed conflict, including journalists and website writers. ... The government attempted to prevent details of the conflict from becoming public by preventing journalists and humanitarian workers from going to the conflict zone, by disconnecting all but a select

number of mobile telephone numbers, by threatening journalists with reprisal if they report on the conflict, and by arresting persons who transmitted information, or who could have information, about the conflict because they had recently been to or fled the area. The government is particularly sensitive to videos and photographs of the war. Political Security detained a 13-year-old child at the airport for having CDs of Huthi rebels. He remained in incommunicado detention for one and a half months, and was released only after seven months. The government in February 2007 and July 2008 has even arrested persons it had officially appointed to mediate between itself and the Huthis, in an attempt to suppress their activities, when they were about to criticize the government's commitment to come to a peaceful solution. ...Despite hostilities ceasing in July 2008, security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest persons from the conflict areas. Displaced persons in the capital remained extremely fearful of arrest. Three groups of internally displaced persons from Sa'da governorate declined to meet with Human Rights Watch because of fears for their own safety. Earlier in 2008, the government arrested persons who had attempted to visit recent conflict areas to assess damage to their property or to bring trapped relatives to safety. ...

The government imposed a near-complete blockade on the travel of persons and goods in and out of Sa'da governorate, principally by closing the main road connecting Sa'da to San'a via 'Amran. Occasionally, persons fleeing fighting and destruction were able to move south. The government also attempted to prevent news about the details of the conflict from becoming public by preventing journalists and humanitarian workers from going to the conflict zone, by disconnecting all but a select number of mobile telephone numbers, by threatening journalists not to report on the conflict, and by arresting persons who transmitted information about the impact of the fighting, or who could have such information because they had recently left the area. Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qurbi told Human Rights Watch, "We have to differentiate between freedom of expression and journalistic crimes. In any case, we have to accept a court's verdict." An international humanitarian aid worker told Human Rights Watch that "a number of ministries told us that the government doesn't want foreigners to report on what is happening there."

### **MSF, June 2008**

Mardi 17 juin, les équipes de MSF qui travaillaient dans le gouvernorat de Saada ont été évacuées à Sanaa, la capitale yéménite . La décision de suspendre temporairement nos activités dans cette région du nord du Yémen intervient alors que de violents combats s'y déroulent. Depuis le 10 mai, il ne nous a pas été possible de déployer nos secours dans des conditions satisfaisantes, ni auprès des blessés, ni auprès des personnes déplacées. Il est difficile de savoir précisément ce qui se passe dans les zones de combats et dans les zones contrôlées par la rébellion. L'accès y est interdit pour des raisons de sécurité, aucun observateur indépendant n'est présent sur le terrain, et la plupart des réseaux de communication sont coupés. Nous ne disposons d'aucun bilan du nombre de morts ou de blessés. Mais les combats à l'arme lourde, les bombardements aériens sur des villages et les quelques informations que nous avons pu recueillir laissent supposer qu'il existe des victimes parmi les civils. Or la plupart d'entre eux n'ont aucun accès à des structures de soins adéquates. Pour les civils, venir jusqu'à l'hôpital n'est pas toujours possible, ou peut s'avérer dangereux à cause des combats en cours, mais aussi parce qu'ils craignent d'être soupçonnés de soutenir la rébellion et arrêtés. Même pour le personnel médical, l'accès aux hôpitaux et centres de santé est compliqué, voire impossible, ce qui hypothèque plus encore la possibilité pour les blessés de se faire soigner.

### **IRIN, July 2007**

The humanitarian situation in Yemen's northern governorate of Saada remains poor as displaced families have not been able to return in spite of the peace agreement between the government and rebels, activists and officials say. Nabil Abdul-Hafeedh, secretary-general of the Social Democracy Forum, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), told IRIN it was difficult to reach civilians in need of assistance. "The Civil Society Coalition [a group of local NGOs] recently formed an aid convoy for the displaced families but the government didn't allow us to go there," Abdul-Hafidh said.

# NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

## National Response

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### National Response- From Restricted Access to Reconstruction & Mediation 2007-2009

- The Government does not have a Ministry or administrative entity that is specifically mandated to address IDPs or returnees. Various Ministries such as Ministry of Education, and that of Health, Water and the Environment, Electricity and Energy, address issues relevant to IDPs / returnees within their respective mandates. There is liaison officer under the Ministry of Planning and Regional Cooperation that facilitates or coordinates activities of aid agencies.
- There are several government committees that are of relevance which have been established with the purpose of responding to crisis as these emerge - such as the committee for the reconstruction in flood affected areas in Hadramout and Al-Maher, as well as Saada national committees for the reconstruction and mediation.
- The membership of these committees is generally inclusive of wide number of pertinent members of government, relevant ministries and other parties building on existing tradition of dialogue between competing individuals and groups – however such inclusiveness has not also come under considerable strain underlying politicization. (ICG, May 2009)
- The national committee for reconstruction for Saada which includes Saada Reconstruction Fund, which is quite pertinent to question of returnees is headed by board headed by prime ministers office and representatives of various ministries including representatives of local of national societies and eminent personalities of Saada. (SFR GoY, May 2009)
- National committee for reconstruction has faced numerous difficulties including lack of adequate funds, and insufficient access to war affected areas, and following the forced resignation of the former head of the committee on alleged sympathy with the Houthi position as well as accusations of lack of impartiality, and failing to assess areas of the opposition. (ICG, May 2009)
- Similar fate has fallen on Saada mediation committees which were established to resolve disputes between the various parties have successively been established during and after each round of fighting however insufficient political will including repressive measures have undermined these committees efforts and effectiveness. (ICG, May 2009)
- The government has also called upon the humanitarian community to assist in addressing humanitarian concerns of those displaced as well as reconstruction needs. (IRIN, September 2008) The government has placed emphasis on return since the ceasefire in July 2008 placing pressure and incentives for IDPs to return following the announcement last year of end of hostilities, and promising rapid reconstruction of the area.
- The Yemeni Government has contributed an estimated 55 million US to the requirements of the reconstruction. Initial assessments underline that there is need of 190 million for immediate needs (IRIN, September 2008), while certain analysts have indicated that total reconstruction and development of Sa'ada for period of 2009 to 2012 is estimated at 700 US million. (ICG, May 2009)

### ICG, May 2009

From the outset, and to its credit, the government pursued an authentically Yemeni negotiated solution.<sup>136</sup> Before, during and after each round of fighting, it established indigenous mediation committees, building on the country's tradition of dialogue between

competing individuals and groups.<sup>137</sup> Ultimately, insufficient political will on both sides undid the committees' work. Mediation efforts took off in early 2004, as tensions rose between Husein al-Huthi and the government. Local informal efforts were reminiscent of traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms between tribes that historically were conducted by Hashemites who, as outsiders, were deemed independent – even though, this time, the Hashemites were party to the conflict.<sup>138</sup> In June 2004, the government set up a committee comprising a mix of local and national figures, several close to al-Huthi.<sup>139</sup> In parallel, a civil society initiative endorsed by the president gathered leading figures from the ruling and opposition parties. According to participants, the initiatives foundered essentially due to lack of coordination – and consensus – between government and army. Access to Saada was unsafe and, just as mediators were scheduled to meet with Husein al-Huthi, the army began shelling rebel positions (see below), arguably in order to scuttle the effort.

The government established similar political committees during subsequent rounds, each with a different makeup – and each with a similar fate. They faced multiple challenges, for example absence of telephone communications with the rebel leadership after security forces cut the lines. They were complemented by local committees comprising tribal and religious elements, which loosely coordinated their work with the more political track. There are many possible explanations for the failure of non-military attempts. According to some, committee participants were too overtly political, lacked local roots, nurtured preconceived ideas about the actors or lacked sufficient knowledge about the Saada region.<sup>148</sup> Arguably the most serious impediment was that both mediation efforts and steps announced by the government to calm the situation were either undermined by accompanying repressive measures or, more simply, not implemented at all. This partly resulted from competing approaches between the political leadership and army command. .... The committees' work was further hampered by the arrest of a number of Zaydi intellectuals, journalists and former committee members,

In the words of a parliament member, “without compensation and reconstruction, the war will never stop”.<sup>174</sup> Accordingly, less than a week after he officially “ended” the war on 17 July 2008, President Salih created the Saada Committee for Peace and Reconstruction. In parallel, he formed a local committee comprising notable Saada figures, such as Faris Manaa (a tribal sheikh, prominent businessman and brother of Hasan Manaa, Saada's governor) and members of elected local councils. The presence in both committees of individuals perceived as close to the rebels, such as Sheikh Ali Nassir al-Qirsha, mollified Huthi leaders. The committees appeared to work cooperatively and were given access to a \$55 million special fund under the prime minister's authority – a sum far less than anticipated or needed, but a start nonetheless. Their goal was to survey the destruction, start reconstruction and dispense compensation in war-affected areas. They also were mandated to solve disputes between the various parties..... The government encouraged displaced persons to go home, providing cash incentives, transportation, food and other commodities to families willing to return to their villages, albeit with mixed results.

Although reconstruction officially is proceeding apace, it faces severe challenges that could jeopardise efforts to avert another round of warfare. Funding became an issue immediately after the fifth round in the context of the global economic meltdown and plummeting oil prices that forced the government to revise its already approved 2009 budget. In response, Sanaa appealed to the international community for financial support. A senior government official said, “there is no external solution to the conflict,



and the reconstruction committees must address the main grievances. But the government needs resources to fulfil its commitments". Although officials met with Western governments in

Persistent instability in the affected regions is another factor hindering reconstruction efforts. Since the July 2008 ceasefire, Saada governorate remains unstable principally due to skirmishes between pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal groups. In particular, the latter accuse the committees of bias, and, in retaliation, members of aggrieved tribes block roads and attack rival tribes. Regime hardliners who oppose reconciliation also criticise the committees' work and take steps to undermine them.<sup>190</sup> They might well be behind the forced resignation in mid-November 2008 of Abd-al-Qadir Hilal as minister of local administration and head of the national reconstruction committee. Security officials had accused Hilal of excessive leniency toward the rebels. For several independent observers, this was another sign of regime division and hesitation to end the war. Under his replacement as reconstruction committee head, Abd-al-Aziz Dhahab, the committee has lost dynamism and much of the credit it previously had gained.

The Huthi leadership likewise has displayed ambivalence toward the reconstruction committees. Although international NGOs and UN agencies have been able to carry out programs in war-affected zones without apparent difficulty, access by national fund and committee members has been less smooth.<sup>193</sup> Yahya al-Huthi has accused both governmental and local reconstruction committees of lying about their objectives as well as spying on the Huthis and their sympathisers. Moreover, he said, "the government is using the committees to convince foreigners that it is taking positive steps".<sup>194</sup> Others echoed al-Huthi's message.<sup>195</sup> As a result, relief officials assert, the national reconstruction fund has been unable to fully assess the damage in Huthi-controlled regions – reportedly those that suffered most from bombardments and fighting.<sup>196</sup>

..... Although reconstruction officially is proceeding apace,<sup>185</sup> it faces severe challenges that could jeopardise efforts to avert another round of warfare. Funding became an issue immediately after the fifth round in the context of the global economic meltdown and plummeting oil prices that forced the government to revise its already approved 2009 budget.<sup>186</sup> In response, Sanaa appealed to the international community for financial support. A senior government official said, "there is no external solution to the conflict, and the reconstruction committees must address the main grievances. But the government needs resources to fulfil its commitments".<sup>187</sup> Although officials met with Western governments in the weeks following the proclaimed end to fighting, the donor community was cautious. In the words of a diplomat from an important donor country:

There is a consensus in the international community that we should wait for guarantees before launching development projects in Saada. No one will invest in that region unless there is a guarantee that war will not resume. This is a way to put pressure on the government and elicit information on the reconstruction and conciliation process.<sup>188</sup> Another diplomat explained that Western governments would be reluctant to financially back a government-controlled fund meant to repair what government forces themselves had destroyed and were likely to destroy again if another round erupted, unless conditions on the ground stabilised.<sup>189</sup> Persistent instability in the affected regions is another factor hindering reconstruction efforts. Since the July 2008 ceasefire, Saada governorate remains unstable principally due to skirmishes between pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal groups. In particular, the latter accuse the committees of bias, and, in

retaliation, members of aggrieved tribes block roads and attack rival tribes. Regime hardliners who oppose reconciliation also criticise the committees' work and take steps to undermine them.190

### **IRIN, April 2009**

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of hundreds of conflict-affected private properties in the impoverished northern governorate of Saada, is well under way, according to the Saada Reconstruction Fund (SRF), a recently-formed government body under the Cabinet. A new seven-month campaign began in March and is aimed at reviving development and maintaining peace after a four year conflict between government forces and a group of Shia rebels. Some 1,340 houses and 114 private farms in four areas are to be targeted, according to SRF, and the government is funding the effort to the tune of US\$6,000,000. Mohammed Abdullah Thabet, SRF executive director, told IRIN damage assessment committees in Saada had discovered 7,284 houses, 1,421 farms, 94 schools and dozens of public facilities damaged during the conflict. He explained that SRF had signed contracts with citizens under which the latter are obliged to renovate their damaged properties. "They are then given funds to start reconstruction. The money is paid to them in installments and according to the extent of the damage," Thabet said. He said the scheme had been effective in providing jobs and helping the displaced return home. Reconstruction work would be supervised by SRF teams consisting of two engineers. SRF began the first reconstruction phase in January 2009, targeting 901 houses in four other parts of Saada. The new campaign is "phase two". "The first phase was 76 percent achieved," said Thabet, explaining that the entire reconstruction and rehabilitation of Saada would take two years. SRF has drafted a four-year development plan for Saada focusing on education, health, water and roads, but more funds are needed, he said.

### **IRIN, March 2009**

Members of the tiny Jewish community in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, say they have not received their monthly food rations or any government financial assistance for the past three months. Rabbi Yahya Yusuf, leader of the 65-member community, told IRIN the Jews had been "suffering terribly" of late; many had been finding it very difficult to even feed their children. "We have sold everything we possess to buy food for our families. We even sold our women's gold rings. We have run out of money," he said. Yusuf said that two weeks ago they had staged a protest outside government headquarters to demand action. "Prime Minister Ali Mujawwar has ordered payment of our monthly allowances and so has the minister of finance. But so far we have not received anything," Yusuf said. The community has been living in the Sanaa suburb of Tourist City. The assistance they had been getting was 58,000 riyals (US\$290), as well as 40kg of sugar, 50kg of wheat, and 40kg of rice per family, according to Yusuf. Most families had 12-18 members. Yusuf said the cut in aid could be used as a pretext to remove them from the city. "When we first lived here [in 2007], we got good food rations plus the financial assistance. But gradually the assistance has been reduced," he said. "We appeal to aid organisations and benevolent contributors to assist us," said Yusuf. Habbob Salem, 27, is a member of the community in Sanaa. He said he and his 18 family members lived in a small apartment with only three rooms. "We have never gone through this hardship. We have no source of income to rely on and now we have run out of money. This is really very harsh for us," he told IRIN. The community was moved to Sanaa in 2007 after a number of Shia rebels in Saada Governorate, northern Yemen, threatened to kill them if they did not leave the area within 10 days. Yusuf said their

property in Saada had been seized by the rebels, though the rebels have denied this. "We have not received any compensation."

### **Yemen Times, August 2008**

The current security situation in Sa'ada is relatively calm, with the exception of occasional violations committed by individuals from time to time, a reliable source from the governorate said Sunday.

Requesting anonymity, the source noted that any security violations are being addressed quickly, but mediation committees must be more patient and wise in order to realize progress on the ground.

Regarding achievements by the government committee mandated to assess damages in the war-torn governorate, the same source noted that the committee's teams working in Al-Talh area are optimistic about making progress on the ground.

Yemen's Local Administration Minister and head of the government committee, Abdulqader Ali Hilal, affirmed in a statement to local media outlets on Saturday that the Yemeni government cares about developing and reconstructing villages on Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia. Hilal stressed the necessity of providing electricity and water services to border villages in Al-Dhahir district, particularly Marahidh village, and connecting them to paved roads. He confirmed that the government will give the district top priority, providing its residents development and service projects in recognition of their support for the Yemeni army during its fight against Houthi rebels.

The committee recently released a report on both public and private property damaged during the four-year fighting between Houthis and Yemeni government troops. The report indicated indirect compensation for those citizens whose farmlands were damaged, as part of government efforts to focus on promoting agricultural products. The committee further discussed consecutive measures taken by the Sa'ada Reconstruction Fund and the Investment Program, as well as the governorate's budget for the fiscal year 2008. It obliges the relevant government agencies and the governorate's local authority to create reports on the entirety of the operations they undertook in Sa'ada.....

As many as 191 armed services soldiers returning from Al-Abr area in Sa'ada have established numerous checkpoints and begun practicing highway robbery. All of the soldiers are from eastern Al-Jawf governorate. "We are exercising highway robbery against the [Yemeni] government because it has abused our rights and refused to give us our salaries," the angry soldiers maintain, "We supported the government in its fight against Houthis, but it did not consider our demands." Their spokesperson further added, "We've established numerous points for highway robbery in the early morning in Khab and Shaaf districts. We'll continue conducting these highway thefts and looting any property belonging to the government until it grants us all of our rights as ensured by the [Yemeni] Constitution."

### **National Response: Civil Society 2007-2009**

- Government imposed boycott on information relevant to the Saada conflict as well as more recently to protests and disturbances in southern Yemen in March-May 2009 has had a considerable impact on national response. Criticism and in depth analysis of the conflict has remained quite rare due to lack of available information as well as overall fear of state repression. (HRW, November 2008; ICG May 2009)

- Journalists, human rights activists, and independents that during the height of the conflict and shortly thereafter have reported on situation or assist displaced have been subject of harrassment, arrest and prosecution. In May 2009, several journalists of Al Shariah, The Street, would face trial for articles published on the situation in Saada. (HRW, November 2008; ICG May 2009)
- There has nevertheless been calls to address the conflict by members of civil society despite government pressure. In 2007 during the fourth war, a group of Yemeni organizations would launch a campaign “Together against the Saada War” Activists met with government officials, staged sit-ins in front of parliament and the presidency building and called for the release of detainees. (ICG, May 2009; CTAW, June 2007; May 2008; June 2008)
- The campaign “Together against the Saada War” would relaunch its campaign in May 2008 during the fifth war, calling upon the government to address violations being committed and including conferences to draw attention and discuss issues related to the war. Such campaigns have placed emphasis on calling release of those arbitrary detained and greater transparency, which included attempts at providing humanitarian assistance. (ICG, May 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009)
- In Saada, national organizations have played a significant role in responding to situations of displacement. Though Government has closely monitored access, national agencies have had relatively more flexibility than international actors in accessing war affected areas due to pre-existing presence, or local affiliation. Such access should be tempered however as it remains subject to similiar restrictions in access, resources and capacity remains limited. (IDMC interview, May 2009)
- There are several national associations present in Saada, predating the Saada conflict, and of various political persuasions. Amongst these are the Yemen Red Crescent, Al-Amel Association, Sa’adah Women Charitable Association, Al-Isla’ah Association (CSSW), Al Eh’san Association, Al Saleh Association. Several of these organizations such as Al Amel, Sa’ada Women Charitable Associatino, and YRCS address displacement though not exclusively so, and are constrained by capacity and existing resources.
- Yemeni Red Crescent Society is responsible for IDP camps in the region and has provided response to situations of displacement in other areas in the governorate. (YRCS, Januray 2009) YRCS access has been subject to harrassment and intimidation with its convoys diverted, prevented access to regions of concern or attacked in several instances during 4-5th war. (ICRC, May and March 2007)
- YRCS close association with the government has had an impact on its perceived neutrality. Though YRCS have also been harrassed and intimidated by pro-governmental tribal supporters, the media as well as certain displaced communities have remained very critical of YRCS and its perceived lack of transparency and accountability in provision of assistance, with allegations of discrimination in treatment and provision of assistance. (Yemen Times, 2008; News Yemen, April 2009; IDMC interview, May 2009)

### **ICG, May 2009**

Muted reactions from civil society, the opposition and media have been an important and unfortunate feature of the Saada war from the start. Criticism and in-depth analysis of the belligerents’ actions have remained rare, in part due to the information vacuum, in part due to fear of state repression. Public reaction also has been low-key, a possible reflection of the government’s successful stigmatisation of Huthis as criminals and terrorists.<sup>211</sup> There have been some notable exceptions. Early in the war, Zaydi-affiliated organisations documented and denounced war-related human rights violations in Saada despite government pressure on its members.<sup>212</sup> More recently, in 2007, a group of Yemeni organisations set up “Together against the Saada War”; they chose as their director a non-Zaydi intellectual, Abu Bakr al-Saqqaf, to discourage the notion that

it supported the rebels.<sup>213</sup> Activists have met with government officials, staged sit-ins in front of parliament and the presidency building and called for the release of detainees.

In 2008, various NGOs convened conferences to draw attention and discuss issues related to the war.<sup>215</sup> None of these efforts have effectively challenged official discourse or affected public debate; they remain marginal – tolerated but ineffectual and, indeed, tolerated because ineffectual. That is not a reason to abandon them, for they hold a key to improving public information, debunking myths on both sides and building confidence between belligerents by establishing forums for open expression and debate. Local, non-affiliated organisations also could help provide credible assessments of destruction and casualties and assist in reconstruction projects,<sup>216</sup> thus enhancing their credibility in rebel and international eyes.

#### **Yemen Times, March 2009**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been present in Sa'ada since 2004 and opened its office in Sa'ada in April 2007 in response to the conflict in the northern areas. The sub-delegation in Sa'ada includes six international and 37 local staff. Its humanitarian activities focus on victims of the latest round of conflict, in other words, those with the most urgent needs. The provision of food and other essential items, water and health services to IDP camps and people in all conflict-affected areas of the Sa'ada governorate remain the ICRC's priority. Nadia Al-Sakkaf interviewed Klaus Spreyermann, head of the ICRC sub-delegation in Sa'ada, about the organization's work and the humanitarian situation in Sa'ada..... When asked about reported accusations in the Yemen Times on a previous issue that YRCS staff discriminate in their treatment of internally displaced persons against Houthis and throwing them out of the camps, Spreyermann said they were baseless. "I was shocked when I read this article, not only about the grave accusations, but also about the fact that a reputed newspaper published such allegations of 'corruption' without either properly crosschecking the information or [providing] substantial proof." According to Spreyermann, these camps have been set up and are managed by the YRCS on a day-to-day basis and with the support of the ICRC. "While we do not know about every 'quarrel' that might happen within a 7,000 person community, I have absolutely no doubt that accusations of throwing IDPs out of the camps are baseless." Spreyermann explained that the very IDP cited in the mentioned article is still living in Al-Talh camp, as before, and claimed that he was wrongly quoted by the Yemen Times journalist who interviewed him: "In our field of work, people expect action to speak louder than words, and I think it might be fair to say that our humanitarian work and presence in Yemen since the early sixties up until now speak for themselves." He emphasized that the ICRC and the YRCS work in full transparency, and are open to receiving and verifying any credible complaints.

#### **Yemen Times, January 2009**

A number of people living in Sa'ada refugee camps as a result of the war between the government and the Houthis in the governorate have complained to the Yemen Times about some members of the Yemeni Red Crescent Association's staff (YRCA) and the organizations that support it. The refugees said that camp staff mistreat them and deprive them from aid donated by foreign humanitarian organizations including food and blankets, particularly during the winter. They added that they lack medical services in the four camps of Al-Anad, Ahmed Talh, Al-Ahsa and Sam.... A tribal source in Sa'ada said in a statement to the Yemen Times that prostitution has spread notably among the youth

in the nearby areas of some camps. The source said that the reasons behind that include families' poverty and hunger, particularly as their children lack the minimum level of food. "YRCA staff keeps the aid which it receives from different humanitarian associations for itself and to serve influential figures from the ruling party. They don't deliver 10 percent of the aid," said the source. "The employees hide blankets and cooking utensils from the displaced people and offer them only a little which is not enough. Two men died due to severe cold by the advent of winter," said the source

### **HRW, November 2008**

Particularly since 2007, when international aid agencies sought to reach all parts of the northern Sa'da governorate, Yemeni authorities have severely restricted humanitarian access to tens of thousands of civilians in need. After a fifth round of fighting erupted in May 2008, the government blocked the movement of all commercial goods, including staple foods and fuel, an act that appears to constitute an illegal collective punishment.... Furthermore, between February 2007 and July 2008 the government imposed a total information blackout on Sa'da governorate. It has clamped down on media coverage, banning local and international journalists from traveling anywhere in the governorate, threatening journalists covering the conflict, and arbitrarily arresting internet webmasters and others with information on civilian casualties. The government cut off most mobile phone subscribers, allowing only a few government vetted individuals access to the network. The result of the government's systematic, sustained, and non-transparent policy of limiting access and information is that tens of thousands of civilians directly affected by the war have been left to suffer, their plight hidden from the rest of Yemen and the outside world.

### **IRIN, July 2007**

The humanitarian situation in Yemen's northern governorate of Saada remains poor as displaced families have not been able to return in spite of the peace agreement between the government and rebels, activists and officials say. Nabil Abdul-Hafeedh, secretary-general of the Social Democracy Forum, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), told IRIN it was difficult to reach civilians in need of assistance. "The Civil Society Coalition [a group of local NGOs] recently formed an aid convoy for the displaced families but the government didn't allow us to go there," Abdul-Hafidh said.

## **International Response**

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### **International Response: Regional & International Community**

- Regional and international community response has varied significantly from active involvement by regional parties, to silence by international community. The Saada war, with its underlying albeit largely misleading Sunni/Shiite dimension, has become part of discourse on geopolitical and sectarian rivalry, as well as rivaling strategic interests of regional actors. (ICG, May 2009)
- In 2007, Qatar carried out mediation efforts that, according to many analysts, Saudi Arabia ultimately helped scuttle. Libya is alleged to have supported the rebels. There has been speculation on a purported Saudi-Iranian proxy war waged in Saada. (ICG, May 2009)

- The most significant mediation initiative came from Qatar which resulted joint ceasefire announcement in June 2007, and consisted of an agreement by the rebels to relinquish their positions and lay down heavy arms and government commitment to declare an amnesty and launch Qatari-supported reconstruction projects in Saada. (ICG, May 2009)
- In February 2008, the two sides met in Doha to sign a peace accord. At the core of the agreement was Qatar's pledge to finance reconstruction and launch major development projects in Saada, estimated at \$300 million-\$500 million. Renewed heavy fighting soon rendered the peace accord obsolete. In March 2009, President Salih confirmed that Qatar's mediation had failed. (ICG, May 2009)
- In contrast, the European Union (EU) and its member states, and the US, have kept a very low profile over the conflict since it erupted in 2004. Almost certainly due to their concerns about political stability in a country which has been identified as an important arena in the war on terrorism. (ICG, May 2009; HRW November 2008)
- Western attitudes may have also been shaped by the rebels' anti-U.S. and anti-Israel rhetoric which has alienated governments, and may also have feared that pressure risked weakening a government facing multiple challenges, including al-Qaeda and economic crisis. (ICG, May 2009; Chatham House, November 2008)
- The conflict gradually attracted greater attention though only after considerable time and during the latter phase of the conflict. In July 2008, US and EU request for improved access signaled concern and pressures on the parties. This growing interest may have contributed to the ceasefire. (ICG, May 2009; HRW November 2008)
- All of this makes the relative lack of international interest during the war's early years regrettable reflecting that an internal conflict that, with adequate outside pressure, could have been resolved. (ICG, May 2009) HRW observes that despite the humanitarian suffering and the human rights emergency created by four years of war, the primary goal of the donors appears to be to stabilize the government's fragile political grip on the country, incompatible with holding authorities accountable over the conduct in the war. (HRW, October 2008)
- International governments have reportedly been hesitant to fund reconstruction efforts subject unless reconciliation efforts ensure that the war will not resume. (ICG, May 2009) The donor community has shown considerable caution in funding Saada mindful of the risks of conflict and its political sensitivity. Funding available in Sa'ada is in vast contrast to the availability of funds provided bilaterally to the reconstruction efforts in Hadramout following natural disaster in October 2008. (OCHA - FTS, June 2009)

### **ICG, May 2009**

Much speculation has revolved around a purported Saudi-Iranian proxy war waged on Yemeni soil. Since 1979, competition between Riyadh and Tehran has become a defining regional dynamic.... The Saada war, with its underlying albeit largely misleading Sunni/Shiite dimension, has become part of this narrative of geopolitical and sectarian rivalry. Other parties also have sought a role. In 2007, Qatar carried out mediation efforts that, according to many analysts, Saudi Arabia ultimately helped scuttle. Libya is alleged to have supported the rebels. As seen, officials point to purported Iranian financial, military and political aid to the rebels, while others suggest possible rebel training in Iran. Support from Jaafari and Zaydi communities outside Yemen, notably in Iran, also has been suggested, including by independent observers. Although an Iranian role cannot be excluded, it is not self-evident. .... Huthi leaders and others claim Saudi interference, underscoring in particular supposed funding of government and local tribes during the fourth round in an effort to undermine Qatari mediation. Many further assert that, during the fifth round, Riyadh bankrolled tribal groups, mainly those connected with the Hashid confederation. The Kingdom denies any participation in the conflict, and its critics have not offered convincing proof. ....

If regional meddling is a possibility, Western silence has been a certainty, with much the same result: allowing the war to fester, intensify and spread. An internal conflict that, with adequate outside pressure, could have been resolved is now threatening to destabilize an already fragile and vulnerable state that the U.S. and others have identified as an important battleground in their fight against jihadi Islamism. Such passivity has several explanations. First is the paucity of information and inadequate, at times contradictory, communications from the rebels that have obscured the war's scale and impact. Diplomats, journalists, researchers and NGOs, whether Yemeni or foreign, have had little to no access to Saada and surrounding areas as a result of official restrictions; they have thus been unable to assess the level of destruction or interview victims. By the same token, the rebels' poor communications and lack of an articulated agenda have hampered information-gathering.

Western attitudes have also been shaped by the rebels' anti-U.S. and anti-Israel rhetoric which, coupled with vague and ill-defined demands, has alienated governments that might otherwise empathise with their suffering. 129 Yemeni authorities have skilfully portrayed the conflict as part of the broader war on terrorism, thereby tapping into U.S. and European post-11 September anxiety to combat potential Islamist foes. Criticised in the West for its tendency to co-opt rather than confront jihadi militants, Sanaa had good reason to demonstrate its disposition to fight terrorist groups even if – or perhaps especially because – the “Huthi terrorists” were an isolated, grievance-based group detached from any al-Qaeda-type network and represented a group, Zaydi Hashemites, that already had lost out in the 1962 revolution.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, Western governments also might have feared that pressure risked weakening a government already facing multiple challenges, including al-Qaeda and a sinking economy.<sup>131</sup> The conflict gradually attracted greater, but still insufficient, attention, primarily thanks to efforts by humanitarian aid agencies.<sup>132</sup> Independent journalists, Western diplomats and international humanitarian workers believe that the resulting international pressure, albeit belated, contributed to the July 2008 ceasefire.<sup>133</sup> The U.S. and EU request early that month for improved combat zone access for international NGOs and UN agencies signalled growing concern and heightened pressure on the parties.<sup>134</sup> Likewise, once the ceasefire was in place, the donor community enjoyed leverage, as the government sought reconstruction funding.<sup>135</sup> All of this makes the relative lack of global interest during the war's early years – when the conflict, arguably, could have been halted in its tracks – the more regrettable....

Several regional governments were involved in efforts to end fighting, at times in response to the Yemeni government's request. During the third round, it reportedly asked Libya for help, though relations gradually soured as the government accused Tripoli of supporting the rebels.<sup>155</sup> Saudi Arabia also is said to have discreetly intervened to settle conflicts between various tribes with which it was allied and which were fighting one another in the context of the Saada war.<sup>156</sup> The most significant mediation initiative came from Qatar,.... The result was the 16 June 2007 joint ceasefire announcement, based on a list of general principles that remained secret until the rebels released it almost a year later.<sup>158</sup> These included, inter alia, an agreement by the rebels to relinquish their positions and lay down heavy arms and government commitment to declare an amnesty and launch Qatari-supported reconstruction projects in Saada. The government also was to set up another committee comprising Yemenis from both sides as well as Qataris who would seek to reach a peace agreement.



On 1 February 2008, the two sides met in Doha to sign a peace accord. ....At the core of the agreement was Qatar's pledge to finance reconstruction and launch major development projects in Saada, possibly to the tune of \$300 million-\$500 million, although figures were never released. Optimism was short-lived. Renewed heavy fighting soon rendered the peace accord obsolete.... In March 2009, President Salih confirmed that Qatar's mediation had failed. He suggested that Doha unintentionally had enabled the rebels to believe they were "equal to the state" because they were negotiating directly with the government.... Although reconstruction officially is proceeding apace,<sup>185</sup> it faces severe challenges that could jeopardise efforts to avert another round of warfare. Funding became an issue immediately after the fifth round in the context of the global economic meltdown and plummeting oil prices that forced the government to revise its already approved 2009 budget.<sup>186</sup> In response, Sanaa appealed to the international community for financial support. A senior government official said, "there is no external solution to the conflict, and the reconstruction committees must address the main grievances. But the government needs resources to fulfil its commitments".<sup>187</sup>

Although officials met with Western governments in the weeks following the proclaimed end to fighting, the donor community was cautious. In the words of a diplomat from an important donor country: There is a consensus in the international community that we should wait for guarantees before launching development projects in Saada. "No one will invest in that region unless there is a guarantee that war will not resume. This is a way to put pressure on the government and elicit information on the reconstruction and conciliation process."<sup>188</sup> Another diplomat explained that Western governments would be reluctant to financially back a government-controlled fund meant to repair what government forces themselves had destroyed and were likely to destroy again if another round erupted, unless conditions on the ground stabilised.<sup>189</sup> Persistent instability in the affected regions is another factor hindering reconstruction efforts. Since the July 2008 ceasefire, Saada governorate remains unstable principally due to skirmishes between pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal groups. In particular, the latter accuse the committees of bias, and, in retaliation, members of aggrieved tribes block roads and attack rival tribes. Regime hardliners who oppose reconciliation also criticise the committees' work and take steps to undermine them.

### **HRW, November 2008**

Donors to Yemen, including nine European Union (EU) states, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United States, have been reluctant to press the government on its conduct of the war and the issue of humanitarian access. The main reason for this reluctance appears to be a belief that Yemen's overriding challenges are security—specifically the fight against al Qaeda, which has a strong presence in Yemen—and development. Despite the humanitarian suffering and the human rights emergency created by four years of war, and despite rule of law initiatives launched by some donors, to date the the primary goal of the donors appears to be to stabilize the government's fragile political grip on the country, a goal which they view as incompatible with holding the authorities accountable over their conduct in the war. This reticence to engage the government over its laws of war obligations, particularly on the question of humanitarian access, is reflected in the wording of the only public document released by the EU since the war started in 2004, a June 2008 declaration of the Council of the European Union: "The EU firmly supports the Government and people of Yemen in addressing the country's economic, political security and social challenges. While acknowledging the need for the Government ... to maintain security within its borders,

the EU remains concerned by the recent escalation of fighting around Sa'dah and the expansion of the conflict to the outskirts of San'a and other areas [and] remains ready to consider urgent humanitarian assistance to victims, including the worrying number of IDPs."

In June and July 2008 some EU member states and the European Commission attempted but failed to adopt a joint EU demarche on the issue of humanitarian access within Sa'da governorate.<sup>157</sup> Shortly thereafter, the US embassy brought together representatives of interested embassies, two UN agencies (WFP and UNDP, the latter as Resident Coordinator, the UN's highest representative in a country), and international NGOs to try to agree on a joint approach towards the Yemeni authorities on the issue of humanitarian access and access to medical relief. Although participants arrived at a consensus on the main parts of a written text, no agreement could be reached on the best format for approaching the authorities, in part because EU states could not agree on whether member states should present a joint front or whether member states could individually sign onto the initiative. Shortly after the question had been resolved at the EU headquarters in Brussels, President Saleh declared an end to the fifth round of fighting on July 17, 2008.<sup>158</sup>

### **Europa, June 2008**

The EU firmly supports the Government and people of Yemen in addressing the country's economic, political, security and social challenges. While acknowledging the need for the Government of Yemen to maintain security within its borders, the EU remains concerned by the recent escalation of the fighting around Sa'dah and the expansion of the conflict to the outskirts of Sana'a and other areas. Based on the assessment of needs and access to victims, the EU remains ready to consider urgent humanitarian assistance to victims, including the worrying number of internally displaced people. The EU calls on the Government of Yemen to do all it can to ensure that innocent civilians are not caught up in the conflict. The EU considers that only a political solution can achieve lasting peace, and calls on all parties to show restraint and to work actively towards a negotiated settlement along the lines of the February 2008 agreement. The European Union remains committed to reinforcing its partnership with Yemen in close co-operation with regional partners, especially the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). The stability of Yemen is crucial for the people of Yemen and for the region as a whole.

### **US Embassey, July 2008**

In a meeting with UN aid representatives, international NGOs, and other foreign diplomats, U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Stephen Seche reiterated the US Government's concern over the humanitarian situation in Sa'ada, calling for immediate measures to alleviate the severe hardships faced by the civilian population. Ambassador Seche added that free and safe access to humanitarian aid for populations affected by the conflict in Sa'ada and the surrounding governorates is needed to ensure efficient delivery and distribution of food aid.

### **International Response: International Humanitarian Community**

- Humanitarian operations to address the humanitarian consequences of Sa'ada have been fraught with difficulties and challenges. For fear of losing the limited access they do have, humanitarian organizations have been reportedly reluctant to put significant public pressure

on the government or the rebels to reverse their limitations on humanitarian access. Though there has been behind the scenes pressure, the success of such initiatives have been limited. (HRW November 2008)

- For many humanitarian agencies were caught unawares by the intensity of the conflict during the 4th and 5th war. There were limited contingency plans with only few organizations such as ICRC, MSF, and WFP maintaining full presence in Saada governorate itself. The UN would undertake its first inter-agency assessment of Saada city in May 2007, but remained constrained in its ability to access and respond effectively. (UN, June 2007)
- The majority of humanitarian agencies including INGOs, and UN - including UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO - would come to Sa'ada following the 4th war but access to war affected areas would remain limited. Such operational constraints would continue through the 5th round of conflict, confining operations to Sa'ada city, or Mahleet area. (HRW November 2008)
- Following the end of hostilities access has gradually increased though remains limited and restricted. An inter-agency comprehensive assessment to be implemented by NGOs with UN support and which had been initially requested by the government in September 2008, by July 2009 had yet to be fully authorised by the authorities. (IDMC interview, July 2009)
- UN agencies are coordinated under Emergency Preparedness Response Group chaired by WFP - which is the de facto lead agency in view of its operational capacity, response and presence - to coordinate international response, with UN agencies, national actors including representatives of the INGOs.
- With the exception of WFP, UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF operate through national implementing partners to respond to humanitarian needs. The presence of national partners facilitates access which would otherwise be very limited though these suffer from limited capacity and lack of resources. UN security requirements - Yemen is in Phase 3 - entail that UN movements need be under military escort, and has called on UN agencies to have a "lighter footprint" limiting existing resources.
- The UNHCR is the focal point with regards to protection concerns under the cluster like approach. Protection working group was established at the end of 2008 bringing together several UN agencies and NGOs. UNICEF in June 2009 established a child protection network in Saada under cluster like approach assembling various actors. (UNICEF, July 2009)
- There are number of non-UN organisations present. International NGOs also have an NGO coordinating forum and Emergency Working Group. Several organizations have active presence in Saada including Islamic Relief, MSF, Save the Children and MDM. ICRC has had an active presence in Saada providing support to YRCS in the latters camp management, and in providing assistance to conflict affected population. While these actors face more flexibility than UN agencies there continue to face limits in access due to insecurity as well as restrictive opposition, tribal and governmental checkpoints or restrictions.
- The humanitarian assistance provided includes food, non-food items, temporary shelter, response to water and sanitation needs in IDP camps and other accessible areas; psycho-social support, improving access to education, and medical assistance to IDPs in the camps and other people affected by the conflict. (WFP, March 2009; ICRC, February 2009; UNICEF, January 2009; UNHCR, July 2008; MSF June 2009).
- Reflecting the sensitivity and challenges of operations, there is scant public information available on the protection concerns of IDPs or returnees. Few agencies have publically advocated or reported on protection issues due to their sensitivity. Even in accessible areas, protection assessments have been lacking due to restrictions or lack of resources, raising concern that significant protection gaps have not been addressed.
- Unlike the response to the flash floods in October 2008, there is no consolidated appeal for Sa'ada. There is considerable concern as to the lack of appropriate resources to respond to existing needs. Separate appeals for WFP (2007-2009) and UNHCR (2009) face shortfalls of 32 per cent and 50 per cent respectively (WFP, June 2009; UNHCR, June 2009).

### **UNHCR, June 2009**

UNHCR continues its partnership with two local NGOs (The Al-Amel Charitable Community for Social Welfare & the Saada Charitable Women's Association) as well as coordination with the government and other actors to provide protection and assistance to IDPs and returnees in Sa'ada. UNHCR undertook a 3 days monitoring mission to Malaheet in order to assess IDPs situation, including new arrivals due to conflict in Saqayan, Razeh and Ghamer Districts. ...The Information and Counseling Center received and recorded 108 cases.... In order to assist newly displaced persons in areas of displacement, UNHCR distributed, through Al Amel, the following items: 11,66 mattresses, 713 blankets, 1,080 sanitary napkins, 5,524 soap bars, 1,057kg of powder soap, 552 kitchen sets, 1,109 plastic sheets and 22 tents to 564 IDP families of 4,501 individuals in Sa'ada City and Malaheet....

UNHCR target for 2009 is US\$ 3,000,000. The remaining amount of 1.5 million is outstanding, as more is needed to protect and assist IDPs, returnees and war-affected persons located in Saada, Amran and Sana'a Governorates.

One Protection Working Group meeting was held in Sa'ada with the participation of UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, Save the Children, CSSW and Al Amel to discuss protection related issues affecting IDPs in Sa'ada Governorate and concrete actions to resolve them. The lack of a systematic registration of IDPs, irregularities of figures from various agencies, documentation issues as well as lack of access to all locations was highlighted during the discussions. The group agreed to discuss these issues with the government and follow-up until concrete actions are taken.

Two coordination meeting chaired by the Liaison Officer and Governor were held in Sa'ada City; with the participation of UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, MSF, ICRC and local NGOs. The purpose of the meetings was to obtain updates from agencies regarding their intervention in the governorate. The Governor stressed the need to coordinate activities in order to avoid duplication and encouraged all agencies to support the rehabilitation process for returnees. With the exception of Malaheet, inaccessibility to IDPs and returnees outside Sa'ada City and Bani Hushaish is main concern for UN and other agencies.

### **ICRC, May 2009**

Though more than six months have passed since the last round of conflict in the north of the country, access to such basic services as safe drinking water, shelter and medical care is still inadequate. While thousands have benefited from ICRC assistance in Sa'ada over the past months, many others are still without proper shelter or adequate access to water, food and health care. ICRC water engineers have been helping restore the water supply in the areas of Sa'ada, Dahyan and the Marran, which were particularly hard-hit by the conflict last year. The ICRC is using trucks to make daily water deliveries to 6,500 people in four IDP camps in Sa'ada, helping to prevent water-borne disease. ....

To respond to the most urgent needs, the ICRC maintained its humanitarian activities, especially in the north of the country, and stepped up its presence in Amran governorate. However, the security situation has often prevented ICRC staff from reaching those in need. ....Currently, the ICRC is supporting nine health-care facilities, four of which are located in the camps, in cooperation with the Yemen Red Crescent

Society (YRCS) and the Ministry of Health and Population. ...From January to the beginning of March 2009, almost 36,000 people received dry food rations and more than 7,600 benefited from distributions of essential household items. ....The ICRC and the YRCS continued to assess the needs of the people in the districts of Sa'ada Governorate that are most affected by the fighting, in particular in Haydan, Dahyan, Majz, Sahar and Al-Safra districts.

### **UNICEF Report, 2009**

After a rapid assessment undertaken in Sa'ada Governorate by a joint UN team during cessation of hostilities in May– June 2007, UNICEF worked through local and international NGOs on the ground in the areas of nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection. Partners included the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW), Yemeni Red Crescent, Islamic Relief, the Charitable Society of Yemeni Doctors, and Sa'ada Women's Association. Following training of health staff in the main government hospital, NGOs and volunteers in the management of severe acute malnutrition at community and facility levels and with the establishment of three outpatient therapeutic centres, 1,029 children under age five were screened, 158 referred to the outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP) and 17 to therapeutic feeding centres. In water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), 32 latrines and 5 wash basins were constructed in the two camps serving mainly women and children. Twenty-four volunteers were trained in correct hygiene practices in order to reach internally displaced persons (IDPs). The distribution of blankets and shoes benefited 1,814 young children and 847 children aged 1 month–12 years in time for the onset of winter. School kits and bags benefited 40,000 students. Awareness-raising sessions on girls' education, early marriage and child trafficking were organized for 3,000 parents in the camps. Psycho-educational support was provided to 400 internally displaced children and literacy skills and awareness on child protection issues to 100 internally displaced girls. As regards child protection, a psychosocial needs assessment of children, adolescents and families was undertaken as well as field research on children affected by armed conflict, which will form the basis for future programme interventions. First-level psychosocial interventions targeting displaced children have been undertaken in early 2008. For the ongoing crisis precipitated by high food prices, UNICEF focused its efforts on addressing the management of severely acutely malnourished children under age five through the establishment of community therapeutic care (CTC) centres with the aim to go to scale within the next year.

### **HRW, November 2008**

For fear of losing the limited access they do have, non-governmental humanitarian organizations have understandably been reluctant to put significant behind-the-scenes—let alone public—pressure on the government or the rebels to reverse their limitations on humanitarian access. United Nations agencies in Yemen made some discrete approaches to the government to increase access, with very limited success. The UN apparently did little, even discreetly, to press either the government or the Huthi rebels to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect the war-affected population, including the tens of thousands of displaced....

Security concerns throughout Yemen have placed all UN staff in the country on heightened security alert. Since the beginning of the armed conflict in 2004, UN agencies have operated in only two towns—Sa'da and Malahit—in the war-torn Sa'da

governorate. After six months of negotiation between the World Food Program (WFP) and the government regarding access to IDP camps in Sa'da town, the UN in June 2007 began to provide assistance to some of the war-affected population.<sup>151</sup> Since then, the WFP, which chairs the UN Emergency Response and Preparedness Team, has taken the de facto lead among UN agencies in terms of service provision in Sa'da town, continuing to organize food distribution through its implementing partners, Islamic Relief and the Yemeni Red Crescent. Since mid-2007, UNICEF has funded four aid agencies to carry out work in Sa'da town's camps.<sup>152</sup>

Since October 2007, UNHCR has also carried out limited distribution of non-food items in Sa'da town's camps.<sup>153</sup> By July 2008, UNHCR had international staff on standby to travel and work in Sa'da, including in Yemeni Red Crescent-run camps, to monitor and report on humanitarian needs and other pressing issues. In the absence of other UN agencies such as the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, which has no staff in Yemen, only UNHCR staff are available for possible full-time deployment in Sa'da, including during times of conflict, for identifying assistance needs and other humanitarian concerns. In mid-July 2008 the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) sent a staff member to Yemen to improve coordination among UN agencies and between the UN and NGOs working in Sa'da governorate.

### **IRIN, March 2008**

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is working to provide shelter for hundreds of families displaced after recent fighting between government forces and Shia rebels in the northern province of Saada. Many of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) had their homes destroyed or damaged in the clashes. Gro Anna Persheim, a UNHCR protection officer, told IRIN 400 semi-permanent shelters would be built in four areas in the province. Each shelter would house 100 families (about 700 people). "The project will be implemented in four phases, each delivering 100 shelters," she said, adding that the shelters would be allocated to the most vulnerable families. According to Persheim, preparatory work started in early March 2008 and assessments would go on until June. She hoped some construction work might start at the end of April. The first housing unit will be built near Saada city, but sites for the other three have not yet been identified. "We are working with the local councils and sheikhs [village leaders] to select villages and identify areas for building the shelters," Persheim said.

According to the UNHCR, 11,000 families have been displaced in Saada Province since 2004. Persheim said the rate of displacement had decreased since the recent return of the Qatari mediation team, but she did not have accurate figures. "We do not have access to all affected areas," she said. She also said some IDPs lived well, rented houses, had access to health services and sent their children to school in Saada city. However, in the villages there were no schools, and some villagers had lost their harvests, and there was no means for them to earn a living in Saada city. The UNHCR has been distributing non-food items (tents, mattresses, kitchen utensils and blankets) to hundreds of IDPs in Saada Province since December 2007. It has also been supporting the Yemeni Red Crescent Association in running three camps for IDPs in Saada city and others outside the city. Clashes between the rebels, led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, and government forces stopped after a new Qatari-brokered peace agreement was signed on 1 February 2008, but reconstruction work in the war-affected areas has yet to start.

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