



5,026 CIVILIANS KILLED AND WOUNDED BY HOUTHILANDMINES, IEDs and UXOs, REPORT FINDS

14 April 2021 - A human rights report has found that 5,026 civilians have been killed or gravely wounded in 17 governorates in Yemen between 2014 and 2021 as a result of explosion of land and sea mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) planted or left behind by the Houthi armed group upon their withdrawal from liberated areas.

Covering a period from July 2014 to March 2021, the report was published on 4 April 2021 and documents the human and material damages and losses caused by mines planted by the Houthi militias in Yemen.

Shared exclusively with Project Masam, the report was compiled and published by three non-profit, non-partisan and non-governmental organisations at the forefront of human rights protection in Yemen: The National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, known as 'Hood', the Yemen Rights Organisation for Rights and Development and Shahed Organisation for Rights and Development.

According to the report, a staggering 2,274 civilians were killed by landmine, UXO or IED explosions – including 1,626 men, 155 women, 398 children (under the age of 18) and 95 elderly (60 and over). Over the period, the report found an additional 2,752 civilians had been wounded and left with permanent disabilities, including 1,916 men, 177 women and 560 children. 99 elderly were also injured. A fifth of those killed and injured were children (958).

The report monitored 6,717 violations committed by the militias in the governorates of Taiz, Al-Hodeydah, Al-Bayda, Al-Jawf, Marib, Aden, Lahj, Al-Dahle Amanat Al Asimah, Ibb, Shabwa, Abyan, Hajjah, Sana'a, Saada, Dhamar and Amran. Taiz governorate topped the list of Yemeni governorates most affected by landmines, IEDs and UXOs left behind, with 25% of all violations recorded by the human right organisations (1,665), followed by AL-Hodeydah, with 783 violations recorded and Al-Bayda (611).

Additionally, some 1,691 public and private facilities and properties were totally and partially damaged as a result of explosions of mines and IEDs. These included private homes, shops, places of worship, educational and health facilities, water reservoirs, monuments, roads, bridges, government and other headquarters for parties and community institutions. The report stated that out of the recorded 1,035 damages to residential areas, 997 houses had been booby-trapped, with residents often "expelled by force" and "contents looted". In Taiz, 223 houses were completely destroyed.

Vehicles, including private cars, buses, taxis, private buses and large trucks, were the most vulnerable to explosions of landmines and IEDs along main, secondary and paved roads. 248 vehicles were completely destroyed during the period. 147 other vehicles including motorcycles, fishing boats and cargo ships in territorial waters, were also totally or partially damaged.

Landmines, UXOs and IEDs explosions also killed 959 head of livestock in 13 governorates in large areas of agricultural land. 162 farms were also totally or partially destroyed.

"All facts indicate that the Houthi group did not abide by anything contained in all international agreements, charters, and treaties regarding mines and violated all restrictions and rules regulating this, and as a result of this behaviour contrary to Yemen's obligations, the group bears criminal and moral responsibility for the consequences of these violations," the report concluded.

All sides of the conflict, however, bear responsibility for unexploded ordnance left behind throughout the war.

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Ousama Algozaibi, Managing Director of Project Masam is available for comment. Videos and photos available.

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About Project Masam

To enhance the security measures in the region and ensure Yemen can rebuild and find stability, the Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance (Masam) mine project was launched in December 2017, in agreement with the Yemeni government.

Training and operations commenced months later, with the first team entering Yemen in February 2018. Project Masam currently has 32 teams working in liberated areas across the country and conducts humanitarian clearance in accordance with priorities set by the Yemeni National Authority.

Project Masam trains, equips and supervises over 450 Yemeni nationals. These include administration, logistics and security support staff, who are supported by experienced technical mentors.

The efforts have already created safe spaces to allow basic humanitarian and reconstruction activities to proceed safely and without fear. Masam does not work on active fronts, and only operates in areas where it has access to, safely.

Since the beginning of the programme, Project Masam has successfully cleared 22,161,506sqm of land, locating and destroying: 3,289 anti-personal mines, 66,125 anti-tank mines, 156,875 unexploded ordnances and 5,968 improvised explosive devices (as at 9 April 2021)

Project Masam's work is conducted under the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief), as part of KSRelief's efforts to support landmine victims. The organisation funds centres that cater for the treatment of injured Yemenis. These centres provide free services to amputees, provide prosthetic rehabilitation support and focus on the rehabilitation of former child soldiers across the country.

About landmine violence

Landmines have plagued Yemen since the 1960s. More recently, Houthi forces' widespread use of landmines across Yemen since 2015 has killed and injured thousands of civilians and prevented aid organisations from reaching vulnerable communities.

During the course of the current war, the Houthis have planted landmines and explosive devices disguised as rocks, pens and children's toys in villages, farmlands, schools, roads and parks. With an estimated 1 million-plus landmines dispersed and counting, Yemen is the most mined nation since World War II. There is no official mapping of the mines' location. At times, mines have been laid by hand often with no discernible pattern or record.

Whilst comprehensive landmine casualty figures are being collected across different governorates, this data is not centralised and thus the exact number of casualties cannot be verified across the country. It is apparent, however, that mines have caused more casualties than the fighting, with landmine victims being mainly children and women.

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