



Yemeni Children.. Little Warriors on the Battlefield

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"Yemeni Children.. Little Warriors on the Battlefield"

Egyptian Coalition for Human Rights and Development

It is an initiative launched by Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue Foundation, and consists of 500 development associations and organizations in 9 Governorates, in order to promote Human Rights conditions in Egypt, strengthen partnerships, and exchange experience.

The NGOs and institutions participating in the initiative were distributed in 9 governorates: Cairo, Gharbia, Beheira, Alexandria, Beni Suef, Sohag, Luxor, Qena and Aswan.

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❖ **Introduction:**

During the 7 years of Houthi control of Sana'a, the Houthis committed a series of violations amounting to war crimes in violation of international law, local laws, and international conventions and treaties ratified by Yemen. The Houthis "looted army equipment", cash reserves, and public treasury, besides putting millions below the poverty and famine line.

These crimes varied between murder, torture, kidnapping, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and planting mines of various kinds, land, and sea.

It also violated the right to physical integrity by committing crimes of physical assault, arrest, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary detention, as well as committing the crimes of torture and abduction.

Moreover, it violated the right to life, by extrajudicial killings, besides violation of the right to housing and freedom of movement and travel, and the crime of violating the right to a fair trial. Also, it committed crimes against freedom of opinion and expression, sexual assault, and collective punishment.

"Since this hateful dynastic movement raised arms against the Yemeni state, its name has been associated with killing, dragging, torture, bombing and ill-treatment, which amount to crimes against humanity".

"The continued international silence on the crimes of the militias will prolong the suffering of the Yemeni people and turn the country into a hotbed of terrorism and a source for spreading it in the region and the world".

Yemen's children live lives dominated by poverty, malnutrition, and disease, so, they are deprived of a quiet childhood. It is estimated that 5 million children in the country suffer from acute malnutrition.

There are many stories of children facing malnutrition, families struggling to provide treatment, and journeys taken by these families to seek help. The Yemeni people are struggling not only to keep their children safe and protected from the scourge of war but also to help and protect their children from dying of starvation and disease as a result of poverty exacerbated by the ongoing crisis. Meanwhile, a health system is collapsing under the weight of conflict.

The economic and humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict in Yemen has devastated the country's health system, disrupting basic services in health facilities across the country. With the system unable to tackle the rising rise of disease, families struggle to access basic medical care

The most dangerous is the Houthis' forced recruitment of children, they threw them into the battlefronts, who were mourned in funeral processions announced and broadcast through the official media of the Houthi militias.

The Houthi group does not abide by any pledge or agreement and practices a systematic violation of all international laws and conventions that guarantee the security and safety of children in conflict areas. It is regrettable that it does not find a deterrent, and therefore continues its hostile practices, in addition to its insistence on violating the agreements and commitments it has undertaken.

Through this report, we will review some points related to the Houthis' forced recruitment of Yemeni children, through the following points:

1. Recruitment of Yemeni children
2. Recruitment of children under international conventions
3. Summer Centers (Recruitment under the guise of education)
4. Danger of Summer Centers
5. Direct effects of child recruitment
6. Testimonies of children who have been recruited

1) Recruitment of Yemeni children

The Houthi group continues to recruit children and force them to fight in its ranks, exploiting the poor financial conditions of their families and their food needs, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had verified 3,995 cases of child recruitment in Yemen to fight, between March 2015 and September 2022, although the numbers are likely to be much higher.

Since the start of the conflict in Yemen in 2014, Houthi militias have recruited thousands of children and used them as fighters on the frontlines or in dangerous military actions including planting mines, improvised explosive devices, and reconnaissance.

The Houthis use various methods to attract children, such as exploiting their families' living conditions, indoctrination, and controlling educational and religious institutions. They have also used summer centers to recruit children, as well as use abduction and pressure on tribal leaders.

Statistics show that the Houthi group has recruited more than 35,000 children since 2014, a large percentage of them under the age of 11. These cases doubled after 2011 and especially after 2014, due to the expansion of Houthi control over more territory in Yemen.

Child recruitment is a serious violation of children's rights and negatively affects their future and the social structure of Yemeni society.

Deterioration of the economic conditions is a major cause of child recruitment, as poverty pushes some Yemeni families to recruit their children in search of a source of income that provides the minimum necessary survival needs or improves their limited source of income. In some cases, children join the recruitment on their own under the feeling of poverty and the collective need of the family, or to obtain what meets their personal needs that the family is unable to meet.

The pattern of forced recruitment of children is also the predominant pattern of child recruitment and includes recruitment without family consent, recruitment under the direct threat of the family, or abduction and recruitment of the child without the knowledge of the family. Poor economic conditions, social pressures, and ideological mobilization are arguably the most important reasons for child recruitment.

Moreover, the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) also uses the method of moral seduction to attract children in terms of promoting the idea of jihad.

2) Recruitment of children under international conventions

The recruitment of children is a grave violation against children under international conventions, and the seriousness of this violation is doubled because it opens the way for the practice of a series of other grave violations against children such as murder, rape, and sexual violence during recruitment. In addition to exposure to harsh recruitment conditions in most cases, severe injuries, and receiving ill-treatment from recruiters.

The recruitment of children is a problem that has caused serious damage to children at the health, psychological, and social levels. The exacerbation of this phenomenon during internal armed conflicts led international and regional organizations to exert efforts aimed at eliminating the crime of child recruitment, embodied in the enactment of many international conventions and the establishment of international mechanisms concerned with their application. It can be said that the principle of prohibiting the recruitment of children finds a legal basis for it in international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law. The crime of child recruitment is still repeated in all internal international conflicts in particular.

The two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, which were finalized by the ICRC, were discussed, taking into account the outcome of the discussions that took place at the Conference of Governmental Experts at its sessions in Geneva in 1971 and 1972.

After extensive discussions during the Geneva Diplomatic Conference at its four sessions, these efforts succeeded for the first time in the adoption of the two protocols adopted by the Conference on June 10, 1977, affirming the total and categorical prohibition of the participation of children in armed conflict.

a. Prohibition of child recruitment in light of the Geneva Protocols of 1977:

Article 77 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention stipulates that "the Parties to the conflict shall be obliged to take all feasible measures to ensure that children who have not yet attained the age of fifteen do not participate directly in armed conflicts, and in particular these Parties shall refrain from recruiting such minors into their armed forces".

According to this provision, state parties must not allow children to be recruited for service in their armed forces who have not attained the age of 15, and even for those who have reached that age and have not yet attained the age of eighteen. So, the belligerent State must give priority to recruitment to the older of these children, in the sense that a child who has reached the age of 17 must be recruited before the child who is 16 years of age and so on.

Concerning internal armed conflicts, Additional Protocol II provides that "children under the age of fifteen shall not be recruited into armed forces or groups and shall not be allowed to participate in hostilities".

Article 77 of Additional Protocol I, prohibits the **direct** involvement of children in armed conflict, i.e. the prohibition of participation in the bearing of arms only.

While the text of Article 4 of Additional Protocol II gives children broader protection that is reflected in the total prohibition of the involvement of children in any of the military operations "**directly or indirectly**". In addition to the transport of ammunition and supplies, the transfer, handling, and circulation of orders, reconnaissance, and gathering information, sabotage, espionage, and intelligence work.

State parties must therefore be more stringent in non-international armed conflicts than during international armed conflicts. This provision also applies

to rebel groups, who benefit more than children in non-international armed conflicts.

From the above, it is clear that **the Geneva Protocols of 1977** set the minimum age for the participation of children in armed conflict at fifteen years, as this step in itself is a qualitative addition to international humanitarian law and a clear support for the international efforts made in this regard.

Contrary to what was expected from the end of the phenomenon of the involvement of children in armed conflict after the signing of the Geneva Protocols of 1977, this scourge has been widely spread in different parts of the world.

The catastrophic situation of children – after the adoption of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention in 1977 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 – prompted the international community to act to contain the situation, which resulted in the adoption of an optional protocol issued in 2000.

b. Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, 2000

The widespread proliferation of light weapons – easy to use – has expanded the armament of children, especially children under the age of eighteen in government forces, paramilitaries, civilian militias, and a variety of non-state armed groups.

In light of the growing awareness and interest within the international community of the dire plight of children affected by armed conflict, the United Nations has taken an initiative as the first of its kind, to raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation in armed conflict to 18 years, after the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Protocol contains some important provisions, in particular the determination of the age of compulsory conscription or voluntary conscription, and the issue of the recruitment of children into armed groups distinct from the armed forces of the State, as follows:

"States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of eighteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.

Accordingly, regarding:

- **Compulsory recruitment:** "States Parties shall ensure that persons under eighteen years of age are not subject to compulsory conscription into their armed forces"
- **Voluntary recruitment:** States parties raise the minimum age for persons to volunteer in their national armed forces from the age specified in Article 38, paragraph 3, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Protocol requires the State, after ratification, to file a declaration containing the minimum age at which it may enlist in its national armed forces, and to provide guarantees against compulsory or forced volunteering.

The Protocol also obliges States parties that allow enlistment in their armed forces under the age of eighteen to take safeguards that such recruitment would be genuinely voluntary, with the consent of the parents and legal guardians of the children. The State must provide them with all full information on the duties involved in national military service or under its control, which accepts students who are at least 15 years of age.

Concerning armed groups distinct from the national forces of the State, the Protocol prohibits them under any circumstances from recruiting or using persons under the age of eighteen in hostilities.

The Optional Protocol also requires States to take all measures to ensure the demobilization of children from their armed forces, stating, "States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons recruited or used in hostilities are demobilized within their jurisdiction in a manner not inconsistent with the present Protocol.

3) Summer Centers (Recruitment under the guise of education)

The Houthi militias have exploited many means to recruit children; the two most prominent means are the regular schools by modifying the curricula and teachers' attitudes and exploiting the conditions of learners and the summer centers that represent a real "laundry" for children's minds.

The Houthi militias raise the slogan "Science and Jihad" as a revealing title for the content of the summer schools implemented by the Houthis in the various governorates and districts they control, and their propaganda intensifies interest in them through multiple channels in addition to different large areas in the press and social media.

The summer centers are at the heart of the Houthis' concerns. So, they adopt huge budgets for the centers' equipment, inauguration, and activities according to official announcements, despite covering many of the needs of the centers through neighboring shops, and their elements are deployed to collect donations for them in neighborhoods and mosques, and civil society organizations and charities are used for the same purpose.

With the end of the school year, Yemeni families in Houthi-controlled areas are waiting for the summer centers season, as the Houthi group intensifies its centers and pushes children to them by any means, most of which fall into the circle of carrots, such as disbursing aid to families, providing participants with clothes and supplies. While some means of mobilizing students for summer centers fall into the circle of intimidation.

In general, the Houthis' summer centers fall within pre-prepared plans to brainwash children and youth and fill them with Houthi ideas through the speeches of the group's founder and its current leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi. Moreover, preparing children to participate in violence and encouraging them to war and fight after accusing the violator of extremism, terrorism, treason, and labor, leading to his infidelity.

The summer centers were established by former Houthi spiritual guide Badr al-Din al-Houthi, the father of the group's former leaders, Hussein, and current Abdulmalik.

The summer centers "fall within the mullahs' project under Iranian supervision, whose plans were initially developed by the establishment of the Aal al-Bayt Council of Elders in the early eighties".

In August 2019, the Houthis appointed the leader close to the group's leader, Khaled Al-Madani, as head of the Supreme Executive Committee for the summer centers, according to many facts and sources, so Al-Madani's qualification for this site is that he is one of the graduates of those centers with his great language of extremism and violence.

The centers are gradually working to convert students to the Imami sect with educational curricula that carry sectarian and racist ideas

Year after year, the Houthis seek to root summer centers, whether in terms of huge financial allocations or through carefully prepared equipment and organization, as the Supreme Committee for Centers distributed a guide that

includes the distribution of "the levels of pupils and students in the summer courses to eight levels... Rehabilitation, basic, intermediate, high, and printed educational curricula are prescribed for all levels, which include cultural, intellectual, and educational lessons. Distributing records and brochures about the programs to be included in the summer courses".

At the end of the annual centers, the enrollees are screened to determine the appropriate ones to go directly to the fronts, while others go to training centers in preparation for being thrown into wars

The number of summer training camps is 17 camps dedicated to training children to be recruited: 4 of them in the Hodeidah governorate, and the other is distributed in other governorates such as Sana'a, Dhamar, Saada, and Amran.

The children in these camps receive training in the fields of physical fitness, the use of light and medium weapons, planting mines, and throwing bombs and mortars, explaining that these camps fall under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense, which is affiliated with the Houthi group.

4) Danger of Summer Centers

These centers represent the destruction of children's minds, in which they are indoctrinated, their minds are filled with the ideology of jihad, the culture of violence is stoked, and the fighting and sectarian ideas of the group are glorified".

What happens inside closed centers, which are recruitment camps, children are trained in fighting, using weapons, planting mines and booby traps, and dismantling them. If the open centers aim to brainwash children and recruit those who are fit for them, the closed centers work to prepare those who are ready to be among the elite militias in the future.

Summer centers are a threat to the future of Yemenis, seeking and using a policy that depends on sectarian and military expansion and changing the identity of society through intellectual and cultural bulldozing, and their focus on children begins from summer centers for easy reception of mined ideas that call for murder, violence, and infidelity of others.

These centers also lead to the obliteration of national identity, change the ideas of an entire generation using destructive means of customs, traditions and religion, and replace them with superstitions and superstitions that have nothing to do with religion or custom and extraneous ideas.

The Houthi militia has begun to destroy the educational system in Yemen by distorting school curricula, excluding competent educational leaders, known for their integrity, and replacing them with dynastic elements to change the national and religious identity of children..

5) Direct effects of child recruitment

Dropping out of education is the most important direct negative effect of child recruitment, as a large percentage of child soldiers are children who were enrolled in schools before engaging in recruitment, and lost their connection to education almost completely after the engagement. Some believe that continuing to recruit can provide them with future opportunities that education does not provide, such as obtaining a permanent military job in the future.

In addition, recruitment results in intellectual and behavioral changes that affect children's perception of the future and their dealings with the family and the local community, due to the acquisition of the recruiting party's culture and the attempt to assume roles that are not appropriate to age.

One of the effects of child recruitment is the expansion of the scope of carrying weapons in society, as a large proportion of child soldiers were not armed before engagement, and these turned into armed people in environments, some of which were not within the traditional social environments of the proliferation of weapons.

The leader of the Houthi militia, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, also admitted that there were rapes to death against fighters in the ranks of the militias. Yemeni media reported a document of militia leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi's confession, stating that child fighters in the ranks of his group were raped to death.

6) Testimonies of children who have been recruited

According to most testimonies, the Houthi militias use UN and international humanitarian relief materials to barter poor families in exchange for recruiting their sons into their ranks or depriving them of these humanitarian aids (fighting for food). That represents a clear and explicit violation of international humanitarian law and a flagrant challenge to the international community and the United Nations resolution.

The Houthi militia also kidnapped children from schools and sent them to war on the battlefronts, which constituted a crime against children, depriving them of their right to education, and exposing them to the worst forms of child labor adopted by the International Labor Organization in 1999.

- **A 14-year-old child testified that** he went to a summer camp outside the port city of Hodeidah after his family was given an "irresistible tempting offer" that included food rations for about a month or more. On the opposite, The family also received promises that their son would complete his studies, but it wasn't long before the child was practicing with his companions using some types of weapons for 40 days.

He said, "They were training us on how to shoot, how to protect the camp, and manage checkpoints".

- **Testimony of the father of one of the children decided to send his son to one of the summer camps after the Houthi group promised him food aid for at least a month.**

The children were receiving ideological education based on statements by Hussein al-Houthi, a prominent leader of the group who was killed in 2004 during clashes between the organization and the Yemeni army.

In the evening, his son and other children were given weapons training and were immediately asked to use their new skills, assigning them to guard the camp overnight.

As part of the wider indoctrination process, the son said he and other children were isolated in the camps, adding: "They prevented us from coming into contact with people outside the camps, even with our families".

- **A 7-year-old child, who** is currently receiving 40 children in the second phase of rehabilitation for children recruited by the Houthi militia, was thrown into military missions hundreds of times his age, in flagrant violation of all human, moral, and religious values and international norms and laws.

His mission, as mentioned, was to transport supplies and ammunition through a "donkey" handed over to him by the Houthis, and deliver them to the front positions of their fighters on the fronts, in a flagrant exploitation and violation of children's rights and a flagrant violation of the values and principles of international humanitarian law.

The child narrates many of the adventures he lived during his work on the battlefronts, and the traumas and dangers he was exposed to at many times, from which rarely anyone survives.

Harsh moments experienced by the child while going and coming with the "donkey" to and from the sites of clashes and barricades, and his speech mixes with tears when he talks about his horror and fear of the shells and bullets that were falling near him and its shocking bang.

The child recounted what he felt on nights as he walked as usual in a donkey (loaded with ammunition and supplies), between mountains, valleys, and wastelands, on his way to the positions of the Houthi fighters. He indicated that he was always walking waiting for a bullet or shell or expecting shrapnel to hit his body, and sometimes falling captive. These expectations cause fear, terror, and anxiety, according to the story published by the website of Wethaq Foundation, the local implementing partner of the project for the rehabilitation of child soldiers.

One of the scenes of fear and horror that he lived, in was that one night while walking, he heard footsteps behind him and thought that an enemy had infiltrated him, and felt that he was killed and would not survive, so he turned back scared and trembling. He discovered that there was "a monster waiting for him and wants to prey on him" (delusion because of panic), the child hurried his order and pressed the trigger of the automatic weapon that he carries to expel his fear. As soon as he fired the bullets, a barrage of fire rained down on him from the bullets of the warring parties who aimed their weapons at the source of the bullets fired by a frightened child.

The child miraculously survived certain deaths, but he did not survive heart and liver diseases, which this incident had a prominent role in causing before he fell captive in the hands of the Yemeni army and joined the King Salman Center for the Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers project.

- **A family of a child under the age of 16 says** that Houthi elements attracted their child to convince him to enroll in "cultural" courses that last for two weeks with other children from the region. Here was the point of his transformation from an innocent child to an aggressive and stubborn person who does not listen to any relative within the family members.

The family explains that they were forced to allow their son to join the Houthi course after he threatened to search for the district supervisor to take him to the war fronts.

After the Houthi cycle and mixing and friction with the group's members, they became addicted to chewing qat greatly, according to the family, and managing the value of "storing" the child daily and other expenses became a means of blackmail against them.

According to the family, their son joined the Houthi fronts, stressing that he has not communicated with them since he went to the militia camp.

- **A family of a 17-year-old child tells** the story of his enrollment in Houthi "cultural" courses and working with the group as a "cultural guide" in the neighborhood of Al-Jaraf and other areas in Sana'a. Despite his father's attempts to prevent him from going with the Houthis throughout that period, he joined the militia fronts in Marib with his younger brother without the knowledge of their family.

- **A 13-year-old boy tells his story about** the draft, says he was taken to serve from his home, but he promised that he would only transfer supplies to adult fighters, only to discover later that during the soldiers' lunch break, he was sent to the fronts to shoot at the "enemy".

He recalls how he saw men and boys cut into pieces and the fear he felt, he always wanted to leave but was afraid of being killed, which forced him to spend two and a half months with the Houthis.

- **Another 12-year-old boy about his experience with recruitment,** says Houthi militiamen drove him and 10 classmates in a pickup truck and told them they were taking them to a place where they would get new school bags. They found themselves inside a training camp to get instructions on how to hide from airstrikes, after which they were sent to fight.

The Houthis teach children religious lessons for a month after they join, he said, through which they cultivate the ideas of jihad. Then they send them to battle camps to train there for weeks.

- A 9-year-old child, lived in a family in which poverty eats and drinks and watched the deteriorating condition of his father, who suffered angina a year and three months ago due to the narrowness of the situation, and oppression of his house in the city of Haradh, which was turned by the

Ansar Allah group (Houthis), into a military barracks, after his displacement from it.

A friend told him about how he receives about 30,000 riyals a month, in exchange for combat services he performs for the Ansar Allah group (Houthis). Thoughts began to come to the night, believing that what his friend had done was the easy way to combat his family's poverty.

As the sun rose the next day, he left his family home to where his friend lived, telling him he wanted to join the battlefield.

He began to leave without telling any of his family that he wanted to become a fighter, fearing for his father's health, and knowing that his mother would refuse the matter, so he resorted to a trick to make up a story. He told the family that a friend in Sana'a contacted him and found him a job in a restaurant there and that he decided to travel.

He set off with his friend towards the frontlines in the Haradh area, and his news was absent for a while, and two months later he sent a sum of money to his family and reassured them that he was fine.

The news of the child was cut off until a visitor came knocking on the door of his family's house. The mother opened it to him, to see on her doorstep gunmen who appeared to be affiliated with the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), to tell her, his death

- **Another 13-year-old boy recounted** that he fought for two years with the Houthis in Yemen, where he says he tortured and killed people and did not care about his life whether he lived or died.
- **A 13-year-old boy said** that half of the fighters he served with on the front lines in Yemen's mountainous Sirwah region were children. Houthi officers ordered them to move forward during the battles even as fighting escalated, he said.

He said he appealed to his commander to let the young fighters do the job of fighting during airstrikes, but the response was always "You are Ansar Allah and you must attack!" he said. An unknown number of child soldiers were sent to their homes, killed, and in coffins.

- **A 13-year-old boy said** Houthi militiamen stormed his family home in the northern Bani Matar region and demanded that he and his father head to the front lines of the fighting.

He said his father told them, "Not me and my son," and then tried to draw their guns at him.

He pointed out, "They dragged him away", adding: "I heard the gunshots and then my father fell dead".

He continued, "The militiamen took him with them and forced him to perform guard duty at a checkpoint for 12 hours a day"

- **Another 12-year-old boy said** Houthi militiamen took him and twenty classmates out in a pickup truck and told them they would take them to a place where they would get new school bags. It was a lie. Instead, the students found themselves inside a training camp to get instructions on how to hide from airstrikes.

- **a child who served with the Houthis between the ages of 13 and 15 said:**

"Recruits are sent to military training camps in the mountains, and at night they sleep in tents or huts made of tree branches. Day after day, they learn how to fire weapons, plant explosives, and evade missiles fired by coalition aircraft"

"From noon to sunset, young soldiers receive a daily ration of green Qat leaves, as an incentive for children, who may not be able to afford it while at home"

"Less than a month after the camp, they are sent to war wearing bracelets (iron rings) that are supposed to ensure that, if killed, they will be returned to their families and honored as martyrs.

- **A 13-year-old child who fought in the Sirwah mountains recounts that** he and his 11-year-old brother joined the Houthi insurgency and his sister disappeared during the shootout. He began flipping bodies on the battlefield, searching the blood for his brother lost when he and other fighters came under fire. the shooter turned out to be a sister.

A few weeks later, he and his brother escaped, paying a truck driver to smuggle them away from Houthi forces.

- **One of the disciples who was lured into fighting with the promise of a new bookcase** - for the first time was assigned to carry boxes of food and

ammunition for soldiers. Then he was deployed to fight. He said neither he nor the other boys had any clothes other than their school uniforms. It was so cruel that it caused a rash.

He recounts a scene from one of the battles that were scary to see the corpses, "the bodies were missing heads or limbs or their intestines were bleeding. **He managed to** escape from the Houthi camp early one morning, from village to village, saying, "I was afraid to look back, I saw trees and stones and I became more afraid because they were hiding behind trees"

- **A family of one of the children who joined the Houthi fronts recounts:** "They stormed our house and forcibly took him from the house, which my parents were not present."
"His mother went repeatedly to the supervisor who took him, and begged him to leave him home, as he is still young and unable to carry weapons, and he responded by striking and threatening to kill him if he returned demanding his son".

Several months later, he told them that he was at a checkpoint at the entrance to Sana'a, his father planned to take him from there, but his plan failed, and the punishment put him on the front lines of the fight without any training in the use of weapons, and he escaped death several times".

- **Students from a secondary school in Ibb governorate, central Yemen, narrated the visit of one of the leaders of the Houthi militias responsible for recruitment.** The visit was aimed at pushing high school students to join the battlefronts but ignoring the calls of the Houthi leader and their unwillingness to respond to him prompted him to call security patrols to arrest them, but rather recruit them by force.

A student said, "We managed to escape through the wide backyard of the school, and we left it for our homes, but the other step that we took later without prior coordination, was to leave our city".

Another student believed that staying at home was risky, as the Houthi militias would follow it with another step, which was to raid the homes of students to arrest them, which happened later. Houthi recruitment campaigns forced thousands of Yemeni students to drop out of school and move to liberated governorates.

Another student at the same school says: "The Houthi militias are looking for children between the ages of 14 and 18, who believe their stories". Many

times I feel feelings of regret for leaving school, but in the end, I see that what I did was better than losing my life, as I was between two options, either joining the Houthi fronts with the loss of life, or I leave my governorate and lose my academic future".

❖ **Conclusion:**

Compulsory recruitment and denial of education and health, along with practices of arbitrary detention and threats, constitute a grave violation and infringement of the immunity and special protection recognized by international children's law.

Yemeni children still hope that the day will come when they will enjoy their most basic rights, which continue to be unjustifiably violated without any real progress by the international community in providing impunity for children in Yemen.

Child recruitment remains a major dilemma in the ongoing conflict, as the economic situation of families is exploited and educational institutions are mobilized to attract children to combat camps.

❖ **Recommendations:**

- Take action against Houthi militias, including countering advanced smuggled weapons and establishing a regulation banning the types of civilian materials used in the manufacture of missiles, and drones.
- The need for a Security Council resolution to stop using social institutions by militias.
- All violations against children, including killing and maiming of children, child recruitment, sexual violence, abduction, and obstruction of humanitarian access must be stopped immediately
- The UN and the international community must end impunity for violations committed, engage local civil society organizations and victims of human rights violations, and call for the establishment of an international investigative team to investigate, collect evidence, and monitor all human rights violations in Yemen, including grave violations against children, to ensure accountability.
- A comprehensive plan must be put to ensure that all children are currently enrolled in school, especially marginalized and at-risk children, and prioritize the protection and rehabilitation of schools.

- All recruitment of child soldiers, demobilization of children involved in conflict, and reintegration through protection programs must be ensured. In addition, civil society organizations and protection agencies must also access all military and security sites to monitor the conditions of detained children, release them, and return them to their families.