

## Houthi Rebels Pledge to Comply with International Law Regarding Prisoners and Civilians, Media and Humanitarian Groups

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In a letter responding to Dr. Mohammed Al-Mikhlaifi, the Head of the Yemeni Observatory For Human Rights, Abdulmalik al Houthi, leader of the al Houthi rebels, states that Yemeni soldiers that have been captured by the rebels are being treated humanely, that the rebels do and will respect the concept of the immunity of civilians, humanitarian organizations and the media. Al Houthi welcomes the ICRC or another humanitarian organization to facilitate communications between the hostages (POWs) and their families.

We wish you a happy Ramadan and may Allah return it to you, Yemen and Islamic Community with peace and blessings.

We have received your letter which was highly appreciated and valued, and we are as you are disappointed that the war started again which we put an effort to cease and we have accepted all mediators since the very beginning of the war regardless of the conditions even when some were not in favor of us. Also, we have proposed a lot of initiatives from one side and the last one was announced few days ago dated on August/31/2009 due to our concern to save the people and to guarantee not repeating the war tragedy which the citizens suffer from. However the state had always failed these efforts and reopens the war against our cities, villages and house we enforces us to use the right provided within all constitutions, local and international laws which is defending ourselves.

With regard to the hostages and family concerns about their safety...we have confirmed so many times that we ensure that all hostages are being treated and dealt in a proper manner maintaining their dignity, mental and physical safety especially that we fear Allah before anyone and we deal with hostages respecting their rights and we consider it a religious duty.

We take good care of the hostages and deal with as our sons and with what is available with us from clean clothes, provide them with proper accommodation, food and also Qat (if they asked for it, clean clothes, and also give them the freedom to read the available books , we also are concerned about releasing them to go back to their families as soon as possible through transporting them by cars to safe places where transportation is available and also providing them with money in accordance with our abilities they might need it during their trip back to their families.

Therefore, we assure you that our treatment to the hostages are based on our religious principles and does not contradict at all neither the Humanitarian International law and

conventions with regard to the hostages which include the provisions you mentioned in your letter and as we clarified above we treat them so much better than what is provided in the laws and conventions.

We will never allow in any case treating the hostages in a brutal manner or imprison them in a dangerous place and we maintain their safety as we do to ours. With regard to the hostages communicating with their families, this is a right provided to them however the impediment is the siege Sa'ada faces and disconnection of communication. We can seek for other recourses to accomplish this through the international organizations like the Red Cross if the State allows it to come in to these areas or through local organization like yours.

We highly appreciate what was mentioned in your letter and your previous press releases with regard to the war and you calling to stop targeting the civilians and allowing aid associations to do their job in the governorate and we would like to assure you that this has been always what we call for since the first war.

We were hoping from your organization and other civil society organizations to move and call the State to comply with the Humanitarian Local and Internal Laws to stop its methodology of using torture ways with our hostages and prisoners and others in the official and non-official prisons. Where in some cases it reached to the death of so many people due to the harsh and torture against them and not providing the health care needed. We have mentioned this in so many reports from our offices and also international organizations and unfortunately your organization and other organizations did not move properly to pressure the State to stop these clear and obvious irregularities which is not hidden on anyone.

Finally, we would like to confirm again that we are in this imposed war we commit to the humanitarian international laws with regard to protecting civilians and dealing with the hostages and the neutral associations and entities like the international and aid organizations and media.

We enclose hereinafter our responses to the recommendations addressed by Human Rights Watch with this regard. We are really thankful to your concern and interest in ceasing this unfair war where clear irregularities against human rights are being committed and also criminal war are being documented. We appreciate your invitation to the dialogue and stopping violence which we always called for.

**Press Office of Sayed / Abdulmalik BadrAl-Din Al-Houthi**

## This is their earlier reply to Human Rights Watch

the executive director Mr./Kenneth Roth, Human Rights Watch

Ms/ Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa

First of all, we thank you for your interest in the tragic situation in (the province Sa'da) and other provinces affected by the war.

We have followed with great interest the reports handed down by your organization which are a remarkable effort we appreciate it, and addressed to us on your recommendations in the report we would like to clarify the following points:

-First what was in the recommendation to us: (we must treat the civilian population under our control – including displaced persons – in accordance with international humanitarian law and international law of human rights, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Of internal displacement.)

regarding to this, we assure you our deep concern on threatening the civilian population humanely guaranteed all the rights enshrined in international humanitarian law, international law of human rights, including the United Nations Principles on Internal Displacement, we do not see any conflict between those principles and our religion that we believe in.

We also affirm our commitment to spare civilians and to avoid armed conflict and contribute to the promotion, protection and strive to preserve the lives, property and dignity, and we consider ourselves part of those civilians did not take up arms only to defend ourselves, and recall that the first war waged by the Authority in 2004, we targeting civilians in their towns and villages by random aerial bombardment, authorities argue that the devastating war behind flimsy excuses and false, like saying that we put the flag of Hezbollah instead of the Yemeni flag, claiming prophecy sometimes and at other times claiming the Imama, the transformation of the Zaidi sect to Imami Shi'ism, and such charges If we assume they do not justify the validity of the Government of a comprehensive declaration of war on its citizens.

You will note that we urge our supporter after each agreement for a cease-fire not to take any reprisals against those who committed crimes against the civilian population, to keep the civil peace and the continuation of the cease-fire and avoid a return to war, and this does not comply the authority.

As you know, the Authority imposed attended a comprehensive international organizations and media from entering (the province of Sa'da), including your organization to ensure that no one would revealed crimes against civilians.

As for us, we welcome all human rights and humanitarian organizations because we have nothing to hide.

And the other thing in your recommendations is what follows:

Should not expose the obstruction of humanitarian relief items to civilians in need.

- the authority must declare that the international humanitarian organizations have the full right of access to civilian populations, and ensuring this, with no military pressure on the movements of these organizations, and when the authority refuse the access, humanitarian organizations must be provided with appropriate explanations.

- Must put an end to the attacks on humanitarian workers, vehicles and humanitarian supplies, and to take appropriate disciplinary action against members of the group responsible for such attacks.

In this regard, we recall that we have already welcomed the help of the organizations, and affirmed our commitment to the arrival of aid to the needy in an impartial and non-selective and under direct supervision by the organizations concerned.

And we again welcome all international humanitarian organizations and let it has full right and freedom of access to affected areas without the intervention of any party, and declare our full cooperation with these organizations to facilitate the tasks and to ensure non-exposure on our part.

With respect to the reference in your report that there are those who accuse us exposure to those in charge of humanitarian assistance, we assure you that these accusations are unfounded, and had already issued several statements and condemned those attacks and demanded an impartial investigation committees to reveal the identity of the assailants, but the ruling authority refused to do so strongly as it is, who was standing behind the attacks, in order to prevent the arrival of aid to the needy in the framework of the so-called policy of collective punishment.

Emphasizing that we are innocent of those attacks we declare our full commitment to take appropriate disciplinary action against those found to be involved in those attacks.

Thank you again for your humanity, and we hope that you will be able in the future access to Sa'da to see the realities of what is going on closely. Please accept my

Best regards.

Abd al-Malik Badr al-Din Al-houthi

Yemen – Sa'da

29 / Jumada II / 1430