

Schools in Yemen... A New Front for Houthi Domination



Houthi-recruited fighters take part in a military parade in Sana'a during August. (Khaled Abdullah/Reuters)

The teacher in Yemen is no longer just the bearer of chalk and maker of generations; in the eyes of the Houthi group, he has become a dangerous adversary whose will must be subdued or broken. In a country exhausted by war and torn by divisions, education has transformed from a hope for the future into an open battlefield. Educators face arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and relentless persecution.

From classrooms emptied of children's voices to dark basements filled with the gasps of teachers, the Houthis are weaving new chapters of a tragedy that threatens the entire Yemeni intellect. Rights reports and eyewitness accounts reveal that the teacher has become a double victim: hunted in his means of livelihood, targeted in his mission, caught between loss of security and the disappearance of his pedagogic role.

What should have been a space to shape minds has become a field for imposing blind obedience and planting a discourse of violence and death, where sectarian sermons replace curricula, prisons replace schools, and detention centers replace halls of learning. Thus the Yemeni teacher today finds himself between the blackboard and the cells, between chalk and batons.

Secret Basements and Ready Charges

In Sana'a, Adnan Muhammad (a pseudonym), a teacher in a public school, never expected to start his academic year in a locked basement instead of a classroom. With dozens of colleagues, he was forced to attend a two-week Houthi indoctrination course, focused on speeches by Hussein al-Houthi and the group's leader, and on a culture of absolute obedience and death in service of their project.

Adnan says: "The lectures were full of misinformation. Most of us listened mockingly inside, but none dared object the punishment is ready. Dismissal or prison." The Houthis distributed lists of attendees and of absentees, a clear sign that these courses are not optional but coercive tools to reduce teachers to instruments of the group's agenda.

In an interview with Noon Post, Mahmoud Said (also a pseudonym), a relative of a teacher arrested by Houthi militias in Sana'a in July 2025, recounts how armed men broke in without warning, violently searched rooms, confiscated his phone and computer, and then seized him, taking him to an undisclosed location. From that moment on, they have had no information about his whereabouts, or what charges are facing him.

Said adds that this teacher was neither a political activist nor a party member; he was simply a well-known teacher among his students and colleagues for his commitment and discipline, living a quiet life between school and home. Yet the Houthis act as though the mere presence of teachers in the education field threatens their project.

He describes the sudden disappearance's effects on the family: "He was the sole provider for his elderly mother, ill with heart problems and high blood pressure. Since his arrest she lives in a constant state of worry she thinks of nothing but him. We fear a health relapse because of the continuous fear about his unknown fate."

Ali confirms that this case is part of a long series of violations against educators. In recent months alone, dozens of teachers have been arrested: some accused of political affiliation, others simply for rejecting attendance at sectarian courses. A relative was accused of belonging to the Islah Party—a pre-made accusation used to ostracize anyone who does not show full loyalty.

Systematic Violations in Numbers

According to "Sam" for Rights and Freedoms, the Houthis have carried out wide arrests of teachers in several remote hamlets of Hifan District in Taiz Governorate. The number of detainees reached about 48 teachers as of 28 August 2025, under harsh humanitarian and security conditions. These constitute arbitrary arrests in violation of Yemeni law and international conventions on personal freedom and human rights.

Tawfiq al-Hamidi, head of Sam, told Noon Post about the systematic targeting of the education sector: between September 2024 and July 2025, the organization recorded 1,253 violations targeting educational workers, including 1,033 arbitrary arrests, 102 enforced disappearances, and 118 cases of physical and psychological torture.

Al-Hamidi reported that Al-Hodeidah province topped the list with 189 cases, followed by Dhamar with 160, Ibb 143, Sana'a 116, Saada 67, and Hajja 185. The remaining violations were spread across Taiz, Al-Bayda, Al-Mahwit, Amran, Lahj, Raymah, Marib, Hadramawt, Shabwa, Al-Dhalea, Aden, and Al-Jawf.

He asserted that the Houthi group bears most of the responsibility: 1,225 of the violations, among them 1,019 arbitrary arrests, 98 enforced disappearances, and 108 cases of torture. Non-state armed groups outside their framework committed 26 cases; the internationally recognized government only 2.

He added that most victims are men: 1,029 male teachers arbitrarily arrested versus 4 female; 117 male torture cases vs one female; 102 enforced

disappearances all men. These figures reveal the scale of the methodical campaign against Yemen's education sector, affirming that assaults on teachers are a double crime—they attack not only individuals but the educational process itself and impact the future of generations.

Trial, Threats, and Death Sentences

Ahmed Saleh (pseudonym), a former detained teacher, confirmed to Noon Post that the Houthis are still trying him and a group of educators in a criminal court, with the prosecution demanding the death penalty. He said: "We face over twenty-six charges, the mildest carrying twenty years imprisonment, the harshest death.

The charges are pre-prepared: overthrowing the regime, undermining security and stability, inciting against the state, calling for protests. All simply because we demanded our rights as teachers—most notably salaries."

He added: "We spent months in prison under enormous pressure to sign declarations not to speak about the salary issue. Today we stand trial again, and the prosecution demands death for me and some colleagues."

The Intellectual and Political Dimension

In areas of Taiz under Houthi control, teacher arrests have surged as part of a repressive policy, aiming to impose sectarian agendas and doctrinal curricula on education. In July 2025, the group arrested eleven teachers and educational figures in the Dhamna District, transferring them to the [Al-Balqa](#) prison, while other arrests targeted educators who refused to teach materials imposed by the group in its controlled districts.

Abdul-Rahman al-Maqtari, general secretary of the Teachers' Syndicate, tells Noon Post that from 2014 to 2024, Taiz Governorate witnessed a systematic series of violations executed by the Houthis against teachers, students, and schools, which has led to the deterioration of both the educational and human rights environment in the province.

He added that the number of teachers killed between 2014 and 2024 reached 240, plus 30 earlier deaths from 2011-2013; the number of wounded was 115, including 3 permanent disabilities. He said the number of arrested and forcibly disappeared reached 90 people, some being held for more than five years, and two still unaccounted for among the disappeared among them teacher leader Abdo Ghalib al-Bahiri.

He noted that teachers have died under torture, including [Abdiq Fa'd al-Adni](#) and [Najib Hassan Ali al-Anani](#), despite knowledge of their deaths by the Red Cross and Human Rights Commission.

He also revealed that about 600 teachers and educators in the districts of Saraq, Al-Waziriya, Maza'i', and Al-Mukh have been unpaid since 2016; more than 15,000 teachers have been forcibly displaced; and over 150 teacher residences have been partially or completely destroyed.

During the two months preceding his interview, 79 teachers, Quran instructors, and school principals have been newly arrested in several districts, some of them local council members, with numbers likely to rise.

He emphasized that these violations from the Houthis represent a direct threat to the education process and to the future of generations in the province, calling on the international community and human rights bodies to act immediately to protect teachers and ensure safe, stable education.

Legal and Rights-Based Testimonies

As the violations by the Houthis against teachers in Yemen intensify, the danger to the educational process and society as a whole emerges clearly. Lawyer and advocate for detained teachers, Abdul-Majid Sabrah, states that the reasons the Houthis target educators are many: disobedience to the group's direction, the fear that teachers might influence society and students counter to the group's ideas and sectarian ambitions. He asserts this strategy aims to foist the group's ideas across all Yemeni society.

Sabrah told Noon Post that detained teachers face harsh treatment including enforced disappearance, severe torture, and deliberate medical neglect, threatening their lives and safety. He emphasized that these practices undermine the entire educational process; traditional schools are replaced with summer camps where students are taught sectarian ideology instead of moderate scientific education.

He revealed that the Houthi prosecutor's office has issued charges against several teachers demanding they be tried for overthrowing the regime, incitement against the state, or calling for protests—even though their activity has remained strictly rights-based and limited to peacefully demanding salary payments via social media.

He added that the Houthis also use other punitive tools: suspension of salaries; harsh, often unjust prison sentences up to or including death; all contributing to psychological and social pressure on teachers and their families, making the practice of their duty nearly impossible.

In the regions controlled by the Houthis, especially Taiz and Dhamar, there is ongoing escalation in arrests targeting social, political, and educational figures. These arrests are part of the group's strategy to force teachers in compliance

with curricula and materials they prescribe, and to persecute civil society, rights defenders, and political activists.

Ishraq al-Maqtari, member of the National Commission for Inquiry into Human Rights Violations, tells Noon Post that teacher arrests have become one of the foremost forms of violation registered in Houthi-controlled areas.

She explains that recent field data reveal the scale of systematic targeting: for example, in Ibb Governorate nearly 120 people were detained, among them about 95 educators; in the Mayyah, Khudair, and Sharab al-Runah districts in Taiz nearly 40 people, including 30 teachers; and in Hifan District alone, 52 persons were imprisoned, among them about 33-34 educators.

She emphasizes that these numbers reflect the seriousness of the group's approach to marginalizing educational staff—because of their influence among students and communities—and that ongoing violations pose a direct threat to the right to education and intellectual future of Yemen's upcoming generation.

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