

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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(Beirut) The [UAE](#) supports [Yemeni](#) forces that have arbitrarily detained, forcibly disappeared, tortured, and abused dozens of people during security operations, Human Rights Watch said today. The UAE finances, arms, and trains these forces, which ostensibly are going after Yemeni branches of Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (also known as ISIS). The UAE also runs at least two informal detention facilities, and its officials appear to have ordered the continued detention of people despite release orders, and forcibly disappeared people, including reportedly moving high-profile detainees outside the country.

Hadrami elite forces guard Mukalla from Al-Qaeda by creating check-points.



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Hadrami elite forces guard Mukalla from Al-Qaeda by creating check-points. 2016 Getty Images

Human Rights Watch has documented the cases of 49 people, including four children, who have been arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared in the Aden and Hadramawt governates of Yemen over the last year. At least 38 appear to have been arrested or detained by UAE-backed security forces. Multiple sources, including Yemeni government officials, have reported the existence of numerous informal detention facilities and secret prisons in Aden and Hadramawt, including at least two run by the UAE and others run by UAE-backed Yemeni security forces. Human Rights Watch documented people held at 11 such sites in the two governorates.

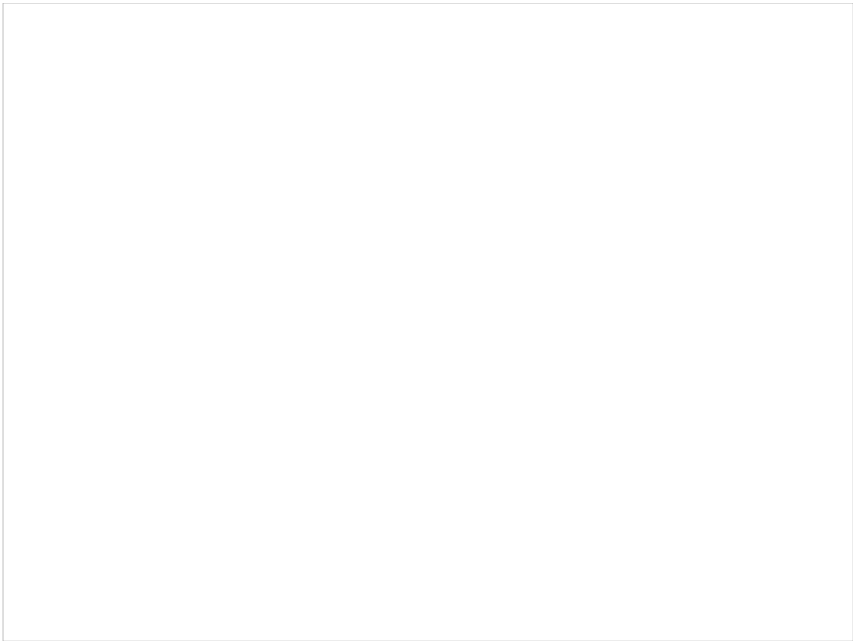
You dont effectively fight extremist groups like Al-Qaeda or ISIS by disappearing dozens of young men and constantly adding to the number of families with missing loved ones in Yemen, said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. The UAE and its partners should place protecting detainee rights at the center of their security campaigns if they care about Yemens long-term stability.

Since March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition of states, including the UAE, has conducted an aerial and ground campaign in support of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi against Houthi forces and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who took over the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014. The US has provided military support to the coalition.

Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed family members and friends of detainees, former detainees, lawyers, activists, and government officials. Human Rights Watch also reviewed documents, videos, and pictures provided by lawyers and activists, as well as letters sent by lawyers or family members to various Yemeni and coalition authorities.

During the conflict, Al-Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula (AQAP) seized weapons, territory, and revenue by looting the central bank in Mukalla, the capital of the Hadramawt governate, and running the citys port for about a year, Reuters [reported](#). AQAP has carried out [numerous attacks](#), primarily on military and security targets in Yemens southern and eastern governorates, killing dozens of people. The local ISIS affiliate in Yemen (IS-Y) has also [claimed responsibility](#) for [similar attacks](#) over the last [two years](#).

The UAE has led counterterror efforts against AQAP and ISIs local affiliate (IS-Y), including by supporting Yemeni forces carrying out security campaigns in southern and eastern parts of the country. Human Rights Watch has documented abuses by some of these forces including forces known as the Security Belt that operate in Aden, Lahj, Abyan, and other southern governorates and the Hadrami Elite Forces that operate in Hadramawt.



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An Emirati and South Yemen flag painted in Yemens port city of Aden. By 2017, Emirati and South Yemen flags flew in many parts of Aden, which President Hadi declared the temporary capital of Yemen after Houthi-Saleh forces took over Sanaa in 2014. 2017 Kristine Beckerle/Human Rights Watch

The Security Belt and Hadrami Elite forces have used excessive force during arrests and raids, detained family members of wanted suspects to pressure them to voluntarily turn themselves in, arbitrarily arrested and detained men and boys, detained children with adults, and forcibly disappeared dozens. As one former detainee said he was told by another detainee in one of Adens many informal detention facilities: This is a no-return prison.

The UAE is reported to run some of these detention facilities and to have moved high-profile detainees outside the country, including to a base it has in Eritrea.

Former detainees and family members also told Human Rights Watch that some detainees had been abused or tortured inside detention facilities, most often through heavy beatings with officers using their fists, their guns or other metal objects. Others mentioned electric shocks, forced nudity, threats to the detainees or their family members, and caning on the feet.

One man, who was able to visit a detained relative, a child, in Aden, said the boy looked insane when he emerged from a crowded cell. He later disappeared from the detention center.

Houthi-Saleh forces have also [arbitrarily detained](#) and disappeared scores of people in northern Yemen. Human Rights Watch has separately documented [abuse](#) in Houthi-Saleh run detention facilities.

All parties carrying out detentions in Yemen should immediately stop forcibly disappearing, arbitrarily detaining, or torturing detainees, Human Rights Watch said. They should release anyone arbitrarily detained or detained for involvement in peaceful political activities, including especially vulnerable people such as children. They should immediately provide a list of all detention sites and of everyone currently in detention or who have died in custody.

People taken into custody during a civil war are entitled to the [fundamental protections that all detainees should have](#), including being promptly brought before an independent authority, like a judge, provided specific reasons for their detention, and given the ability to contest the detention. Anyone not being prosecuted for a criminal offense may only be held for exceptional reasons of security, set out clearly in domestic law, and must be released as soon as the reasons for the [deprivation of their liberty](#) cease to exist. All such detainees should be brought promptly before a judge. Detention under such circumstances should be reviewed at least every six months.

Every detainee must be [treated humanely](#) at all times. Visits from family members [must be allowed if practicable](#). Under applicable human rights law, children should be detained only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. In all cases, children should be held separately from adults, unless they are detained with their family.

The ban against torture and other ill-treatment is one of the most fundamental prohibitions in international human rights and humanitarian law. No exceptional circumstances may justify torture, and states are required to investigate and prosecute those responsible for torture.

Yemen is obliged to ensure that the Security Belt and Hadrami Elite Forces, as well as any other forces operating with the Yemeni governments consent, comply with relevant legal requirements and procedural safeguards, including taking active steps to prevent disappearances, such as through regularizing the procedure of registering detainees and notifying family members of their whereabouts. The UAE has similar obligations, given its role in detentions.

The US [works](#) closely with the UAE in its efforts against AQAP, and members of the US government have [repeatedly praised](#) the UAE. In 2016, the [US deployed a small number of special operations forces to Yemen](#) to assist UAE efforts against the armed group. The US has also reportedly conducted joint raids with the UAE against AQAP in central and eastern Yemen, according to the [New York Times](#) and [the Intercept](#). Human Rights Watch investigated a January raid in [al-Bayda](#) governorate that killed at least 14 civilians, including nine children.

Wives, mothers, and daughters in the north and south of Yemen want to know whether their husbands, sons, and brothers are all right, if they are even alive, Whitson said. Yemen, the UAE, Houthi-Saleh forces, and any other party disappearing people should immediately inform families of where their loved ones are and release those held arbitrarily.

Because of the danger of reprisals against those who spoke with Human Rights Watch or against their families, pseudonyms are used below and identifying details have been removed. All participants were informed of the purpose of the interview, the ways in which the data would be used, and given assurances of anonymity. The UAE [leads](#) coalition efforts in southern and eastern Yemen, including its counterterrorism operations. People interviewed by Human Rights Watch used UAE and coalition interchangeably to describe the UAE and its role in the detention campaigns.

A Web of Secret Detention Sites

Yemeni human rights groups and lawyers have documented hundreds of cases of people arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared in areas of Yemen formally under the control of the internationally recognized government of President Hadi. Other security forces beyond those that are UAE-backed have also been implicated in abuses. The southern port city of Aden, for example, is currently home to multiple, often competing, security forces and militias. While technically under the Interior Ministry, these forces operate with separate command and control structures, with units aligned to Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. These forces are arresting and detaining people, and operating unofficial detention sites, local activists, journalists, and lawyers say.

One man described to Human Rights Watch a recent protest calling on the UAE and Hadrami Elite Forces to reveal the whereabouts of the disappeared: There were small kids saying release our dads. We were writing on the posters that we are against terrorism, but terrorism is also taking people in this way.

There are multiple informal and secret detention facilities in Aden, Hadramawt, and the areas of the country under Houthi-Saleh control to which independent monitors, lawyers and families of detainees have not been granted access. All parties running detention facilities in Yemen should provide immediate access to detention facilities, official and unofficial, for monitors of detention conditions, lawyers, medics, human rights monitors, and families, Human Rights Watch said.

Under international human rights law, an enforced disappearance occurs when the authorities take someone into custody and deny holding them or fail to disclose their fate or whereabouts. Disappeared people are at greater risk of torture and other ill-treatment, especially when they are detained outside formal detention facilities, such as police jails and prisons.

Possible Transfers Outside Yemen

Human Rights Watch was not able to verify these claims, but according to lawyers and activists, as well as relatives of men who had been disappeared, the UAE was transferring high-level detainees outside of Yemen. According to one of the activists, about 15 people accused of being members of AQAP or IS-Y had been transferred to the base the UAE has been developing in Eritreas port city, Assab, over the past two years. A man whose relatives had been disappeared said at least five officials told him the UAE transferred the men outside of Yemen, including three who said the men were being held in Eritrea.

In 2016, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea [reported](#) on the rapid construction of what appears to be a military base with permanent structures at Assab. According to [security analysts](#), the base includes its own port, airbase, and a military training facility, where the UAE has [trained](#) Yemeni forces, including the Security Belt and Hadrami Elite Forces, [according](#) to the Middle East Institute. The UN Monitoring Group also [reported](#) that the base has expanded to encompass not only personnel from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but also Yemeni troops and other troops in transit.

Yemen is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to protect the well-being of anyone they transfer to the UAE or other governments or groups. Anyone being transferred out of a country should be able to contest the transfer in that countrys courts. Transfers cannot be made if the person would likely face torture or other major human rights abuses.

The UAE-Backed Security Belt in Aden

In Aden, many of those arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared were arrested by the Security Belt, a force created in spring 2016. It is officially under the Interior Ministry but is funded, trained, and directed by the UAE, said several activists, lawyers, and government officials. The [UN Panel of Experts on Yemen](#) and a [Center for Civilians in Conflict \(CIVIC\)](#) report found that the Security Belt operated largely outside the Yemeni governments control.

Detention Facilities in Aden, Yemen

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This map depicts formal and informal detention facilities in which Human Rights Watch documented cases of people arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared since 2016, and where Human Rights Watch

was able to secure GPS. It does not depict all locations currently being used as detention centers in Aden, Aden governorate.

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In dozens of interviews, people detained by the Security Belt or detainees family members said Security Belt officers claimed they were following UAE orders in detaining terrorism suspects and that they lacked the authority to release detainees without specific UAE authorization. A former detainee said a high-ranking Security Belt Commander told him he had initially trusted the UAE was detaining suspects based on strong intelligence but he had increasingly come to believe not everyone they arrested was in fact linked to extremist groups.

A man whose brother was arrested in July 2016 said a Security Belt officer told him the UAE has given the Security Belt orders, including a list of names of people to arrest, and that after their arrest the UAE would decide what to do with them. The UAE did not provide the Security Belt with the charges or accusations against the men, he said.

The Security Belt has arbitrarily arrested and abused dozens of people. Several families reported that the security forces, including the Security Belt, had used excessive force when carrying out arrests, including beating men with their guns and forcing entry into homes. The Security Belt has also arrested suspects family members when unable to find the person they hoped to arrest to pressure the actual suspect to turn himself in.

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Muneer and Kareem: One night in the autumn of 2016, Security Belt officers came at 2 a.m. to the family home of Kareem and Muneer, both in their twenties, intending to arrest Muneer. Muneer was not home, so the Security Belt officers blindfolded Kareem, took him to a nearby camp and interrogated him. After a few hours, the men dumped a still blindfolded Kareem in a location he could not immediately identify. When he discovered where he was, he walked home. A family member said he was very scared when he arrived. The next day, Muneer surrendered at the Central Prison. Prison officials told Muneers father his sons file was with the coalition. The general prosecutor issued a release order for Muneer. The prosecutors office told the family they could not secure his release, as the authorities did not respect their orders.

Laith and Hamid: One night in the autumn of 2016 at about 2:30 a.m., Security Belt forces came to the home of Hamid looking to arrest his son, Laith. When they could not find him, they kicked and beat Hamid. An officer also hit Hamids wife with his rifle. They blindfolded Hamid, kicked him again when he tried to loosen the blindfold, then detained him, beating him again and released him, telling him to bring his son. He told Human Rights Watch: Yes, I promised to take my son to them and I did the following day. Im really very sorry for my son because if I knew he would be detained for this long I would never have taken him to them. Laith remains in detention.

Secret Prisons, Mistreatment of Detainees in Aden

Aden has two official detention facilities, the Central Prison and the Criminal Investigations Department (CID). In February 2017, the CID was holding about 220 people and the Central Prison about 231 terrorism detainees and 480 criminal detainees, according to the prosecutors office.

While the court system in Aden is largely not functioning, the prosecutors office is continuing to issue release orders for people if there is insufficient evidence to detain them. The prosecutions orders are often not respected, particularly concerning terrorism cases, which is where the power of the prosecutor stops, a prosecutor said. Families, lawyers, and government officials repeatedly said that people arrested by the Security Belt whose case files were with the coalition were most likely to remain detained despite a prosecutorial release order even in the official sites.

The Central Prison is divided into criminal cases, controlled by a prison director, and terrorism cases, overseen by a Security Belt officer who was appointed by and reports to UAE officers in Aden, said analysts, activists, and lawyers in Aden. One man previously detained in the Central Prison said that at least four people in the prison ward with him had release orders, but they remained detained because, they were told, the coalition refused to let them out. He, and two other men detained with him, said that prison officials said that the Security Belt ran the prison and they reported to the UAE.

In late 2016, the general prosecutors office issued release orders for 27 people who had been arrested by the Security Belt and detained on suspicion of terrorism. By February 2017, 10 had been released. The Security Belt officers in the prison told the office the remaining 17 could not be released without an order from the coalition, as they had been arrested by the Security Belt and thus fell under coalition control. Soon after, the prosecutors office identified 35 additional detainees, all also accused of terrorism, for release. Three lawyers said that the prison director told them in a meeting he could not release certain people, even if they had release orders, as the decision rested with the coalition.

Omar and Mustafa: One night in August, at about 1:30 a.m., Security Belt officers broke down the door of a house, shouting they were there to arrest Mustafa, a 17-year-old high school student. Mustafa was accompanying an elderly relative on a trip, so the men took his older brother Omar with them instead. A week later, Mustafa turned himself in, and Security Belt personnel released Omar. While Mustafas family eventually secured a release order for him, Central Prison officials, including the de facto head of the prison, claimed his file was with the coalition and there was nothing they could do about it. A family member said, And you cant go to the coalition. They will shoot you if you try and go to the coalition. A relative who had visited Mustafa said, He is in a very bad way he is a student, this shouldnt have happened to him.

Human Rights Watch has documented multiple allegations that various security forces in police stations and in official and secret detention facilities are mistreating detainees. One man detained in the Central Prison said that he and a few other detainees were blindfolded, handcuffed, and taken to a separate room in the prison. He said he was given multiple electrical shocks. He said he also heard the other three men with him being beaten and given electrical shocks. One of them fell over him, and he could hear the man screaming in pain.

In late August, in a separate case, a man who was out of Aden visiting relatives said his wife went to visit their two sons in the Central Prison, where they had just been transferred after being forcibly disappeared. After the visit, his wife told him that one of their sons vision was impaired, he was only semi-conscious, his head had been visibly wounded, and he had handcuff marks on his wrist. The young man told his mother he had been beaten with a metal object and given electrical shocks. The other son looked psychologically shaken, but not physically abused, their mother said. About two weeks later, the two men disappeared completely. A government official later told the family the men were with the coalition.

In another case, a family member visited a relative in an informal detention facility. His relative told him he had been detained at the UAE base for months before his transfer to the current detention facility. He said he had been interrogated and beaten daily in the base, once until he lost consciousness and after which he remained bed-ridden.

One lawyer said that when they visited the Central Prison in late 2016 they heard four complaints of mistreatment, but the detainees were afraid to raise the cases or act as witnesses due to fears of retaliation. Journalists and human rights activists also told Human Rights Watch they had documented abuse in Adens prisons. Vice Interior Minister Ali Nasser told Human Rights Watch that the Interior Ministry is working on improving the conditions in prisons, but that the ministry requires funding to properly equip the buildings and train staff.

Human Rights Watch documented four cases of children arbitrarily arrested or forcibly disappeared in Aden who were held with adults in the Central Prison and Camp Tariq, a military camp controlled by Adens Security Administration. In addition, a former Central Prison detainee said that seven or eight children were in the ward with him, boys about 15 or 16 years old, when he was there in 2016. He said these boys would come back to the ward crying after interrogations, later telling the prisoners they had been blindfolded and beaten and that officers had threatened to take off their clothes. The father of a 17-year-old who had been detained for more than a year said:

He is young; in the days of the war [when Houthi-Saleh forces entered Aden in 2015] he would shake because of the war. My son is struggling from psychological problems. He is a student. He doesnt want to be in prison.

Lawyers, activists, family members, and former detainees described at least six informal or secret detention facilities in Aden. One person who had collected more than 150 names of those detained by security forces cross-checked their lists with the lists of those detained in the Central Prison and CID, and found that about 50 of them were in neither detention facility. Sources, including government officials, said that lawyers, activists, judges, prosecutors, and international organizations did not have access to the informal detention facilities or secret prisons in Aden. In February, Vice Interior Minister Nasser denied there were any informal detention facilities or secret prisons in Aden.

Many people who have been forcibly disappeared were initially arrested by the Security Belt, and were later told by various government officials that they had been transferred to detention facilities under UAE control and that Yemeni officials and Security Belt officers no longer had the power to intervene.

Multiple sources, including government officials, confirmed that the UAE ran at least one detention facility for terrorism suspects they deemed to be high-value or sensitive cases in Aden. An individual following these cases said they knew of 10 detainees by name who had been transferred to the Central Prison after being missing for three to seven months, and who later reported they were detained by UAE forces. Three men told Human Rights Watch that while they were detained in Central Prison a few men were transferred into the prison who told them they had been detained by the UAE.

Former detainees said that, while they were being transported to another detention facility, the truck carrying them stopped outside the UAEs headquarters in Buraika, a neighborhood in Aden, and deposited there some of the other men who had been arrested. A Yemeni nongovernmental group monitoring detentions said that the Security Belt transferred more than 50 detainees from the Central Prison to the UAE headquarters in Buraika in 2017.

One case involved Saleheddine, who was detained in 2016. A relative of his said contacts in Aden told the family he had been transferred to the UAEs headquarters in Buraika. Multiple high-level officials told the family they did not have power to intervene in the case, as the matter was with the UAE. Months later, guards at the UAE headquarters said there were plans to transfer dozens of detainees to another location. Soon after, Saleheddine called. He confirmed he had been held with the coalition and had been transferred to an informal Security Belt detention facility.

Multiple people in Aden also alleged that the Security Administration, which falls under the Interior Ministry but whose top official is UAE-supported, also ran informal detention facilities and secret prisons, including in Tawahi, an Aden district where the Security Chief lives, and at Camp Tariq in Khormaksar. Human Rights Watch spoke to two former detainees who said they had been detained in an unknown location in Tawahi, and the relative of another detainee who visited his family member in Camp Tariq.

In 2016, a 15-year-old and a 17-year-old were arrested, first taken to a police station, but then disappeared a few days later, family members said. A government official told a family member the 17-year-old had been transferred to an informal detention facility run by the Security Administration. The family member who was able to visit, described the prison as having about seven or eight large metal hangars filled with people. The 17-year-old was in one of them and, when he came out, he looked insane. He later disappeared from the camp.

Nadim and Yusuf: Nadim and Yusuf were arrested one night in early 2017, at about midnight. Yusuf said that one of the officers shoved his face to the ground and accused him of working with ISIS. The officers hit them with the butts of their guns and handcuffed them. Nadim resisted arrest. The officers blindfolded the men, put them in military trucks, and took them to an informal detention facilities. The men were taken to a smaller room. Seven other men were inside, including one who had been shot in the leg he said by the security forces and whose wound was infested with worms. A man in the cell said: This is a no return prison. One man had been detained for eight months. The men told them they were only allowed to wash every two weeks and that when their drinking water ran out, detainees had turned to drinking their own

urine. Both men were released after friends and family members intervened, although three of the men arrested with them remained detained. The two men contacted the family of the man who had been shot. His mother was very happy, as she had thought her son had died.

Local activists in other areas under the Yemeni governments control, for example in Taizz, Lahj, Abyan, and Marib, described similar abuses by government-affiliated security forces.

The UAE and Hadrami Elite Forces

In April 2016, the coalition [retook Mukalla](#), which AQAP had controlled for months. Extremist groups continued to carry out attacks on military installations, killing and wounding [dozens](#) of military forces.



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The UAE has continued to support and direct Yemen forces carrying out counterterrorism and other security campaigns in Hadramawt, primarily the [Hadrami Elite Forces](#). The Hadrami Elite Forces are formally a part of the Yemen Army, specifically the Second Military Zone, which covers parts of Hadramawt governorate. But activists, lawyers, and family members of detainees said that the UAE provides salaries, training, weapons, and direction to the Elite Forces. The UAE informed the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen it had provided military, financial, and training assistance and intelligence, logistic information and aerial intervention, but that the forces were under the control of the Yemeni Armed Forces. The UN Panel concluded that: While nominally under the command of the legitimate Government, they are effectively under the operational control of the United Arab Emirates, which oversees ground operations in Mukalla. A 2016 CIVIC [report](#) concluded the same.

The US [deployed a small number](#) of special forces to offer intelligence and logistical support to UAE-led efforts in Mukalla in April, indefinitely extending the deployment in June. According to [VICE News](#), the US special forces in Mukalla are indirectly backing the UAE-trained forces by advising the UAE on how to carry out the campaign against AQAP. Reuters, however, [reported](#) that the UAE is working with the US to train, manage and equip Yemeni fighters in that effort [against AQAP]. A former Yemeni government official also [alleged](#) that the Hadrami Elite Forces had received US tactical and technical anti-terrorism support.

The Hadrami Elite Forces have arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared dozens of people. Human Rights Watch met members of a committee representing family members of the disappeared who collected the names of 87 people disappeared in Hadramawt's coastal area. Yemeni rights monitors shared a list of 142 people who they said had been arbitrarily arrested or forcibly disappeared in Hadramawt since May 2016, the vast majority by the Hadrami Elite Forces. A family member of a man disappeared in May 2016 said that about 25 men from his town had been disappeared since the UAE entered Mukalla.

The UAE runs unofficial detention facilities in Mukalla, with the principal detention facility at al-Riyan airport, Mukalla's main airport, said family members of detainees, former detainees, and local lawyers and activists. A man whose son was detained by the Hadrami Elite Forces said recently released prisoners and guards working at the prison had confirmed the airport held dozens of prisoners. Families said the forces detained men in the Presidential Palace in Mukalla and at various checkpoints, often before transferring them to al-Riyan.

Lawyers, activists, and independent monitors do not have access to either detention facility. Individuals in Hadramawt said they had spoken by phone with Emirati officers who admitted holding their family members, allowed the families to talk to their missing relatives over the phone, and told them not to protest or speak to the media. Emirati officers use noms-de-guerre. As one woman said, We never know their names. Never. The UAE officials' refusal to provide real names was reminiscent of the Houthis and AQAP, family members said.

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Remi: In the spring of 2016, during the first large-scale security campaign after the coalition pushed AQAP out of Mukalla, men in a military truck arrested Remi. Remi was later released. He had been imprisoned in al-Riyan airport and interrogated by Abu Ahmed, the nom-de-guerre for a UAE officer who multiple families said was in charge of detention facilities. Soon after his release, Remi was again arrested and taken to al-Riyan, on UAE orders, local officials said. In the course of about a year, the family received only one phone call from Remi. He said he was okay and he was calling from a UAE officers phone.

Family members said they had heard that men in the detention facility were being beaten and abused. One of the detention committee members said Yemeni and Emirati officers interrogated detainees and that there had been reports of torture, beating and a lot of things I can't say, that I am embarrassed to say. A prisoner who had been detained said he had been beaten by seven Hadrami Elite Forces officers, punched in the face and hit with wires while being interrogated at a military checkpoint before being transferred to al-Riyan airport.

Human Rights Watch examined written statements by two men who had been detained at the Security Intelligence headquarters, Presidential Palace, and al-Riyan airport. The statements described abuse including beating, exposure to cold temperatures, insults, death threats, and sexual abuse, including forced nudity and threats of rape. Human Rights Watch confirmed that the men had been detained by speaking with friends and family members.

A father whose two sons had been arrested said he was worried about them, as some of the men who had been released from al-Riyan had told him they had been tortured. A Hadramawt local government official told the family the men had been transferred to al-Riyan. He said he could not do anything about the case, as the airport is under Emirati control. Abu Ahmed, the Emirati officer, told the family the men were being held at the airport. One of his sons called after close to a year in detention. His father said his voice seemed weak, that he was crying, and that he said he was suffering. He still did not know what he had been accused of. He said he was kept handcuffed and blindfolded at all times except when eating and using the bathroom. He did not know if his brother was in the same prison.

People in Hadramawt have organized multiple protests and written numerous letters, often addressed to the Hadi government, the Hadramawt governor, and the coalition, asking the authorities to reveal the fate of their family members, allow them to visit the prisons, and refer any cases where there is evidence against an individual to courts.

A former detainee told one man's family he had been detained with their relative in al-Riyan. Abdulkader had been arrested a year earlier. While the governor and regional military commander told the family they did not have the authority to release him, a UAE officer promised the family he would be released soon. He remains detained. His mother, discussing the impact of the disappearances on families, in particular mothers, said: We just want to see our sons.

On February 12, the governor of Hadramawt issued a [circular](#) addressed to the coalition, the head of the Second Military Zone, the General Prosecutor, the General Security Director and the police, stating that no forces should arrest anyone without an order from the prosecutor. The same day, Abubakr Hussein Salem, the governor of Abyan, [issued](#) a similar circular, a Yemeni outlet reported. However, people in Hadramawt said the Hadrami Elite Forces continued to raid homes and arbitrarily detain and disappear men in Mukalla after the circular was issued.

In May, just before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, about 18 men were released from al-Riyan, family members said. Dozens remained detained. The UAE, Yemen, and others should immediately release all those held arbitrarily, Human Rights Watch said.

Bahrain Death Sentences Follow Torture, Sham Trials

Suspicious Killings and Extrajudicial Executions by Egyptian Security Forces

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