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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High
Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



To end humanitarian devastation, the time is now for the United Nations (UN) to ensure accountability and reparations for human rights crimes in Yemen

Grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law

For over six years, the world has watched as war has torn Yemen apart and devastated its people. Impunity for war crimes and other violations of international law have fueled the conflict, creating the world's "largest man-made humanitarian catastrophe"¹.

In 2020, the warring parties in Yemen continued their wider assault on human rights in Yemen, with civilians killed, wounded, arbitrarily detained, disappeared and tortured. The warring parties also obstructed humanitarian aid, recruited and exploited children, occupied schools and hospitals, and attacked healthcare and humanitarian workers.

Grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights were committed across the country by all warring parties including the Ansar Allah (Houthi) group, the Saudi Arabia/United Arab Emirates-led coalition, the forces of the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and armed groups loyal to it, and the United Arab Emirates-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC).

The attack on Aden International Airport on December 30, 2020, which coincided with the arrival of the new unity, power-sharing cabinet formed in December 2020 between the internationally recognized government and the Southern Transitional Council, is yet another on a long and ever-growing list of tragedies underscoring the urgent need to end impunity and ensure accountability for perpetrators and reparations for victims. The attack, which killed twenty-two people and wounded dozens, including International Committee of the Red Cross staff members and journalists², was called a "transgression of such magnitude [that it] potentially amounts to a war crime"³ by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths.

As 2021 begins, the warring parties continue to commit serious violations, and the fate of millions rests in part upon whether or not the international community will heed the recent calls of the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE) and take adequate steps to address this "pandemic of impunity."

Ensuring criminal accountability for international crimes committed in Yemen

In its third annual report to the Human Rights Council⁴, the GEE said it supported the "establishment of a criminally focused investigation body [...] to conduct further investigations and prepare case files to be shared with relevant prosecutorial authorities." The experts also recommended the Security Council refer the situation in Yemen to the

¹ Crises Overview by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. See: <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/crisis-overview#:~:text=Four%20years%20of%20relentless%20conflict,humanitarian%20crisis%20in%20the%20world.>

² Twitter Statement by Committee to Protect Journalists Middle East and North Africa (30 December 2020). See: <https://twitter.com/CPJMENA/status/1344345603858456578>.

³ Press Release by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen on UN Special Envoy's Call with Yemen's Foreign Minister (31 December 2020). See: <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/press-release-un-special-envoy%E2%80%99s-call-yemen%E2%80%99s-foreign-minister>.

⁴ Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (28 September 2020). See: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/2020-09-09-report.pdf>.

International Criminal Court, and encouraged third States to collaborate and undertake universal jurisdiction prosecutions where appropriate. In the longer term, the Group encouraged “further dialogue about the creation of a special tribunal such as a ‘hybrid tribunal’ to prosecute cases of those most responsible.” The GEE also reiterated the importance of victims’ right to remedy, including reparations.

The undersigned organizations call on the UN and its member states to urgently take up the GEE’s recommendations, including by exploring the establishment of international mechanisms aimed at ensuring criminal accountability for international crimes committed in Yemen.

In addition to pursuing concrete steps to “help bridge the acute accountability gap,” such as advancing a holistic and credible accountability and redress agenda for Yemen, states should continue supporting the GEE, including by providing sufficient resources to continue its work documenting and reporting on human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen to the UN Human Rights Council.

Mwatana for Human Rights, an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.