



THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IS PARAMOUNT TO OUR EFFORTS

[ADEN – 14 DECEMBER] On 12 December Human Rights Watch issued a statement criticising the slow implementation of the Riyadh Agreement and lack of action in response to human rights issues. The Southern Transitional Council (STC) had constructively engaged with HRW as part of this process. Our Engagement with HRW included responding in-depth to a list of questions from HRW, as well as hosting a delegation from HRW at the STC Headquarters in Aden recently where we shared reports of human rights violations against Southern people, including the continued detention of STC members and supporters in Shabwa by government forces, as well outlined actions and measures taken by the STC to meet the demands of our people. Along this line, the [STC wrote to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) on 10 December advocating the human rights of the South.

As set out to HRW and in our subsequent exchange of letters with the organisation, the protection of civilians and upholding of international law in the South is at the forefront of the Southern Transitional Council. In this regard, we refute any allegations of civilians being arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared by the STC. We call on HRW to share any credible evidence they have on the matter.

The Southern people have been the victims of human rights violations dating back to decades. Our people have been arbitrarily detained, tortured, Southern leaders assassinated, and thousands sent into exile at the hands of Sanaa authorities since the unification of the North and South Yemen in 1990. In 2015 the Houthis and forces loyal to the former President Saleh invaded Aden, where hundreds of Southerners were unlawfully killed and many more injured. We urge HRW and other human rights NGOs to report on the violations against the Southern people comprehensively instead of a piecemeal approach. As we informed HRW in person, the STC would not stop in [advocating for justice and accountability](#) for the Southern people to address these crimes.

Against this background, the STC took action to ensure the restoration of stability and security in Aden in early August. This ensured the protection of all civilians in the South regardless of their ethnicities, religion or tribal affiliations. In response to reports of northerners being harassed in the South, the STC leadership immediately condemned those isolated events and took decisive action to work with Southern security forces to hold those responsible to account. This was followed by a STC Presidential decree that ensured the safety of all civilians in the South, as well as measures for civilians to raise reports of any further violations directly to the STC.

In this regard, the STC's focus remains on ensuring the stability and safety of the South through a political process. This was our sole aim in sitting at the negotiation table with the government of

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Southern Transitional Council

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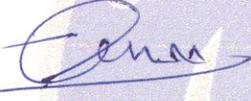
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Yemen, and where we signed the [Riyadh Agreement](#) under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. We agree with HRW's political stance on the importance of this agreement being implemented. This is why we have worked with the Yemeni government to facilitate the return of the Prime Minister and other Ministers to Aden to get the governance on the ground running again, to ensure basic services are being delivered for our people, and to continue in implementing the Agreement at the technical level, including nominating figures to take over as the next governor and police chief in Aden.

Nevertheless, much more collective action is needed to implement this Agreement, and the STC is doubling its efforts working with our regional allies to do so. The Agreement offers a critical window of opportunity as a stepping stone to the broader UN-led political process to secure a sustainable end to the Yemen conflict. This is the STC's focus, and we are clear on our position in playing a decisive and constructive partner at the UN negotiating table.

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