

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

20 February 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 53/4 and 58/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **military strikes conducted by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) on Al Hudaydah's main port in Yemen on 20 July 2024, which reportedly resulted in the death of six port workers and the injury of more than 80 others**. The reported targeting of infrastructure causing disproportionate harm to civilians, raises serious concerns regarding Israel's compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular those relating to the protection of the right to life.

According to the information received:

Since October 2023, in the context of the wider regional escalation following the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, Ansar Allah (Houthis), which exercises *de facto* control over large areas of Yemen, including Sana'a and Al Hudaydah, has reportedly launched missiles and drones towards Israel and conducted attacks affecting maritime traffic in the Red Sea and surrounding waters, often referring to the situation in Gaza.¹ In this broader context, Israel has reportedly conducted several strikes in areas under Houthi control in Yemen. Some of these strikes have reportedly resulted in civilian deaths and injuries and have caused damage to infrastructure of an apparent civilian character.

In particular, strikes on Al Hudaydah Governorate on 20 July 2024 affected port-related and fuel infrastructure, reportedly resulting in six deaths and more than 80 injuries, including among civilian workers,² and destroying a power station. Furthermore, additional strikes were carried out on 19 December 2024 in and around the ports of Al Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Isa, as well as against power stations in Sana'a, with United Nations reporting referring to civilian casualties and extensive damage affecting port capacity.³ On 26 December 2024, additional strikes reportedly affected Sana'a International Airport, Red Sea port infrastructure and power facilities; reports referred to civilian deaths

¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications, Daily Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, 14 May 2025 (DB/250514), available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/db250514.doc.htm>

² United Nations News, "Israeli air strikes on Yemen's Hodeidah kill six, injure 80: UN", 21 July 2024, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1152346>

³ United Nations, Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Yemen (SG/SM/22501), 19 December 2024, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sghsm22501.doc.htm>

and injuries, and the World Health Organization (WHO) publicly indicated that members of its team were present at the airport at the time,⁴ and one staff member of United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) crew was injured.⁵

The military strikes conducted by Israel on Hudaydah port on 20 July 2024

Al Hudaydah port, situated on the Red Sea in western Yemen, is widely reported to be one of the most important ports in the country and a major lifeline for imports. Approximately 80 per cent of humanitarian supplies and around 70 per cent of fuel and commercial imports entering Yemen pass through Al Hudaydah port.⁶

The port has also been subject to United Nations monitoring arrangements, including through the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA), established by Security Council resolution 2452 (2019) and subsequently renewed, to support the ceasefire that resulted from the Stockholm agreement and the redeployment of forces to the ports.

On 20 July 2024, shortly before 6.11 p.m. (Local Time), the Israeli armed forces reportedly conducted airstrikes affecting Al Hudaydah port, Ras Khatib Power Stations, and areas in Al Hudaydah city. The strike reportedly killed six civilian employees of the Yemen Oil Company and injured approximately 83 others. It is alleged that the “Operation Long Arm” involved twelve Israeli military aircraft and the use of GBU-39 munitions, and that the strikes began in Al Hudaydah city and targeted oil storage facilities at the port. It is further reported that three strikes have hit infrastructure described as vital civilian infrastructure, including oil, gas and petroleum storage facilities, causing fires. Additionally, a series of strikes impacted the thermal power station in the city, resulting in power outages in several districts. Some reporting further indicated that the fuel-tank fires continued for several days, and that an additional fuel tank reportedly exploded approximately one week later, reigniting flames.

In total, 29 out of the 41 oil storage tanks, two operational cranes, and an oil tank connected to the Hudaydah power plant were damaged or destroyed by the strikes. It was reported that the attack killed at least six port workers and injured 83 others, most of them suffering from severe burns.

On 20 July 2024, at 6.21 p.m., the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed responsibility for the strikes through a public statement on X,⁷ indicating that

4 World Health Organization, “Statement by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General on the attack on the Sana’a airport, Yemen”, 26 December 2024, available at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/26-12-2024-statement-by-dr-tedros-adhanom-ghebreyesus--who-director-general-on-the-attack-on-the-sana-a-airport--yemen>

5 United Nations, *Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Yemen*, 26 December 2024, available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2024-12-26/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-yemen>

6 Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, *The Yemen Review Quarterly: July–September 2024* (15 September 2024), available at <https://sanaacenter.org/the-yemen-review/july-sept-2024> (accessed on 29 December 2025)

7 Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), post on X, 20 July 2024: “A short while ago, IDF fighter jets struck military targets of the Houthi terrorist regime in the area of the Al Hudaydah Port in Yemen in response to the hundreds of attacks carried out against the State of Israel in recent months.” Available at: <https://t.co/LBGSM9ZQ7u>, (accessed on

IDF fighter jets had struck “military targets” of the Houthis in the area of Al Hudaydah port in response to attacks against Israel.

The following day, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated in a video, shared via X,⁸ stating that the attacks were in retaliation for a “deadly drone attack near the US Consulate in Tel Aviv” and claiming that “the targeted port is used for smuggling weapons from Iran to the Houthis” and asking the international community to “support Israel’s actions to defend against this Iranian terror axis and ensure the aggressors pay a heavy price.”

The strikes caused unprecedented damage to most of the port’s oil storage capacity. The United Nations World Food Program recognized that the attack destroyed approximately 800,000 liters of fuel; and around 100,000 tons of storage capacity was substantially damaged or destroyed.⁹ This has reduced the fuel storage remaining in the governorate to 50,000 tons. The strikes ignited a massive fire that burned for at least three days, with toxic fumes and contamination posing serious health risks to nearby communities and the environment. Reports also indicate that the strikes caused oil spills into the harbour, which caused widespread contamination of the surrounding sea and soil.

Furthermore, the strikes also impacted Hudaydah’s main power plant – Ras Khatib – the city’s primary source of electricity, which supplied energy to hospitals, schools, businesses, and residential areas. Located in one of Yemen’s hottest regions, the plant produced essential power for fans, air conditioning, and refrigeration, which are critical for public health.

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply concerned about the reported civilian deaths and injuries and the reported widespread damage to port-related fuel infrastructure and the main power plant in Al Hudaydah following the strikes of 20 July 2024. We underline that port workers who were allegedly killed in the attack fall under the category of civilians and persons not actively engaged in combat. The information received raises serious concerns regarding Israel’s compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the customary rules on distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack, and under international human rights law, in particular the protection of the right to life and the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as interpreted by the Human Rights Committee in general comment No. 36 (CCPR/C/GC/36).

We emphasise that, in the conduct of hostilities, parties must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives, and may direct attacks only against military objectives; in case of doubt, an object normally dedicated to civilian purposes must be presumed not to be used for military purposes. Assuming the port constituted a dual-use object (serving both

29 December 2025).

⁸ Benjamin Netanyahu (@netanyahu), post on X, 21 July 2024, available at:

<https://x.com/netanyahu/status/1814948186953265590> (accessed on 29 December 2025)

⁹ United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), *Yemen Situation Report – 7 July 2024*, 7 July 2024, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/wfp-yemen-situation-report-7-july-2024> (accessed on 30 December 2025).

military and civilian functions), the rules of proportionality and precautions in attack apply in full. Attacks expected to cause incidental civilian death or injury, or damage to civilian objects, that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated are prohibited. Parties to a conflict must take all feasible precautions, including feasible target verification, to avoid and, in any event, minimize incidental civilian harm, and must cancel or suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that the target is not a military objective or that the attack would be disproportionate; where circumstances permit, effective advance warning must be given of attacks which may affect the civilian population.¹⁰

Additionally, attacks on the power plant, the port, and its fuel stores clearly raise a foreseeable risk of indirect harm for Yemeni civilians given the dire humanitarian situation that already exists and the challenges in rebuilding infrastructure.

In this regard, we are particularly concerned by the reported repeated strikes affecting Al Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Isa, power stations in Sana'a, and Sana'a International Airport, as well as Red Sea port infrastructure and power facilities, together with reports of civilian deaths and injuries, including the fact that the strike on Sana'a airport occurred while WHO personnel were present and that a member of a UNHAS crew was injured. These incidents raise serious concerns regarding compliance with the above obligations, including rigorous target verification, the taking of all feasible precautions to avoid and, in any event, minimize civilian harm, and the obligation to cancel or suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that the target is not a military objective or that the attack would be disproportionate.

We are further concerned that strikes affecting fuel imports and electricity generation may foreseeably disrupt essential services, including water, sanitation, transportation and the functioning of hospitals and other vital public facilities, particularly in densely populated urban centres such as Sana'a, Dhamar, Al Hudaydah and Hajjah. Such foreseeable effects are relevant to the assessment of incidental civilian harm under IHL and may also implicate the duty to respect and ensure the right to life under article 6 ICCPR, including in armed conflict settings where IHL and IHRL operate in a complementary manner (Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36).

We recall that the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen recommended that parties "immediately end any measures that worsen the humanitarian crisis" (A/HRC/48/20, para. 89(c)) and "conduct prompt, transparent, independent, impartial, thorough, credible, effective and gender-sensitive investigations" of violations and crimes and ensure accountability (A/HRC/48/20, para. 90(a)). In light of the above, we urge your Excellency's Government to act in accordance with these recommendations, to ensure full compliance with applicable international law, and to refrain from any further attacks that may harm civilians or civilian objects.

Finally, we underscore the obligation to ensure accountability for potentially unlawful loss of life and serious civilian harm. Under IHRL, this includes the duty to conduct prompt, effective, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into

¹⁰ Customary IHL, including as reflected in the ICRC Customary IHL Study, rules 15-20

potentially unlawful deaths and, where warranted, to prosecute those responsible, guided by relevant international standards including the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016). Under customary IHL, States must also investigate war crimes and, where appropriate, prosecute suspects (ICRC Customary IHL Study, rule 158); where applicable, individual responsibility may extend beyond direct perpetrators, including under the principle of command/superior responsibility under international criminal law.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on precautionary measures taken to ensure compliance with the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution under international humanitarian law, and to guarantee the safety of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, and civilian objects.
3. Kindly explain what measures have been put in place to investigate possible breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to hold those responsible accountable.
4. Please provide detailed information as to how Israel is safeguarding the rights of civilians in Yemen despite its ongoing military activities, as was recommended by the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen.
5. Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure that any victims of unlawful attacks, as well as their families, have access to effective remedies, including reparation and compensation.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate

a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter has been also sent to the Government of Yemen, as well as to the de-facto authorities in Sana'a.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Morris Tidball-Binz

Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Ben Saul

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we recall the relevant obligations of your Excellency's Government under international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL), as well as authoritative guidance on their interpretation.

International human rights law

The Right to Life

We would like to refer to article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that every individual has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The right to life constitutes a jus cogens, peremptory norm from which no derogation is permitted. In its general comment 36, paragraph 2, the Human Rights Committee notes that article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by your Excellency's Government on 3 October 1991, recognizes and protects the right to life of all human beings without derogation even in situations of armed conflict.

The Human Rights Committee has further clarified that, in situations of armed conflict, IHL and IHRL are complementary. In particular, practices inconsistent with IHL that entail a risk to the lives of civilians and other protected persons, such as directing attacks against civilians or civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, or failure to apply precaution and proportionality, may also amount to a violation of article 6 of the ICCPR. The Committee has also indicated that States should, in general, disclose the criteria for attacking individuals or objects with lethal force where deprivation of life is expected, including the legal basis for attacks, the process of target identification, the means and methods used, and whether less harmful alternatives were considered, and must investigate alleged or suspected violations of article 6 in armed conflict in accordance with relevant international standards.

Extraterritorial application: The Human Rights Committee has interpreted States parties' obligations under article 6 as extending to all persons subject to their jurisdiction, including persons over whose enjoyment of the right to life a State exercises power or effective control, and also to persons outside the State's territory whose right to life is affected by the State's military or other activities in a direct and reasonably foreseeable manner. In this regard, allegations of lethal operations affecting civilians abroad may engage the State's obligations under article 6 ICCPR, alongside the applicable rules of IHL.

Positive obligations to protect life, including in relation to essential services: The Human Rights Committee has further emphasized that the duty to protect life under article 6 also entails positive obligations to address general conditions in society that may give rise to direct threats to life or prevent individuals from enjoying their right to life with dignity, including where relevant through ensuring access, without delay, to essential goods and services.

Duty to investigate, prosecute, and provide an effective remedy: We underline that IHRL requires effective remedies for violations, including through prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into potentially unlawful deaths, and, where the evidence so warrants, the prosecution of those responsible. The Human Rights Committee has affirmed that investigations into alleged violations of article 6 must be independent, impartial, prompt, thorough, effective, credible, transparent, allow victims' participation, and should be guided by relevant international standards, including the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death.

In his report to the 50th session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/50/34, para. 80), the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has similarly underscored that the duty to investigate the cause and manner of potentially unlawful deaths promptly, thoroughly, effectively, independently, impartially and transparently is integral to the right to life and applies without distinction of any kind.

Rights to food, health and water in relation to the right to life

We also recall that the Human Rights Committee has affirmed that the right to life should not be interpreted narrowly and entails positive obligations where necessary to ensure access without delay to essential goods and services required to sustain life, including food and health-related services.

With respect to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), we note that Israel signed the Covenant on 3 October 1991. We recall that articles 11 and 12 of the ICESCR address the rights to an adequate standard of living (including adequate food) and to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which are particularly implicated where disruption of fuel supplies foreseeably affects water, sanitation, food supply chains and the functioning of hospitals and other essential services.

International humanitarian law

We recall that IHL applicable in armed conflict, including customary IHL, binds all parties and regulates the conduct of hostilities, including through the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack, as well as rules on warnings, and special protections for medical and humanitarian personnel.

Principle of distinction

We underline that parties to an armed conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives, and may direct attacks only against military objectives. Civilian objects may not be attacked unless and for such time as they become military objectives; in case of doubt, an object normally dedicated to civilian purposes must be presumed not to be used for military purposes.

We further recall that a "military objective" is limited to objects which, by their nature, location, purpose or use, make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization offers a definite military

advantage in the circumstances ruling at the time. Accordingly, the fact that an object generates revenue or broad economic benefit does not, by itself, render it a military objective absent the requisite nexus and definite military advantage at the time of attack. We also note that the UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) has been mandated by the Security Council to support the Hudaydah Agreement, including with respect to Hudaydah city and the ports of Hudaydah, Ras Issa and Salif, including in relation to the presence of military personnel and material.

Principle of proportionality

We recall that attacks expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, or damage to civilian objects that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated are prohibited. We further recall that proportionality assessments must take into account reasonably foreseeable incidental harm, including foreseeable reverberating effects on civilians where relevant, and that this obligation operates together with the duty to take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event minimize, incidental civilian harm.

In this regard, if the port was a military target, we are concerned that it caused disproportionate loss of civilian life. The principle of proportionality, outlined in customary rule 14, establishes that an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is to be considered an indiscriminate attack and therefore prohibited. The proportionality of an attack thus balances the possible advantage that can be gained from a military objective with the expected harm posed to the civilian population. The considerable loss of life of civilian port workers, coupled with the extensive harm to civilian property, appear to be excessive relative to the military advantage of causing some disruption to the weapons or fuel supply to Ansar Allah. In addition, the principle of proportionality requires an assessment of all reasonably foreseeable harm to civilians flowing from the attack. The port's ability to remain operational is essential to importing humanitarian aid to support the well-being of millions of Yemenis. Its destruction risks worsening an already dire humanitarian situation in the country, including efforts to address famine and spread of disease, which is disproportionately affecting children according to UNICEF.¹¹

Principle of precaution

We underline that parties are required to take all feasible precautions to verify that targets are military objectives; to choose means and methods of attack with a view to avoiding, and in any event minimizing, incidental civilian harm; and to cancel or suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that the target is not a military objective or that the attack would be disproportionate. Parties must also give effective advance warning of attacks which may affect the civilian population, unless circumstances do not permit.

¹¹ UNICEF. Yemen crisis (Emergencies). United Nations Children's Fund. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis> (accessed 30 January 2026).

Protection of the wounded and sick; medical and humanitarian personnel

We further refer to the obligation to respect and protect the wounded and sick and those caring for them, and protections afforded to medical units and humanitarian personnel, which must not be attacked or impeded in the performance of their humanitarian functions.

Accountability and investigations under international law

We recall that serious violations of IHL may, depending on the circumstances, constitute war crimes under international law and give rise to individual criminal responsibility. We further recall that responsibility may extend beyond direct perpetrators to those who ordered, authorized, or otherwise bear responsibility, including under command/superior responsibility where commanders knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that subordinates were committing or about to commit violations and failed to take necessary and reasonable measures within their power to prevent such acts or to submit the matter for investigation and prosecution.

In this connection, we recall that the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen has urged parties to immediately end measures that worsen the humanitarian crisis and to conduct prompt, transparent, independent, impartial, thorough, credible, effective and gender-sensitive investigations of violations and crimes, and to ensure accountability.

Human rights and counterterrorism

Finally, we recall that numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council reaffirm that any measures taken to combat terrorism or violent extremism must comply with States' obligations under international law, in particular IHRL, IHL (as applicable) and refugee law, and must conform to the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination. We further recall the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288), which underscores that effective counterterrorism and the protection of human rights are complementary and mutually reinforcing.