

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300

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March 22, 2017

H.E. Hisham Sharaf
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Yemen

CC: Alia Faisal Latif
Minister of Human Rights
Ministry of Human Rights
Republic of Yemen

Brig. Gen. Mohammed Naser Al-Atafi
Minister of Defense
Ministry of Defense
Republic of Yemen

Subject: Houthi-Saleh Use of Antipersonnel and Antivehicle Landmines

Dear Minister Sharaf,

We write to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its continued cooperation with Human Rights Watch and to raise our continued concerns regarding the use of landmines in Yemen by forces under the control of or affiliated with the Sanaa-based Ministry of Defense. We appreciated the September 7, 2016 reply to our last letter on this matter.

As you are aware, the Mine Ban Treaty, which Yemen signed in 1997 and ratified in 1999, prohibits the use of antipersonnel mines by any actor under any circumstances. Any use of antipersonnel mines is also a violation of Yemen's criminal code. While antivehicle mines are not prohibited by the Mine Ban Treaty, they are often used indiscriminately in violation of international humanitarian law.

Human Rights Watch has documented new evidence that forces under the control of or affiliated with the Sanaa-based Ministry of Defense used antipersonnel and antivehicle landmines in Aden, Marib, Taizz and Sanaa governorates. We previously documented civilian casualties from landmine use in [Aden](#), [Abyan](#), [Marib](#), [Lahj](#), and [Taizz](#) in 2015 and 2016.

We seek information regarding the use of landmines by forces under the control of or affiliated with the Ministry of Defense. We kindly request a response by April 2, 2017 so that we may reflect your response in the upcoming report that we plan to publish on this issue:

1. Have forces under the command of or affiliated with the Ministry of Defense, including Ansar Allah or local popular forces, laid

- antipersonnel mines in Yemen, for example near Bab al-Mandab or Mocha, Taizz governorate, in Khormaksar, al-Basataeen, Green City, Dar Saad, Mansoor and al-Buraika neighborhoods in Aden governorate, or in Majzer, Mass, near the Marib Damm, in Harib valley, Marib governorate, or Nihm, Sanaa governorate? If so, where and when have they laid these mines, and by what units and under whose command? From where did these individuals or units acquire the mines?
2. Do the Ministry of Defense or military forces affiliated with the Ministry stockpile any antipersonnel landmines such as PPM-2 and GYATA antipersonnel mines or Claymore mines made in China? Have any forces under the command of or affiliated with the Ministry of Defense used or laid victim-activated improvised explosive devices?
 3. Have the Sanaa-based authorities taken any steps to hold individuals or units, if any, who laid antipersonnel mines accountable? For example, in your September response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it planned to establish a committee to investigate new use of antipersonnel mines in Taizz. Have you taken any steps to open such an investigation?
 4. We welcome the September 2016 statement by the ministry affirming Yemen's adherence and commitment to abide by the obligations of the Mine Ban Treaty. Could the Ministry of Defense in Sanaa publicly reaffirm its commitment to complying with the Mine Ban Treaty, as well as Yemen's Penal Code, to assure the international community it will not permit the use of antipersonnel landmines by forces under its control?

Please do not hesitate to contact Kristine Beckerle, Yemen researcher, at beckerk@hrw.org or +1-646-705-2681, should you have questions.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to a positive response.

Sincerely,



Steve Goose
Executive Director
Arms Division
Human Rights Watch



Sarah Leah Whitson
Executive Director
Middle East and North Africa
Human Rights Watch