

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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December 3, 2019

Mr. Aidarus Al-Zoubaidi
President of the Southern Transitional Council
Aden, Yemen

*CC: Human Rights Department
Southern Transitional Council
Aden, Yemen*

Re: Arbitrary Detentions, Enforced Disappearances and Deportations

Dear President Al-Zoubaidi,

We write to inquire about reports Human Rights Watch received that Southern Transitional Council (STC) security forces operating in the city and governorate of Aden have arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared local residents, as well as denied Yemeni civilians entry into Aden city.

As you are aware, since the current conflict began in 2015, we have been documenting human rights abuses and violations of the laws of war across Yemen, including the pervasive use of arbitrary detentions and forcible disappearances by parties to the conflict. Human Rights Watch has documented arbitrary detentions in areas under Houthi forces' control in northern Yemen and unlawful detention and ill-treatment of civilians in southern Yemen.

In light of the latest clashes between STC security forces and the Yemeni government forces in August and September 2019, we have documented that STC security forces carried out serious abuses in Aden during this period, including arbitrary detentions.

We seek more information regarding recent human rights abuses as part of the recent clashes. We kindly request a response by December 12, 2019 so that we may reflect your response in our upcoming report:

1. How many civilian detainees are the STC security forces currently holding from the August and September clashes, and where are these detainees being held?

2. How many of these detainees have been brought before an impartial official or judge to determine the lawfulness of their detention?
3. Do detainees have access to family members or lawyers?
4. Has the STC received allegations of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, ill-treatment of detainees, or restricting entry of Yemenis perceived to be from northern Yemen into Aden city by forces under your control? If so, how many cases, and what action has been in response?
5. Has the STC investigated or prosecuted any cases of unlawful detentions, ill-treatment of detainees, or restricting entry of Yemenis perceived to be from northern Yemen into Aden city by forces under their control? If so, how many cases and what was the outcome of these investigations/prosecutions?
6. What measures is STC taking to ensure that the merging of STC and Yemeni government security forces, as announced under the Riyadh Agreement, will respect and protect the rights of Yemenis and curtail serious abuses in the future?
7. What complaint mechanisms, if any, you have created for residents who have faced harassment or abuse by local security forces?

We would welcome any further observations on this issue and documents that would assist our research.

Please do not hesitate to contact Afrah Nasser, Human Rights Watch's Yemen researcher, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], should you have questions. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to a positive response.

Sincerely,

Michael Page
Deputy Director
Middle East and North Africa
Human Rights Watch