



## Increasing Systematic Sexual Violence Against Women in Yemen Requires Joint Efforts

June 19, 2024

Justice4Yemen Pact

Every year, June 19<sup>th</sup> is a powerful reminder of the 2008 UN Security Council resolution condemning the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and an obstacle to peace. This day underscores the devastating psychological impact of sexual assault by armed groups in conflicts and wars and highlights the urgent need to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence.

### The situation in Yemen

In Yemen, the [Justice4Yemen Pact](#) expresses its deep disappointment at the persistent and widespread sexual violence. The situation in Yemen shows two main types of sexual violence against women. The first type involves [acts perpetrated directly by warring parties, and non-state military actors](#). These groups deliberately use sexual violence as a tactic of war to terrorize communities, punish perceived enemies and gain control of territory. The premeditated nature of this violence underscores the urgent need for international accountability and justice mechanisms to address these war crimes.

The second type of sexual violence arises from [the breakdown of societal and institutional structures](#). This breakdown exacerbates existing gender inequalities and norms that unfairly blame women for the violence they suffer. [Displacement and the collapse of legal and protection](#) systems make women and girls particularly vulnerable as traditional support networks disintegrate. In this chaotic environment, gender norms often stigmatize victims rather than perpetrators, hindering efforts to report assaults and seek justice. These two types of violence are linked: The strategic use of sexual violence by armed groups contributes to the breakdown of societal structures, while the breakdown of these structures allows this violence to continue unchecked. To break the cycle of silence and impunity, it is crucial to challenge and change these harmful norms. In order to develop a comprehensive strategy to protect women and end sexual violence in conflict zones, both direct violence by warring parties and indirect violence resulting from the breakdown of society must be addressed.

Another important impact of the war is the dramatic increase in gender-based violence—including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)—which has become a nationwide problem. Yemen consistently ranks last or second to last in the [World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index](#). In 2017, [Yemen was the worst place in the world to be a woman, as rates of gender-based violence skyrocketed due to the conflict](#). SGBV in Yemen [takes many forms, including rape, assault, early and forced marriages, and the sexual exploitation of vulnerable groups](#) such as internally displaced people and immigrants.

[Cybercrime against women and women activists](#) is on the rise due to digital vulnerabilities, especially in social media. In online blackmail, victims are threatened with the publication of sensitive media in exchange for money or sexual services. The lack of specific laws on cybercrime in Yemen and the bias against women pose a challenge for protection.



## Our commitment and call to action

The Justice4Yemen Pact continues to advocate for the defense of women's rights, protecting them from violations and addressing the complexities of Yemen. We call on human rights organizations, international institutions, and women's rights activists to step up their efforts to promote and protect women's rights in Yemen.

## Key Recommendations

1. Immediate cessation of violations: All parties must end the ongoing violations of women's rights and work towards a peaceful and just solution in Yemen.
2. Compliance with international agreements: Parties must commit to upholding international agreements on women's rights and strictly prohibit rape and other forms of sexual violence and adhere to international standards in conflict.
3. Support women-led organizations: Support women-led civil society organizations to remove barriers to protection, equality and justice and address the root causes of sexual violence.
4. Confidential treatment of cases: Ensure confidentiality in the handling of sexual violence cases to protect the identity of victims and prevent retaliation.
5. Protection of female prisoners: Take measures to protect female prisoners from sexual violence, e.g. by deploying female guards in women's prisons and providing humanitarian assistance.
6. Prioritize health and protection: prioritize the health and protection of women, girls, and marginalized groups, especially considering collapsed justice and health systems that normalize sexual violence.
7. The international community's responsibility: The international community must take its responsibility seriously, protect civilians from abuses and prioritize accountability, reparations, and restitution in the political process.
8. Integrate accountability principles: Ensure that the principles of accountability and justice are included in the political negotiation processes.
9. Improve the gender-sensitive legal framework: Reform biased laws and regulations to eliminate discrimination against women, especially on issues such as sexual assault.
10. Improve protection systems for survivors: Activate protection systems to support women by providing robust complaint mechanisms and comprehensive protection measures including cybercrimes and extortions.
11. Documentation and reporting of cases: Introduce and strengthen mechanisms for systematic documentation and reporting of cases of sexual violence to ensure accountability and justice for victims.
12. Prioritize Evidence-Based Research and Statistical Analysis.
  - Rigorous, evidence-based research and comprehensive statistical analysis are essential to understand, address and raise awareness of the scope and impact of sexual violence against women, supporting the development of effective policies and interventions.



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Justice4Yemen Pact Coalition,

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1. Abductees' Mothers Association (AMA)
2. Al-Amal Women's and Sociocultural Foundation (AWSF)
3. Center for Strategic Studies to Support Women and Children (CSWC)
4. Free Media Center for Investigative Journalism
5. Marib Dam Foundation for Social Development (MDF)
6. Musaala Organization
7. SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties
8. Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC)
9. Watch for Human Rights
10. Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV)