Yemen | Condemnation of the Houthi Court Ruling Against Journalist Mohammed Dabwan Al-Mayahi: A Flagrant Violation of the Right to Free Expression and an Escalation of Repression Against Journalists in Yemen

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HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement condemns the ruling issued on May 24, 2025, by the Specialized Criminal Court under the Houthi group against journalist Mohammed Dabwan Al-Mayahi, considering it a serious violation of fundamental rights, particularly the right to freedom of expression, and a further intensification of the use of the judiciary as a political tool to suppress journalists in Yemen.

The court, which lacks legal and constitutional legitimacy, sentenced journalist Mohammed Dabwan Al-Mayahi to one and a half years in prison and imposed a fine of five million Yemeni riyals, alongside a decision to ban him from engaging in any journalistic or media activities. This decision is a direct violation of the rights of journalists. It represents an assault on free expression, posing a serious threat to any real efforts for reform in the country. This ruling contradicts Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information without interference.

This ruling follows more than eight months of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, beginning on September 20, 2024, based on posts and opinions shared by Al-Miyahi on social media platforms, in violation of basic legal standards.

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement affirms that the Specialized Criminal Court, established in 1999 to handle terrorism cases, has no legal jurisdiction over publishing or press-related matters. The use of this court to prosecute journalists constitutes systematic weaponization of the judiciary for political retaliation, which directly conflicts with Yemen’s international obligations to protect freedom of the press.

In a disturbing development, the issuance of this ruling was accompanied by a public incitement campaign led by prominent figures within the Houthi group, including Nasr al-Din Amer, head of the Yemen News Agency (Saba) under Houthi control, who published on the platform X (formerly Twitter), justifying violence against journalists, stating that if the journalist “were anywhere else, he would have been eliminated without trial.” This represents public incitement against journalists and directly threatens their safety.

The incitement campaign has escalated to include public calls for the execution of Al-Miyahi by some individuals and activists affiliated with the group, which constitutes a clear violation of the right to life and reflects a hostile climate that undermines the rule of law in Yemen.

This incitement campaign, coinciding with the unjust ruling, constitutes a compound assault on press freedom in Yemen and underscores that journalists and human rights defenders in Yemen continue to face arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, and systematic defamation and incitement campaigns.

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement demands the following:

- The immediate and unconditional release of journalist Mohammed Dabwan Al-Mayahi.
- Annulling the ruling issued by the illegitimate court and ceasing the use of the judiciary as a tool for political retaliation against journalists.
- Ending security and judicial persecution against journalists and human rights defenders inside Yemen and abroad.

> **HuMENA stresses that the international community's repeated neglect of the serious violations committed against journalists in Yemen fosters a culture of impunity and encourages the Houthi group to continue targeting journalists and using the judiciary as a tool for political vengeance. This reality presents a direct threat to the civil and media spaces in Yemen and signals the potential transformation of the country into a zone of forced silence where freedoms are repressed and free speech is criminalized, in a blatant violation of international human rights standards.**

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