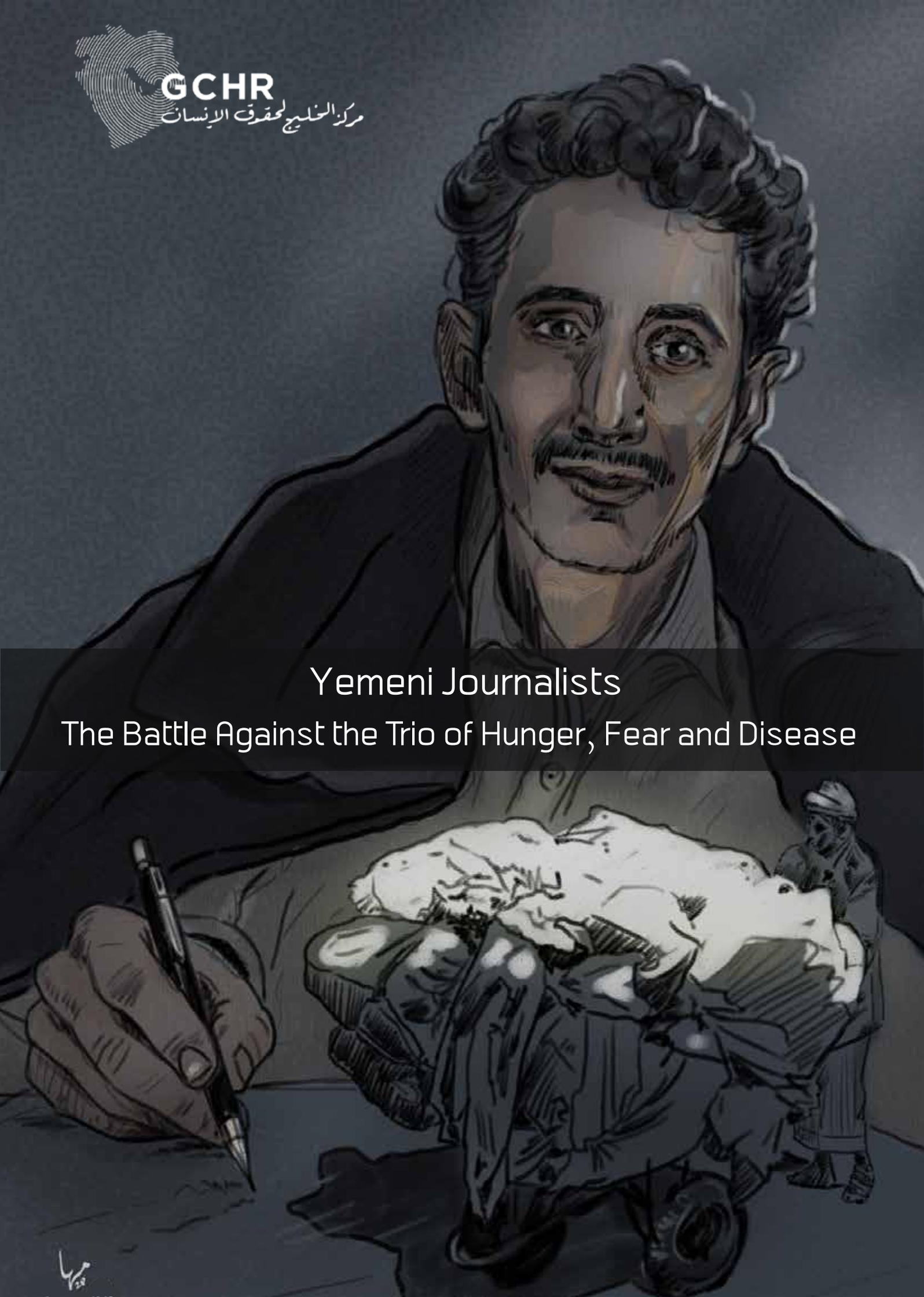


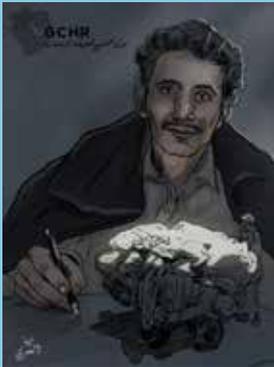
## Yemeni Journalists

The Battle Against the Trio of Hunger, Fear and Disease



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Cover: Nabil Al-Sharabi, a Yemeni journalist who has moved to another profession

Drawing: Maha Al-Omari - Gulf Center

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is an independent, non-profit NGO that provides support and protection to human rights defenders (HRDs) in order to promote human rights, including but not limited to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. GCHR is based in Lebanon and documents the environment for HRDs in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries, specifically Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. GCHR was founded in 2011.

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The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) has been documenting the many egregious crimes being committed in Yemen against journalists. The stories are both horrifying and disturbing. From journalists being poisoned, to others being assassinated on the streets, to yet more being kidnapped, tortured and detained. GCHR always calls for the protection of journalists and justice for those who have been killed while attempting to do their jobs. However, the extreme cases of extrajudicial killings in a country that has been suffering from multiple tragedies is not the whole story. We also ask, what of the journalists who remain? The journalists who not only face severe risks for doing their jobs, but many who now find themselves unable to continue working in their profession and thus unable to feed their children or keep a roof over their heads. The journalists in Yemen who are now selling their own treasured books, washing cars, and making dolls just to be able to survive.

We chose in this report not to give an analysis from our point of view, but to allow Yemeni journalists who have worked and are working on the ground to voice their opinions, so we can hear from them directly about the difficulties and challenges of being a journalist in Yemen.



**Abeer Badr Yassin**

**More than a thousand journalists and employees of the official media have been deprived of their salaries since 2016. Because of this reality, many independent journalists fled the country. Those who wanted to stay in Yemen went to work in other fields such as agriculture, marketing and others, and those who left the country are suffering today from harsh living conditions as they lose their jobs and stop receiving their salaries.**



Journalist, Ali Muhammad Abdo Al-Uqbi, further describes the dire situation: “There is no doubt that journalists in Yemen are living in tragic conditions and they are the ones paying the price more than others. Some were displaced outside the country, while others live in cities under the control of the legitimate government. Some languish in the Houthis’ prisons, while others have lost their jobs or their voices out of fear of harassment and prosecution. The situation under which Yemeni journalists live is very difficult, especially during this health and economic crisis, with the spread of the coronavirus pandemic COVID-19. A number of our fellow journalists have been kidnapped and held in the Houthis’ prisons on malicious accusations. They spent years in detention and their health condition is deplorable. In addition to that, the Houthis handed down death sentences

against some of them. Their detention continued despite calls from the UN and international organisations demanding their release. The growing threat of the spread of the Corona pandemic, as well as the inhumane conditions for our fellow journalists in the Houthi detention facilities, puts a huge responsibility on the international community to pressure the Houthis to release the journalists who are unjustly detained, to call for the promotion of the values of freedom of expression and the protection of journalists, and to take urgent measures to stop the health disaster facing them in light of the spread of this pandemic in Yemen.

*Moreover, there is a number of colleagues working in government media organisations whose salaries have been cut off for years and, due to the economic situation and the spread of the Coronavirus, many of them were unable to carry out their work due to the poor economic and living conditions that they suffer from.”*

“In the areas under the control of the legitimate government, most of the colleagues have also been displaced by the Houthis from many governorates due to harassment. In Marib, there are many journalists who have a safe environment, but they face other difficulties related to the living and economic situation, and they work in silence. They try as much as possible to keep their living condition without a salary hidden from others, with no headquarters to convene and no internet, the fees for which ought to be paid by the government. They work with their personal equipment and they try as much as possible to overcome these obstacles and situations, as they prefer to remain in their country to document the suffering of the people to the world as a result of the continuing war. The government who is mainly responsible to find solutions for the journalists and pay their salaries regularly to alleviate their suffering does not care about them and does not do its duties and responsibilities. Many complain about the promises of the government that do not get fulfilled with regard to the paying of the salaries of journalists employed in media institutions.”

Also, Fatima Alaghbari had the following to say about the economic situation of Yemeni journalists, and the effects of the global Coronavirus pandemic: “After the deterioration of the economic situation in Yemen and the ongoing war since 2015, many journalists lost their jobs in the various media outlets. Journalists who had aligned themselves with the parties became the ones who had the best chance to have a source of income by working in media outlets controlled by the parties or supported from abroad. As for the rest of journalists, their situation deteriorated severely. Some of them offered their libraries for sale, some of them died [of illness] while they did not have money for their treatment, and there were those who collected mineral water bottles to sell them at a very cheap price, at least providing the value of their daily sustenance. There are also those who accumulated debts and Corona came and made things even worse, as some journalists work as freelancers by article writing reports for some news websites. Because of the global repercussions of the virus, the income of some was reduced and others were asked to stop until life returns to normal. This, in itself, is the cause of suffering among Yemeni journalists, specifically those who find it difficult to work in this environment.”



She continued, “Journalists in Yemen are the ones affected the most by the Coronavirus on several levels, the most prominent of which is the economic factor. The Yemeni journalists, who were originally suffering from a difficult economic situation before the Coronavirus as a result of the raging war in the country for about six years, when most media outlets stopped working, were directly affected by the Coronavirus. Some were subjected to the cessation of their sources of income from working with national or international media, which have greatly reduced their staff and correspondents, while other outlets announced the permanent suspension of their activities, due to their financial situation that was affected by the Coronavirus, which struck the global economy.”



Furthermore, Adel AbdulMughni gave this brief description of the Yemeni journalist: “In the absence of institutions and support agencies, the Yemeni journalist is now living in the shadow of a war and a pandemic, and suffers from a miserable situation facing the dangers of war and the Coronavirus epidemic without health insurance or safety tools. The Yemeni journalist today remains alone, fighting a disproportionate battle against the trio of hunger, fear and disease.”

Finally, Nabil Al-Sharabi, a Yemeni journalist specialising in economic affairs reflects on the situation as follows:“The poor condition of Yemeni journalists in the time of the Coronavirus has doubled even more, although their suffering began in early 2015. As something similar to the Coronavirus measures was imposed on the press work and the press environment, either isolation and distancing or quarantine and staying at home, but it was less severe than what the Coronavirus added, which came to close whatever windows of opportunity for survival that remaine



**Journalist Nabil Al-Sharabi, become works in a profession other than journalism**

Yemeni journalists were suffering from losing work in the journalistic field, as I mentioned, but they tried to overcome their miserable situation by finding sources of income, albeit arduous, that would generate a dearth of revenue for them that would enable them to provide part of the basic necessities of life for their families and housing rent. This was the first wave of Coronavirus.”

“With the second wave of Coronavirus - the actual one, these journalists lost all hope. Because I am close to many colleagues who were sentenced to live in very miserable conditions, I realise the extent of the damage they are suffering from the first and second Coronavirus waves. Also, this is a modest number that does not exceed 200 journalists, and they are among those who remained at home, either due to the inability to seek asylum outside the country, or for personal reasons. No one cares about their situation, not the Journalists’ Syndicate, which has become in the same situation as the journalists, nor the concerned authorities or civil society organisations.”

“Addressing the situation of such a number does not require a miracle or international efforts. It only needs sympathy from colleagues in the profession who are able to reach out with their voices to access the emergency funds to support journalists in times of wars and conflicts, and to help relieve a bit of their suffering with those funds affiliated to international media organizations. We always read in their publications that they are keen to provide a decent life for journalists in any region of the world without discrimination, but we do not know what has torn the fabric of the Yemeni press family, so that journalists turn from colleagues to opponents. My suggestion does not mean that we beg others to give charity to us. On the contrary, our souls refuse that. Rather, it is on the ground that the existing problem is easily resolved.”

We at GCHR salute the resilience of Yemeni journalists. Through our work we have found them to be very proud and strong in the face of such inconceivable hardship. Therefore, we call on the international community to step up and work on protecting Yemeni journalists, protecting their lives, their freedom and their means of income. It is not only tragic to see the loss of life and the attacks against journalists in Yemen, but also terrible that the country is losing so many voices who wish to serve the country through this profession.

With these words, Yemeni journalist Abeer Badr Yassin ended her talk at a GCHR event on the International Day to End Impunity on 2 November 2020:

***Journalists need support and backing, they do not work for a press institution” only, but for all people, and are conveying the truth, therefore protecting them is in everyone's interest. Even if we disagree with them, they are not a military warrior, they are journalists, and therefore the response to them is with the word and not by “.targeting their lives and freedom***



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