**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
CASE STUDIES

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Yemen: Airstrikes, testimonies and analysis**

***Al-Mujaliyya neighbourhood, Ta’iz (Ta’iz governorate), 16 June 2015***

Forty-eight-year old Jamila and four of her children were killed when an airstrike destroyed their home in al-Mujaliyya neighbourhood at 3.45AM on 16 June. Jamila’s daughter Leila Hayel, who lost her mother and siblings Suha (10), Amal (14), Samah (23), and Hani (25), told Amnesty International about the incident. She lives 600 metres away from her parents’ house:

“*The whole family had been staying in the Hawban neighbourhood [east side of Ta’iz city] for the last two months because of the continuous fighting [between armed groups] in al-Mujaliyya [south side of Ta’iz city]. In fact, the majority of the residents have left the neighbourhood. They had only returned home one week before the strike, in time for Ramadan. On that night, a bomb struck al-Arwa school, located 30 metres away from our house. Fearing for their lives, my family rushed to leave the house after the explosion. While my sisters and mother were putting on their abayas [long traditional dress worn outdoors] and my brother Hani was locking up the house, a bomb landed in the middle of the house. The force of the explosion sent my sisters and mother flying five metres, killing them instantly. Hani’s body was not dug out until 12 hours later. My father Faisal (60) was the only survivor*.”

On that night, three airstrikes struck al-Mujaliyya neighbourhood for the first time ever, only minutes apart. The first targeted al-Arwa School, which was reportedly being used as a detention centre by the Huthi/Saleh loyalists. The second struck the Hayel home and the third landed in the courtyard of al-Ahdal family, where 13 relatives (10 women, three men) were sheltering in the basement of the house after hearing the first two strikes. The bomb at al-Ahdal house, only a couple of doors down from the Hayel family, failed to detonate, limiting what could have been even greater destruction and likely more civilian casualties.

 ***Beit-Me’yad (Sana’a governorate), 13 June 2015***

The Saudi Arabian-led coalition bombed several houses belonging to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and some of his relatives, killing and injuring other relatives and neighbours – at times striking the intended target and at times missing the apparent intended target and striking civilians instead. A series of strikes which targeted the houses of two of the former President’s nephews on 13 June killed 10 civilians (four children, five women, and one man) and injured 28 others (11 children, 10 women, seven men) in nearby houses.

The strike which destroyed the house of Yahya Mohamed ‘Abdullah Saleh, the former President’s nephew and a former commander of the Central Security Forces (who has been outside the country for years), killed five neighbours from the al-‘Amiri family and injured five others. Two other strikes apparently aimed at his brother Tareq Mohamed Abdullah Saleh, a former commander of the Presidential Guard, missed the intended target and struck the nearby house of Tareq’s estranged relatives and other neighbours, killing five and injuring 23. Tareq’s house was struck later that night.

The first and second airstrikes hit the house of the al-Akwa family, where 23 relatives were present at the time. Hareth al-Akwa, who lost his wife Fatma (35), his daughter Reem (18) and his son Malek (8), spoke to Amnesty International about the incident:

“*The whole family had relocated to Hodeidah for a whole month and we had only returned home two days before the strike, in time for Ramadan. The first airstrike killed, the second one burned. My little boy Malek, he was an angel. My daughter Hala (four) was thrown from the first floor by the force of the explosion. Luckily she fell into her grandmother’s arms downstairs. They [the coalition] said that the airstrike killed Tareq Mohamed Abdullah Saleh, my nephew, but it’s not true. In fact, Tareq came to pay his condolences. We had had no contact with him in years. We are only related through marriage. My two sisters married the brothers of [former President] Ali Abdullah Saleh. His house has been empty since the start of the airstrikes.”*

‘Abdullah Mohamed al-Akwa, 24, who lost his wife Ibtihal (20) and his father Mohamed (45), told Amnesty International:

*“I was on the roof turning off the generator when the first rocket struck. The explosion sent me flying onto the neighbour’s roof, around 20 metres away. My wife Ibtihal was killed while she was sleeping in our room. We had only been married for five months.”*

Five neighbours from the Mahyoub family, a 52-year-old woman and four of her children, were also injured in the strike. Thyazin Mahyoub told Amnesty International:

*“We were six people at home: my mother, my four siblings and I. The rocket first struck our house, destroying the third floor where the kitchen was, and then it struck the al-Akwa’s house next door. My mother, Maryam, lost her right arm and my brothers and sisters were all injured by shrapnel. I was at the far end of the house and did not suffer any injuries.”*

Mohamed al-‘Amiri, who lost four children and his nephew, told Amnesty International:

“*We heard the first explosion at midnight, we all went to the living room. We did not move fast enough, the strike [in front of our house] came five to eight minutes later – around 12:10AM. We were 13 family members in the house. I heard my daughter Aysha screaming from her room. She was killed … Yahya Mohamed Abdullah Saleh has not lived in his house since 2011*.”

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition has provided no evidence that any of the targeted houses contained legitimate military objectives, such as arm caches or command and control centres, and Amnesty International has found no evidence to that effect. The fact that two of the houses belong to relatives of former president Saleh, who previously held high-ranking military positions and who may now to be allied with the Huthis, does not make their houses military objectives.

***The Old City, Sana’a (Sana’a governorate), 12 June 2015***

A coalition strike in the Old City of Sana’a destroyed four adjacent houses on 12 June at 2AM killing the five members of the Abdelqader family who were inside: Hassan Yahya Abdelqader, his wife Ummat al-Malik, his brother Rashad and son Abdullah and his cousin Shawqi. Hassan’s brother, Mohamed, who lives nearby, told Amnesty International:

*“We heard a plane flying over us at around 1:50AM. So my family and I hid under the staircase, the safest place in the house. At 2AM we heard an explosion. A few minutes later Shawqi’s mother called me and asked me to go to check on him. He had called her from under the rubble asking for help ... I ran over there. With the neighbours we started to dig through the rubble with our hands. Shawqi was dead when he was pulled out of the rubble at 5AM. He was married with five-year-old twins and his wife is six months pregnant. Thirteen people live in the houses, most of them women and children, but they had left two days earlier, after another airstrike hit the Defence Military Compound [200 metres to the south].”*

***Al-‘Erra village, Hamdan, (Sana’a governorate), 2 June 2015***Five children and three women were killed from the al-‘Etmi and al-Qibli families and another relative was injured in an airstrike at around 5:30PM on 2 June. It completely destroyed one house and part-demolished two others. The location of the strike is less than one kilometre west of al-Kawla Air Force base and some two to three kilometres west of al-Dailami Air Force base, but residents said there were no hostilities or fighters operating in the area at the time.

Hasan Mohamed Qaed al-‘Etmi, a 35-year-old ice cream seller, lost four of his children, and his wife and sister were injured. He told Amnesty International:

*“I was away from the house, when at around 5:30PM on that Tuesday my son called me and said that an airstrike had hit a place next to our house. He didn’t want to shock me. He asked me to come over. When I got back, I found that my sister Hooria had been injured on her head. After I made sure she was alright, I headed towards my house and I saw a big crowd gathered … I saw my wife injured and crying and she was looking for our children. After looking amongst the rubble, we found the bodies of two of our children Qaed (four) and Adeeb (seven). We then continued to search and we found [the bodies of] Radina (eight) and Amira (11), but we did not find them until three hours later … Amira’s head and face had been smashed.”*

Ali al-Qibli, a maths teacher who lost his five-year-old son Shihab and his 18-year-old daughter Noura, told Amnesty International:

*“I couldn’t recognize my daughter Noura because her face was destroyed. My son pointed out her dress amongst the rubble…In the previous week there were three or four airstrikes on the al-Dailami Air Force base in the airport compound [two to three kilometres west].”*

Neighbour Mohamed Ali, who was playing football about 200 metres from house at the time of the incident, said:

*“I heard an explosion west of our village; I later knew it was an airstrike. Five minutes later I saw a bomb drop on the house of al-Qibli family about 200 metres from where I was playing football. A cloud of dust and smoke went up from the al-Qibli’s house and the al-‘Etmi house next to it. We ran over. I saw a girl under the rubble. She had a head injury and was not moving, Body parts were scattered up to 10 metres away.”*

After the strike many residents fled from their homes fearing further airstrikes.

 ***Al-Akma village (Ta’iz governorate), 14 April 2015***

At approximately 12:30AM on 14 April, an airstrike killed 10 civilians of the al-Hujairi family, including seven children, a woman and an elderly man, and injured 14 other relatives, most of them children and women. It struck a marginalized residential area in al-Akma village, where people live in humble dwellings made of corrugated iron and cardboard.

The village, 20km north-east of the city of Ta’iz, lies in between two Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled military installations, which are between 500 metres and 1km outside the village in either direction.

Rabi’ Mohamed al-Haddadi, a neighbour who helped rescue the dead and wounded, told Amnesty International:

*“On Saturday night [14 April] at about 12AM, a rocket hit a cluster of three houses that belong to al-Hujairi family. All the dead and wounded were from the same family. We gathered the body parts, the bodies were torn to pieces. After that airstrike, they left the area and we never saw them again … those people were poor ... What did they do to deserve to be killed?”*

He spoke about the frequent airstrikes:

*“In the same week the airstrike happened on our village, there were two previous airstrikes in the same week on 22 May military camp west of our village. It was the first and only strike on our village. Up to a week before Ramadan, the strikes continued targeting the military camp.”*Wadhha, another resident present on the night of the airstrike, described the aftermath:

*“It was approximately 12:00 at night when I heard the plane flying over us. My neighbour came to my house because she had heard the plane too and told me to get up and wear my ‘abaya [long traditional dress worn outdoors]. I told her that I sleep in my ‘abaya all the time. Then I heard the explosion. I thought that the house was going to collapse on my head. I was at home on my own. I kept reciting the shahada [Islamic profession of faith] and waited for death. We had been warned not to go out if a rocket lands in order to avoid shrapnel… Then, after it was quiet again, I went out to see. It smelt like tyres were burning. I no longer understood what was going on. I fainted and fell to the ground… We are now all displaced. We only come back here for quick visits but we do not sleep in our homes.”****Hajr Ukaish village, Beni Matar (Sana’a governorate), 3 April 2015***

A bomb hit three houses belonging to the family of Hussein ‘Abdullah al-Ukaishi, killing 11 civilians (six children, two women, three men) and injuring six (two children, two women, two men). Among those killed was a one-day-old baby who had not yet been named.

Amnesty International interviewed 10 relatives and neighbours about the incident. Other residents fled their homes in fear after the airstrike and sought shelter in the caves in the nearby mountains.

Hussein Abdullah al-Ukaishi’s brother, Ahmed ‘Abdullah al-Ukaishi, 42, told Amnesty International:

*“On that Friday evening, I suddenly heard two explosions in a row that shook my house. I tried to locate the site of the explosion from my window, then I saw my brother Hussein’s house had turned into rubble ... I tried to move to go to his house, but I could not move from my place. I saw my brother’s house ablaze, all I could imagine was my brother and family within the flames and the rubble. After putting out the fires, from 7:30PM to 4AM we tried to rescue who we could.”*

According to Ahmed, there were no hostilities or fighters present in the vicinity at the time, and Hajr Ukaish village is three to four kilometres north of the Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled Jabal Nabi Shu’aib military base – which may have been the intended target. The strikes came without prior warning. He said the first rocket hit the main road, less than 1km south of the village, and the second was a direct hit on the house.

Hameed Hussein al-Ukaishi, a family member who was injured inside the house and has had to resort to living in his neighbour’s house after the airstrike destroyed their home, said:

*“I heard the plane and then the house was struck. I fainted. Then I found myself buried up to my neck in the rubble. There was no warning before the strike. They [the coalition forces] said that there were weapons in our home but we are just simple farmers and we have nothing to do with anything.”*

***Beit Rijal Village, Beni Matar, (Sana’a governorate), 6 April 2015***Two airstrikes against the home of the Sha’lan family and a neighbouring qat farm in the village at around 2PM on 6 April killed three children and two women and injured six others (two children, two women, two men).

Saleh Yahya Sha’lan, 53, the owner of the home that was struck, told Amnesty International he was at the mosque at the time of the strike:

*“I heard the explosion at approximately 2PM… I ran home and I arrived to see my son Sha’lan and my grandson Hazem dead. The rocket had hit the kitchen and thrown them approximately 70 metres out of the house… We tried to rescue the injured first. My daughter Safaa was taken to the hospital, she was pregnant… I have been rendered homeless without even clothes.”*

His neighbour ‘Abdelnasser ‘Atiya, a 23-year-old qat farmer, told Amnesty International:

*“At around 2:30PM, we saw the plane en route to Jabal ‘Ayban [a mountaintop Republican Guard military installation 3km away] and then it veered off towards our village and hit us with two rockets, one hit house of Saleh Sha’lan and the second hit the qat farm. Eighteen-year-old Intisar [Saleh Yahya Sha’lan’s daughter] was milking a cow with her nephew Hazem and the rocket threw them 50 metres into the farm. It took us an hour to find their bodies.”*

According to ‘Abdelnasser, there were no hostilities going on or fighters present at the time. Beit Rijal village is three kilometres north-west of a Huthi/Saleh loyalist-controlled Jabal ‘Ayban Air Defence base – which may have been the intended target. There was no prior warning.

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