

Restitution of Yemen's Looted Lands

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Yemen in 2014, the Yemeni scene has been developing rapidly, but in a more complex direction. The country has been torn apart year after year, especially with the outbreak of armed conflict following the killing of former President `Ali `Abdullah Salih by the rebel Houthi Movement and the entry of the Arab Coalition led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to the conflict against the Houthis for control over the capital, and their putative support for the legitimate government headed by President `Abdrabbu Mansour Hadi. The situation has evolved since last year with the southern regions, and the legitimate Yemeni government began to lose its control over the southern regions, with the **outbreak of separatist movements** backed by the UAE, to impose its governmental and security institutions. Meanwhile, Iran continues to provide Financial and military support for the Houthi forces, to tighten their control over government institutions in the capital, Sanaa, and the areas under their control.

The catastrophic humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen reflects the severity of the armed conflict and the increase of armed groups, and the aggravation of the catastrophic effects of armed conflict on civilians, whether within the areas under the control of the Houthis or the governorates under the control of the legitimate government, with the death toll among civilians rising to **233,000, including 131,000** resulting from indirect causes result from the lack of food, and the destruction of health services and infrastructure. What clearly indicates that all parties to the conflict have committed **grave breaches** of international humanitarian law and gross violations of international human rights law by way of indiscriminate targeting of civilians, the destruction of their property, medical facilities and schools, the obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the prevention of humanitarian actors from reaching some areas in need of urgent relief. Especially with the outbreak of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and before it, the **cholera epidemic**, which kills more civilians.

That tragic scene that has been going on for five years has become at the opposite end of addressing and addressing the root causes of the conflict in Yemen. Neglecting to solve the real conflicts facing Yemenis over housing, land and natural resources, which are considered one of the main drivers for the continuation of the war in Yemen. This continuum has led to an increase in the fragility and continuous displacement of the groups affected by the armed conflict, their inability to meet their basic needs of shelter, water and food, and the loss of their property, which eliminates hopes for peace and security, especially with the deterioration of the institutions that have begun to resolve these conflicts, due to the ongoing war and the, and the rupture of the components of the state and the collapse of the rule of law.

Within the framework of supporting, advocating and preserving the right of conflict victims to an effective remedy and reparation through resolving the root causes, Housing and Land Rights Network - Habitat International Coalition has supported the civil society initiative to develop a mechanism for restoring the victims' plundered housing, land and properties (HLP) that were once looted by the policies of the `Ali `Abdullah Salih regime, then looted again by the Houthi militias, or destroyed as a result of indiscriminate bombing operations by the Arab Coalition forces. This is

through the application of the loss matrix model for three illustrative cases that constitute a grave violation that has been documented to preserve the rights of civilians and which have been developed in a comprehensive report that will be launched soon.

Since the victims of the parties to the conflict have the right to seek reparations for the material and moral damages they have suffered, a corresponding international law obligation bears on the legitimate Yemeni government, the Houthi militias, and the Saudi-led Coalition to ensure effective and rapid reparation for these victims, with restitution, return, resettlement, rehabilitation, compensation for values that cannot be restored, and guarantees of non-repetition to their satisfaction that justice has been done.

Therefore, through this project, HIC-HLRN has sought to develop an approach based on human rights principles and best practices to implement transitional justice, including overcoming the political and tribal aspects of land disputes, to address the issue of property restitution and achieve equitable enjoyment of the human right to land and the realization of citizenship as a common basis for the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. Through this initiative, the Network has aimed to support restorative justice as a national project and to build the capacities of civil society and enable it to establish a national land observatory as a means toward that goal. This effort can contribute greatly as a mechanism for land-related data collection, documentation and administrative guidance in response to the information needs of stakeholders, especially at the time of the approval of any comprehensive and final peace process, which should include concrete and enforceable provisions for responsible governance of land and natural resources, in order to avoid these being issues fueling ongoing and future conflict.

Addressing the main factor in responsible natural resource governance, which is justice, while providing the opportunity for vulnerable communities, especially women, to manage these resources locally, HIC-HLRN accompanies Yemeni civil society in contributing to Yemen's recovery from the most tragic periods in the history the country once known as "Arabia Felix."