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THE MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION

Report on the Explosion at Sa'wan Neighborhood, eastern Sana'a
and killed 14 male and female students, and injured tens others

Monday 07 April 2019





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منظمة سام للحقوق والحريات

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Introduction

On the noon of 7th April 2019, a massive explosion hit the vicinity of martyr Al-Raḡi school in the Saḡwan neighborhood in the capital Sanaḡa.

The school was full of students, and the streets around the school were crowded with people returning to their homes when white smoke rose from the roof of an aluminum molding workshop, followed by explosions, that destroyed the workshop and caused various damages at the neighbouring houses. The explosion coincided with a state of panic and stampede among female students who rushed to the school corridors and some of them were trampled. The second door staircase was closed, forcing some of the students to jump, and some of the parents tried to climb and reach to their daughters.

This explosion was one of the most devastating incidents, considering the number of casualties among children, and further proves that the fighting parties, no longer care about the rules of the international war law, or the distinction applicable on civilians.

Apparently, these parties use civilians for political purposes without due ethical or legal obligations to protect civilians.

The carelessness shown by the international community in punishing those responsible for human rights violations has encouraged the parties to the conflict to commit further violations, especially after the bombing of the Saḡda children's bus on 9 August 2018, noting the inability of the international community to mobilize international criminal accountability against human rights violators in Yemen.

Without serious commitment to ensure justice for human rights victims in Yemen and criminal accountability, justice will be far from being achieved in Yemen, and all talks about peace are delusional, and rather will encourage impunity in this regard.

Yemenis are awaiting the justice that might come across the border, losing hope that the conflicting parties will go for peace talks, and bring about a comprehensive peace deal that ends their grievances.

Legal Background

By definition; civilian objects are “all objects that are not military targets and are intended to serve civilian purposes, that when attacked or destroyed, will not achieve military advantage or victory”.

It includes all civilian installations such as houses, buildings, hospitals, schools and civilian objects not used for military purposes, agricultural areas, crops, livestock, service facilities, and government properties, places of worship, charity, artistic and scientific institutions, historical monuments, museums, cultural and educational institutions.

These places were given special protection noting their great importance

and humanitarian status. Where article 53 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention of 1977 states:

“without prejudice to the provisions of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 14 May 1954, and of other relevant international instruments, it is prohibited:

(a) to commit any acts of hostility directed against the historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples;

(b) to use such objects in support of the military effort.

Hence, schools enjoy special attention

and protection by the rights community, being related to children, who has been provided with special protection during armed conflict by article 77 of Protocol I of 1977, that stated that "children shall be the object of special respect".

Article 4-3 of Protocol II, stated that Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, to protect children during non-international armed conflict; in particular:

Considering the statistics and reports on the armed conflict in Yemen, that indicate that targeting schools directly, or using them as military barracks, or arms stores, is considered as flagrant attack on child rights in Yemen, and breach to

the international law.

Schools are protected by the international law, and Geneva conventions, where they pose no military threat to any party, also schools should not be used for any military purpose by any party, and shall receive the attention of the parties to the conflict, especially when located at residential neighborhoods, and shall receive even more attention, when congested with students, as the case with Al-Ra'i school in Sana'a, which is not a military target by any means, and targeting it directly, or exposing it to any risk, by storing arms or explosive materials, is a crime, and violation to the IHL, and the Hague convention in particular.



Introduction:

- Sa'wan neighborhood is one of the highly populated residential areas, in the northeastern side of Sana'a, accommodated thousands of midclass limited income and poor families, and consist of a number of neighborhoods.
- Sa'wan was not far from the ravages of war, since September 2014, where the city was exposed to three major violent incidents; where Asha'b colony was stroke by night airstrike by the Coalition fighters in May 2015, killing and injuring many civilians, mainly children and women, and destroyed 5 houses. Followed by airstrike on Alommal town in mid-Ramadhan of the same year, killing many civilians, among marginalized group, majority of them are women and children. Also followed by several airstrikes that hit military clinics, and neighboring military engineering camp. All these airstrikes caused casualties on civilians and civilian objects.
- Al-Arbaeen neighborhood, one of the new colonies in Sa'wan, subject matter of this report, is located northern to Al-Arbaeen roundabout, northeast Sana'a city, from that colony 24th street in branching out, in which the two-years aluminum molding workshop is located, and occupies 400 sqm. The workshop included a gas tank, and the former owner sold it to a Houthi leader, however SAM could not verify this information.

Conclusion:

SAM received an assessment by a military expert from the armed forces, to whom we presented video clips and photos of the explosion. The expert believed that the explosion was not resulted from an air missile, or strike, rather it was resulted from an internal act inside the workshop, and the 5 km radius of the explosion, resulted from highly explosive materials, that could

and injured other students and civilians in the vicinity. The explosion also, killed and injured a number of Houthis elements, present at the workshop and its surroundings, but could not verify the information related to them.

- The incident caused severe trauma on the children, and civilians, at the vicinity of the explosion.
- The explosion caused serious and



probably be used for manufacturing warheads, used for military purposes.

- The explosion killed 14 male and female students from the neighboring schools, mainly children,

moderate damage in shops and several houses, for more than 200 houses and a trade stores, according to authorities' reports.

Armed groups. security cordon. the explosion aftermath

- At 7 a.m. on Sunday, 7 April 2019, the usual movements of students to schools and universities, started and the employees to their workplaces. Parents escorted their children to schools, hoping that they will return safely, by the end of the day, alas the tragedy occurred earlier.
- Hours prior to the incident Houthis militia cordoned the place and prevented people from coming closer, according to an eyewitness.



White Smoke Rises in the Sky

According to the testimonies of the locals, nearby the school, SAM monitors documented significant remarks on the pre-incident hours as follows;

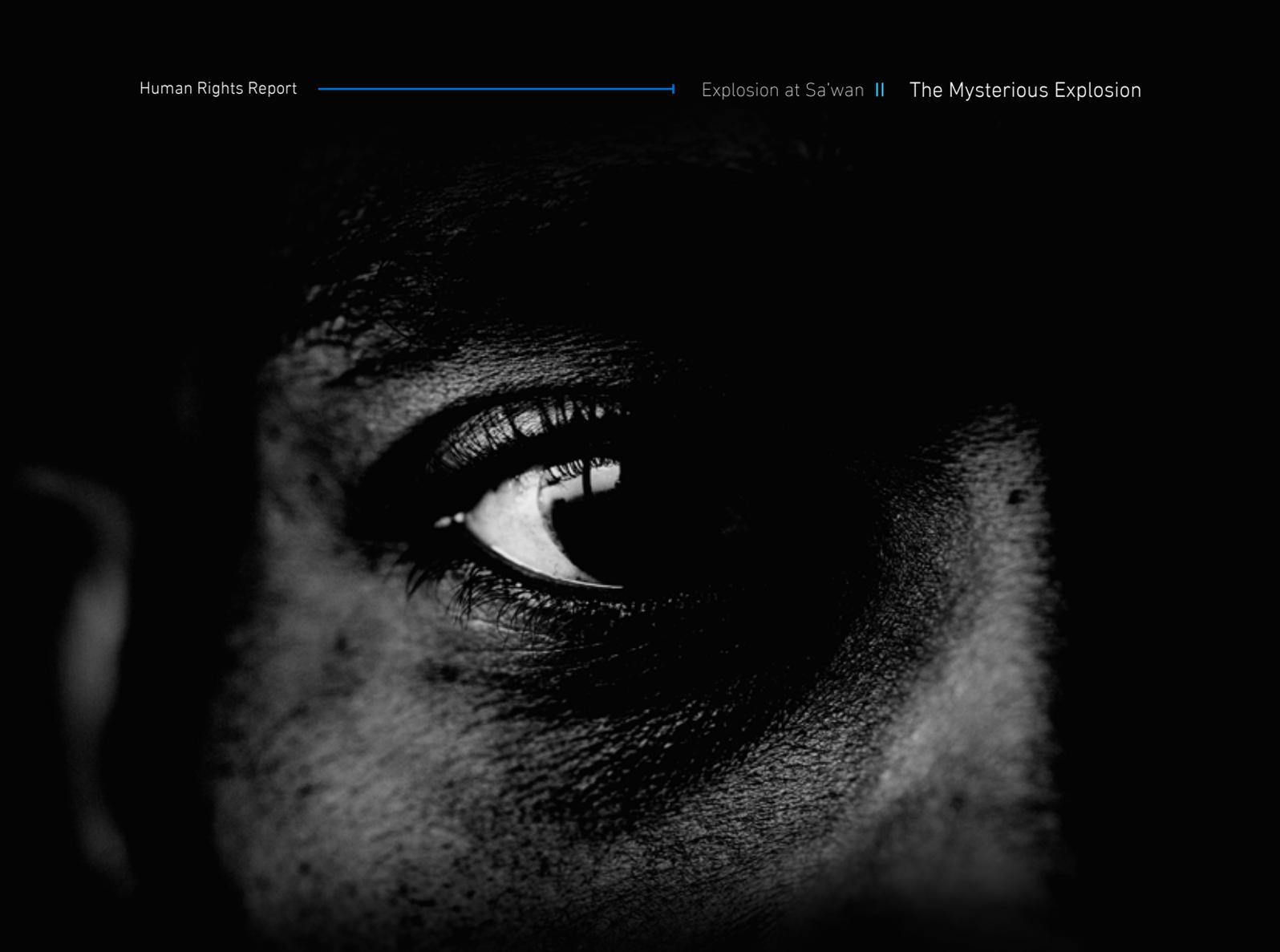
- At 11:30 a.m. thick white smoke rose from the roof of the workshop (the venue of the event) and rose to a high distance in the sky, and was seen from various places in the city of Sana'a.
- Many of the by-passers managed to take pictures and videos that recorded the noise of minor explosions inside the workshop.
- Minutes later red flames rose for 4m, followed by massive explosion inside the workshop, that completely destroyed the workshop building and the fence, in addition to some neighboring houses.
- Al-Ra'i Girls School, located 400 meters to the west of the workshop, had the largest share of casualties, where the explosion caused a state of panic and scattered shrapnel and glasses of buildings, and the students rushed down, and some of them were trampled at the corridors. Smoke and dust covered the area and the parents who rushed to the school were at state of shock and panic, due to the explosion that rocked their houses, wondering about their daughters' conditions.
- Some of the students of Al-Ahqaf school, located 300m eastern to the workshop, also sustained some injuries due to the explosion.
- The explosions continued for about two hours.
- Following the explosion, more security, police forces and militia gunmen, rushed and cordoned the site, and denied access to anyone, preventing out monitors from examining the site, and collecting relevant information.



Although the Houthi group imposed a security cordon on the scene of the explosion, where the elements of preventive security were deployed by men and women; they spread among the people; prevented the capture of any traces of the explosive remnants or their effects, but assaulted anyone who tried to shoot; but the organization's team managed to reach the nearest n A cat for the Mu'aaouia triggered the blast, and the damage left behind

- The security cordon continued till next day, where all the explosion remnants and traces were removed.
- men and women organized protests on the next and third day successively.
- Despite the implied risks, and deployment of Protective Security elements in the site, who tried to convince the public that the explosion resulted from airstrike, and censored any information to the contrary of their claims, SAM team managed to reach into the closest point to the site, at 5 p.m. of day one, and surveyed the site, and concluded to the following;
- Houthis cordoned the site with intensive security and prevented people from accessing the place, or taking photos, as documented in this report, we managed to see a wide space of the wreckage of workshop "about ten Libna" , in the middle of residential area.
- To the east of the workshop, lays a one floor building, to the west numerous houses and a land, to the north lays Maeen Al-Faiq house, which was totally destroyed, in addition to houses of his brother and cousin. Four houses were totally destroyed; Bassam Al-Faiq, Jamal Al-Faiq and Ali Al-Faiq houses, to the south, other buildings, one street fat from the explosion site.
- 200 houses and trade stores sustained light and medium damages.





Testimonies Reveal the Hidden Part of the Incident

SAM monitors interviewed a number of witnesses to get more details on the explosion that killed 14 female students, injured others, and damaged many houses and trade stores, on the condition of anonymity, to avoid any consequences that they might encounter by Houthis militia.

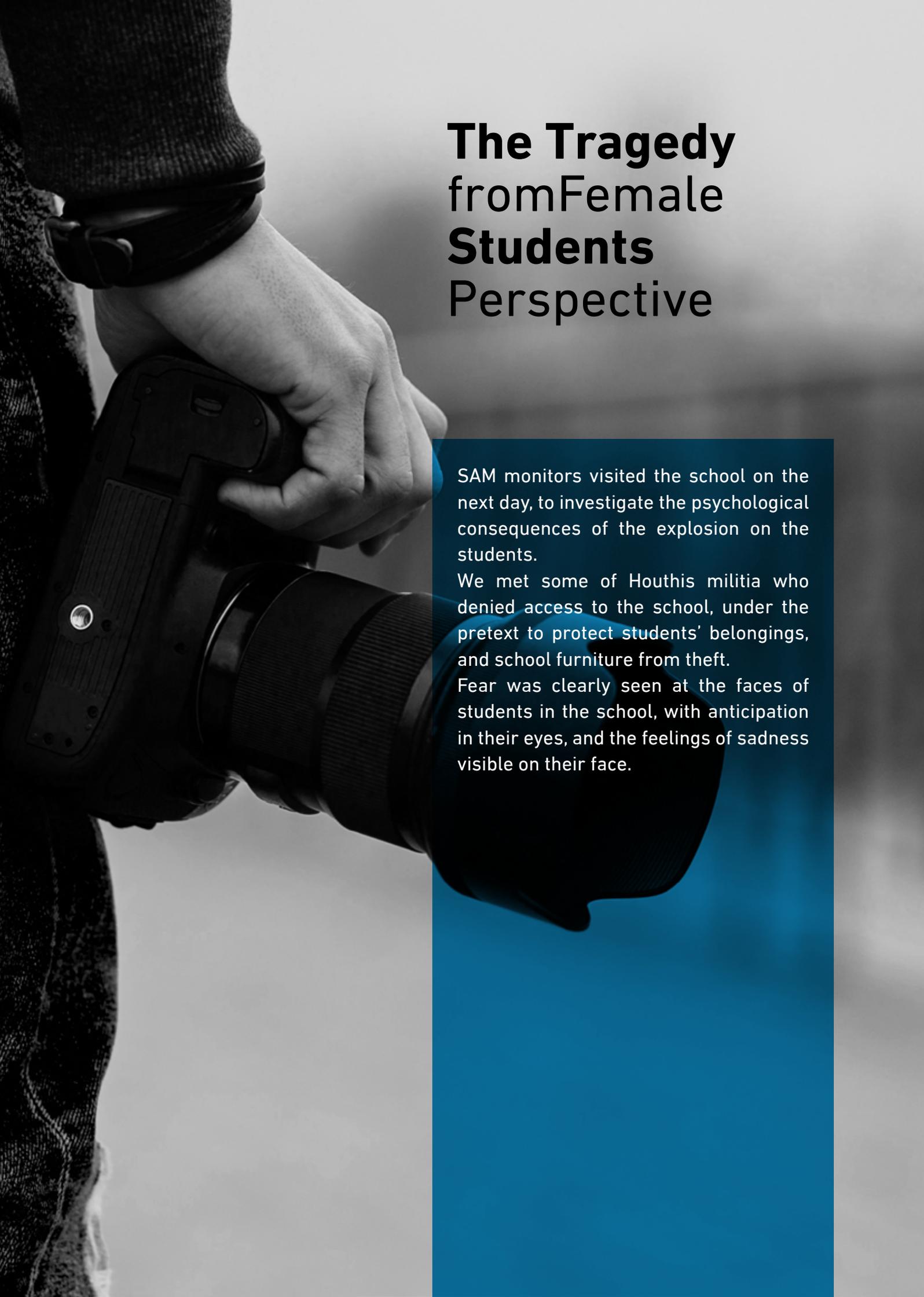
1. Witness N. H. told SAM that “while some people were taking photos of the damage in the workshop and nearby houses, four vehicles loaded with armed men of the Special Forces, arrived and wanted to take their mobile phones, and Someone tried to prevent them, so they hit him with the gun’s stock, some other neighbors protested, and they beat them, and took them to the Fifth area prison, and some to the Alommal city police station, and detained them till the evening.”
2. Witness M.A. told SAM that “the workshop was built in the colony before two years, and we don’t know who owns it. It was aluminum and wood molding workshop; we see some materials coming in and out of the workshop. However, the presence of detonators, prove that it is an explosives manufacturing workshop.”
3. Abdulmalik, told SAM that at 12 noon, he was close to workshop, “I saw one of the workers carrying an iron piece using it to sharpen a wire, he shouted to his friends “runaway, it will explode”, I heard the screams of children and women, then the second explosion occurred. Some houses and properties were totally destroyed”
4. Hussein told SAM that he was outside his house: “I heard the first explosion, and I ran fast, after a while, a second explosion throw me to the ground and covered with wreckage. I continued running and saw my neighbor carrying his children away, I was shouting, the wreckage was covering everything, and people were suffocated by the gunpowder that came from the workshop.”
5. Zeineddine, told SAM that “the first explosion was minor, like an explosion of a cooking gas cylinder, then followed by a second loud explosion. I ran quickly, then a third strong explosion followed, and our houses were filled with shrapnel, gunpowder, and detonators, which are still there.”



Testimonies and Close Look

On the third day, SAM monitors visited the site, which is still cordoned by Houthis militia, and interviewed some of the dwellers, and managed to get closer look at the site, there was no hole in the workshop floor, which could have resulted from airstrike, and saw some shrapnel, remained from the explosion, which we've photographed.

6. Witness A. A. S. said "I was with my little daughter near Al-Marwan mosque, at 12 noon, I heard the first explosion, but no noise of fighters, I saw thick white smoke, so I returned home with my daughter, I went back to the school with my nephew to get my nieces from the school, I heard successive explosions, I saw the parents rushing to the school, I saw about 15 students trampling each other, one of them was asking to rescue her, amidst screaming, I pulled her, and shouted to push back the students who were crowded at the staircase to rescue the others, we managed to pull the girls out, and I saw two of them died."
7. Witness A. A. told SAM that "when I heard the explosion, I went to the site, and saw the parents rushing to the school searching for their daughters, I met many of the neighbors, running out of their houses, I managed to carry some of them, I heard mothers screaming and searching for their daughters, I saw some students fainted and others died."
8. Witness H.A.N., 58, guard of one of neighbouring buildings, told SAM that "the workshop which is nearby the building I'm guarding, manufactures aluminum doors and windows. Recently, a gas unit was installed and connected to the workshop, vehicles loaded with armed men used to come often, and we are much worried. On the incident day, a thick smoke rose from the workshop, and we heard light explosions, followed by a missile noise, and explosion, I passed out, and wake up after a while."
9. Witness Saeeda, F, 50, lives near Al-Ra'i school said "I heard a whistle-like noise from the workshop for ten minutes, then saw a white thick smoke arise from the workshop, followed by explosion", she said no, when asked if she heard a fighter noise.



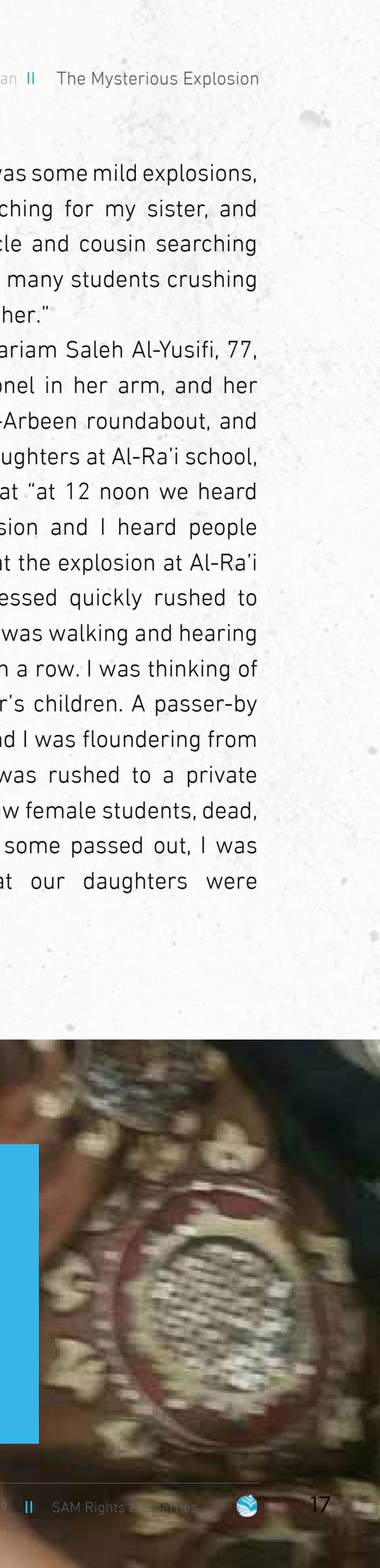
The Tragedy from Female Students Perspective

SAM monitors visited the school on the next day, to investigate the psychological consequences of the explosion on the students.

We met some of Houthis militia who denied access to the school, under the pretext to protect students' belongings, and school furniture from theft.

Fear was clearly seen at the faces of students in the school, with anticipation in their eyes, and the feelings of sadness visible on their face.

- Student Hayat told SAM that “at about 12 noon, we heard a loud explosion, making all students to leave their classes in great panic, amidst screams and crying. We didn't hear fighters' noise, rather the first and second explosion, with some low explosions. The students rushed to the stairs and I hardly managed to exit and injured my leg, I saw many students crushed over each other, I was scared and run to my house.”
- Teacher D. M. said “I didn't hear fighter noise, it was a loud explosion, make the students rush to the staircase, leaving behind their bags, while screaming an in great panic, I was trapped, and about to faint, and saw students under my feet.”
- Child Malak, 10, said “my classmate told us that there is huge cloud in the sky, we went outside to watch, then we heard the first massive explosion, the students rushed to the stairs, also, there was some mild explosions, I went searching for my sister, and saw my uncle and cousin searching for us, I saw many students crushing over each other.”
- Wounded Mariam Saleh Al-Yusif, 77, hit by shrapnel in her arm, and her house at Al-Arbeen roundabout, and her granddaughters at Al-Ra'i school, told SAM that “at 12 noon we heard a big explosion and I heard people shouting that the explosion at Al-Ra'i school, I dressed quickly rushed to the school, I was walking and hearing explosions in a row. I was thinking of my daughter's children. A passer-by found me and I was floundering from bleeding. I was rushed to a private hospital. I saw female students, dead, injured and some passed out, I was worried that our daughters were there.”



Beside her was her granddaughter; Amat Alaleem Ibrahim Al-Masouri, 11, injured in her leg, during the stampede, told SAM that “we heard the explosion at noon, and run to the staircase, we were congested, and I passed out to wake up at the hospital.” She suffers post trauma consequences, and panic, she wakes up screaming and saying she will not go back to the school.

DESTRUCTION RAVAGED EVERYTHING

SAM team visited the explosion site several times, and inspected the damaged buildings and trade stores, with great damage seen at the closest vicinity to the site, where we saw the facades of shops and houses completely destroyed. Some of them were documented with videos, photographs and interviews of victims. Surprisingly, the scope of the incident and the damage caused by it reached a large distance of 5 sq.km. The shops and public and private buildings damaged were estimated at more than 200 houses and shops. Is not common in the bombing, resulted from airstrikes, as the damage does not reach this extent

Psychological damage caused by the incident more than to be restricted to children, students, students and women in the neighborhood, where many of them suffer the impact of the explosion, which caused them injuries, anxiety and fear and panic which will not disappear soon.



Stances and responses to the incident

- **Houthis militia**, immediately accused the “forces of aggression” for the explosion, and claimed in a statement that the incident resulted from aircraft bombing that targeted the basic education school in Sa'wan. And continued to mobilize people and organize protests, at the site for three days. On Wednesday, the victims were, the victims were mourned in a large public funeral, with the presence of Houthis leaders, and the Houthis-run media aired the process, which they used to mobilize more insurgents.
 - **Al-Ahadath channel** in an exclusive news, two hours after the incident, announced that the Coalition forces targeted a Houthi camp in Sa'wan, east Sana'a. The announcement was in line with what was announced by the Houthis authority's militia in Sana'a.
 - **Turki Al-Maleki**, spokesperson of the Arab Coalition forces, said in statement to Sky News, on the evening of the incident, that the explosion in Sana'a resulted from an explosion inside a Houthis factory of arms and explosions. He denied that the coalition had carried out any operation inside the capital Sana'a that day, and there were raids targeting Amad camp in Sinhan and others in Nihm.
 - **The UN envoy to Yemen**, Martin Griffiths, who was on a visit to Sanaa, expressed his regret for the civilian casualties in the Sa'wan area. In a statement on his official website, he said: “I regret to hear
- the news of the tragic death of civilians, mostly young schoolgirls, and extend his condolences to the victims and to all civilians throughout the country.
- **Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen**, Liz Grande, said in a press statement that: “The protection of the population and the civilian infrastructure of Yemen are fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. These principles are violated even as the United Nations is struggling to tackle the worst food security crisis in the world and one of the worst outbreaks of cholera in recent history. She explained that preliminary reports indicate the killing of 14 civilians in an air strike yesterday, including five students, and wounded dozens of civilians in Shu'ub district, in the city of Sanaa. “The cause of such an awful number of dead and wounded is absurd, and we extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, and we must make every effort to understand the real circumstances that led to this tragedy”, she added.
 - **Minister of human rights**, in the legitimate government, Dr. Muhammed Askar. Called in a tweet on his Twitter page, he called on the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Human Rights Violations to carry out its duties and expose the perpetrators to public opinion and bring them to justice.

THE LIST NAMES OF THE VICTIMS OF THE INCIDENT (DEATHS)


 الجمهورية العراقية
 وزارة الصحة العامة والسكان
 الإدارة العامة للمنظمات الصحية

تقرير عن مجزرة شارع الترحمين (سحوان) ليوم الاحد السابع الممالي عشر صيماً الموافق ٢٠١٩-٤-٧

رقم	الاسم	الجنس	العمر	المستشفى	العنصرية	المحافظة	تاريخ الاصابة	المنطقة
1	اسيا حسن محمد العبداد	م	٢	سحوان التخصصي	الدور الاربعين جوار منزل الكيس	زبيدة	07/04/2019	سحوان
2	ابراهيم محمد يحيى ابراهيم	م	12	المستشفى	حضور	عمرة	07/04/2019	سحوان
3	بلقيس احمد الخيران	م	23	المستشفى	المحايشة	حجة	07/04/2019	سحوان
4	ياسر جواد عبدالواسع	م	6	المستشفى	زبيدة	زبيدة	07/04/2019	سحوان
5	حماس ابراهيم طاهر حسن	م	12	سحوان التخصصي	جوار مدرسة الراي	زبيدة	07/04/2019	سحوان
6	حنان فتح احمد الواسي	م	11	م / الحرميين التخصصي			07/04/2019	سحوان
7	فايزة جواد جاسم العيسى	م	12	سحوان التخصصي	الموازين	اب	07/04/2019	سحوان
8	امان الكدم	م	12	المستشفى	زبيدة	زبيدة	07/04/2019	سحوان
9	مروان احمد محمد علي العزاوي	م	14	م / الحرميين التخصصي			07/04/2019	سحوان
10	ناصر علي ناصر دحان	م	30	م / الحرميين التخصصي			07/04/2019	سحوان
11	ناصر يحيى جواد	م	27	المتحدرين			07/04/2019	سحوان
12	ابراهيم احمد علي العزاوي	م	12	المتحدرين			07/04/2019	سحوان
13	ايه الرحمن علي الجعفرى	م	12	الثورة			07/04/2019	سحوان
14	ياد فواد الحريري	م	10	المتحدرين			07/04/2019	سحوان

VICTIMS OF THE EXPLOSION OF THE AL RA'AE SCHOOL IN SANA'A

7 APRIL 2019



إيمان كدم



آية الرحمن الجعفري



أسيا الحداد



أرزاق عزام



حنان الوصابي



حماس القطوي



بسام الشدادي



بثينة الخزان



ناصر جحاف



نيراد الحرازي



ماريا ماجد جميل



رنا فؤاد الحربي

Recommendations

The international community:

- Investigate the incident of Al-Ra'i school in Sa'wan, east Sanaa, of Monday, April 7, 2019, which resulted in the deaths of (14) students and injured dozen others.

The Arab Coalition:

- Avoid any air strikes that may cause harm to cities and populated areas, including public installations.
- Conduct a comprehensive review to the bank of targets and the rules of engagement, especially in population areas, and close to military sites in accordance with the rules and principles of international law.

Houthis Militia:

- Allow a serious and impartial investigation into the causes of the explosion that occurred next to Al-Ra'i school in Sa'wan, east of Sana'a on Monday, April 7, 2019, killing 14 school students and wounding dozens more.
- To abide by the rules of international law, to spare population areas and public installations, from any military threats, including weapons stores, or logistic services for military purposes.



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