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## Human Rights Watch Statement

### UPR outcome report of Yemen

24 September 2009

Human Rights Watch welcomes the UPR Working Group report on Yemen, and seeks to further urge the government to implement fully the accepted recommendations, including in the regions affected by the recent unrest in southern Yemen and renewed armed conflict in northern Yemen. The government of Yemen should in this context endeavor to strengthen protection for the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in the south, and scrupulously observe international humanitarian law in the north.

Since 2007, southern Yemenis have conducted peaceful sit-ins, marches and demonstrations to protest what they say is the northern-dominated central government's discriminatory treatment. These protests have grown in recent months.

While the government publicly claims to listen to southern grievances, its security forces have responded to largely peaceful protests with a brutal crackdown, using lethal force against protestors without cause or warning, arbitrarily detaining thousands, and conducting unfair, politicized trials of the movement's leaders. The central authorities have also attacked the independent media, suspending publications, blocking websites, arresting journalists, and even shooting up the offices of the largest independent newspaper, *Al-Ayyam*. Outspoken southern academics and students, too, have come under heavy-handed government repression. Yemen should fully respect accepted recommendations 72 to 76 as a matter of highest priority and should commit to implement recommendations made by Norway and the Czech Republic.

Human Rights Watch is also extremely concerned about the grave humanitarian consequences of current fighting in northern Yemen, based on reports from the United Nations and nongovernmental humanitarian agencies, which indicate that fighting since mid-August has brought the number of internally displaced persons to 150,000. As in previous rounds of fighting, humanitarian agencies have struggled to gain access to the displaced and other civilians. The Yemeni government should take all possible steps to facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

At least 87 persons, the majority women, children, and the elderly, were killed in aerial bombings in 'Adi, east of the town of Harf Sufyan in 'Amran governorate, on September 16. The Yemeni government should promptly and impartially investigate responsibility for any attacks that indiscriminately or disproportionately harm civilians. All parties to the armed conflict should respect the prohibition under international law against targeting civilians.

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