



# Arms Control in Taiz City Security Priorities and Peacebuilding Policy Brief

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## Executive Summary

Ownership of firearms in Yemen is considered a right, not a privilege, thus possessing firearms is allowed without a permit or license. Historically, Yemenis have carried traditional white arms (Jambia) and firearms since ancient times, regulated by tribal customs and traditions. To a lesser extent, urban centers are governed by laws. Therefore, the visible presence of firearms has long been a societal issue in Yemen, but it has emerged as a new phenomenon in Taiz city, especially with the outbreak of the armed conflict in Yemen in 2015 and the resulting influx and smuggling of arms into the country. The fragile legal framework for regulating the bearing and possession of firearms, coupled with weak enforcement, adds another dimension to the problem, along with a lack of awareness of the risks associated with bearing firearms.

The armed conflict, indiscriminate distribution of weapons, conflicts among factions of popular resistance, ongoing military frontlines on the city outskirts, and the collapse of state institutions have all contributed to the proliferation of arms in Taiz city. This issue has manifested in various forms, such as the emergence of arms markets, a security chaos resulting in the killing of hundreds of civilians, military and security personnel, as well as attacks on justice institutions, and armed confrontations with the police.

The continued proliferation of arms in Taiz city is likely to have future implications that pose a real challenge to police work, perpetuate a culture of arms, leading to increased violence, crime, and violations. Additionally, it will result in a lack of security, loss of trust in law enforcement institutions, and consequently, instability, hindering peacebuilding efforts. These effects will impact future generations and the civility project of Taiz city.

The security and military authorities have exerted multiple efforts to address the issue, considering their limited resources. Key initiatives include establishing a weapon storage room at the main entrance of the city (Hangar Point), implementing a visual control project through surveillance cameras on city streets, and conducting security campaigns. However, the proximity of frontlines to the city poses a challenge in regulating the weapons of military personnel, highlighting the need for a clear vision to organize the issue of arms control in Taiz city through collaborative efforts among all security and military agencies, with government support. Therefore, the policy brief suggests a single procedural solution by adopting a phased plan to regulate arms in the city, categorizing facilities and areas into levels (A, B, C) where bearing arms is prohibited. Priority should be given to vital educational, judicial, and health facilities, security and military zones, as well as public spaces such as parks and markets. Additionally, the proposal includes various recommendations, such as regulating military personnel's weapons, activating media and educational awareness tools, supporting police capabilities, and regulating arms trade in the city.



## Introduction

Carrying weapons has been a longstanding phenomenon in Yemeni society, but it was not common in Taiz city. The possession of arms was limited within narrow contexts, such as social occasions in rural areas, while in the city, it was regulated through official permits. The ongoing conflict and instability, especially in its early years, coupled with the absence of justice institutions and law enforcement, led to the wider spread of this phenomenon within the city. With the continuation of armed conflict and the weakness of organized and deterrent measures, the problem escalated, taking on new dimensions such as attacks on judges and lawyers, as well as the involvement of children in carrying weapons. This has resulted in loss of life and property, raising concerns about its persistence in the future. This policy paper addresses the issue of weak regulation of weapon proliferation in Taiz city (under the legitimate government's authority), and its implications on the city's overall situation. It focuses on the dimensions of the problem, its effects, causes, and provides recommendations for official decision-makers and local mediators to contribute to mitigating the issue and ultimately finding a resolution.

The policy brief includes an executive summary, a background on the context in Taiz city, an overview of the dimensions of the issue of weapon proliferation in Taiz, and the public policies towards the problem since its inception. The brief aims to analyze the problem and its dimensions, manifestations, and the role of official entities in regulating weapon possession in Taiz city to enhance the security situation. It concludes by proposing a framework for regulating weapon possession, along with several recommendations aimed at improving mechanisms for dealing with the issue and coordinating official and unofficial efforts to mitigate the problem.

The paper followed a clear methodology in the process of data collection, relying on both secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources included a desk review of documents, literature, and reports issued by governmental and non-governmental entities, as well as newspaper reports published on local and international websites. Primary sources involved 25 in-depth interviews (KIs) and 5 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 50 participants representing local authorities, security and military institutions, academics, civil society organizations, political party representatives, union leaders, journalists, and human rights activists in Taiz city.



## Context Analysis

Taiz governorate is located in the southwest of Yemen, with a population of approximately 4,1 million people, including 836,715 residents in the urban part of the city.<sup>1</sup> Taiz is considered the cultural capital of Yemen, with highly educated inhabitants actively engaged in politics, culture, trade, and public service. The governorate holds strategic importance, stretching along the Red Sea coast and encompassing the city and port of Mocha, reaching up to the Bab el Mandeb strait. In mid-April 2015, an unequal war erupted on the outskirts of southern Taiz governorate, before formations of the “Popular Resistance” began to spread through the streets and neighborhoods of the governorate.<sup>2</sup>

Taiz governorate stands out as the most complex intersection of the Yemeni war, almost serving as a microcosm of the situation in Yemen. It is a place where multiple parties share control, with armed formations reflecting a highly intricate situation.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the provincial police managed by the Aden-based Ministry of Interior and the Taiz Axis Forces under the Ministry of Defense, there are security and military forces affiliated with the Houthi group (Ansar Allah) present in the north and east of Taiz. They continue to impose a partial siege on the city since 2015.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there are forces known as the Republican Guards in the western coast of the governorate, in addition to the Southern Giants Forces, and finally, the National Shield Forces in the southeastern directorates. All of these entities have thousands of recruits and receive arms supplies through various channels, keeping them on high alert.

The phenomenon of weapon proliferation in Taiz city cannot be separated from the broader context of the problem at the national level and the developments resulting from the ongoing armed conflict. Even before the conflict erupted in 2015, Yemen was considered a regional arms market, with reports indicating the existence of around 60 million weapons. However, these numbers have significantly increased during the years of conflict, which have legitimized the possession of weapons without any controls.<sup>5</sup> The ongoing and multi-faceted nature of the conflict has led to a surge in the demand for arms<sup>6</sup>, with arms sales exceeding 18\$ billion since the beginning of the conflict in 2015.<sup>7</sup> This has fueled the entrenched arms smuggling networks in the country<sup>8</sup>, making Yemen the second most armed country in the world after the United States.<sup>9</sup>

1 Central Bureau of Statistics - Taiz Office, "Taiz Governorate Statistical Yearbook, Fifth Edition, 2023", p. 54.

2 Adnan al-Hammadi "Brigadier General Adnan al-Hammadi: Shawki Hael asked me not to go to Brigade 35 in Taiz, and these are the secrets of the camp's fall" Interview with Rashid Mohammed and Rasha Abdul Kafi. Originally published in Bawabat al-Sharqi, and republished by AL-Magazin Post, September 2015, 18. <https://almawqeaqpost.net/news/2128>

3 Majid al-Madhaji, "Taiz at the Crossroads of Yemen's War," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, March 2020, 27. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/analysis-ar/9473>

4 Abdullah al-Hajj, "Disintegration and Social Reform in Taiz," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, January 2022, 30. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/analysis-ar/16377>

5 Zakaria al-Kamali, "Uncontrolled weapons in Yemen increase the crime rate," AL-Araby Al-Jadeed, October 2021, 30. <https://goo.su/kLPmR>

6 "Why is the demand for firearms increasing in Yemen?," Voice of Beirut International, March 2024, 13. <https://cuts.top/FliP>

7 Amnesty International, "Arms Control." <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/what-we-do/arms-control/>

8 Michael Horton, "Yemen: A Dangerous Regional Arms Market," Terrorism Monitor Vol: 15, no: 12.

<https://jamestown.org/program/yemen-dangerous-regional-arms-bazaar/>

9 "America and Yemen in the lead. Who owns the world's small arms?" Masrawy, June 2018, 18. <https://cuts.top/FilP>



## The high cost of weapon proliferation

The events in Taiz have had a significant impact on the overall situation in the city, leading to the emergence of a new reality based on violence and weapons. When the conflict erupted in April 2015, the security sector collapsed, creating a vacuum filled by unofficial security entities. The judicial system in the city also came to a halt, forcing residents to resolve legal disputes on their own.<sup>10</sup> Many resorted to violence instead of dialogue and negotiation.<sup>11</sup> The police infrastructure in Taiz suffered destruction, with its facilities looted, including the headquarters of the provincial police administration and the central prison facility. Additionally, the judicial complex was destroyed, and court operations were suspended for two years before resuming under precarious security conditions. The complete collapse of the police sector in Taiz created a climate of fear among the population, making it challenging for them to seek assistance from security authorities for complaints or reports.<sup>12</sup> This situation bolstered the influence of certain individuals, hindered security reform efforts, and increased citizens' fears of losing safety due to the proliferation of armed elements in public places and markets.<sup>13</sup>

Since the beginning of the war in Taiz, international and UN organizations have initially operated from outside the city before establishing offices in Al Turbah in the Al-Shamaytin district south of Taiz, and then in the coastal city of Al-Mokha. Starting from 2020, several organizations have opened offices in the city of Taiz. Due to the unstable situation in Taiz, the killing of International Red Cross staff member Hanna Lahoud in April 2018 by armed individuals as he was leaving the city<sup>14</sup> led to the reclassification of the security situation in Taiz as unstable. Four years later, specifically in July 2023, a high-profile member of World Food Program, Moayad Hamidi, was assassinated in Al Turbah by unidentified gunmen.<sup>15</sup> Currently, out of the 27 international and UN organizations in Taiz, only 12 operate from their offices in the city, while the rest conduct their work from offices in Al Turbah and Al-Mokha.<sup>16</sup>

According to security estimates, the number of victims of security breakdown and armed murder gangs in Taiz from early 2018 to August 2021 reached approximately 300 victims.<sup>17</sup> The manifestations of chaos were not limited to armed clashes in the city center, as the robbery of commercial stores became a prevalent issue complained about by city merchants.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, medical facilities were targeted, with at least 40 violent incidents recorded against the public hospital, Al-Thawra, between 2018 and 2020.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Closure of Taiz courts forces Yemenis to take matters into their own hands," [FR], Middle East Eye, March 2022 ,29. <https://cuts.top/EZoe>

<sup>11</sup> Abdullah al-Hajj, Disintegration and Social Reform in Taiz, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, January 2022 ,30. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/analysis-ar/16377>

<sup>12</sup> Personal interview with a young man from Taiz city, May 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Journalist Makin Mohammed, personal interview, Taiz, May 2024 ,8.

<sup>14</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICRC staff member killed in Taiz, Yemen (statement), 2018/21/4.

<https://www.icrc.org/ar/document/yemen-icrc-staff-member-shot-and-killed-taiz>

<sup>15</sup> Middle East, UN staff member killed in Taiz, July 2023 ,23. <https://n9.cl/2k7jn3>

<sup>16</sup> Organizations Database, Office of Planning and International Cooperation – Taiz.

<https://www.mopic-taiz.com/organizations/organizations-database/>

<sup>17</sup> Akram Yassin, "The murderous gangs that took over Taiz. How did the city sink into the quagmire of chaos?" (Investigation), Al-Monitor, 2021/25/8. <https://almawqaeapost.net/reports/62850>

<sup>18</sup> Hisham Sarhan, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> "Humanitarian medical facilities come under indiscriminate attack in Taiz city," press release, MSF, 2020/20/03. <https://cuts.top/H28J>





In contrast, security forces conducted pursuit and tracking campaigns against members of these gangs who resisted the security campaign with weapons,<sup>20</sup> resulting in around 50 police officers killed and nearly 85 others injured.<sup>21</sup> While most of the mentioned statistics pertain to previous years, they reflect two indicators: a negative one related to the proliferation of weapons in the five years following the outbreak of armed conflict and the resulting collapse of state institutions, and a positive one reflecting the level of security improvement and the decline in crimes associated with the spread of weapons in recent years, despite limited resources.

### Great Challenges, Limited Government Intervention

The political and military instability in areas under the control of the internationally recognized government of Yemen (IRGoY), especially in the interim capital Aden, has led to a lack of governmental focus on the situation in Taiz Governorate, particularly in the security sector where support has been limited to the re-recruitment of forces within the official security apparatus, and the provision of some light and medium weapons and security equipment. In July 2016, the government began the reconstruction of the security sector in the governorate,<sup>22</sup> integrating most pro-government groups into the Taiz military axis under the Yemeni army.<sup>23</sup> Despite this unstable situation and limited support, the police in Taiz have maintained official structures, without the establishment of new security formations as seen in Aden and some southern provinces, explaining the significant improvement in security services due to the harmony and integration among security units. Furthermore, many instances of armed displays are attributed to military personnel, complicating tasks for security authorities facing shortages in resources and armament,<sup>24</sup> creating a form of overlap in responsibilities between security and military authorities despite differing levels of capabilities. Therefore, regulating arms possession requires coordination and cooperation among these agencies.

The ongoing neglect of rebuilding and rehabilitating the police forces in Taiz Governorate to carry out the task of regulating arms possession poses a threat to social fabric and civil peace, not only in the governorate but in Yemen as a whole. Therefore, the international community, especially the office of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, must address this issue as a danger that jeopardizes the continuation of the conflict. It is essential, first and foremost, to support the security authorities with the necessary equipment and capabilities to deal with the security challenges they face in the post-conflict environment, in addition to enhancing the powers of the civilian and military judiciary.

20 Akram Yassin, op. cit.

21 Focus group discussion with security and military leaders, Taiz, April 2024.

22 Mohammed Al-Eryani, "Policing in a Fragmented State: The Resilience of Local Institutions in Taiz," Yemen Policy Center, March 2020. <https://goo.su/oZdAW>

23 Abdullah al-Hajj, "Disintegration and Social Reform in Taiz," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, 2022/30/01. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/analysis-ar/16377>

24 "What are the causes of insecurity in Taiz?", Belkis, 2022/21/10. <https://cuts.top/F14I>





## Weak legal infrastructure

The legal framework governing the regulation of arms possession and carrying in Yemen, coupled with its weak enforcement on the ground, continues to perpetuate the view of arms possession and carrying as a personal matter. On one hand, Yemeni law grants citizens the right to own personal firearms, such as automatic rifles, pistols, and hunting rifles, with a specified amount of ammunition. Consequently, the state has indirectly contributed to the proliferation of weapons, even if to a minor extent during periods of stability, encouraging people to possess them. On the other hand, the lack of law enforcement has led to the persistence of the phenomenon of bearing arms, exacerbating the situation with the armed conflict, where bearing weapons in cities and markets has become a part of daily life.

However, the law prohibits anyone from carrying a firearm in the capital and provincial capitals and cities without an official permit. Carrying personal firearms or walking with them, even if licensed, is also prohibited in some cases and places, such as during protests, sports and youth events, and within official premises. This means that some provisions of the law and its executive regulations can be utilized to regulate bearing arms in the city of Taiz, being the capital of the governorate. Although the law allows for the carrying and possession of weapons, the Yemeni legislative system has increased penalties for crimes committed using firearms, as outlined in Law No. 12 of 1994 on crimes and penalties, Law No. 24 of 1998 on combating kidnapping and ransom crimes, and other laws that could help curb the spread of weapons in the city of Taiz if activated and enforced through the judiciary.





## Manifestations of Weak Arms Regulation in Taiz City

### Proliferation of arms markets:

The circumstances of war, raids on military camps and security facilities, looting of weapons, and their subsequent resale have contributed to the flourishing of arms markets. All parties to the conflict have seized quantities of weapons during battles and from Yemeni army stockpiles. These surplus weapons are easily sold to arms dealers and other entities. As a result of the collapse of state institutions, many residents, especially merchants and warehouse owners, have resorted to arming themselves out of fear of increasing acts of robbery and looting resulting from the proliferation of weapons. The abundance of weapons in the hands of individuals and leaders, facilitated by unregulated arms distribution coinciding with the recruitment of youth, has led to a notable increase in arms trading activities.

While arms markets have been common in many Yemeni provinces and cities for a long time, they were not prevalent in the city of Taiz, known for its civility. However, since the outbreak of armed conflict in Taiz in 2015, arms shops and warehouses have become a part of the daily scene in the city. The People's Republic Market in Taiz is a prime example of the distortions caused by the Yemeni war, where arms trade now includes RPG launchers, missiles, modern sniper rifles, artillery shells, and tanks. It cannot be confirmed that arms shops in Taiz operate in accordance with official legal permits, as evidenced by the types of weapons and ammunition on display, which exceed the permissible personal weapons for sale. It also cannot be asserted that they operate beyond police oversight. Nevertheless, it requires multiple measures to prevent non-personal arms trade.

### Decline in Civic Awareness

The conflict in Taiz is characterized by unique traits that differentiate it from other cities in Yemen, as the city has witnessed intense violence involving many civilians who had not previously used weapons.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, some interviewees believe that carrying arms in Taiz is linked to defending the city and was initially not considered reprehensible behavior, but rather received wide support from various segments of society and was seen as a response to exceptional circumstances that could be overcome.

However, as the conflict persists and state institutions slowly regain their effectiveness, with a lack of rehabilitation and awareness programs, the proliferation of weapons has led to the emergence of negative and unfamiliar phenomena in the city. This includes incidents like gunfire at weddings and events, such as when the national youth team won the West Asian Cup in its ninth edition in December 2021 and tenth edition in 2023<sup>33</sup>, resulting in injuries.<sup>34</sup> Some expressing joy through firing gunshots into the city's sky reflected the concerning aspect of the widespread arms phenomenon and the decline in civic awareness. Firing gunshots was not a celebratory ritual in Taiz; rather, years of armed conflict with weak deterrent measures have contributed to the emergence of such negative phenomena.

31 Taiz Time, "Black markets in Taiz to sell rockets, snipers, RPGs, artillery and tanks," 2021/11/2.

<https://taiztime.com/taiz-news/23-43-07-02-11-2021>

32 Naila Moussa, "Who cares about Yemen's security?" In *Out of Hell: Rebuilding Security in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen*, edited by Basma Kodmani and Naila Moussa, Arab Reform Initiative, August 2017, p. 111.

33 Fahmi Abdul Qabed, "Statistics on the number of victims of retaliatory bullets after the victory of the Yemeni team," *Al-Mashhad*, 2023/23/12. <https://almushahid.net/119407/>

34 Hisham Sarhan, op. cit.



Weak awareness manifests at several levels, including ignorance and prevailing culture among youth who have entrenched ideas that consider carrying weapons as a symbol of strength, heroism, and masculinity. These concepts have significantly strengthened after some individuals carried weapons, despite their lack of awareness of the risks and harms, such as the danger of committing crimes like murder and causing injuries. Another level of weak awareness is evident in the daily practices of some leaders, military officials, and civilians who insist on bringing armed escorts into government offices or city streets, often not in military attire. This behavior contributes to the continuation of armed displays, whether intentional or unintentional. Tolerance towards gunfire at weddings and any celebratory events contributes to the spread of this phenomenon. To prevent the spread of such behaviors, the responsibility falls on the community, its social figures, intellectual elites, and civil society to reject this phenomenon through mechanisms of social condemnation, such as emphasizing the unwelcomeness of any armed individual attending social events.

On the other hand, awareness and advocacy activities lead to positive results in reducing the spread of weapons. According to participants in focus group discussions (FGDs), official entities address weapon-related issues when they become media topics, taking immediate actions such as security campaigns, but these efforts quickly cease. The lack of continuity in field actions, as cited by security leaders, is attributed to the high costs associated with security campaigns given limited resources. Social and political figures, civil society organizations, and opinion leaders can contribute by pressuring the government to provide the necessary resources for weapon regulation. They can also play a supervisory role over security agencies.

### Obstruction of justice

The ongoing conflict in Yemen for nearly 9 years has weakened public institutions, including security, military, and even the judicial authority, with influential figures meddling in judicial affairs.<sup>35</sup> The proliferation and lax control of weapons in Taiz city allowed arms to become a means of influencing a justice system lacking necessary protection. The leniency in weapon control and enforcing penalties for violators led to a rise in repeated attacks on courts, judges, and lawyers, ranging from abductions to threats and direct assaults, aimed at disrupting the course of justice. Within one week, there were recorded 7 attacks targeting judicial personnel in the city.<sup>36</sup> Data from the Bar Association in Taiz Governorate indicated that lawyers experienced over 30 violations by armed individuals in 2022.<sup>37</sup>

The repeated assaults and escalating frequency on judges and lawyers by armed individuals affiliated with security agencies and military units, coupled with the weak execution of court orders, prompted the judicial authority and the Bar Association to suspend their activities several times.<sup>38</sup> The Bar Association described these attacks as nearly systematic.<sup>39</sup> The continuation of these violations without holding perpetrators accountable and the lack of control over weapon proliferation will have negative impacts on justice systems, undermine the prestige and independence of the judiciary, leading to erosion of the rule of law, increased chaos, violations, threats to rights, and adverse effects on the human rights situation in Taiz.

35 "Weapons" in the face of the judiciary in Taiz Repeated attacks cause courts and prosecution offices to suspend work, Khuyut website, 2024/20/2.

<https://www.khuyut.com/blog/taiz-judiciary>

36 Lawyers Against Corruption monitors seven attacks on judges during a week, Al-Watan Al-Adaniya, Friday, April 2020 ,3.

<https://www.alwattan.net/news/117587>

37 Website Post, "Taiz. The Bar Association suspends its work for three days to protest attacks on a number of its members," 2022/17/10.

<https://almawqeaqpost.net/news/78761>

38 Yemen: Judicial work suspended due to repeated attacks on members of the judiciary in Taiz, Yemen Future, February 2024 ,2.

<https://yemenfuture.net/news/20206>

39 Website Post, "Taiz. The Bar Association condemns violations against lawyers and calls for an investigation," 2022/9/12.

<https://almawqeaqpost.net/news/77300>





## Repercussions and concerns

The proliferation of armed manifestations negatively impacts the stability of the security situation. On one hand, it contributes to increased crime rates and hinders the work of security authorities, making it difficult to distinguish between security suspects and others, complicating the process of tracking criminals or fugitives from justice. On the other hand, this situation raises significant concerns about the possibility of security chaos in the event of renewed military confrontations in the city.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the continued phenomenon of carrying weapons erodes trust in the official entities' ability to maintain security, increasing the likelihood of civil conflicts and retaliations. Economic activity is also adversely affected, reflecting on commodity prices and services. Additionally, it restricts freedom of expression, undermines the independence of the judiciary, and efforts to establish the rule of law, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability while bolstering the recruitment of children. These effects may impact the future of upcoming generations and the civil project in Taiz Governorate.<sup>41</sup>

During periods of armed conflict, organizing arms control becomes a military and security priority. However, this objective will not be achieved unless the regulation and control of personal weapons of army and security personnel are addressed first. The roaming of these individuals with their personal weapons in the streets and public markets provides justification for the continuation of this phenomenon. Moreover, carrying official weapons in public places in civilian attire raises concerns and fear among citizens, who find it difficult to distinguish between official and unofficial arms.<sup>42</sup>

40 Personal interview with a security leader in Taiz governorate police, April 2024.

41 Interviews with human rights activists and media professionals in Taiz city, April 2024.

42 Fourth Focus Group Discussion, Taiz, May 2024.





## Security efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons

In its efforts to confront insecurity in the city, the provincial police department has taken a number of precautionary and preventive measures aimed at enhancing the capabilities of security agencies to reduce crime and mitigate the phenomenon of weapons proliferation, most notably:

### Visual control project

The Taiz Police Department launched the "Visual Control Project through Public Street Surveillance Cameras" connected to the police operations room, in partnership with civil society organizations and with contributions from local businesses.<sup>43</sup> Prior to this, commercial warehouses in the city were required to install surveillance cameras in front of their stores. It can be said that surveillance cameras have succeeded in detecting many armed robbery crimes committed by armed individuals in Taiz, and have transformed many crimes that were previously invisible over the past years into issues of public opinion.<sup>44</sup> As a result, there has been a decrease in robbery crimes.

### Weapon depository room at the Hangar Point

Over the past three years, security and military agencies have taken measures to prevent the entry of weapons from the "Hangar Point", the main entrance to the city. These measures include inspecting vehicles and individuals entering the city and establishing a "Weapon Depository Room." In this room, personal weapons are taken, documented, and the weapon holder is issued a receipt detailing the weapon and its information. The weapon is returned to the individual upon leaving the city. Similarly, security and military agencies have set up inspection points such as in University Street in Ad Dahi and Haseb Street to limit the spread of weapons.

### Security campaigns

As part of its efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons in the city of Taiz and organize them, the provincial police administration conducts security campaigns periodically to control armed displays and to regulate the firing of guns at weddings. Additionally, the Taiz Police issued a list containing the names of 39 individuals wanted for security offenses under judicial orders, related to weapon-related crimes.<sup>45</sup> More than two-thirds of the list are enlisted in the Axis Forces and are affiliated with local military and civilian authorities, according to security information.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the continued carrying of weapons by members of military brigades stationed on the outskirts of the city poses challenges to security forces. The checkpoints are unable to control the weapons under the pretext that they are used for military service on the frontlines.

43 "Special statement to Yemen Monitor. Surveillance cameras covering "Taiz City" to reduce crime," 2021/28/11. <https://n9.cl/u9ifzh>

44 "Surveillance cameras expose armed robbery crimes in Taiz - Yemen," Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, 2021/9/1. <https://cuts.top/F4E3>

45 "Al-Watan al-Adaniya publishes the black list of wanted persons in Taiz - documents," December 2020 ,7. <https://al-wattan.net/news/141581>

46 "Most of them are members of the Axis forces. Taiz police publish a black list of wanted persons," Taiz al-Youm, December 2020 ,8. <https://cuts.top/H5OM>





## The proposed solution

Based on the reasons outlined in the paper, immediate solutions can be proposed to curb the spread of weapons and contribute to regulating weapon possession through joint efforts involving all security and military agencies. This can be initiated by establishing a broad mandate local police force as the center for the (Jund Region) Police, with extensive powers. Therefore, the paper suggests a single procedural solution for military and security entities, as follows:

### A gradual plan to regulate weapons:

A gradual plan to regulate weapon possession in the city involves identifying facilities and areas classified into levels (A, B, C), where bearing arms is gradually prohibited. The complete ban would start at Level A, with gradual enforcement in the subsequent levels (B, C). These levels may be based on geographical or functional criteria. This can be further clarified with an example table as follows:

#	Level	Examples for each level
1	Level (A)	Vital educational, healthcare, and judicial facilities, as well as international organizations.
2	Level (B)	Official security and military facilities and areas where commercial banks are located.
3	Level (C)	Public spaces such as parks, markets, main and side streets.

**(Note:** The table serves as illustrative examples for the proposal, while the determination of levels is subject to the assessments and priorities of the relevant security agencies)

Following the gradual approach of the proposal and enforcing strict regulations at Level A would help restore credibility to the police and the facilities and sites associated with this level. It would also enhance the chances of successful implementation in the subsequent levels. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to study and evaluate the experience, address any shortcomings and considerations before moving on to the next levels.





This solution requires accompanying measures to be implemented firmly, such as regulating the possession of weapons by military units close to the frontlines through designated points for fighters to surrender their weapons. It also involves imposing strict control on arms dealers, banning the sale of non-personal weapons, implementing rigorous measures to prevent carrying medium-sized weapons in public places and streets, confiscating medium weapons and ammunition like hand grenades, engaging stakeholders, and official and unofficial actors. This includes coordinating with civil society organizations, social figures, mosque preachers, and opinion leaders such as journalists and human rights activists to launch an awareness campaign in schools, universities, mosques, and social media platforms. This may entail financial costs, which can be addressed by pressuring the government to provide support, coordinating with local authorities, the private sector, and donor agencies.



## Recommendations

- In order to prepare for the implementation of the proposed solution and contribute to its execution, various official and community entities should undertake a number of tasks and responsibilities, which we summarize in the recommendations for the following entities:

### To security and military authorities:

1. Develop a joint security and military plan to implement the gradual weapon control and regulation plan across the three levels.
2. Establish a joint security and military campaign to enforce the security plan for implementing the curfew on medium-sized weapons in the city by military and security leaders and personnel, activating disciplinary regulations.
3. Require military and security personnel to wear the specified military uniform by law during official duties and prohibit carrying weapons without official tasks.
4. Regulate the weapons of security and military units by numbering them and keeping them in camps, government offices, and service locations.
5. Activate the role of military police and security units in regulating the process of buying and selling weapons by issuing licenses to stores for buying, selling, and repairing weapons, imposing control, and prohibiting trading in non-personal weapons.
6. Intensify regular field patrols in streets and markets by the security committee to control weapon bearers.
7. Increase awareness among individuals by military units on the importance of adhering to military regulations.
8. It is essential for the police leadership to involve local leaders and influential civil society members in awareness activities and monitoring the regulation of weapon possession in the city of Taiz.



- **To local authorities**

9. Activate the role of various official media platforms (radio, television, mosque platforms, social media) to raise awareness about the dangers of bearing weapons to combat the phenomenon.
10. Promote a culture of peace through awareness raising, encouraging initiatives to prevent revenge, and promoting adherence to the law.
11. It is necessary to introduce a culture of peace and awareness of the dangers of weapons in school curricula, institute lectures, and universities.
12. Prioritize economic development and education strategies alongside their security responses to reduce the phenomenon of weapon possession.
13. Enhance protection for the judicial institution, its members, and facilities.
14. Implement developmental programs to address the root causes of weapon possession, including illiteracy and unemployment.
15. Engage social figures, religious leaders, civil society, and other stakeholders through dialogue and collaboration to contribute to mitigating the issue of weapon possession.

**To international non-government organizations and local CSOs:**

16. Support rehabilitation programs for military and security personnel.
17. Intensify training for military and police leaders, law enforcement personnel, and officers.
18. Support programs to enhance police capabilities and contribute to meeting their needs as part of police rebuilding efforts in conflict environments.
19. Advocate for the government to provide the necessary resources and equipment for security and military agencies to regulate weapon possession in Taiz city.
20. Link humanitarian and developmental interventions to bolster security and the rule of law.
21. Connect peacebuilding programs to enhancing institutional capacities of the police and law enforcement agencies.
22. Intensify awareness projects and activities about the dangers of bearing weapons.
23. Focus on entrepreneurship projects and income-generating initiatives for youth to combat unemployment.
24. Organize local quarterly or annual meetings and conferences to discuss and evaluate the weapon regulation plan in Taiz city.
25. Exert maximum pressure to ban the supply and smuggling of weapons into Yemen.
26. Utilize art and peaceful heritage to resolve conflicts within awareness activities to reduce armed incidents in Taiz city.



## About the authors, YWBOD, MFDHR, and CSSST project

### **Rashed Mohammed**

A Consultant, researcher and trainer in public policy. He holds a master's degree in public international law from the Faculty of Law, Taiz University, awarded in 2024 with a very good grade for his thesis titled Transitional Justice Guarantees in International Human Rights Law. He holds several local and regional ToT courses in public policy, governance, social accountability, peacebuilding, gender, advocacy, and human rights at local and regional levels. He has authored numerous public policy papers in collaboration with civil society organizations in the fields of human rights and public services. Lastly, the researcher would like to acknowledge the generous funding provided by YWBOD with support from the United Nations Peace Support Facility.

### **Dhi Yazan Al-Suwaie**

A lawyer and the founder of Masar Foundation for Development and Human Rights. He is a trainer and facilitator in the fields of human rights and international humanitarian law. He holds a preliminary Master's degree in Public Law from the Faculty of Law at Taiz University, and he completed several courses in peace, human rights, and climate and environmental issues at both local and regional levels. Al-Suwaie is actively engaged in advocating for human rights, climate and environmental issues, and works in the management and coordination of several projects related to peace, human rights, development, environment and climate.

### **The United Nations Peace Support Facility for Yemen**

The United Nations Peace Support Facility for Yemen was established in 2019 to support national and subnational peace process. The facility is managed by UNDP Yemen.

### **Youth without Borders Organization for Development (YWBOD):**

Established in April 2013, YWBOD is a non-governmental, non-profit, civil society organization working on youth empowerment, peacebuilding and development in Yemen. YWBOD has the strategic vision to be the pioneer platform for young men and women engaging in peacebuilding programs in Yemen. Since its establishment, YWBOD seeks to empower young changemakers in a peaceful, coherent and inclusive context in Yemen, supporting the effective roles of young people in local and national policies to contribute to development and peace. This has resulted in strong partnerships and collective work towards impactful and sustainable results for the empowerment of young men and women and their engagement in community security, community resilience and conflict resolution, recovery and reconstruction, humanitarian relief and livelihoods.





### **Masar Foundation for Development and Human Rights (MFDHR):**

Established on February 2017 ,22 by a group of activists dedicated to defending human rights and civil work, MFDHR is an independent non-governmental, non-profit, civil society organization with legal personality and independent financial liability. MFDHR was established in accordance with Law No. 1 of 2001 on Associations and NGOs and operates under License No. (9M) granted by the Social Affairs and Labor Office in Taiz. Committed to neutrality, MFDHR is dedicated to promoting human rights, democracy, and good governance in Yemeni society.

### **CSSST project:**

The Civil Society Support to Security Agencies in Taiz project is implemented by (YWBOD) in partnership with civil society organizations and alliances, and in coordination and cooperation with government institutions in Taiz city, including the local authority, police department, military units and other stakeholders concerned with security issues in Taiz. The project aims to improve the security situation in Taiz governorate and contribute to creating a stable and peaceful environment at the local level, paving the way for any peace agreement/ceasefire at the national level. That is by implementing interventions to strengthen the capacities of security institutions in Taiz city, enabling them to address security challenges and improve security in the city.

