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**YEMEN: USCIRF calls for release of 17 Baha'is forcibly disappeared by the Houthis**

**YEMEN: USCIRF calls for immediate release of 17 Baha'is forcibly disappeared by the Houthis**

USCIRF (02.06.2023) – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) condemns last week's Houthi attack on a peaceful gathering of Yemeni Baha'is in Sana'a. Armed

Houthi gunmen stormed a private residence and arrested **17 Baha'i** community members during the gathering.

*"USCIRF is outraged by last week's Houthi raid on the Baha'i community and calls for their immediate release,"* said USCIRF Commissioner **Stephen Schneck**. *"U.S. officials must urge Houthi authorities to cease the flagrant targeting of religious minority communities and engage in good faith to secure a new agreement on a comprehensive peace process."*

On May 23, armed Houthi forces raided a private residence in Sana'a where members of the Baha'i community were attending their annual national convention to elect the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Yemen. The 17 detained individuals were taken to an unknown location, and their family members have been unable to contact them. This latest attack is part of the Houthi movement's ongoing attacks on religious minorities in northern Yemen, including Baha'is.

Under Houthi rule, Baha'is are systematically targeted on a religious basis and have suffered from public defamation, seizure of assets, destruction of property, arbitrary arrests, and lack of due process. The community's leader, **Hamid bin Haydara**, was sentenced to death in 2018 before being allowed to leave in 2020 along with five other Baha'i detainees despite charges against them remaining in place.

*"USCIRF abhors Houthi restrictions on religious freedom for Yemeni Baha'is and other religious minorities,"* said USCIRF Vice Chair **Abraham Cooper**. *"The U.S. government together with members of the international community must affirm to Houthi*

*leaders that respect for the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief is the only path towards durable peace in Yemen.”*

In its **2023 Annual Report**, USCIRF recommended that the U.S. Department of State designate the Houthi movement as an “entity of particular concern,” or EPC, for engaging in and tolerating ongoing and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. In May 2023, USCIRF published a **report** on violations of religious freedom in Houthi-controlled areas of northern Yemen.

**Further reading about FORB on HRWF website**

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