

# THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (DIHR) IN YEMEN

In early 2011, the wave of Arab uprisings reached Yemen where members of the opposition staged protests against the rule of President Saleh, who had been in power for more than three decades. Following negotiations, Saleh agreed to a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brokered deal, which included his resignation and subsequent immunity. The GCC agreement laid out a transitional process, including presidential elections, which were held in February 2012. Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi subsequently took office as President of Yemen.

The presidential elections were followed by a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) process, which aimed at defining the main aspect of a future unified Yemeni state. Although significantly delayed, the NDC was formally finalised, but the outcomes are yet to be implemented. This is mainly because of the current instability in Yemen caused by the Houthi rebellion against the sitting president and government.

In September 2014, the northern-based Zaidi Shiite Houthi movement took over the Yemeni capital Sana'a, and has since continued to expand its control over different areas of Yemen. Consequently, the government is currently in exile in Aden and President Hadi has sought refuge in Saudi Arabia.

President Hadi continues to receive international recognition as president, although his authority in Yemen is limited. In support of his authority, a Saudi Arabia-led coalition of states began carrying out airstrikes in Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of halting and reversing the alleged Iran-backed Houthis.

## DIHR PROGRAMME 2015-2017

DIHR's engagement in Yemen started with a partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights in 2007. In 2008, dialogue activities with a group of NGOs also led to the establishment of the Yemeni Human Rights Network.

DIHR's objective in Yemen is to support the national human rights system in becoming capable of promoting and protecting human rights across the country. Due to the current security situation, DIHR will scale down activities in Yemen in 2016, while continuing to liaise with and engage partners in activities in order to build a solid foundation for a post-conflict situation. This means that the focus of DIHR activities in Yemen will be on the MoHR and the MoLA.

### BRIEF FACTS

**Geography:** Yemen

is a Middle Eastern country

neighbouring Saudi Arabia to the North, Oman to the East, and the Gulf of Aden to the South.

**Demography:** Yemen has approximately 24 million inhabitants with a life expectancy at birth of around 63 years.

**Economy:** GNI in Yemen is 3,820 USD (PPP) per capita.

**Official language:** Arabic.

**Political:** Under the 1991 constitution, Yemen is a multiparty republic with two legislative houses – the Consultative Council (111 appointed members), and the House of Representatives (301 elected members). The President is the head of state, and the Prime Minister is the head of government.



### ***Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR)***

Based on a partnership formalised through a MoU signed in 2012, DIHR has remained a “critical friend” of the ministry despite difficult circumstances. In 2015 DIHR focused on supporting the ministry in maintaining its role as the governmental human rights focal point in Yemen by facilitating the national human rights strategy drafting process and drafting reports on the human rights situation.

In 2016, DIHR will focus on ensuring that activities are coordinated with the MoHR and that lines of communication remain open with the main actors in the ministry. This will provide DIHR with critical information on the situation on the ground as well as the opportunity to invite Yemeni partners to regional activities.

### ***Ministry of Legal Affairs (MoLA)***

MoLA is responsible for all legislative matters including the drafting of a new constitution for Yemen. Before the current crises, the ministry was spearheading an intra-ministerial reform focused on human rights promotion. In 2014, DIHR and MoLA engaged in a partnership and agreed that DIHR should work to develop the capacity of MoLA staff in legal analysis, revision, and drafting. DIHR initiated this work in 2015, but the security situation prevented a full implementation of activities.

In 2016, DIHR will focus on ensuring that activities are coordinated with the MoHR and that lines of communication remain open with the main actors in the ministry. This will provide DIHR with critical information on the situation on the ground as well as the opportunity to invite Yemeni partners to regional activities.

The expected outcome of DIHR’s engagement in Yemen is that:

- DIHR has a Local Project Coordinator on the ground in Yemen, who will be able to liaise with and coordinate local activities with DIHR’s Yemeni partners.
- The MoHR and MoLA invites DIHR to provide input to the human rights strategy of Yemen and participates in MENA regional activities facilitated by DIHR.

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