

Policy Report

July 2019



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Formalizing the Informal

State and Non-State Security Providers in Government-Controlled Taiz City



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The Yemen Polling Center

The Yemen Polling Center (YPC) is an independent organization providing social science research services. YPC was established in 2004 as the first polling center in Yemen and received registration certificate no. 147 from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in December 2005.

YPC designs and implements services to fulfill the research needs of and to inform national and international institutions, non-profit organizations, corporations and government agencies. It conducts public opinion surveys, focus groups, interviews, demographic studies and market research employing quantitative and qualitative methods for development projects, international organizations and foundations, publications, business groups and financial institutions.

YPC has repeatedly proved its quality research capabilities and consistency. In 2010 it won Gallup's World Poll Partnership and Best Partner in the Middle East and North Africa Awards. This was followed in 2013 by Gallup's Most Valued Partner Award and in 2014 by the Gallup Award for Consistency.

As a member of the World Association for Public Opinion Research and the American Association for Public Opinion Research, YPC is committed to excellence in social science. Since its inception, YPC has conducted dozens of research projects on issues ranging from satellite television and radio consumption to attitudes toward human rights and women's rights to political reform, corruption, public health and other governance-related studies.

YPC's dedicated and experienced team cooperates with dozens of experts, consultants and university professors in Yemen and abroad. Its personnel and technical resources allow the center to conduct surveys of varying sizes in Yemen while adhering to international standards for data quality. It has surveyed nearly 170,000 Yemeni citizens in face-to-face interviews. Yemen is a religious and conservative society, so male-female interactions are limited. YPC is able to interview women respondents because approximately half of its interviewers are female.

YPC has carried out numerous internationally funded projects and has cooperated with various national and international organizations, including the European External Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme, the United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. National Democratic Institute, the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, London-based ORB International, the World Bank and the Yemeni Ministry of Local Administration.

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Kamal Moqbil, an expert in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, joined the Yemen Polling Center team as project officer in December 2008. He developed the guidelines for managing the center's entire fieldwork process, from selecting interviewers to quality control to data entry, in the process establishing strong relationships between headquarters and the various teams in the field. Through his work with the teams, he gained valuable knowledge about different Yemeni communities and their living conditions, enabling him to effectively manage research projects in difficult times. He holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Sana'a University.

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About This Report

Formalizing the Informal is part of a series published within the framework of Rebuilding Peace and Security, a project funded by the European Union's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace and implemented by the Yemen Polling Center (YPC) between 2016 and 2019. The project builds on the premise that security in Yemen is both provided and undermined by the large number of diverse actors involved in the effort.¹ Measures to address security concerns therefore cannot be standardized, but should instead be adapted to address local and regional challenges.

The publication series concentrates on different areas in Yemen to shed light on local security providers, examining the condition of local formal and informal structures, levels of cooperation between security providers and challenges to security provision. *Formalizing the Informal* focuses on government-controlled areas in the city of Taiz and explores the dynamic landscape of security providers. In Taiz, in contrast to many other parts of Yemen, the internationally recognized government of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi is relatively strong and supported by state as well as non-state actors. This has created the unique situation in which at least nominally, all security providers, regardless of their ideological affiliation, support state institutions or have become part of them. Nevertheless, some actors performing security functions pose a risk to the security of communities, and both state and non-state security providers continue to face a plethora of challenges with regard to capacity and coordination.

Formalizing the Informal draws on a variety of data sources.² Quantitative data were collected as part of nationwide representative surveys (excluding Saada and Socotra) conducted by YPC in November 2012, May 2017 and April–May 2019.³ For this publication, the 2012 and 2019 survey

¹ Soudias and Transfeld, *Mapping Popular Perception*; Heinze and Albukari, *Opportunities for SSR in Yemen*.

² Due to the current volatile political and security context in Yemen and the high-risk activities involved in data collection, especially information on security institutions, YPC, a seasoned data collection agency, has adopted safety measures and protocols to ensure staff safety and mitigate risk to them. These risk management measures directly impact research methodologies as they restrict research to areas that are deemed safe by field researchers and influence the selection of interview partners.

³ Interviewees were selected on the basis of a simple random sample from among 44,339 primary sampling units, i.e., villages in rural areas and neighborhoods in cities. Ten interviews (of five women and five men) were conducted in each unit. The sample reflects the rural/urban population distribution, with 68 percent of the interviews conducted in rural areas, half of them with females, half of them with males. All the surveys were conducted face-to-face, and all interviewers were from the area they canvassed to guarantee that they could speak and understand local dialects. Female interviewers questioned female respondents. The nationwide surveys conducted in 2017 and 2019 had a sample of 4,000, with the sample in Taiz numbering 500, with a margin of error

results reported include all responses in the dataset, as none of the areas in the sample were under the control of Ansarallah (Houthis), while the 2017 survey results exclude districts that were at the time under the control of Ansarallah.⁴ In February 2018, YPC conducted two focus group discussions in Taiz with civil society and youth activists to explore impressions about security in the governorate. A total of 15 men participated in the discussions.

Another set of data was collected between October 2018 and May 2019 through key informant interviews with military and police officers, state security officials, sheikhs, aqils, members of armed groups and journalists. Finally, YPC field researchers assembled data from observing security incidents and responses by security providers between January and April 2019. Remaining gaps in knowledge were closed by drawing on the expertise of the authors of this report as well as that of field researchers based in Taiz.

Doing field research on matters related to security and security institutions is a great challenge in Yemen under the current circumstances. Interviews with members of the security establishments proved to be particularly challenging due to the sensitive nature of the questions. Many feared that YPC would pass the information along to the enemy. There were moments when interlocutors changed their mind and withdrew from the interviews for fear of reprisal. In other instances, high-ranking individuals surprisingly agreed to sit for interviews.

The security establishment interviews were conducted between October 2018 and July 2019 in seven governorates, each of which presented unique problems and obstacles. For a number of reasons, Taiz was the least-challenging location, not simply because research there was restricted to territories outside of Ansarallah's control. That YPC's headquarters is located in Taiz enabled easier access and the establishment of instant trust between the fieldwork director and some interlocutors. High-profile state and non-state actors were interviewed along with members of civil society and ordinary residents. The experience left YPC well poised to continue on this research path to examine several other related issues and institutions.

All interlocutors have been anonymized to protect their identity and security and to help ensure that YPC can continue its work as a result of establishing relationships of trust.

of 4.38. The nationwide survey in 2012 had a sample of 2,000, with Taiz represented by 240 respondents, resulting in a margin of error of 6.33.

⁴ The 2017 data are drawn from the following districts: Hadnan, Jabal Habashi, Mashrah, al-Mawaset, al-Mesrakh, al-Mudhafar, Qahirah, Saber al-Mawadem, Salah, al-Shamayatein and al-Ma'afer.

Main Findings

- At the onset of the 2015 conflict in Yemen between the internationally recognized government and Ansarallah (Houthis), state institutions and frameworks collapsed in southwestern Taiz city. While much of the former police leadership remained in place, the rank and file had to be rebuilt after the relative reestablishment of stability.
- Informal actors, in particular sheikhs and aqils, expanded their roles as security providers. After the state framework collapsed, the degree of arbitrariness in security provision increased. Today, security structures overlap in their functioning, without clear hierarchies.
- Informal actors have become security actors as well as security threats. While these actors mediate in conflicts and manage public security, some are at the same time involved in armed clashes and criminal activity.
- Over the course of 2017, formal institutions gradually began to function again in southwestern Taiz city through the internationally recognized government. When asked in 2017 which actor is usually the first to respond to security incidents, a plurality of 37 percent of respondents in resistance-controlled areas said the police/security authorities.
- Although overall confidence in the police increased between 2017 and 2019, Taiz residents are disappointed with the performance of the police, with a 2019 survey recording a 40 percent increase in the number of respondents who said that the police are not active in their area.
- Cooperation between formal and informal actors is characterized on the one hand by the state's efforts to gain control over all security services and reestablish an order of command, but on the other hand, many actors base their preferences for coordination on political loyalties.
- Police in Taiz lack training, uniforms and basic equipment, including vehicles, computers, phones, weapons and armor.
- Non-state actors, the sheikhs and aqils, lack knowledge of basic administrative processes, resulting in a situation that hampers coordination with state institutions and encourages cooperation with actors based on political or personal loyalty

Introduction

Security in southwestern Taiz city has been gradually returning since mid-2017, following the subsidence of fierce fighting that erupted in 2015 when the Houthi movement which named itself Ansarallah (engl.: the followers of god) pushed to take full control of the city.⁵ Resistance forces reclaimed most of the city, with Ansarallah remaining in control of small pockets in the northeast. Nearly all the security officials interviewed by YPC between October 2018 and July 2019 confirmed that the security situation had improved. In 2019, a plurality of Taiz residents (43 percent) also stated that security has improved.⁶ Assassinations, criminal offenses, arms and clashes were all down. Regardless, as of June 2019, formal and informal security actors had continued to face a plethora of challenges in providing security, and as a result, informal armed groups in government-controlled Taiz remained a security threat to communities. Rather than creating new challenges in the security sector, the conflict that began in 2015 in Taiz exacerbated old ones.

Due to the complete collapse of state security institutions, particularly the police, various non-state actors expanded their functions in security provision in southwestern Taiz in 2015, becoming more involved in policing, conflict resolution and control of local commerce and taxes. A variety of new and old actors emerged to defend the city and governorate from the Ansarallah incursion in March 2015, including armed civilians and tribal elements, fighters loyal to Islah, the Yemeni offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, and armed Salafi groups. Many of these actors were informal but considered themselves to be legitimate representatives of the people, and in some cases, of the state.⁷ The involvement of informal actors in security provision was not a new phenomenon stemming from the 2015 conflict, but the war altered their role.

The expanding influence and increasing activities of informal armed groups often resulted in inefficient parallel and intersecting security structures due to the absence of a unified command and a clear hierarchy among security providers. The informal actors undermined each other as well as the authority of state institutions. Their lack of knowledge of the laws regulating security provision and their own roles in addition to their differing political loyalties also contributed to the chaos. These actors additionally posed a direct security threat to communities because of their struggles for political and military dominance.

⁵ In late May and June 2019, tensions between Ansarallah and government forces in Taiz erupted again. At the time of writing, it was not yet clear whether the clashes would lead to prolonged fighting.

⁶ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.

⁷ YPC interview with a sheikh, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

Most of the struggles involved competition between Islah and Salafi groups in the city. The reduced presence of the Salafi Abu al-Abbas Brigade since 2018, when it partially withdrew, and its complete departure in spring 2019 gave Islah space to emerge as the main player in southwestern Taiz, dominating many state security institutions.⁸ Despite the progress made in providing security, informal armed groups continue to hamper state building. In YPC interviews between October 2018 and July 2019, Taiz residents underlined that the overlapping roles of the informal security actors, their weak capabilities and the ongoing conflicts among them rendered them security threats rather than security providers.

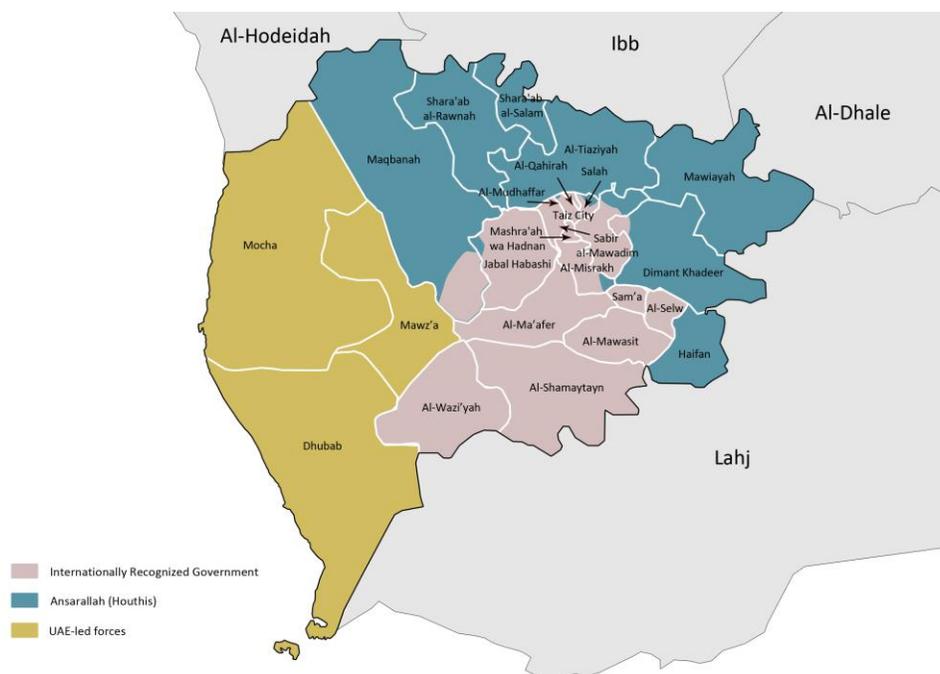
In April 2019, clashes broke out between state security forces connected to Islah and Abu al-Abbas. The latter's subsequent, coordinated move out of the city, despite delays, demonstrates the positive effect of the of state institutions in improving security. That said, the expulsion of Abu al-Abbas merely pushed violent power struggles into rural areas, specifically in the vicinity of al-Torba, 100 kilometers from the city. On top of that, in May 2019, informal actors yet again were the cause of violence, when clashes broke out between state forces and an armed group led by Ghazwan al-Mikhlaifi, the 19-year-old Islah affiliate and self-proclaimed sheikh of the Qahira district. These clashes point to an internal power struggle among Islah-affiliated forces.

The Yemeni conflict temporarily disassembled the entire state framework for security provision in Taiz. As state institutions are being rebuilt and reintroduced in the city, the internationally recognized government is trying to get the upper hand and regain control over security provision. It has done so in part by integrating informal actors into formal structures and issuing directives to non-state actors. In July 2015, the government ordered the integration of various armed groups into state security structures, and as a result, a combination of formal and previously informal groups currently constitute the security forces in the city. The process has been slow and is yet to resolve the security challenges created by the presence of a multitude of actors. Despite some successful examples of integration, informal structures and political loyalties to entities other than the state still trump loyalty to formal institutions. Informal actors continue to vie for the upper hand in Taiz governorate, thus jeopardizing security. The move to rebuild the police force starting in mid-2017 has positively contributed to the security situation. The police, however, lack basic equipment, which obviously hampers their efforts to institute and enforce law and order and to exert authority over informal actors.

⁸ Yemen Polling Center, *Research Debrief: The Status of the Abu al-Abbas Group in Taiz*. Adel Abdo Fara'a, leader of the Abu al-Abbas Brigade, studied at the Salafi learning center in Dammaj.

Conflict Dynamics: A Divided City

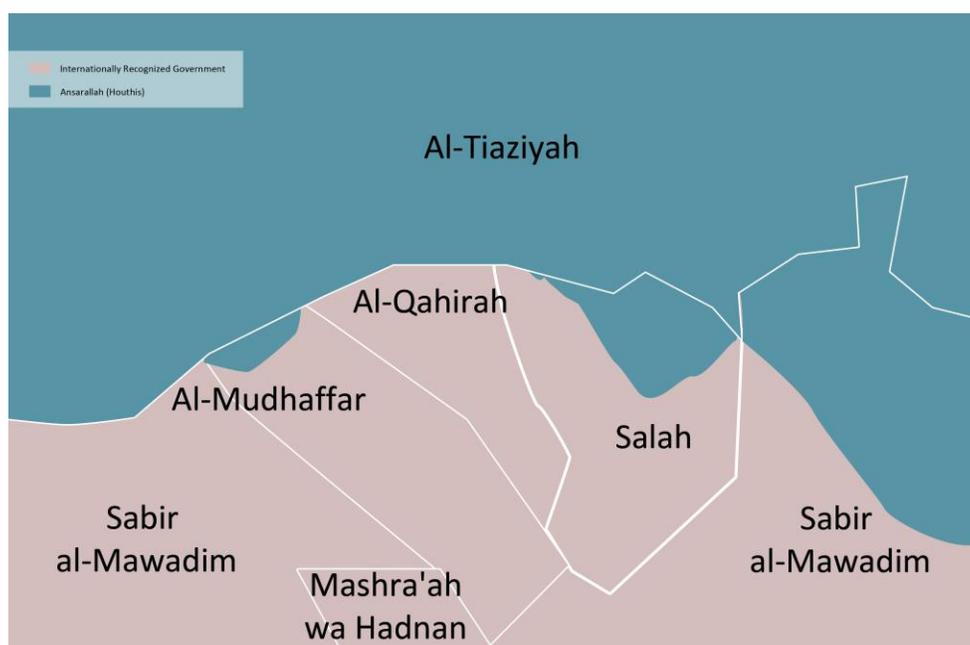
After war in Yemen erupted in March 2015, a violent power struggle gripped Taiz as the two main factions — Ansarallah and forces loyal to the internationally recognized government of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi — attempted to maintain and increase their geographical, political and military hold on Taiz governorate, which they and their allies had divided into two main spheres (see Map 1). The conflict over Taiz peaked between October 2015 and July 2016, creating one of the country’s worst humanitarian crises. In the wake of an increase in petty crimes, lawlessness eventually took hold of Taiz city. One local police officer remarked, “When people feel hungry, they rob, kill, or kidnap.”⁹ Taiz experienced the most ground battles in the country, with the conflict destroying large swaths of the city. In 2019, a quarter of Taiz residents reported that they had a family member who had been killed or injured because of the war. A quarter also said that their family’s home had been damaged or completely destroyed, and half said that they had been displaced.¹⁰



Map 1 Areas of Control in Taiz Governorate, June 2019

⁹ YPC interview with a police officer, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

¹⁰ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.



Map 2 Areas under Ansarallah Control in Taiz City, June 2019

Although Ansarallah only gained control of a small part of Taiz city (see Map 2), in the northeast, it controlled much of the governorate and put the city under tremendous pressure in October 2015, when it laid siege to it, blocking supply routes by controlling the eastern and western entrances to it. This led to devastating shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel and the doubling of prices for basic commodities.¹¹ In August 2016, resistance fighters gained control of Han Mountain, west of Taiz, which eased the siege by allowing the reopening of al-Dhabab road, in the southwest, toward Lahj and Aden governorates. In a May 2017 YPC survey, the majority of respondents (86 percent) ranked poverty and living conditions as their greatest concerns, the highest among all the governorates surveyed.¹² During a February 2018 focus group discussion, participants confirmed that increasingly difficult living conditions were continuing to cause anxiety and insecurity in Taiz.¹³

The current conflict has its roots in what is popularly called the February 2011 Revolution, way before Ansarallah expanded its territorial control, in 2014, and the Saudi-led coalition intervened militarily, in March 2015. In 2011, inspired in part by the wave of revolutions across the Middle East and North Africa, a large number of Taiz residents held strikes and demonstrations calling on President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. In 2015, they would view the intense shelling and

¹¹ World Food Programme, *Yemen Market Watch Report*.

¹² YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. See at note 3.

¹³ YPC focus group discussions with CSOs, Taiz, 15 February 2018.

siege of the city by Saleh and his loyalists, backed by Ansarallah fighters,¹⁴ as his quest for revenge.¹⁵ The 2011 protests quickly spread nationally, including to the capital, Sana'a, Aden, Ibb and al-Hodeidah. The Saleh regime's efforts to smother the protests were in vain. Taiz represented a special place for many, because in 2011 the local population had been adamant in calling for Saleh to step down amid the so-called Arab Spring.

On 18 March 2011, the Friday of Dignity, government snipers killed 45 people in Sanaa's Change Square. On May 29, Saleh's security forces attacked the protesters in Taiz. The violence sparked armed conflict, with some military defectors—mostly affiliated with the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP),¹⁶ an oppositional alliance dominated by the Islah party, along with some generals—stepping in under the guise of defending the protesters. Islah was the second largest and most powerful political party in Yemen at the time, behind the ruling General People's Congress (GPC). The conflict that escalated between the two power centers in the capital also manifested itself in Taiz.

The violence in Yemen continued until November, when Saleh and the opposition parties agreed to a peace initiative led by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The agreement, signed in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, forced Saleh to step down and established a transitional government in December 2011 with Hadi as president. The deal, which initially succeeded in halting the violence, guaranteed Saleh immunity from prosecution and also allowed him to remain active in politics. Despite the agreement, the conflict between Saleh loyalists and those opposed to him continued to simmer beneath the surface.¹⁷

Amid the 2011 uprising and elite conflict, Ansarallah expanded politically, religiously and militarily, especially in northern Yemen. The Houthis, hailing from Saada, bordering Saudi Arabia in the extreme north, resented their region's political, economic and religious marginalization. Between 2004 and 2010, the Houthis fought six rounds of war against the central government, championing an anti-imperialistic agenda and defending their religious identity as Zaidi.¹⁸ Although Ansarallah had taken part in the peaceful 2011 protests, it was also exploiting the

¹⁴ Ansarallah killed Saleh in December 2017 after he ended their alliance.

¹⁵ DeepRoot Consulting, *Caught in the Middle: A Conflict Mapping of Taiz Governorate*.

¹⁶ The JMP is a coalition of five oppositional parties that was formed in 2005. The coalition includes Islah (Congregation for Reform Party), the Yemen Socialist Party and the Nasserist party, in addition to two smaller parties.

¹⁷ For more on this conflict among elites and the GCC initiative, see Transfeld, "Political Bargaining and Violent Conflict: Shifting Elite Alliances as the Decisive Factor in Yemen's Transformation."

¹⁸ The Zaidiya are a branch of Shi'i Islam prevalent in northern Yemen. Its adherents are known as Fiver Shia, in contrast to the Twelver Shia, who are dominant in Iran. Roughly 40 percent of Yemenis adhere to the tradition, which is close to the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam, prevalent in central and southern Yemen.

state's weakness simultaneously in mobilizing and training fighters. Demonstrating its strength, Ansarallah laid siege to Dar al-Hadith, a Salafi learning center in Saada governorate, between October 2013 and January 2014. The group accused the non-local, Saudi-funded school, based in Dammaj, of smuggling weapons into the area. The confrontation ended with the expulsion of the Salafis and their relocation to Taiz.¹⁹

In the summer of 2014, the Houthis advanced on Amran, 50 kilometers north of Sanaa, where in a show of force they quickly uprooted the Ahmar, the most influential tribal family in Yemen and leader of the most powerful tribal federation.²⁰ The group then went on to capture Sana'a on 21 September after a few days of fighting.²¹ Ansarallah benefitted from the desire of former president Saleh to take revenge on Islah and its affiliates, receiving support from Saleh networks in the military, tribes, political parties and media. This allowed the Houthis to seize military institutions, uniforms, vehicles and weapons.

Ansarallah's capture of the capital facilitated the group's further expansion southward. Seeking a way south to further expand their power, the Houthis, with the support of Saleh loyalists, made their first moves toward Taiz in October 2014. They first entered the city with armed men in March 2015, and began to gradually establish a military foothold. The Houthis, wanting their fighters to be treated by Taiz authorities as representatives of the state rather than a militia, dispatched troops wearing security uniforms.²² Saleh loyalists in Taiz facilitated the Houthi-Saleh alliance's takeover of major parts of the city, including state institutions and military camps, as well as some rural districts.²³

¹⁹ For background on the conflict between Ansarallah and Dar al-Hadith, see Muslimi, "How Sunni Shia Sectarianism Is Poisoning Yemen."

²⁰ On the battle of Amran, see McGregor, "Houthis Battle Army and Tribal Militias for Control of Yemen's Amran Governorate."

²¹ Ansarallah's offensive was temporarily halted by the National Peace and Partnership Agreement. For more on the agreement, see Transfeld, "Houthis on the Rise in Yemen."

²² Homaid, "Protests Continue in Taiz."

²³ Ansarallah initially took control of the Central Security Camp, the camp of the 22nd Mechanized Brigade, the 35th Brigade, the military and civil airport, strategic locations in the mountains, including Jabal Saber, al-Qahirah Castle, al-Saleh Garden, and residential areas, including Hawd al-Ashraf, al-Jahmalia, Kalabah, al-Mujalla, al-Kamp, Sina and Wadi al-Dahi.

The Popular Resistance

In 2014 the people of Taiz had initially responded to the coup in Sana'a with protests and strikes. As Ansarallah began sending loyalists toward Taiz in October, residents decisively called for their ouster. Nowhere else did Ansarallah encounter as much resistance. This was due to the effective counter-mobilization of political parties, including Islah, the Nasserites and the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), for whom an Ansarallah incursion was viewed as threatening to their political authority. This, in combination with Ansarallah's lack of historical, cultural and social roots in central Yemen, rendered the group intruders rather than the liberators they yearned to be.²⁴ Saleh's alliance with Ansarallah only intensified Taiz residents' oppositional stance. The violence the Houthi-Saleh alliance employed against protesters additionally motivated Taiz residents to take up arms.²⁵

Initial attempts by the 35th Brigade, under Major General Adnan al-Hammadi, to take control of military infrastructure to stop the Houthi-Saleh push toward Taiz failed. Full-fledged resistance in Taiz emerged only after the military intervention by the Saudi-led coalition against Ansarallah on 25 March 2015. Sheikh Hamoud al-Mikhlaifi, who had gained prominence during the 2011 uprising, spearheaded the resistance. Affiliated with Islah, Mikhlaifi had previously led the armed rebels who had defended protesters from government attacks. This had allowed him to assume an influential position in Taiz politics and the security sector in the transitional period initiated in late 2012 by Saleh's forced resignation. During this period, Mikhlaifi became a major arbiter in the city, interfering with and influencing decisions by Governor Shawki Hayel Saeed.²⁶

Upon the emergence of the popular resistance in 2015, Mikhlaifi not only gained the support of a broad range of military, tribal and political actors, but also turned out to be popular with Taiz residents. Fighters under the leadership of Salafi commanders displaced to Taiz from Dammaj in 2013 also organized at this time. These included the Abu al-Abbas Brigade and the Kata'ib al-Hazm. In April 2015, after Saeed resigned as governor, the Coordination Council for the Popular Resistance Command formed under Mikhlaifi's leadership. The council brought influential political and military figures together, including Islah affiliates Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar, the current vice president in the internationally recognized government, as well as Sadiq Sarhan, commander of the 22nd Mechanized Brigade. Consequently, Islah-backed fighters came to dominate the

²⁴ Also see Schmitz, "Yemen's Uncharted Political Landscape."

²⁵ Middle East Eye and Agencies, "At Least Five Yemenis Dead as Houthis Shoot at Taz Protesters."

²⁶ For more on Mikhlaifi, see Kasinof, "A Voice of Authority Emerges from the Opposition in Yemen," and Salisbury, "Yemen's Taiz: Between Sheikh and State."

armed resistance against the Houthi-Saleh alliance.²⁷ At the onset of the conflict, the popular resistance controlled only a few neighborhoods in the southwestern part of Taiz city,²⁸ but as it continued, the resistance, with the support of the Saudi-led coalition, eventually took control of the entire western part of the city.²⁹

Rather than the individual components of the resistance sticking together in a united front against the Houthi-Saleh alliance, the fault lines between them widened due to external interventions by some of the Gulf states. As the conflict progressed, the direct influence of the external actors on local decision-making became more obvious.³⁰ Alliances between various resistance factions formed based on pragmatism, rather than shared values or ideologies, as actors sought to gain support from the UAE and therefore distanced themselves from Islah, its rival.³¹ Political and military leaders aligned with Hadi's internationally recognized government competed with Islah in seeking alliances with the Salafis, primarily to strengthen their own positions and secondarily to gain support from the UAE.³² The involvement of the UAE in Taiz shaped conflict dynamics by driving a wedge between Islah-loyal and Salafi groups. The UAE supported the latter, while ruling out the former as an ally. Likewise, tensions emerged between the UAE and the Hadi government, as the Emiratis pursued their own interests in Yemen, often at the expense of government authority.

Taiz residents viewed these machinations as having damaged the cause of the resistance. Residents in resistance-controlled areas described the various actors as serving "as agents for national, regional and international agendas" rather than local agendas.³³ The presence of multiple ineffective state and non-state actors in competition with each other continues to have

²⁷ See Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, "Editorial: Islah's Political and Military Ascent in Taiz."

²⁸ These neighborhoods included Jamal Street, the Old City, al-Huraish Street, al-Jomhori, al-Rawdha, Wadi al-Qadhi, and al-Thawra Hospital.

²⁹ The areas taken by the resistance included al-Asqari, Beer Basha, al-Camp, Habel Salman, al-Haseb, Hawd Asharaf, al-Mujaliya, Sina and Wadi al-Dahi.

³⁰ On October 12, 2017, anonymous sources revealed that the commander of the Joint Forces (Qawat al-Wajib al-Mushtarika), the Emirati Ahmed Ali Mohammed al-Baloshi, had sent an official letter to the commander of the Taiz axis, Maj. Gen. Khaled Fadhel, requesting that he only follow instructions from the Arab coalition and halt any security procedures not coordinated with him. See Radio al-Kana, "Shurta Taiz takashaf haqiqa al-wad`al-amni fi al-muhafiza."

³¹ DeepRoot Consulting, *Caught in the Middle: A Conflict Mapping of Taiz Governorate*.

³² In December 2016, the deputy governor of Taiz, Aref Gamel, a GPC member loyal to Hadi, announced the formation of the National Joint Meeting, an alliance between his party and the Abu al-Abbas Brigade. The 35th Brigade, commanded by Adnan al-Hammadi, also allied with the Salafis.

³³ Youth Without Borders Organization for Development, *Public Life Recovery: Causes, Challenges and Recommendations*.

a detrimental impact on security in the form of increasing clashes and criminality and the absence of formal, effective and coordinated responses to community concerns. It is in such a context that security providers turn into security threats.

In 2017 in resistance-controlled areas, 10 percent of residents perceived armed groups and militants to be responsible for poor security there, while 3 percent considered the popular resistance responsible. Ansarallah was cited by nearly 40 percent of residents as the main threat for endangering security. Other threats include random shelling, as well as falling or stray bullets (26 percent),³⁴ armed clashes (13 percent), bad security situations involving criminal acts, including assassinations (13 percent), and the spread of weapons and armed groups (6 percent).³⁵ The same concerns were also mentioned in interviews with security officials and confirmed by the focus group discussions and a report by the Youth Without Borders Organization for Development detailing the random use of weapons, increased assassinations, criminality and armed groups as major security threats to communities.³⁶

Because of the fragmentation among the resistance forces, struggles among them over strategically important locations increased in 2018. This was exacerbated by attention shifting to fighting Ansarallah in al-Hodeidah. Clashes took place at militarily important locations, such as al-Qahirah Castle and the Political Security Organization building. The positions of military units in residential neighborhoods often became the site of clashes, making them a security risk to the people living there. Markets, including the Delux and al-Waleed qat markets,³⁷ also erupted in conflict due to power struggles among the various groups trying to gain control over market revenues and taxes. In October 2018, armed conflicts took place between Islah-led military units and the Nasserist-led 35th Brigade in al-Shamaitain district at the only road open for exiting and entering the city. Al-Hanqar checkpoint, on the same road, was equally strategic, of both military and financial significance, not the least due to the money paid by drivers to enter and leave the city, making it the site of frequent clashes. In the fight for revenue, conflict also broke out over humanitarian aid and drug smuggling.

³⁴ The later mostly due to celebratory fire.

³⁵ YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. See at note 3.

³⁶ YPC focus group discussions with CSOs, Taiz, 15 February 2018; YPC interviews with civic figures and security officials, Taiz, October 2018–May 2019; Youth Without Borders Organization for Development, *Public Life Recovery: Causes, Challenges and Recommendations*.

³⁷ Qat, a narcotic, is consumed by most (particularly male) Yemenis on a daily basis.

The Collapse and Return of State Security Forces

When violence escalated between Ansarallah and the popular resistance in March 2015, southwestern Taiz city experienced a complete breakdown of state institutions, including those in the security sector. As a consequence, non-state actors took up various functions of the state, which enabled them to increase their political and military influence, ultimately leading to a power struggle for dominance over resistance-controlled Taiz. Thus, these actors became both security threats and security providers. In May 2017 when asked “Who brings security to the area,” a plurality of 47 percent of respondents in government-controlled areas cited “the resistance and legitimate forces.”³⁸ This is not surprising given that Ansarallah was considered the prime security threat even in those parts of the city, and it was the resistance that successfully defended these districts of Taiz against Ansarallah control.

With this security vacuum, Taiz was unlike other cities where the incursion of Ansarallah had led to the handover of all state institutions to the non-state armed group through Saleh’s network. As one report described the situation in Taiz after February 2012, “Government forces were still unable to access major areas of the city. Many basic rule of law components—including lawful arrests, prosecution, and judicial review of crimes—did not function normally.”³⁹ Taiz police and rule of law institutions, already weakened after the conflicts during the course of the 2011 uprising, were in no condition to stand against a storm of Ansarallah’s magnitude. When Ansarallah took control of the security administration (Idarat al-‘Amn) and the governor’s office in March 2015, there were no state orders for police to follow in terms of carrying out regular duties and police in resistance areas refused to follow orders from the armed group. Unlike police in Ansarallah-controlled areas in other parts of the country, state officials in resistance-controlled Taiz abandoned institutions, shutting them down. In particular, the rank and file of the police in southwestern Taiz left the governorate entirely, in search of safety from the warring parties or to join the Houthi-Saleh alliance. Between April and November 2015, when the governor’s office was relocated to the Yemen Oil Company building, Taiz had no governor. According to staff of the governorate’s security administration, all of the city’s police stations closed between March and July 2015, after which four stations were reopened.⁴⁰

³⁸ “Legitimate forces” refers to military and quasi-military units affiliated with the internationally recognized government. YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. See at note 3.

³⁹ Gaston and Dawsari, *Waiting for Change: The Impact of Transition on Local Justice and Security in Yemen*. Also see Saqaf, “Criminal Gangs Terrorize Taiz City.”

⁴⁰ YPC interview with staff of security administration, Taiz, 18 May 2019.

This vacuum of state institutions allowed the non-state actors to play an influential role in security provision. It is important to note, however, that weak state structures and the presence of non-state actors were not new developments stemming from the conflict in Yemen as a whole or in Taiz specifically. Prior to the war, a security arrangement had already been in place involving state actors—including the police, governor’s office and military police—and non-state actors, such as sheikhs and local neighborhood authorities, so-called *aqils*. In fact, the role of non-state actors in security provision is set out by the Criminal Code (1994). Article 84 designates an *aqil* as a “judicial officer,” and according to article 91, he has the authority to investigate crimes and track perpetrators, examine complaints and collect evidence and information related to perpetrators, verifying their documents and sending them to the Public Prosecutor’s Office if necessary. *Aqils* in Taiz are nominated by the communities they represent and formally embraced by local state institutions, maintaining a close relationship with district local councils. With regard to security, *aqils* are supposed to work with the local police, assisting in various tasks, such as attesting to the identity and whereabouts of individuals, assessing the needs of the community and resolving minor security incidents. In short, *aqils* serve as a link between the community and the state.

Sheikhs are part of this semi-formal security arrangement despite Taiz not being a tribal society. Unlike sheikhs from tribal areas in northern Yemen, who are selected by a community understood to be a tribe, sheikhs in Taiz attain their status based on their political, social, economic or military influence. In contrast to northern sheikhs, who head a group of people regardless of their location, sheikhs in Taiz are responsible for a specific geographic area, such as a village, a district or a neighborhood. This phenomenon of “sheikhs without tribes” is confirmed by the survey findings, as most survey respondents in Taiz governorate were aware of sheikhs being active in the governorate; a much smaller percentage was aware of tribes being active.⁴¹

The role of sheikhs in security provision is much less regulated than in the case of *aqils*. In the past, the sheikhs’ role was formally acknowledged and embraced by the local representation of the Department of Tribal Affairs (*Idarat Shu'un al-Qaba'il*) in exchange for an allowance and a government ID. The department, under the Ministry of Interior, pursued the goal to bring tribal matters under the helm of the state, but it was also a tool for distributing patronage and ensuring allegiance to the Saleh regime. The Arbitration Law (1992) was passed with the goal of formalizing tribal roles in security and regulating the procedural relationships between state law and customary law.⁴²

⁴¹ In Taiz governorate, 70 percent of respondents said that tribal leaders were active in their areas, compared to 34 percent who said that tribes were. YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. See at note 3.

⁴² Zwaini, *Rule of Law in Yemen: Prospects and Challenges*.

When the security establishment in Taiz shut down in March 2015, informal actors, particularly those connected to the resistance, took the lead in security provision, impacting the semi-formal security arrangement. The conflict exacerbated already existing problems, but most notably, for a few months informal actors completely replaced the state framework for security provision in Taiz. When in mid-2017 state institutions returned to resistance-controlled areas, state authorities attempted to reign in the non-state actors and reestablish the state's dominance.⁴³ The improvement of security and the gradual revival of state institutions was made possible through the initiative of Governor Ali al-Mamari and because violence had subsided between the resistance and Ansarallah, with the conflict in a stalemate and the parties content to simply defend their areas of control. Mamari pressured the Hadi-government to pay salaries and even resigned to protest the issue on 26 September 2017. No salaries had been paid in the security sector between September 2016 and March 2017.

The paying of salaries in the security sector in April 2017 had a positive impact, with police officers immediately returning to work, according to a YPC survey. While the popular resistance remained the actor associated more broadly with security in government-controlled areas, in May 2017 Taiz residents nonetheless perceived the police presence as strong. Survey results show that police presence was thought to have improved in 2017 and to be stronger than in 2012, just after the 2011 uprising.⁴⁴ With the previous loss of most rank-and-file police, 3,000 policemen and 600 special forces members were recruited.⁴⁵ In 2017, one-third of respondents said that there was a police station in their area, one reason residents perceived a strong police presence at the time.

⁴³ In December 2017, the internationally recognized government appointed Amin Mahmoud as Taiz governor, following a visit by a government delegation in October that announced plans to rebuild state institutions. The security administration and governor's office were restored in December 2017. The government also started paying civil servants' salaries at this time. A new chief of police was appointed in January 2018.

⁴⁴ YPC nation-wide representative survey, November 2012 and May 2017. See at note 3.

⁴⁵ YPC interview with staff of security administration, Taiz , 6 June 2019.

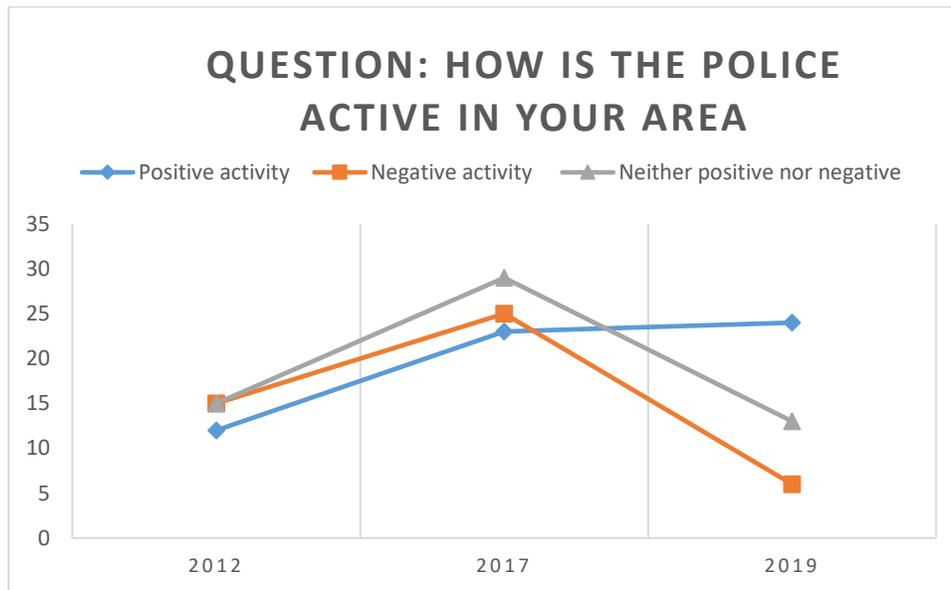


Figure 1 Police Activity, 2012–2019

In July 2015, President Hadi issued a decree mandating the integration of informal armed groups in the Taiz axis into the National Army's 4th Regional Command, which Hadi had established through military reforms in 2012 and 2013. The military integration efforts also strengthened the presence of the state, as informal actors were now formalized, representing the state and receiving state salaries. For instance, the Abu al-Abbas Brigade integrated into the 35th Brigade, and the Salafi Hazm Brigade became the 5th Brigade (the Presidential Guard). Despite the attempts to formalize the informal groups and with that extend state control over them, individual militias remained active independent of official military structures. For instance, Ghazwa al-Mikhlafi, the 19-year-old self-styled sheikh from al-Qahirah, became a member of the 22nd Mechanized Brigade, yet he continued to command a militia that posed a security challenge as demonstrated by clashes between his followers and state forces in May 2019.

To decrease clashes among forces in government-controlled Taiz, Governor Ameen Mahmoud formed a security committee (Al-Lajna al-'Amniya) on 21 May 2018. Security officials interviewed in Taiz largely attributed improved security to the committee.⁴⁶ To enhance the efforts of the security committee, a presidential committee (Al-Lajna al-Ra'asiya) was formed in August 2018 to bring a definitive end to feuding. The intervention of the presidential committee contributed to the gradual relocation of Abu al-Abbas fighters to al-Kadah from al-Jahmalia, al-Mojalia, the

⁴⁶ YPC interviews with security officials, Taiz, November 2018–January 2019.

Political Security Organization building (Al-'Amn al-Siyasi) and al-Qahirah Castle.⁴⁷ The committee also intervened in spring 2019, when an agreement between the factions was made leading to the complete relocation of the Abu al-Abbas Brigade to al-Kadah. In short, the presidential committee contributed to the improvement of the security situation, as the number of conflicts and armed groups decreased and more government facilities reopened.⁴⁸

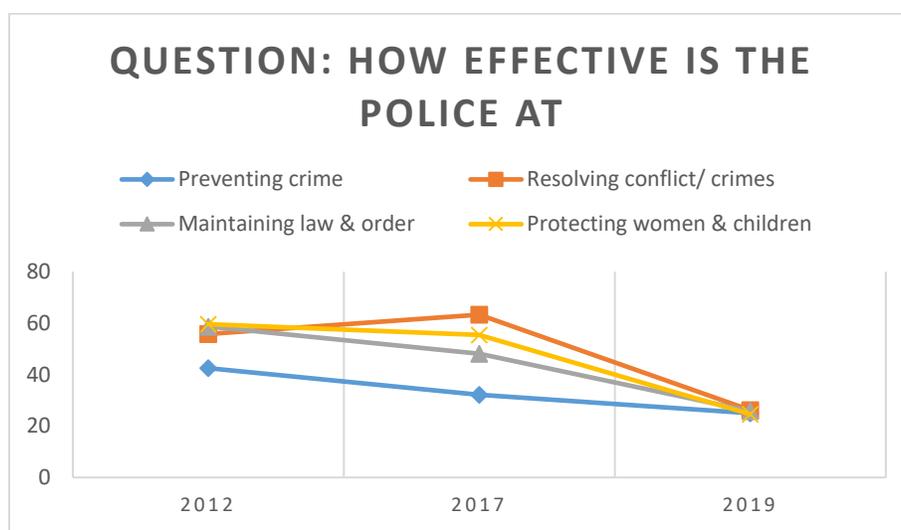


Figure 2 Police Efficiency, 2012–2019

In 2019, the police, more so than resistance forces or informal security actors, are most associated by Taiz residents with bringing security.⁴⁹ After some initial enthusiasm in 2017, Taiz residents are not completely satisfied with the performance of the police two years after the return of state security forces). According to the survey in Taiz governorate during April–May 2019, those who viewed the police as active in a positive way remained the same, and those who said the police were active in a negative way stood at 6 percent, down from 25 percent in 2017 (see figure 1).⁵⁰ What is remarkable, however, is that the number of respondents who said the police were not active increased, from 4 percent to 42 percent, between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, 53 percent said the police were not active or that they did not receive services from them. Although the police appeared to be less active, Taiz residents rated their work as more effective

⁴⁷ Al-Kadah, west of Taiz city, spans the districts of al-Wazi'yah, Jabal Habashi, Maqbanah and al-Ma'afer.

⁴⁸ These included the security administration in its original building and military police headquarters (Al-Shurta al-Askariya). The security administration had until then been in the building housing the Passports and Immigration Office (Maktab al-Hijra w-al-Jawazat).

⁴⁹ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.

⁵⁰ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.

in 2019 than they did in 2017 and 2012; 39 percent said that they at least sometimes received services from the police. This suggests that state security institutions in Taiz are overall on a positive path, although they still lack in efficiency (see figure 2), they have built up a presence.

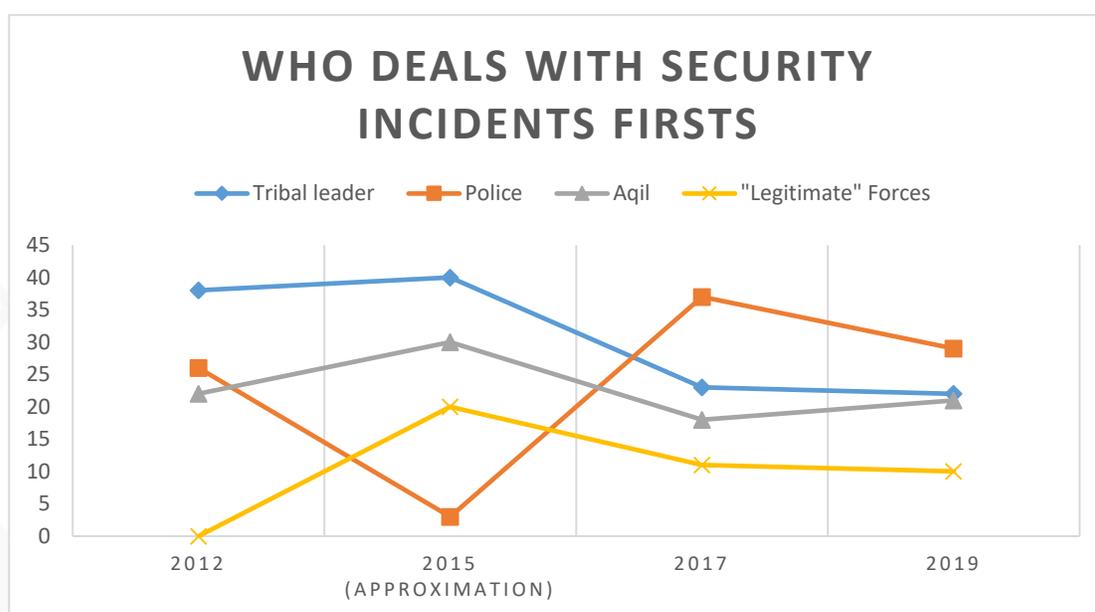


Figure 3 Security Incident Response, 2012–2019

Remaining Challenges of Local Security Providers

That state institutions gradually returned to functioning in government-controlled areas over the course of 2017 was clearly reflected in YPC survey results from that year. When asked which actor was usually the first to respond to security incidents, a plurality of 37 percent of respondents in resistance-controlled areas cited the police (see Figure 2). Men (61 percent) in particular said they reported their security concerns to the police. This represents a success for the state security apparatus.

While in 2019 the police appeared to be less active from the perspective of residents, overall confidence in the police increased since 2017. At the onset of the 2015 conflict, most low-ranking police officers abandoned their posts and left Taiz. Thus, while much of the former police leadership remained in place, the rank and file had to be rebuilt. The new recruits, mostly young

and inexperienced, were drawn from Taiz governorate. They received 30 to 40 days of training at the National Institute for Administrative Sciences in Taiz as well as at Traffic Police headquarters, an amount clearly insufficient for transforming civilians into competent police officers.

In essence, the new recruits have differed little from non-state security providers in that they lack knowledge of laws or administrative procedures. In 2017, 49 percent of YPC survey respondents said that police officers do not wear uniforms when on duty. By 2019 that number had decreased to 35 percent.⁵¹ Officers who do not wear uniforms are not immediately recognizable as police, especially given the prevalence of weapons and armed civilians in the city. To combat this problem, Youth Without Borders started the advocacy campaign “Weapons Are Carried With Uniforms” to support decrees issued by security institutions reminding their men not to carry weapons unless they are wearing uniforms. When YPC field researchers entered a police station to conduct interviews in 2019, they noticed the lack of equipment and saw only a single weapon. The police lack heavy weapons and armor. When clashes break out or when attacked, they have to abandon their post or request military support because most non-state actors are more heavily armed.⁵²

Corruption is rampant in Taiz due to the irregularity of salary transfers, leading police officers to ask for money in return for security services. State actors often act arbitrarily, and hierarchies are ignored. In a YPC interview, a police officer stationed at a district security administration (Idarat al-‘Amn al-Mudiriya) described how police stations were supposed to contact the chairman of the district-level local council (Al-Majls al-Mahali lil-Mudiriya) to request support for major security cases. The chairman then orders the district security administration to provide the required support. He added that only one police station in the district follows this procedure, at least to some extent. Due to the station’s proximity to the district security administration, it regularly coordinates with it directly, ignoring the local council.⁵³ Similarly, the military does not follow formalized procedures in cooperating with security actors and does not follow directives. The security administration ordered commanders and soldiers accused of crimes to surrender to the authorities and directed certain commanders and brigades to leave the city because they were considered security threats.⁵⁴ Most did not comply.

⁵¹ YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. See at note 3.

⁵² Observations of a YPC field research team at a Taiz police station, 19 February 2019.

⁵³ Murder cases are supposed to be transferred to the investigation bureau (Al-Bahth al-Jena’i) and family and housing cases referred to the courts if they cannot be resolved by the security administration (Idarat al-‘Amn). YPC interview with a police officer, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

⁵⁴ YPC interview with the secretariat of the security director, Taiz, 18 May 2019.

Police performance had been weak before the current conflict, and the involvement of non-state actors as part of a semi-formal security arrangement was a common practice. Despite the state's minor successes in terms of security provision, informal actors still perform security functions, and the ongoing inefficiency of the police drives residents to seek help from non-state actors. Despite the strengthening of the police, informal actors are still relevant, as 21 percent of residents said the aqil deals with security incidents first, and 22 percent said tribal sheikhs first intervene in 2019.⁵⁵ What is different today compared to the period before 2011 is that as a consequence of the 2015 conflict, the state framework for security provision is in the process of reforming, as a result of its complete collapse.

Since 2017 institutions reestablished by the internationally recognized government have tried to regain their dominant position in southwestern Taiz. While the state has returned to security provision, and its positive impact has been noted by security officials and civic figures, state institutions have clearly not been able to reestablish a hierarchy that allows them to fully oversee security provision or effectively enforce law and order. In an interview, an aqil confirmed this latter state of affairs when he stated that no institution supervised his actions concerning security provision. Prior to the war, aqils had worked through local police stations with regard to their security services role. The aqil explained that today security providers supervise and support each other based on personal relations. That said, he recognized the formal hierarchy that places aqils under the supervision of the governor and the local authority.⁵⁶ The president of the security committee set up a joint operation room for security providers in 2017, but because of political differences among its members, it never enhanced cooperation.⁵⁷

A letter from the security administration dated 18 February 2018, describes the aqils' duties and the requirement that neighborhood aqils report to them. Observations on the ground by YPC researchers between January and April 2019 as well as YPC interviews with non-state actors reveal that coordination and cooperation between state and non-state actors (and security providers more generally) are indeed based on political loyalties rather than defined hierarchies. This is demonstrated in the response of an Islah-affiliated sheikh during a YPC interview when he was asked about the state institutions with which he coordinates. In his response, he only mentioned known Islah affiliates, such as the 22nd Mechanized Brigade, the security administration and specific police stations.⁵⁸ Often the preference to coordinate based on personal connections is coupled with a lack of knowledge of administrative procedures, such as mechanisms for reporting.

⁵⁵ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.

⁵⁶ YPC interview with an aqil, Taiz, 28 October 2018.

⁵⁷ YPC interview with the secretariat of the security director, Taiz, 4 July 2019.

⁵⁸ YPC interview with a sheikh, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

In this context, the way non-state actors assume the functions of state security institutions far exceeds the scope of their legal and geographical authority and is characterized by arbitrariness. A sheikh interviewed by YPC described sheikhs as representing specific districts, as is traditionally the case in this area. At the same time, he gave examples of security incidents that sheikhs resolved in districts outside their own.⁵⁹ This behavior points to sheikhs perhaps trying to expand their influence beyond their own territory, but it might also simply be a case of taking on the responsibility of supporting security provision where needed.

One aqil explained in an interview that between 2014 and 2018, he had headed a police station without receiving proper police or administrative training. He attributed his position to his engagement with the resistance forces as well as his status of aqil of aqils.⁶⁰ Given that he headed the station for such a long time, it appears that the community viewed his work positively. He patrolled the streets and ran checkpoints together with neighborhood youths. The same aqil explained that he had imprisoned two people for three days, nominally exceeding his authority as neighborhood aqil, as legally speaking, he must pass such cases on to the police.⁶¹

A lack of hierarchy coupled with the circumstance of legal and traditional definitions of authority not being enforced results in increased arbitrariness in security provision. Of course, due to the informal nature of sheikhs and aqils, they became security providers on the basis of their social power and political affiliation, not necessarily because of their security-related qualifications. Although these actors often understand themselves to be representatives of the state, they lack knowledge and understanding of the laws that entitle them to the role of security provider and of the laws relevant to security provision itself. A sheikh who understands that he is a security provider demonstrated in an interview that he does not follow formal procedures in addressing security issues, describing how he resolved a conflict over inheritance according to customary law.⁶² As a result of such “freelancing,” institutional insecurity has increased, which means that residents are subject to a higher degree of arbitrariness.

It follows that these non-state security providers are also viewed as security threats. Ironically, a sheikh in the Qahirah district described himself in a YPC interview as part of the state. He asserted, “I do maintain security and always support security institutions in most of the security problems.”⁶³ A police officer interviewed separately described that same sheikh as a threat to

⁵⁹ YPC interview with a sheikh, Taiz, 1 November 2018.

⁶⁰ The aqil of aqil is the highest aqil of an area, giving him authority over other aqils.

⁶¹ YPC interview with an aqil, Taiz, 28 October 2018.

⁶² YPC interview with a sheikh, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

⁶³ YPC interview with a sheikh, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

the security of residents.⁶⁴ Their statements are symptomatic of the competition between the various security providers in resistance-controlled Taiz to be seen as the legitimate force. It also suggests how the line between state and non-state actors cannot be easily drawn. It is not just that state actors cannot always be identified as such because they lack uniforms, but also because of the integration of non-state actors and unqualified civilians into the security services.

The internationally recognized government attempted to get unified military and political control over resistance-controlled areas and reassert dominance over non-state actors by integrating the informal armed groups into the formal military structure and recruit new personnel as rank-and-file police. Of course the recruitment and military integration measures also contributed to the blurriness of the line between state and non-state actors. State and non-state actors often face similar challenges when it comes to effective security provision and exhibit similar behaviors. As noted, new police recruits currently lack adequate training and knowledge of laws relevant to police work. In a YPC interview, military officers confirmed that there had been convicts among the security recruits, and civic figures believe that some had joined the security establishment with the goal of looting.⁶⁵ This obviously points to new recruits being widely perceived as security threats themselves.

Many fighters retain at least some degree of loyalty to their respective parties despite attempts to merge and formalize security structures. It is important to note, however, that this is not unusual. In fact, powerful political parties, namely Islah and the GPC, already held influence within the various sections of the security apparatus prior to the conflict. With the state framework having collapsed, however, these political loyalties became the primary organizing principles, penetrating much deeper into the relevant institutions. At the time of writing, most police stations in government-controlled areas were affiliated with Islah by virtue of their leadership. In a YPC interview, one police officer shared his impression of the political nature of some of the orders he had received.⁶⁶

This situation results in impunity and non-state actors undermining state security provision. Security officials explained in interviews that armed groups, such as the Abu al-Abbas Brigade and Islah factions, are a security threat because they engage in robbery and other criminal acts.⁶⁷ Reading between the lines of statements by security officials describing these non-state actors

⁶⁴ YPC interview with a police officer, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

⁶⁵ YPC interview with a military officers and civic figures, Taiz, 18 November 2018. Previous YPC research also established that by June 2015, all inmates of Taiz prisons had been released, see Heinze, Marie-Christine, *Criminal Histories, Arrest and Prison Experiences of Women and Girls in Yemen*, p.15.

⁶⁶ YPC interview with police officer, Taiz, 15 May 2019.

⁶⁷ YPC interview with police officers, Taiz, 29 October 2018.

as security threats reveals an inability to get a grip on the problem. Observations by YPC researchers between January and April 2019 show that members of informal armed groups get away with perpetrating sexual violence against women and children, stealing land, extortion, and other crimes, including murder. Their status as part of the resistance makes it difficult for state actors to hold them accountable. The deterioration of human rights is related to this situation and the war in general. A plurality of 48 percent of respondents described the human rights situation as getting worse.⁶⁸

Conclusions and Recommendations

The complete collapse of police and other state security institutions at the outset of conflict in 2015 in Taiz created space in the southwestern part of the city for non-state actors, especially the popular resistance and sheikhs, to increase their role in security provision. The dynamics of the conflict uprooted the state's ability to uphold the formal framework of the previous security arrangement, also composed of state and non-state actors. State security actors are not the only entities that can legally provide security in Yemen; non-state actors are also authorized to play such a role. To the detriment of formal actors in Taiz, particularly the police, the balance shifted toward the non-state actors, many of whom had already been empowered by the national conflict that erupted in 2011. The state attempted to rebuild institutions in resistance-controlled areas of Taiz, but faced challenges reestablishing itself as the main point of reference amid the semi-formal security arrangement, which had also been an issue in the past.

That non-state actors continued to function and stepped in to perform the role of the state at the outset of the war contributed positively to the security of communities in Taiz. The multiplicity of security actors, however, rendered security provision ineffective, while at the same time these actors posed a security threat to communities themselves for three main reasons: first, the actors' lacked knowledge of the law; second, and related to that, the parameters of the non-state actors' authorities and territories disappeared, as they were no longer enforced by the state framework, but were determined according to the actors' political and military influence; and third, the interplay of weak state structures and differing political loyalties, exacerbated by external intervention, mutually reinforced informal structures, leading to political infighting and conflicts among these actors over political and military dominance.

⁶⁸ YPC nationwide representative survey, April–May 2019. See at note 3.

Given the dysfunctional state of national-level state institutions, the measures that can be taken to effectively improve security provision are limited. That said, Yemeni government officials, donor organizations and the international community should approach security sector reform in government-controlled Taiz in stages. In the short-term, a mapping and assessment of existing administrative structures can help develop a basis for the establishment of new institutions and the reform of existing ones. What is needed are clear definitions of hierarchies, roles, procedures and communication, which should be developed for state and non-state actors in an inclusive process involving members of the security establishment, political parties, CSOs and women. Today, the situation in Taiz, with security actors being increasingly under the control of a unified command allows for a constructive discussion about such definitions.

The traditional lack of well-established roles for aqils and sheikhs in the Taiz region has contributed to the lack of defined roles for them today. This circumstance also, however, presents an opportunity to institutionalize informal actors and reshape their leadership positions in a more functional manner. For example, one consideration might be to make the selection of aqils merit-based, rather than determined by political affiliation. Reform of these structures would be challenging initially, but as long as the roles and administrative procedures are defined on paper, the training provided to state and non-state actors can build upon them with the goal of developing state and non-state security providers' knowledge with regard to their own roles, authorities and obligations. Such training should focus on Yemeni law, particularly the Criminal Code, human rights and community policing. Youth Without Borders has already provided training in administrative skills to 110 aqils involved in reporting security issues. Their awareness of their role as security providers and the need to cooperate and coordinate with state security institutions has been improved. In short, with training, aqils became more aware of their responsibility as security providers, which enhanced their cooperation with state institutions.

The importance of regular salaries for state employees and the security sector cannot be overstated. Following successes in reinstating salaries, local authorities together with CSOs should keep pressure on the government to ensure that salaries continue to be regularly paid, while at the same time work continues toward increasing transparency, which requires that local authorities reinstate the drafting of public budgets. Accordingly, state officials must be trained in budgeting and administrative procedures. In addition, CSOs and media should be trained in financial oversight and monitoring. These measures will not only contribute to more effective spending, but will also help in building trust between state institutions and the community.

In the long-term, state security providers must be given the material support they require to do their jobs. The police need uniforms, armor, vehicles and arms along with basic office equipment, such as computers, printers and phones. Only with the necessary equipment and with regularly paid salaries will police officers become sufficiently empowered to begin enforcing laws in the

face of armed groups and other non-state actors. Only then, for instance, will the police (and the military) be able to enforce the law banning weapons in cities, which would greatly contribute to improving security. The ban was successfully enforced between 2007 and 2010. State institutions should revisit campaigns from that period of time, and coupled with increased awareness, use the systems of checkpoints in the city to collect unlicensed weapons and prevent armed men from entering the city, denying them access unless they relinquish their arms for the duration of their stay.

Non-state actors should and must continue to be involved in rebuilding stability and security provision given that the majority (74 percent) of respondents in Taiz prioritized these groups' role in doing so as follows: the powerful people (88 percent), tribal sheikhs (78 percent), resistance factions (74 percent), local councils (64 percent), community groups/NGOs (51 percent), women's groups (38 percent) and popular committees (27 percent).⁶⁹ Mechanisms for better coordination between state and non-state actors must also be introduced.

⁶⁹ YPC nationwide representative survey, May 2017. Data is drawn from entire sample. See at note 3.

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Appendix 1: Military Actors in Taiz

Name	Leader	Category	Affiliation	Area	Comments
22nd Mechanized Brigade	Brig. Gen. Sadiq Sarhan	Military	Government	Sabir al-Mawadim Salh Al-Qahirah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sarhan was appointed by republican decree in March 2015. - Sarhan together with other military leaders formed a military council in May 2015 in Taiz. - Sarhan participated on the side of Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar in the military confrontations that broke out during the 2011 revolution.
170th Air Defense Brigade	Brig. Gen. Abdulaziz al-Majidi	Military	Government with Islah connection	Al-Qahirah Al-Mudafaher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majidi was appointed by republican decree in February 2018. - Majidi served as head of the military and popular resistance operations and was the official spokesperson for the Military Council in Taiz until 2016. - Islah dominates the brigade in terms of leadership, members' loyalty and financing.
145th Infantry Brigade	Lt. Shakib Khaled Fadel	Military	Government	Madrat Al-Samn wa al-Sabon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The brigade was formed in 2017 without an official decree from the presidency. - Shakib Khaled Fadel is the son of the former commander of the Taiz axis, Khaled Fadel.
17th Infantry Brigade	Brig. Gen. Abd al-Rahman al-Shamsani	Military	Government with Islah connection	Maqbanah Jabal Habashi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 17th Brigade was merged in fall 2016 with the so-called Student Brigade commanded by Islahi Col. Abdo Hamoud al-Saghir, an informal armed group part of the resistance. - Islah dominates the brigade in terms of leadership, members' loyalty and financing.
35th Brigade	Brig. Gen. Adnan al-Hammadi	Military	Government	Al-Shamaytayn Al-Mawasat Al-Maafer Al-Selw Qdas Haifan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hammadi was appointed by republican decree in April 2015. - Hammadi is close to the Nasserist and socialist leaders in Taiz; and opposes Islah.

Name	Leader	Category	Affiliation	Area	Comments
5th Brigade/ Presidential Guard	Brig. Gen. Adnan Raziq	Military	Government with Salafi connections	Maqbanah Al-Mudafaher Al-Shamaiatain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Abu al-Abbas Brigade was integrated in fall 2016 into the 35th Brigade but remained administratively and financially independent. - The brigade was formed in 2017 and merged with the Hazm Brigade. Before heading the 5th, Raziq lead the informal armed group. - The 5th is mostly composed of southern Salafis who enjoy the support of the Hadi government. - Raziq is a Salafi leader from al-Shabwa.
Al-Sa'alek Brigade	Azzam Farhan	Informal armed group	Government with Islah connection	Sabir Al-Mawadim Al-Shaqib Al-Aros Mohamed Ali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In a February 2018 report, the International Panel of Experts of the UN Security Council described members of this brigade as terrorists. - Azzam Farhan is the son of Abdu Farhan (Salem), adviser to the Taiz axis commander and commander of Islah's military wing in Taiz.
Military Police	Col. Jamal al-Shamiri	Police and central security	Government	Taiz city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Islah dominates the Military Police in terms of leadership, members' loyalty and financing.
4th Infantry Brigade	Brig. Gen. Abu Bakr al-Jabuli	Military	Government	Al-Shamaiatain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The brigade was established by republican decree in August 2018 and consists of former resistance fighters. - The brigade frequently clashes with the 35th Brigade in rural areas, including al-Shamaitain directorate.
Patrol and Road Police	Col. Mohamed Mahyoub	Police and central security	Government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mahyoub formerly worked for the Ministry of Education as a teacher.
Special Forces (former Central Security Forces)	Brig. Gen. Jamil Aqlan	Police and central security	Government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aqlan was formerly director of security for Lahj governorate and has no party affiliation.
Police	Brig. Gen. Mansour al-Akhali	Police and central security	Government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Al-Akhali was appointed by presidential decree in January 2018.
Abu al-Abbas Brigade	Col. Adel Abdo Faria'a	Police and central security	Salafi with UAE connection	Al-Khadaha Al-Shamaiatain Al-Nashamah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The brigade was integrated in fall 2016 into the 35th Brigade, but it remained administratively and financially independent.

Name	Leader	Category	Affiliation	Area	Comments
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The brigade clashed frequently with the 22nd Mechanized brigade in the old city of Taiz. In April 2019, a deal was struck to redeploy the brigade outside of the city. - Fara'a is a Salafi, he recognizes the Hadi government, but does not follow its orders. He formerly worked for the Ministry of Education as a teacher.
Usbat al-Haq Brigade	Col. Marwan Atek	Semi-formal armed group	Government with Salafi connections		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This group was allied with the Abu al-Abbas Brigade until they split in mid-2017. - The leader of the brigade, Radwan al-'Odini, was assassinated in June 2018.
Ghazwan al-Mikhlaifi Group	Ghazwan al-Mikhlaifi	Informal armed group	Islah	Osaifirah/Al-Rawdhah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ghazwan and his brother Suhaib al-Mikhlaifi are members of the 22nd Mechanized Brigade. They have a good relationship with the brigade's leader, Sadiq Sarhan, and his son. They remain active independently. - Ghazwan is wanted by the security forces as he is considered a threat to the security.
Ghadir al-Sharabi Group	Ghadir al-Sharabi	Informal armed group	Connected with Islah	Dominates some areas and qat markets within Wadi al-Qadhi/Taiz city center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The group has frequently clashed with the Ghazwan al-Mikhlaifi Group. - Sharabi is a member in the 170th Air Defense Brigade.
Abdulaziz Modhesh Group	Abdul Aziz Modhesh	Informal armed group	Connected with Islah	Beer Baasha/western Taiz city	
Saddam al-Maqluo Group	Saddam al-Maqluo	Informal armed group	Connected with Islah	Lower Al-Tahrir/Taiz city center	

