

Thematic Report: Shootings impacting civilians in residential and commercial spaces

November 2023

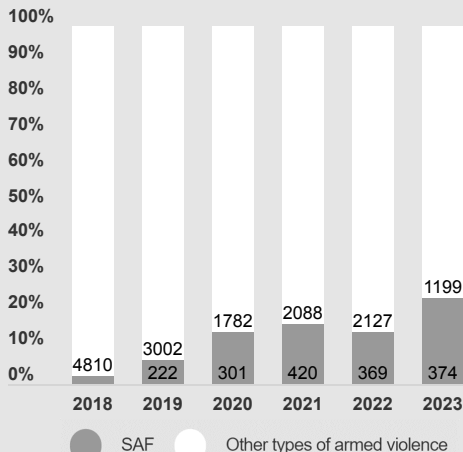
Data correct at 30 November 2023

Small arms fire is accounting for a growing proportion of civilian casualties in Yemen. Since a countrywide truce entered into force in April 2022, and remained informally in place despite officially lapsing in October 2022, violence on Yemen's frontlines has de-escalated. The past two years have seen notable declines in civilian casualty numbers across a number of frontline governorates, including Ta'izz, Hudaydah, Ma'rib and Dali'. However, although overall civilian casualty numbers are decreasing, civilian casualties on account of small arms fire* (SAF) remain high. 2023 has seen the highest proportion of SAF casualties on CIMP records, this year accounting for 24% of the total countrywide casualty count. By comparison, in CIMP's first year of recording, 2018, just 3% of civilian casualties were the result of SAF, and last year, SAF accounted for 15% of the casualties reported countrywide.

Accelerating economic deterioration has become a key driver of local grievances and rivalries. Against a backdrop of a proliferation in access to arms and weak mechanisms for law and order, this has resulted in an incendiary environment. Altercations are swift to escalate into shootings, including in commercial centres and residential areas. This report examines some of the key trends in SAF incidents impacting civilians, including flashpoints, vulnerabilities, and possible drivers.

**Small arms typically include firearms that are designed for individual use, and are small enough to be portable by the individual, such as pistols, rifles, and light machine guns.*

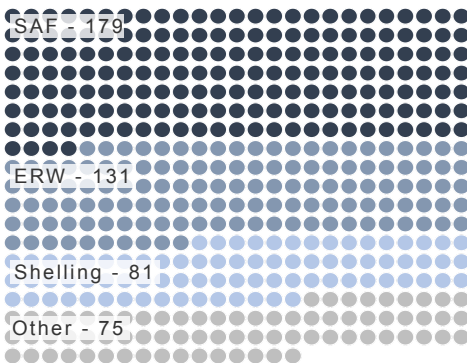
Annual civilian SAF casualties as a proportion of civilian casualties from all types of armed violence



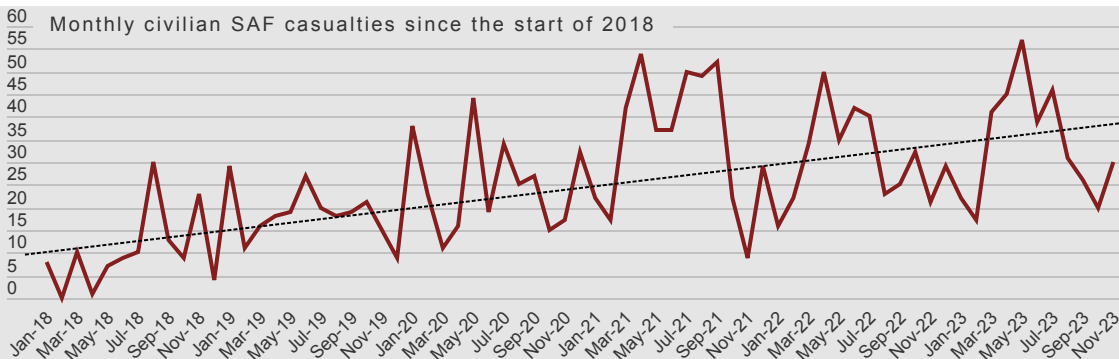
Small arms fire has caused more fatalities than any other type of armed violence in 2023

SAF shootings have been responsible for 374 civilian casualties in Yemen so far this year, already surpassing the 369 reported throughout 2022. Despite having seen a decline since peaking in May, this is the second highest casualty count by type of armed violence this year, second only to civilian shelling casualties, who have predominantly been reported along the Saudi border. 179 fatalities have been among the SAF casualties; more than any other type of armed violence. Of 466 civilian fatalities reported countrywide as a result of armed violence in 2023, 38% have been the result of SAF. The mortality rate among SAF shooting incidents is also higher than other types of armed violence; roughly one in two SAF casualties this year (48%) has been a fatality.

Civilian fatalities by type of armed violence in 2023



Monthly civilian SAF casualties since the start of 2018



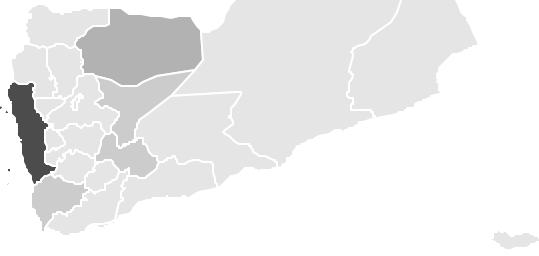
Civilian SAF casualties are more geographically dispersed than other types of armed violence

Incidents involving different types of armed violence in Yemen are often concentrated in particular areas. For example, incidents involving explosive remnants of warfare (ERW) are primarily focused on the west coast, with Hudaydah governorate having seen roughly half of all civilian ERW casualties this year. More than three quarters of the civilian shellfire casualties reported this year have been in western Sa'dah. Ta'izz, meanwhile, has seen 84% of all sniper casualties this year. SAF incidents, however, are more geographically dispersed. SAF has resulted in civilian casualties across 19 of Yemen's 21 governorates this year, a broader geographic spread than any other type of armed violence. The four governorates to have seen the highest SAF casualty numbers, however, are Ta'izz, with 67 casualties reported this year, Shabwah, with 44, Ibb, with 39, and Abyan, with 29.

SAF has been responsible for 374 civilian casualties in 2023, including 18% in Ta'izz, 12% in Shabwah and 10% in Ibb.



ERW has been responsible for 312 civilian casualties in 2023, including 46% in Hudaydah, 13% in Jawf and 10% in Marib.



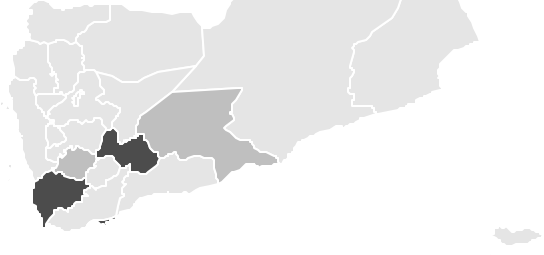
Shelling and drones have been responsible for 456 civilian casualties in 2023, including 73% in Sa'dah, 14% in Ta'izz, and 5% in Hudaydah.



Light weapons fire has been responsible for 250 civilian casualties in 2023, including 93% in Sa'dah, 4% in Bayda and 2% in Abyan.



Hand grenades have been responsible for 91 civilian casualties in 2023, including 27% in Bayda, 25% in Aden and 23% in Ta'izz.



Sniper fire has been responsible for 45 civilian casualties in 2023, including 84% in Ta'izz, and 11% in Dali'.



Recent years have seen the weight of reports of civilian casualties shift away from frontlines. Since the Stockholm Agreement was signed at the end of 2018, there has been a gradual annual decline in civilian casualties as a result of frontline violence. As at 30 November 2023, 170 civilian casualties have been reported as a result of drone strikes, shellfire, light weapons fire and sniper fire in frontline areas, including 102 in Ta'izz, 24 in Dali', and 22 in Hudaydah, compared to 442 in 2022. The decline in frontline hostilities has resulted in a shift in the primary drivers of civilian casualties in Yemen. At 374, isolated SAF incidents across the country have been responsible for more than double the number of civilian casualties as a result of frontline violence this year. Drivers of armed violence are becoming increasingly localised, shaped more by dynamics at the community and district level, rather than by the overall conflict.

Despite the geographic dispersal of incidents, certain types of sites are seeing a heightened number of SAF incidents, including marketplaces, checkpoints, and civilian homes.

Marketplace shootings

At least 18 SAF incidents, resulting in at least 37 civilian casualties, have been reported in or near marketplaces this year, accounting for 10% of this year's shooting casualties. Marketplaces are frequently a site for armed clashes among rival factions, often driven by territorial or economic disputes. Of the 18 marketplace shootings to have resulted in civilian casualties this year, five have been reported in Ta'izz, including at least two that were sparked by disputes between rival factions over the distribution of market revenues. The deadliest marketplace shooting this year, however, was in Al-Qanawis, Hudaydah, where a dispute over stalls' rent collections escalated into a shooting, killing three civilians and injuring another five, including two children.

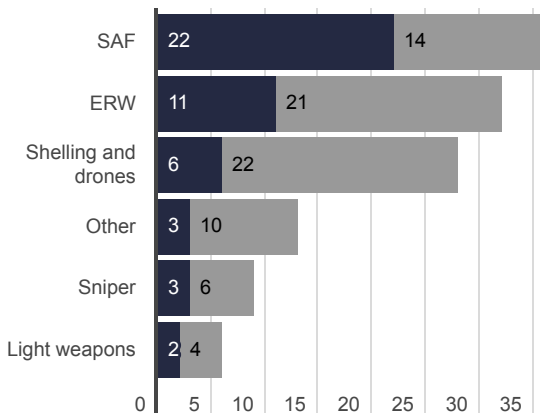
Checkpoint shootings

At least another 13 SAF incidents, resulting in 21 civilian casualties, have been reported at or near checkpoints in 2023, exceeding the 12 civilian casualties reported as a result of checkpoint shootings last year. Jawf has seen over a third of the checkpoint shooting casualties, as a result of five separate incidents, including three in Al-Hazm district and one in each of Kharab Al-Marashi and Bart Al-Anan. Checkpoints can be flashpoints for frictions between rival groups, often marking territorial boundaries and/or controlling the flow of goods from one area to another and associated levies. Moreover, checkpoint personnel are typically armed, adding to the often incendiary nature of checkpoint altercations.

Domestic shootings

There has also been a permeation of violence into domestic spaces, increasing civilians' exposure and vulnerability to armed violence. Since the start of 2023, there have been at least 28 shooting incidents on account of family disputes, resulting in 55 civilian casualties. Three of these shootings, and another 11 besides, have been reported in civilian houses, resulting in another 28 civilian casualties. As violence has increasingly crept into domestic spaces, this has also yielded a greater impact on women. Shootings in civilian homes and as a result of family disputes have resulted in 19 women casualties, 15 of whom have been fatalities. Over two thirds of the women killed in shootings this year have been the result of domestic incidents, as violence becomes increasingly domesticated. SAF has been responsible for more women casualties than any other type of armed violence in Yemen this year, at 36, and almost half of the 47 women fatalities reported countrywide this year have been caused by SAF.

Women casualties in 2023 by type of armed violence



Localised grievances are also exacerbating hand grenade incidents.

As of 30 November, grenade incidents had resulted in 91 civilian casualties across Yemen this year, already surpassing the 81 civilian grenade casualties reported in 2022. At least 20 casualties this year have been the result of grenades detonating in civilian homes, and another eight grenade casualties have been in marketplaces. Of ten women grenade casualties so far this year, seven have been the result of grenades detonating in civilian houses. There were also 23 civilian casualties in a mass casualty incident in Bayda, where in May, two civilians were killed and 21 injured when a grenade exploded inside a mosque in Al-Quraishyah, following a local vengeance dispute.

Conclusion

The growing proportion and dispersal of SAF incidents and associated civilian casualties is reflective of rising levels of localised violence in Yemen, being driven by a host of grievances and rivalries, from economic to territorial, tribal and familial. Tensions are exacerbated by weak rule of law and order, and compounded by widespread access to arms, meaning altercations are swift to escalate in this incendiary landscape. As shooting incidents continue to permeate civilian commercial, transit and domestic spaces, the risk to civilians will likely grow, while the domestication of violence is likely to yield a disproportionately heavy impact on women.

The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project is a service under the Protection Cluster for the collection, analysis and dissemination of open source data on the civilian impact from armed violence in Yemen, to inform and complement protection programming.



For more information, please visit www.civilianimpactmonitoring.org

