

Mwatana has documented, or recorded, heavy damage from the war. They are very concerned about damage to at least 34 archaeological sites over the past four years. Archaeological sites are important windows into the past. They are important physical structures, but they also represent pride and what the Mwatana calls "collective memory."

## **Yemeni Groups Concerned About Historic Preservation**

Mwatana issued a lengthy report titled "The Degradation of History." Degradation means loss of respect and destruction. The report features stories from over 75 people working at archaeological sites and monuments that came under attack. The sites are located in nine states, or governorates, across the country. They include the capital Sanaa, Aden and the eastern governorate of Marib.

Radhya al-Mutawakel is the leader of the Mwatana organization. She said the war in Yemen is devastating on so many fronts beyond the loss of human life. She is worried about the country's history, culture and shared memory. "It is not only a loss for Yemenis, but also for the cultural heritage of all peoples," said al-Mutawakel.

## **Houthi Rebels Versus Saudi Support**

The report covers airstrikes, or bombings by aircraft, and other attacks since mid-2014. The fighting started in 2014. That's when Yemen's Houthi rebels, or anti-government forces, descended from their highlands and took over most of the northern region. Houthis forced the Yemeni government to flee the country. Then, from outside of Yemen, the government asked for military help from neighboring countries, like Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis have been leading the fighting on behalf of the Yemeni government. In March 2015, they waged a large air campaign against Houthis. They also started a land, sea and air embargo. This stops goods like food and clothing from coming in and out of the country. As a result, many Yemenis are starving, even citizens who have nothing to do with the Houthis. Within a few months, the Saudi-led group pushed the Houthis out of the southern region while the north remained in the Houthis' grip.

## **Heavy Bombing To Blame**

The Old City section of the capital Sanaa has suffered significant damage from the fighting. The Old City of Sanaa is on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites. The UNESCO list honors sites for their historical importance. The Old City has come under heavy bombing several times. The airstrikes have demolished many of the area's ancient buildings.