

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 31/006/2009

05 May 2009

UA 119/09 Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture or other ill treatment/ Possible prisoners of conscience

YEMEN **Qassim 'Askar Jubran (m), retired officer and former Yemeni ambassador**
Ahmad Muhammad Ba Mu'allam (m)
Fadi Ba'oom (m)

Qassim 'Askar Jubran, Ahmad Muhammad Ba Mu'allam and Fadi Ba'oom are being held in incommunicado detention, where they are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Unconfirmed reports suggest that they are being held at the Political Security Prison in the capital Sana'a. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

Ahmad Muhammad Ba Mu'allam and Fadi Ba'oom were respectively arrested on 15 and 18 April 2009 in Al-Mukalla, a city in the Hadhramout coastal region, in the southern part of Yemen. Qassim 'Askar Jubran, a retired officer and former Yemeni ambassador, was arrested on 16 or 17 April in the city of Aden.

Amnesty International does not know the exact reasons for the men's arrest and detention, but they are said to have been targeted for their connection with a coalition of political groups known as the Southern Movement, which is seen by the government of Yemen as calling for the independence of the southern part of the country. Qassim 'Askar Jubran and Ahmad Muhammad Ba Mu'allam are said to be leading figures of the Southern Movement. Fadi Ba'oom is the son of Hassan Ba'oom, who is also considered to be a leading figure in the Southern Movement.

The Southern Movement is said to have been behind protests in the southern governorates in the lead-up to 27 April 2009, the date marking the 15th anniversary of the start of the civil war in 1994 between the Yemeni government in Sana'a and southern separatists. In response to the recent protests, the government has deployed security forces to a number of towns and villages. There have been reports of armed clashes in some areas, which are said to have resulted in deaths and injuries on both sides.

The authorities are reported to have confiscated copies of about six newspapers from newsagents on 4 May, because they were suspected of expressing views favourable to the secession of the south in their coverage of the protests. One of these newspapers, *al-Ayyam*, an Aden-based Arabic daily, is said to have also had its offices encircled by security forces yesterday and copies of the publication prevented from being distributed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Protests in the south of Yemen have been sporadically taking place for about two years. They began with protests by retired soldiers from the south, who have increasingly been voicing concern that they do not receive the same treatment in employment, salary and pensions as soldiers from the north of the country. Most of the retired soldiers are from the army of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), commonly known as South Yemen. Following the unification of the country in 1990, the armies of both the PDRY and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), commonly known as North Yemen, were merged into a single army force for the new Republic of Yemen. However, after the civil war of 1994, many of the soldiers of the former PDRY were dismissed from the army. These, as well as those who remained in the current unified

army, allege that they are subject to discrimination compared to soldiers originally from the army of the YAR. The Southern Movement appears to have emerged following these protests.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to ensure that Qassim 'Askar Jubran, Ahmad Muhammad Ba Mu'allam and Fadi Ba'oom are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and are allowed prompt and regular access to lawyers of their choosing, their families and to any medical treatment they may require;
- noting that if they are held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release;
- asking for details of any charges they face to be made public, and calling on the authorities to ensure that any legal proceedings against them conform to international fair trial standards;
- expressing concern that a number of newspapers have been targeted solely for having covered the protests.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh
Office of the President of the Republic of Yemen
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 127 4147

Salutation: Your Excellency

Attorney General

His Excellency 'Abdullah al-'Ulufi
Office of the Attorney General
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 137 4412

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Mutaheer Rashad al Masri
Ministry of the Interior
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 1 332 511

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Human Rights

Her Excellency Houda 'Ali 'Abdullatif al-Baan
Ministry for Human Rights
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 1 444 833

and to diplomatic representatives of Yemen accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 June 2009.