

PUBLIC

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UA 219/04 Fear of torture and ill-treatment/Incommunicado detention

YEMEN Zaid Ali Amer (m), cleric, aged about 65
Hassan Ali Ajlan al-Nu'mi (m), cleric, aged 48
Majed al-Huthi (m), teacher, aged about 20
Adel Shalli (m), poet, aged 30
Muhammad Ali Luqman (m), judge, aged about 48

The five people named above have been detained during mass arrests following clashes between the security forces and followers of cleric Hussain Badr al-Din al-Huthi, which began on 21 June. Up to several hundred people have reportedly been detained, and most are held incommunicado, which puts them at grave risk of torture and ill-treatment. They and many other detainees may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for expressing their conscientiously held beliefs.

Tension between the government and Badr al-Din al-Huthi, from the Zaidi community, has been growing since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Hundreds of his followers have been detained every week for shouting anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans after Friday prayers. The recent clashes began after the government asked Badr al-Din al-Huthi to hand himself to the security forces, and he refused.

The five people named above are held by the Political Security, the branch of the security forces which deals with political and security suspects. The first four are said to be detained in Hajja province, while Muhammad Ali Luqman is said to be detained in Sana'a. Adel Shalli was reportedly arrested because he circulated a statement opposing the government's military action against Hussain Badr al-Din al-Huthi's followers. Majed al-Huthi was reportedly arrested simply because he has the same family name as the cleric.

The exact number of people killed by the security forces is not known. On 3 July the Minister of Interior reportedly told parliament that 118 people had been killed. Other sources have reported that the number of dead, among them women and children, could be as high as 500. Most of the killings are said to have resulted from the security forces' use of heavy weaponry, including helicopter gunships. A helicopter gunship is reported to have attacked civilian targets, killing a number of people. Amnesty International fears that many or most of those killed may have died as a result of extrajudicial executions, or use of excessive force by the security forces.

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

- seeking urgent assurances that the five detainees (naming them), and others detained after clashes in Sa'da province, are not being tortured or ill-treated, and that all are given access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may need;
- calling for them to be released immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely for the peaceful expression of their conscientiously held beliefs;
- calling for an investigation into reports that civilians may have died as a result of the use of excessive force by the security forces, with the findings made public and anyone found responsible brought to justice;
- Seeking assurances that security forces will adhere strictly to international standards, particularly the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. Basic Principle 9 states: "In any event, intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life." Principle 8 states: "exceptional circumstances such as internal political instability or any other public emergency may not be invoked to justify any departure from these basic principles."

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh

President of the Republic of Yemen

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Telegrams: President 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Telexes: 2422 RIASAH YE

Faxes: + 967 127 4147

Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister

>Abd al-Qader Bajamal

Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Telegrams: Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Faxes: + 967 1 274 662

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Rashid Muhammad al->Alimi

Ministry of Interior

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Sana'a, Yemen

Faxes: + 967 1 332 511

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights

Amat al Aeem al Suswah

Ministry for Human Rights

Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Telegrams: Minister of Human Rights, Sana'a, Yemen

Faxes: + 967 1 419 700

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 20 August 2004.