

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 198/07 (MDE 31/009/2007, 03 August 2007) Incommunicado detention/ fear of torture/medical concern

YEMEN Brigadier Nasser al-Nouba (m), aged in his 50s]
Shallal Ali Shaya' (m), aged about 35] released
Scores of others]

New names: 'Abbas al-'Assal (m), aged 42,
Nasser al-'Awlaqi (m), aged about 40

Brigadier Nasser al-Nouba, Shallal Ali Shaya' and scores of others arrested after a protest on 2 August, have been released by the Yemeni authorities. However, two other men detained at the same time, 'Abbas al-'Assal and Nasser al-'Awlaqi, are still reported to be held incommunicado. 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.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Brigadier Nasser al-Nouba, Shallal Ali Shaya' and scores of other detainees were released without charge on 7 August. They had been arrested on 2 August after a sit-in protest in Liberty Square, in central Aden, staged by retired soldiers to complain that their pension payments had not been made, or had been severely delayed.

'Abbas al-'Assal and Nasser al-'Awlaqi were also arrested during the sit-in. They continue to be held at the Sheikh Osman police station in Aden without access to family members or lawyers, and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. They do not appear to have been charged with any offence, and the exact reason for their continued detention is not known to Amnesty International, although they may have been targeted for playing a leading role in organising the protest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Retired soldiers from the south of Yemen 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. The 2 August protest was intended to draw attention to their grievances. The government apparently told them to apply for permission for the sit-in. They reportedly refused, on the grounds that they were not intending to hold a demonstration, and so did not need permission.

Most of the retired soldiers are from the army of former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). Following the unification of the country in 1990, both armies of the PDRY (South Yemen) and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) (North Yemen), were merged into a single army force for the new Republic of Yemen. However, following 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 army, complained of being subjected to discrimination when compared to soldiers originally from the North.

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 'Abbas al-'Assal and Nasser al-'Awlaqi are protected from torture and given regular access to lawyers of their choosing, their families and any medical treatment they may require;
- asking for details of any charges they face, and calling on the authorities to ensure that any legal proceedings against them conform to international fair trial standards;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

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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 24 September 2007.*****