

# URGENT ACTION

## PROTESTERS IN OMAN DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO

**Dozens of protesters in Oman were arrested in the early hours of 29 March. They are being held incommunicado, increasing the risk of torture or other ill-treatment. They may be held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.**

At around 3am on 29 March, security forces are said to have arrested a number of protesters who had been camping out at the Globe Roundabout in Sohar, in the north of Oman. They removed blockades and, according to one press report, used sticks to hit people who were refusing to leave. Others who had attended protests were reported to have been arrested at their homes. They are all believed to be held in the Central Prison in Samail, west of the capital, Muscat. They are being held incommunicado and so are at particular risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

**Ahmed al-Shezawi**, who is aged around 35, has four children and is head of the press relations department in *al-Shabiba*, an Omani daily newspaper, is believed to have been arrested in the early hours of 27 March at his flat in Muscat. Ahmed al-Shezawi's uncle **Dr Abdul Gufar al-Shezawi**, a 50-year-old lecturer at the Teachers College in Sohar, was also arrested at his home in Sohar by members of the security forces. According to reports received by Amnesty International, he was beaten at the time of arrest. He is reported to suffer from diabetes and high blood pressure. Both are reported to have taken part in the protests. Ahmed al-Shezawi had participated in protests in Muscat and Sohar and Dr Abdul Gufar al-Shezawi had taken part in the protests in Sohar. Officials at the police station in Sohar are believed to have said both men as well as the other protesters are being held in the Samail Central Prison.

Protesters had camped at the roundabout since 27 February, when two people were reported to have been killed at the protest after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at them. The protesters had refused to move from the area in Sohar until their demands were met; they include more jobs, an end to corruption and the sacking of government officials.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to ensure that all of the men detained following the protests in Sohar and Muscat, including Ahmed al-Shezawi and Dr Abdul Gufar al-Shezawi, are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to their family, lawyers and any medical attention they may require;
- Calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are being held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- 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;
- Calling on the authorities to allow peaceful protests to take place.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 MAY 2011 TO:

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id  
Head of State, Prime Minister, Foreign  
Affairs, Defence and Finance Minister  
Diwan of the Royal Court  
The Palace  
Muscat 113  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 735 375  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin  
Faisal bin Said Al Busaidi  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 127  
Ruwi 112  
Muscat  
Sultanate of Oman  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

### And copies to:

Mr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami  
Chairman  
National Human Rights Commission  
P.O.Box 29, Postal Code: 103  
Bareq A' Shati  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24648801  
Email: [enquiry@nhrc.om](mailto:enquiry@nhrc.om)  
**Salutation: Dear Mr Mohammed bin  
Abdullah Al Riyami**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Student Abdullah al-Ghamalasi was killed on 27 February 2011 when police opened fire with rubber bullets on about 2,000 protesters who had gathered at a roundabout outside a police station in Sohar . They were calling for more jobs, an end to corruption and for government officials to be sacked. Another man is said to have died while undergoing surgery for injuries sustained during the same protest. Oman's Minister of Health was reported to have acknowledged that one person had been killed by a rubber bullet but denied reports of other killings. The police are reported to have fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators, some of whom threw stones at the police. At least a dozen people were injured and around 40 people were reported to have been arrested following the protests in Sohar. They were released without charge the same day on the orders of Oman's ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id. For more information, see Amnesty International's press release *Oman must rein in security forces to prevent further deaths* (Index: PRE01/092/2011), 28 February 2011.

On 27 February, Sultan Qaboos ordered the creation of 50,000 jobs and 150 Omani riyals a month (approximately US\$390) in benefits for the unemployed in response to protesters' demands. On 7 March, Sultan Qaboos made a wide-ranging reshuffle and restructuring of the cabinet, sacking a number of ministers.

However, protesters have continued intermittently to call for the sacking of other ministers, including the Minister of Information. They have also called for several current and former ministers to be held to account for offences, such as the former Minister of the Royal Office, they are alleged to have committed while in office. In addition, they are voicing the need for greater freedom of the press and for the reforms that Sultan Qaboos ordered in February and March to be implemented.

Oman continues to maintain strict restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. Several bloggers and journalists in recent years have been targeted, some of them detained, after criticizing the government.

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