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Public Statement

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Yemen: Amnesty International welcomes release of editor-in-chief, calls for end to punitive measures against other journalists

Amnesty International welcomes the release today of Abdul Karim al Khaiwani, editor-in-chief of al-Shura newspaper, but remains deeply concerned at the punitive measures the government of Yemen continues to impose against journalists, including arrest, imprisonment, fines and suspended prison sentences.

Abdul Karim al Khaiwani's release came following a pardon by President 'Ali' Abdullah Saleh issued on 23 March. Two days earlier the Court of Appeal had upheld the Lower Court sentence of a one-year prison term imposed on the editor and the six-month closure of al-Shura newspaper. On 8 March Amnesty International issued a public statement calling for an independent and impartial investigation into reports that members of Abdul Karim al Khaiwani's defence team were forcibly removed from a recent appeal hearing on 1 March and badly beaten by security officials following a disagreement between lawyer Mohammed Najj Allow and the court presiding judge. Other people attending the trial were said to have been beaten by security officials when they tried to leave the court room in protest against the violent treatment of the lawyers.

Other journalists punished for their articles include Abdul Wahid Hawash and Abdul Jabbar Saad, editor and journalist for Al-Ehyaa Al-Araby newspaper, who in December 2004 received suspended prison terms of between four and six months after writing articles reportedly criticizing Saudi Arabia.

AI calls on the government of Yemen to put an end to punitive measures against journalists and ensure respect of the right to freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Yemen is a state party.