

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International calls on Oman to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and abolish the death penalty

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Oman

Amnesty International welcomes the cooperation by the Government of Oman with the UPR process. The organization is alarmed, however, at continued restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and regrets the government's responses to recommendations in this regard.

Amnesty International is disappointed by Oman's decision to reject recommendations to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including by investigating cases of excessive use of force against demonstrators and supporting civil society organizations.¹ The fact that Oman has both accepted and rejected recommendations to review current legislation that fails to protect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association sends a mixed message as to its commitment to these rights.²

In recent years, Amnesty International has documented a pattern of harassment of activists, journalists and bloggers by the authorities, including arrests and prosecutions on public order charges or under vaguely worded Penal Code provisions that criminalize insulting the Sultan. Amnesty International urges the government to urgently guarantee the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience, including the former Shura Council member Talib al-Ma'amari and activist Saeed Jaddad.

¹ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Oman*, A/HRC/31/11, 6 January 2016, recommendations 129.153 (Switzerland), 129.163 (Czech Republic) and 129.176 (Ireland); Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Oman (Addendum)*, A/HRC/31/11/Add.1, 8 March 2016, pp. 10-12.

² A/HRC/31/11, recommendations 129.90 (Sweden) 129.92-129.93 (United States of America), 129.154 – 129.157 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, France, Libya) and 129.160-129.162 (Chile, Namibia, Czech Republic) and 129.164-129.166 (Estonia, France, Iceland); A/HRC/31/11/Add.1, pp. 8 and 10-11.

Amnesty International regrets Oman's mostly negative responses to recommendations to implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.³

Amnesty International was also disappointed to note that Oman rejected recommendations to establish a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its abolition in law.⁴ The scope of crimes for which the death penalty is applicable in Omani law exceeds those provided for by international human rights standards.⁵ Pending its abolition, Amnesty International urges Oman to ensure that the death penalty is imposed only for the most serious crimes and in full compliance with international standards for fair trials.

Despite rejecting recommendations to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Amnesty International urges Oman to reconsider this in light of its previous aspiration to ratify the Covenant as stated in the Common Core Document it submitted to the United Nations in 2013.⁶

Thank you, Mr. President.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Oman on 17 March 2016 during its 31st session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

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³ A/HRC/31/11, recommendations 129.154 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and 129.167-129.170 (Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Australia); A/HRC/31/11/Add.1, pp. 10-11.

⁴ A/HRC/31/11, recommendations 129.11-129.15 (Sierra Leone, Australia, France, Portugal, Montenegro, Namibia) and 129.132-129.139 (Mexico, Costa Rica, France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland); A/HRC/31/11/Add.1, pp. 3 and 10.

⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6(2).

⁶ United Nations, *Common core document forming part of the reports of States parties – Oman*, HRI/CORE/OMN/2013, 25 October 2013, para. 36; A/HRC/31/11, recommendations 129.4-129.10 (Australia, Costa Rica, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Ghana, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Sierra Leone) and 129.15 (Namibia); A/HRC/31/11/Add.1, p. 3.