JOINT LETTER: DETENTION IN YEMEN

Ansar Allah
Abdelmalik Badr El-Din Al-Houthi, Leader of Ansar Allah
Mahdi Mashat, President of the Supreme Political Council
Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, Member of the Supreme Political Council
Abdelkarim Amir Al-Din Al-Houthi, Sanaa minister of interior
Abdelhakim Al-Khiwani, Sanaa intelligence and security apparatus director
Abdelaziz bin Habtoor, Sanaa prime minister
Jalal Al-Royshan, Sanaa deputy prime minister for defense and security affairs
Hisham Sharaf, Sanaa minister of foreign affairs
Hussein Al-Azzi, Sanaa vice minister of foreign affairs

Government of Yemen
Abd Rabuh Mansour Hadi, President
Lt. General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, Vice President
Moeen Abdelmalik Saeed, Prime Minister
Ahmad Al-Maysari, Minister of Interior
Major General Mohammed Ali Al-Maqdishi, Minister of Defense
Abdullah Al-Hadhrami, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Abduh Al-Hothaifi, PSO director
Major General Sultan Al-Arada, Marib governor
Mohammed Saleh bin Eido, Shabwa governor
Major General Faraj Al-Bahsani, Hadramawt governor

Southern Transitional Council
Major General Aidroos Al-Zubaidi, Southern Transitional Council president
Hani bin Breik, Southern Transitional Council vice president
Major General Shallal al-Shaye, security chief, Aden

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Minister of Defense
Adel bin Ahmad Al-Jubeir, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
Prince Lieutenant General Fahad bin Turki bin Abdalazeez, Coalition Commander

United Arab Emirates
Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces
Dr. Anwar Mohammad Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Copied to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen

We write to you on Human Rights Day to call on you to take meaningful steps to end detention-related abuse in Yemen.

Steps taken in recent weeks by both the Ansar Allah armed group (Houthis) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to unilaterally release hundreds of detainees were positive. There remains an urgent need to address rampant, ongoing detention-related abuse that continues to affect tens of thousands of Yemenis across the country. The impact of detention-related abuse goes beyond the person detained – it impacts their family members, their loved ones and wider society. In addition to ending the suffering of victims and their families, ending and redressing detention-related abuses also would contribute towards reaching a just and sustainable resolution of the conflict in Yemen.

We specifically write to ask you to build on recent positive steps by using your authority and influence to help ensure the release of all those arbitrarily detained, an end to enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, the improvement of conditions of detention, including the facilitation of family visits, and full cooperation with efforts to ensure that individuals reasonably suspected of responsibility for war crimes and serious human rights violations, including torture and hostage-taking, are prosecuted in fair trials that preclude the death penalty.

As you are aware, thousands of civilian detainees are currently held in various formal and informal detention facilities. They include human rights defenders, activists, peaceful protestors, journalists, migrants, fishermen, members of the Baha’i community, humanitarian workers and those deemed to be critics or opponents of the authorities. Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment in Yemen by parties to the conflict, including the Houthi armed group, the Government of Yemen (GoY), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia (KSA), and local forces backed by members of the coalition have been extensively documented by various local and international organizations, including the UN-mandated Group of Eminent Experts (GEE). Accountability and redress for these abuses remains lacking.

In their most recent report, the GEE found that parties to the conflict continued to detain individuals arbitrarily. They documented incommunicado detention, solitary confinement for long periods, frequent transfers between facilities and the use of secret facilities, which often keep detainees out of the reach of their families, as well as legal protection and judicial oversight.¹

One year ago, Houthi armed group and the Yemeni government held consultations in Sweden to discuss an executive mechanism to activate a prisoner exchange agreement, providing hope to many families that their loved ones would be able to return to them. They subsequently met to discuss implementation, but, as progress stalled, relatives of the thousands of detainees lost hope that the Sweden consultations would lead to the release of their loved ones. Wider implementation of the agreement has yet to materialise. While the recent unilateral release of prisoners – mostly fighters – by both the Houthis and KSA, may help build confidence between the parties, more extensive and comprehensive steps must be taken to address rampant detention-related rights abuse, regardless of the state of political talks.

To that end, we call on you to use your influence and good offices to help bring about an end to ill-treatment, torture, arbitrary detention and forced disappearances by all parties to the conflict. We urge you to help secure the release of those arbitrarily detained, human rights defenders, journalists, migrants, fishermen, members of the Baha’i community, humanitarian workers and those deemed to be critics or opponents of the authorities. Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment in Yemen by parties to the conflict, including the Houthi armed group, the Government of Yemen (GoY), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia (KSA), and local forces backed by members of the coalition have been extensively documented by various local and international organizations, including the UN-mandated Group of Eminent Experts (GEE). Accountability and redress for these abuses remains lacking.

¹ pp.11-12
journalists and peaceful activists; and that anyone deprived of their liberty is granted regular access to their families and lawyers; and that international monitors are allowed immediate access to all detention facilities, unofficial and official.

Signed
Mwatana for Human Rights
Amnesty International
Human Rights Watch
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Dhameer for Rights and Freedoms – Yemen
Afaq Forum for Change – Yemen
Yemeni Archive
Peace and Building Foundation – Yemen
Musa'ala for Human Rights – Yemen
Sisters' Arab Forum for Human Rights – Yemen
Mothers of Abductees' Association – Yemen
Watch for Human Rights – Yemen
Civil Alliance for Peace – Yemen
Wogood for Human Security – Yemen
Adala Association – Morocco
Syrian Network for Human Rights – Syria
Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research – Syria