

URGENT ACTION

COURT SENTENCES FOUR JOURNALISTS TO DEATH

A Huthi-aligned court in Sana'a handed down death sentences to four journalists following a grossly unfair trial. The four journalists have been detained with six others since 2015. During their detention the men were forcibly disappeared, held in intermittent incommunicado detention and in solitary confinement, and deprived of access to medical care. At least three of them were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Ansarullah Representative at Peace Talks

Mohamed Abdelsalam

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Dear Mr Abdelsalam,

On 11 April 2020, the Sana'a based Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) sentenced to death four out of a group of ten journalists who had been awaiting trial since 2015. **Akram al-Walidi, Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hareth Hamid and Tawfiq al-Mansouri** were sentenced on the basis of trumped-up charges. The lawyer will appeal the ruling; however, the date of the next court session remains unknown.

In December 2018, after being questioned in the presence of their lawyers, the ten journalists were formally charged with a series of offences, including spying, which carries the death penalty. The charges included "spying for Saudi Arabia"; "creating several websites on the internet and on social media"; and "broadcasting rumours, fake news and statements in support of the enemy Saudi Arabia and its allies against the Republic of Yemen". The first court session took place on 9 December 2019; the lawyers were allowed to attend that session; but were subsequently barred from attending all the other court sessions, including the last one which resulted in the sentencing of the four journalists.

Since their detention in 2015, all 10 journalists have been suffering from a range of medical issues, including stomach and colon pain, hearing problems, haemorrhoids and headaches due to eyesight issue for which they have not received adequate medical attention.

According to Abdelkhaleq Amran's family, detainees held in adjacent cells in the Political Security Office (PSO) in Sana'a heard him screaming as he was being tortured, in November 2016. Other journalists were also exposed to torture and ill-treatment and have been consistently denied urgent medical care and family visits.

We urge the Huthi de facto authorities to immediately quash these death sentences, drop all pending charges, and release all ten journalists. Pending their release, they must ensure they have legal representation, regular access to their families, and adequate medical care. They must also open an effective, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in view of holding any individuals responsible accountable.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nine of the journalists were arrested in a single raid on the Qasr al-Ahlam hotel in Sana'a on 9 June 2015. Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hisham Tarmoom, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Hareth Hamid, Hasan Annab, Akram al-Walidi, Haytham al-Shihab, Hisham al-Yousefi and Essam Balgheeth were working at the hotel as it was one of the few places in the city that had an internet connection and electricity.

The 10th journalist, Salah al-Qaedi, was detained at his home in Sana'a by members of Huthi forces on 28 August 2015 according to an eyewitness. Five minutes later, they returned to the house and demanded that the family hand over Salah al-Qaedi's laptop and equipment threatening to arrest the rest of the family. When the family said that they did not have his equipment, Huthi forces arrested all seven male relatives and held them for 48 hours.

On 16 March 2016, nine of the journalists, excluding Salah al-Qaedi, were moved from al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility to al-Habra. Salah al-Qaedi had been detained in al-Habra since mid-October 2015. On 23 May 2016, the families of all 10 detained journalists went to visit their relatives in al-Habra. On arrival, prison guards told the families that the journalists were no longer there but refused to reveal their whereabouts.

The 10 journalists were detained without charge or trial until December 2018, when they were formally charged after being questioned in the presence of their lawyers. Their first trial session was held on 9 December 2019. Without informing their lawyers and families, the court sentenced Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Abdelkhaleq Omran, Akram al-Walidi and Hareth Hamid to death during their latest trial session on 11 April 2020. Lawyers were barred from representing the men and from attending the court session.

All parties to the conflict, including Huthi forces, the Yemeni government, the Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led coalition and UAE-backed Yemeni forces have carried out arbitrary detentions.

In areas they controlled, [Huthi forces arbitrarily arrested and detained critics](#) and opponents as well as journalists, human rights defenders and members of the Baha'i community, subjecting scores to unfair trials, [incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance](#). The majority of those targeted have been members or supporters of the political party al-Islah.

The internationally recognized Yemeni government has also harassed, threatened and arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and other activists. Meanwhile, UAE-backed Yemeni forces in southern Yemen [conducted a campaign of arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances](#). In May 2018, Amnesty International detailed the cases of 51 men held in a network of secret prisons by UAE and Yemeni forces operating outside the command of Yemen's government, including individuals detained between March 2016 and May 2018.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 14 July 2020.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Akram al-Walidi (Him/His), Abdelkhaleq Amran (His/him), Hareth Hamid (Him/His), Tawfiq al-Mansouri (him/his), Hisham Tarmoom (His/him), Hasan Annab (him/his), Haytham al-Shihab (him/his), Hisham al-Yousefi (him/his), Essam Balgheeth (him/his) and Salah al-Qaedi (him/his).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/6383/2017/en/>